

From phone to fridge: A mini-darkroom on the table

September 11 2019, by Nancy Cohen



Taking digital photos is one thing; the next-level of happiness is making real photos to have and hold. At least, that is the reasoning of the kinds of enthusiasts who will be drawn to an item called Polaroid Lab.

"The idea behind the Polaroid Lab is that it turns your most precious smartphone photos into tangible Polaroid photographs—bringing them into the world as something you can hold in your hand and store on the fridge door rather than in the cloud," said Oskar Smolokowski, CEO of Polaroid B.V.

TechSpot described Polaroid Lab as a miniature darkroom sitting on your tabletop that works with your phone. *TechCrunch*'s Greg Kumparak introduced it as a tower that uses the light from your phone's screen, bounced off a series of mirrors, to make a proper Polaroid from the photos you've already taken. *Gizmodo* described it as an "instant photography device" that can make you hard copies out of any digital photo on your phone.

Ingredients to do so: (1) your hand to push the red button (2) special film packs from Polaroid and (3) the special app for iPhone or Android phones. It churns out instant prints at the push of a button using Polaroid's film packs and mobile app for iPhone and Android.

Polaroid Originals, formerly the Impossible Project, announced the Polaroid Lab as a miniature instant film darkroom for your phone's [digital photos](#). Polaroid Originals is a new brand from Polaroid dedicated to analog instant photography in the original, iconic format. It was launched in September 2017.

Polaroid Lab, said reports, was capable of neat tricks using chemistry, mirrors and light.

Specifically, that would involve "any iPhone after the 6S, and "current models of Samsung, Huawei, Google Pixel and One Plus" Android items, said Kumparak.

Andrew Liszewski in *Gizmodo* said light from your smartphone's screen is projected and it is used to directly expose Polaroid's instant film. The lens exists only inside the Lab. Three are used to focus projected light from the phone's screen down onto the Polaroid film.

Shawn Knight in *TechSpot* declared that "For many, it's probably as close as they'll get to the experience of a [classic](#) Polaroid camera."

Polaroid Lab will turn digital photos into "real Polaroid pictures." Polaroid wants you to think of it as just a formula for "timeless images." Timeless? What's wrong with pictures stored digitally?

Liszewski: "Think back to the many, many times you've lost or accidentally destroyed a phone and in the process lost hundreds of photos. Most of us are embarrassingly bad about backing up our data and are too cheap to pay the monthly service fees that ensure everything gets properly synced and stored in the cloud."

The makers are inviting site visitors to sign up from the Polaroid Originals site page.

How easy, or difficult, is it for the consumer to learn to use it?

Andrew Liszewski: "If you can successfully place your smartphone face down on a table, you can create Polaroid copies of your favorite photos."

How it works: There is an app driving all of this, by way of Polaroid Originals. You choose the image you want from your phone via the app. You place the phone downwards.

"When the red button is pressed, the picture is projected onto the film and then, using a combination of mirrors, light and the unique Polaroid chemistry, it is recast as an instant photo that ejects from the Polaroid Lab. After the usual development time, the digital image is now a fully-fledged Polaroid [photograph](#)," said Polaroid.

CNET's Joshua Goldman, a senior editor for CNET Reviews, told readers what his experience was like exploring the machine for the first time. "Press a button on the side, the unit turns on, and the phone platform on top extends from inside the body. Using the [mobile app](#), you can either take a fresh photo with your phone or pull one from your [library](#). Then you just place the screen down over the opening in the platform and press the print button on front."

He also noted that one can have the app split one image into a collage of multiple shots.

(In the 1990's and 2000's, digital technology eclipsed Polaroid's instant photography. By 2008 Polaroid was calling it quits over instant film production. Instant photography fans called The [Impossible Project](#) stepped in. They bought the last remaining Polaroid factory and made film for vintage Polaroid cameras. The acquisition of the Polaroid brand by The Impossible Project's largest shareholder in spring 2017 created the opportunity for Polaroid to return to analog instant photography.)

The [video](#) about the new item, due next month, asks some tough questions: How many pictures do you have on your phone? ? (Too many).

But wait, are you talking picture-perfect? *Gizmodo* let readers know that expectations for a perfectly crisp photo may be too high. "Polaroid film is still known for its lo-fi aesthetic (which some photographers still prefer) and the [analog](#) approach taken here will soften and desaturate

images in the process."

The article said, "If you want a perfect copy of a photo, you'll still need to connect your smartphone to one of those photo-printing kiosks that can be found at drug stores and big-box chains."

Another issue raised was cost, as per Kumparak's observation:

"The company says that the Polaroid Lab works with its existing I-Type and 600 series films... which, as any enthusiast could tell you, doesn't come cheap. Expect each photo printed here to cost you a buck or two. That's a bit steeper than many at-home printers and definitely pricier than just blasting out some 4x6s at Costco, but this thing will almost certainly still find its audience amongst those going for a certain [look](#)."

(On the other hand, as Goldman remarked, "there's less chance of wasted prints because you're using your phone's best photos.")

The \$130 Polaroid Lab will be available starting on [October](#) 10, according to *Engadget* and other reports.

More information: eu.polaroidoriginals.com/

[www.polaroid.com/news/bad-news ... al-polaroid-pictures](http://www.polaroid.com/news/bad-news...al-polaroid-pictures)

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