

WHICH DSLR?

John Henshall looks at today's leading Digital – and Film – Single Lens Reflex cameras

Canon EOS-1Ds Mark II

Nikon D2x

Canon EOS-350D

Fujifilm FinePix S3 Pro

Kodak DCS ProSLR/c

Nikon D50

Canon EOS-20D

Nikon F6

Nikon D70s

Until 1999, choosing a DSLR was easy because there was just one manufacturer: Kodak. There were no DSLRs from Canon or Nikon but Kodak made models for Canon and Nikon lenses.

The situation is much different now. Kodak has ceased manufacture of DSLRs, whilst Canon and Nikon themselves are now the major players.

There are other manufacturers, of course, but their systems are nowhere near so widely used as Canon and Nikon. Just one other manufacturer features prominently: Fujifilm, whose S-series DSLRs accept Nikon lenses.

I am often asked to recommend the best DSLR but this is difficult to do. Cameras have different strengths – and weaknesses – and deciding how these

suit or conflict with your needs is particularly difficult.

For example, do you want very high resolution, or accurate – or pleasing – colour, or high sensitivity with low noise? Or is price or weight the most important factor?

In an attempt to evaluate some of these factors, I got together the major Canon- and Nikon-mount DSLRs for a series of side-by-side real-world shots, intended to simulate everyday shooting conditions rather than test-chart tests.

Anyway, I don't know anyone who photographs test charts for a living.

I included Kodak's full-frame sensor ProSLR/c, because these cameras – with Canon (/c) or Nikon (/n) mounts – are still out there at tempting prices.

I added to the list the latest –

perhaps even the last – film SLR, the **Nikon F6**. This was loaded with the latest 35mm film: the new **Fujichrome Velvia Professional 100**. The film was processed by one of the leading London professional laboratories and scanned at 4000 pixels per inch using the latest **Nikon Super CoolScan 9000** scanner.

My first shot was of Bear House. Over the years, I have been waiting for a camera which could resolve the house name in this shot. At last this is now possible with the Canon 1DsII and, to a lesser extent, with other cameras.

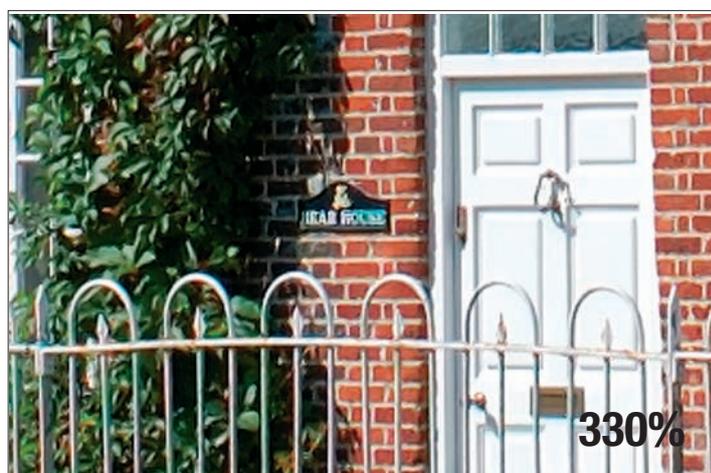
Next came a typical studio portrait setup – electronic flash with softboxes. In each case the camera was set to its Flash White Balance.

So which camera is the winner? Which camera should you buy?

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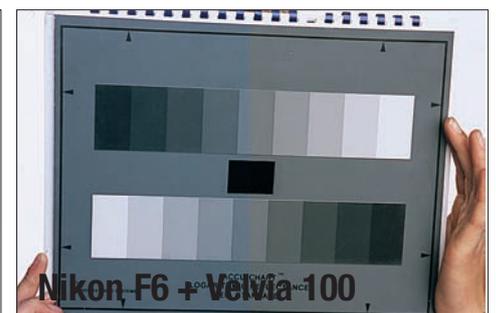
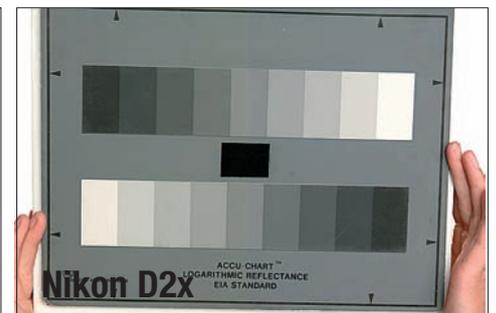
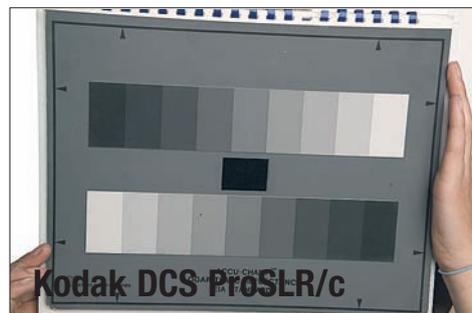
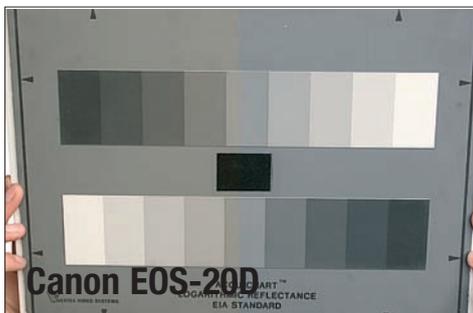
John Henshall's Chip Shop







PREVIOUS PAGES: The shot of Bear House gives a good indication of a camera's ability to resolve fine detail and the sunlit white gates and shadow areas provide real-world tonal extremities. The percentages indicate the enlargement above 300 ppi required to produce the sections shown. ABOVE AND LEFT: Using Fuji Velvia 100 film in the Nikon F6 was a strange but enjoyable experience I haven't had for a few years now. Having to wait a few days for the results was definitely a drag – particularly the palaver of getting the film processed and scanning it. Although the colour and tonality of the film is beautiful, there is noticeable halation, particularly around the rounded tops of the railings. This could not be the lens – I used the same one lens for all the Nikon-mount cameras and another single lens for all the Canon mount cameras. I even re-scanned the shots on another scanner to be sure but the halation was still there. BELOW: Shooting in the studio using the camera's Flash White Balance was not a good idea. The shots of the greyscale are divided down the middle – the left halves show the result of the camera's Flash setting, the right halves are the corrections achieved by clicking Adobe Photoshop's 'Set Gray Point' Eyedropper (in Curves) on the chart's background. Interestingly, the Kodak gave the best result. It's much better to set a manual White Balance for your flash. RIGHT: The portraits – all exposed using the cameras' Flash settings.



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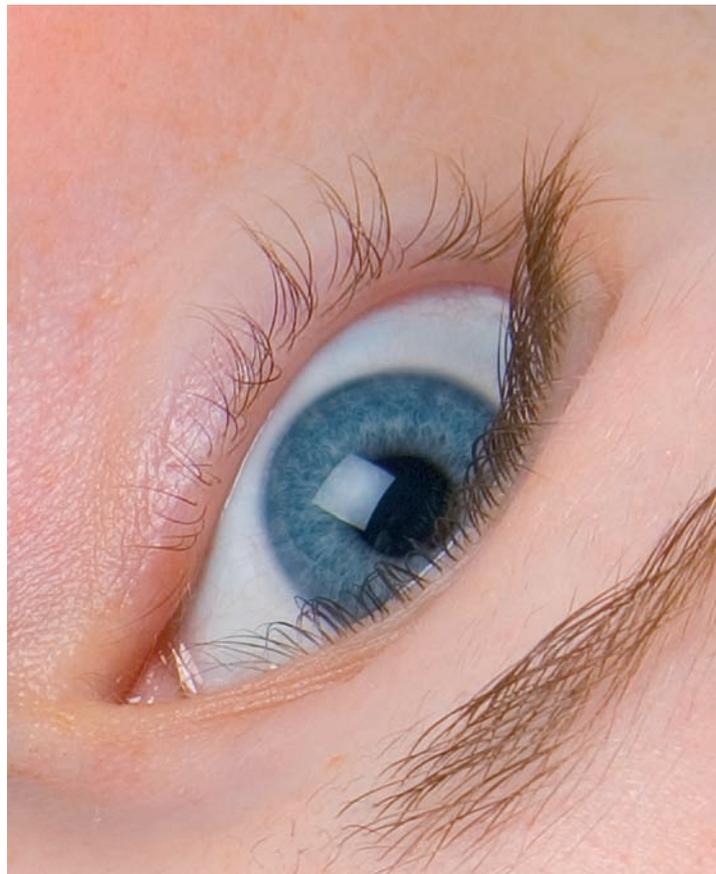
Unfortunately that decision is by no means clear cut, though I do have my preferences, based on a combination of colour quality, resolution and price. And a lot depends on which system you already use – Canon or Nikon.

However, it's important to bear in mind that your old 'legacy' lenses from film days might not produce the great results you expect or hope. On the other hand, they might – there's no hard-and-fast rule. Chances are, however, that if you already use one particular system, that's the one you'll stick with. Or might now be the time to change systems? If so, you'll need to spend a lot of money on lenses.

If I used **Nikon** lenses I would go for the **Fujifilm FinePix S3Pro** for general use because of its excellent colour and reasonable price. For high-end use I would choose the outstanding **Nikon D2x**. Both have small sensors, though.

For the **Canon** system I would choose the **Canon EOS-1Ds Mark II** for its stunning resolution and colour and its full-frame sensor. But it's big, heavy and very expensive, so I would choose the **Canon EOS-20D** as the best trade-off of quality, functionality, weight and price. *To be concluded*

The Canon EOS-1Ds Mark II has 16.7 megapixels – the highest resolution of all the DSLRs. While you may be tempted to go for this camera simply because of its incredible resolution – much higher than any 35mm film – bear in mind that the level of detail which the camera reveals could be an embarrassment. **BELOW:** Karyna wears absolutely no makeup and has a flawless complexion. **Unless all our female subjects are like her, we would need to use considerable amounts of makeup and diffusion, or spend hours retouching blemishes.** **RIGHT:** The close up of Karyna's eye is a section of the same image interpolated to 190MB. This would produce a 84.5 x 56 cm print – that's 33 x 22 inches.



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