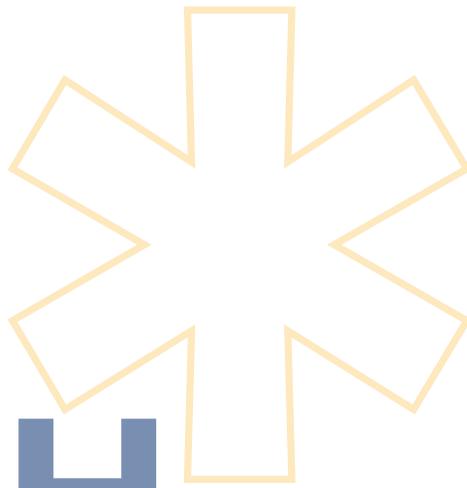


TRENDS

**PHOTOS
DELIVERED
HERE
in 3 Minutes**



Once, photo booths with their “pictures in just three minutes!” were state-of-the-art technology. But in these days of strict passport photo rules, mobile phone cameras, instant uploads and online image sharing, who still fronts up, coins in hand, for their shopping mall close-up? **Hazel Flynn** finds out



FLASH BACK

They're known in the industry as "dip-and-dunks", and they're a dying breed. For decades these photo booths, using old-style darkroom technology, were plentiful – in railway stations, shopping centres and amusement parks. You put your money in the slot, pulled the curtain, made four flash-lit poses, waited three minutes for your photos to appear, then gingerly removed them, taking care not to smudge the still-drying ink.

Then digital cameras came along and the old booths almost died out. There was just enough nostalgia to keep a few going in shopping centres here and there. Then someone had the idea of hiring a booth to use at a private party. Although still relatively new, these party hires now make up "a significant part of the business" of The Original Photo Company, says owner Katina Lazaris, and they're even bringing people back to the shopping-centre booths, as we found when we spent a day observing the two busiest public dip-and-dunk booths in Sydney: one colour, one black-and-white, at the Broadway Shopping Centre, Glebe. >>





Lauren Tuck, Kandice Williams and Carly Wilson

THE THREE FRIENDS are having a relaxed day, shopping for a birthday present, and maybe new clothes. Kandice has never used a booth before, but Lauren and Carly have. "This year after a movie," says Lauren. "We just saw the one upstairs and jumped in. The photos are on the fridge." Carly also keeps some black-and-white originals "that Mum and Dad took back in the '70s". Don't they mind waiting for the shots? "No, although the first time we did it we were waiting so long we thought it wasn't working," says Carly. And the results today? "Oh no, I'm so close to the lens!" says Carly. "Look at you, you look like a rabbit!" says Kandice to Lauren. The three dissolve into companionable laughter.

Alexandra Marceau, Danny Oorburg and their daughter, Jessica

A FAMILY SHOT is next, after Alex notices the booth. "We were just passing by and I spotted it," she says. "I have memories of people having a bit of fun with them. We wanted to get a spontaneous, fun, happy shot. You go in and hope to capture a moment of happiness." Danny, who hasn't used a booth before, is all for it, particularly given that Jessica turned one the day before.

Jessica isn't too sure what to make of the flashes, but her parents are pleased with the result. What will they do with the strip? "We have a good old-fashioned paper photo album. We'll put it in there," says Alex.



Maddison Petrich

MADDISON, aged 11, and her mother, Shirley, were at the cinema with Shirley's older daughter and Maddison's dad, seeing *Inglourious Basterds*. But it proved too violent for Maddison ("and me too, really," says Shirley) so the pair are waiting at a bench near the photo booth until the film ends. Maddison has never seen a booth before and didn't know what it was. She has a mobile phone with a camera, which she uses "lots".

"I've got about 100 photos on it," admits Maddison of her mobile. Does she ever print them out? "No, just keep them on the phone." So what does she think of the idea of sitting down somewhere to have your photo taken, then having to wait three minutes for them to come out? "Cool," she declares. And her opinion of the shots of her and toy rabbit, Lily? "Pretty good," she says, with a tween shrug. "They're lovely," says Mum.



Owen Long, Tim Coventry and Stuart-James Vincent

WITHOUT DOUBT the day's most colourful customers, English and Welsh visitors Owen, Tim and Stuart-James stop by with a crammed grocery trolley. They've been in Australia for between three and nine months; Tim is sponsored by his employer, the others have open-ended arrangements.

Stuart-James is the only one to have used the booths for anything other than passport shots. "I just go in them to have a bit of fun – sometimes with girls. I have a big collage of them on my wall at home." They primed themselves today by dropping in at a neighborhood anti-cancer event, where they had a few friendly drinks and got their faces painted at a fundraising stall. "I chose a clown because I thought it would suit my personality," says Stuart-James.

"I chose a ladybird 'cause I thought it would suit my personality," deadpans Tim, cracking up all within earshot.

John Amery, Sue Binney and Smudge

UPSTAIRS, dating couple John and Sue, and John's dog Smudge, are waiting for Sue's son, who is at a friend's birthday party in the nearby amusement arcade. A busy shopping mall is not their favourite environment. "We wouldn't normally be here," says Sue. "Not voluntarily, anyway." The photo booth provides a welcome distraction.

Both have used them before, back in teenage days. "There was always a whole crowd of teenagers squashing their heads into the picture," recalls Sue.

Adds John, "And always ridiculous poses, which is part of the fun. It's the anonymity of going into a public room with another person. And because you're shy and embarrassed, you always make stupid faces."

Paul Giordano and Melissa Di Natale

PAUL AND MELISSA each have half of a photo-booth strip they took five years ago, when they started dating.

"I've got two of them in my room on my mantelpiece and the other two are on the fridge at her place," says Paul. "And we did one recently at a fancy dress party. It was cool. Everyone was lining up to do it."

It was that experience which drew Melissa to the booth today, though Paul admits he's collected "quite a few" strips over the years. "I've got ones from when I was about four years old with my mum, which she's still got on the fridge. And there are some from when I was a teenager and the sticker booths came out." What's the appeal? "They're good keepsakes," says Melissa. +

