# Nikon

## D700

The Nikon D700 is Nikon's, and the world's, best serious digital camera. The old professional D3 costs more and runs faster for sports, but the D700 is newer, smarter, smaller and lighter.

The D700 has image quality indistinguishable from the klunky old D3, both in terms of sharpness and at high ISOs. The D700 has the same superb 3" LCD, but handles even better than the old D3 better due to a new INFO button and smarter firmware. I own a D3, and I prefer the D700 except that the D700 lacks the 5:4 crop mode I often use (most people don't care).

Even at $8,000, the overpriced D3X isn't an improvement over the D3. Sorry rich people. The D3X is the same as the D3, except that it only has the same frame rate as the D700 (maybe even a little slower), and the D3X lacks the high ISO performance of either the D3 or D700.

Unless you're a full-time sports, news or action pro, the D700 replaces the D3 for studio, wedding, portrait, nature and landscape pros, as well as all advanced amateur photographers. (I'm a very strict grader for what defines a pro; everyone else is amateur.)

Forget the D3X, unless you're printing everything at 20 x 30" (50 x 75cm) and up, since the D3X is a hair slower than the D700, and has nowhere near the high ISO performance. I've made great 20 x 30" prints from a D40; pixels aren't worth what they used to be.

The Canon 5D Mark II costs a little more, and the choice between the two is easy. The 5D Mark II is the best thing Canon makes, but the D700 is better for almost everything.

The D700 wins for just about everything, especially action and taking pictures of your friends, family and kids. The D700 has superior autofocus performance over the Canon 5D Mark II. The 5D Mark II's AF system is inferior for photographing moving kids in dim light. All my D700 shots made with a 50mm f/1.4 indoors are just about perfect, most of my 5D Mark II shots made with a 50/1.4 USM just can't nail the focus because the 5D Mark II lacks the face recognition of the D700. The D700 magically focuses on a moving kid's nearest eye, while the 5D Mark II usually mis-focusses on his shirt, sleeve or background. At f/2, depth of field is so narrow that most of my 5D Mark II photos are useless for moving kids. Who needs 21MP if they're out of focus?

If you have incredible Canon lenses and regularly make prints many yards (meters) wide, the Canon 5D Mark II has more pixels, but the AF and ergonomic (handling, speed and comfort) performance of the D700 is superior. The 5D Mark II is mostly plastic, while the D700 is mostly metal. The D700 is sculpted to feel great in your hands all day, while my hands start to hurt fast holding the less well designed 5D Mark II. Nikon shooters can't believe that when you take a picture on the 5D Mark II, that you can't zoom or look at any other pictures until you use your other hand to press the play button manually!

Get the 5D Mark II if you're photographing things that hold still or pose for you AND you need to print them Bismarck sized, otherwise, get the D700.

I average 5,000 shots every month on my D3. When I got a D700, there wasn't much difference. The D700 has exactly the same image quality, and handles just a little bit better. I can't say anything better about the D700 than that. The D700 is a D3 with a smaller battery (unless you add the grip) and a cheaper finder screen system, and that's it. The D700 even has the superior rear thumb control of the D3, not the crappy single-piece thing from the D300.

The D700 is a mostly improved version last year's $5,000 camera, for just $3,000. If you want to read all the good things I think about the D700, read my D3 review in its entirety, and read this review simply for what differs between the two.

The thing I missed most in the D700 is the option to shoot in the professional 4:5 aspect ratio, which fits more of my subjects better than the outdated 2:3 aspect ratio of 35mm film and most DSLRs. On my D3, I program the FUNC button to let me chose my framing with one finger without having to take my eye from the finder.

To make up for it, the D700 adds an AUTO option to the Auto Dynamic Range mode, which will probably give the D700 slightly better image quality in difficult light with less twiddling (I leave my D3 set at Normal, since it has no AUTO setting), and more importantly, the D700 added a much needed way to get to my color saturation and contrast Picture Control settings, as well as a way to display the huge INFO panel on the 3" LCD, each with just one tap of one finger on my shooting hand. On the D700, I can get to all the menus with just one hand.

Which is better? If I didn't use the 4:5 mode so often and have a personal issue with the obstructive black AF sensor markers and too-small exposure compensation marks in the D700's finder, it's obvious that the D700 is better so long as you're not shooting action at 9FPS.

The D700 uses the same image sensor and has exactly the same image quality as the D3, even at ISO 3,200.

The D700 has some subtle, but critical firmware improvements which make it far easier and faster to use than the D3. I can shoot the D700 with one hand, but need to two hands to set Picture Controls and get to the menus in the D3. See my D700 User's Guide for details. In the D700, I can program the FUNC button to call up my Picture Controls, program the power button to call up the rear INFO display, and another tap of the INFO button gets me to other frequently used menu settings. The D3 lacks these options, so it takes a second hand on the MENU button to do all this. Time wasted jacking with more button pushes on the D3 needing an extra hand means missed photos.

Review by Ken Rockwell

## Nikon D3

The professional Nikon D 'single digit' series of digital SLR's started life back in June 1999 with the groundbreaking D1. Groundbreaking because it was the digital SLR that broke Kodak's stranglehold on the digital SLR market and fundamentally brought prices down to a level which most professionals could afford (around the US$5,500 mark). Since then we have seen a steady progression in the evolution of this line of cameras. Whilst the core values of a high quality full-size body with integrated grip have remained constant, the line split into two halves (indicated by the X and H suffixes), one targeted at high resolution photography the other high speed sports type photography (lower resolution but faster continuous shooting). It's been almost three years since Nikon introduced a completely new digital SLR with a new sensor (the D2X) and there had been much anticipation that Nikon's next move would be a full-frame chip.

And so it was, with the introduction last August of the new 'FX format' D3, featuring a 36 x 23.9 mm 12.1 megapixel CMOS sensor as well as a vast array of new features which absolutely raise it another notch above previous single digit Nikon DSLRs. Important headline improvements include high sensitivity support by default, up to ISO 6400 with 25600 available as a boost option, 14-bit A/D conversion, a new standard image processor, a new shutter, new auto focus sensor, focus tracking by color, nine frames per second continuous, dual compact flash support, DX lens support (albeit at lower resolution) with automatic cropping and a 3.0" 922,000 pixel LCD monitor (which it has to be said is lovely).

Some will undoubtedly question Nikon for 'only' delivering twelve megapixels on their first full frame digital SLR, all we can presume by looking at past model line history is that this camera is designed for speed (both in sensitivity, auto-focus and continuous shooting). Our first comment on seeing the D3 in the late summer of last year was 'where's the 'H' suffix?', something echoed many times in the months following announcement by commentators and photographers. Although Nikon remains tight-lipped about its future plans it seems fair to assume that Photokina will bring an EOS 1DS Mark III competitor (with higher resolution but without the high speed shooting).

Review by http://www.dpreview.com

## Nikon D3100

Nikon has developed a habit of making very attractive entry-level DSLRs, which are rarely the best specified but cleverly designed so that they're easy and enjoyable to shoot with. The D3000 fitted this pattern perfectly, a gentle refresh of the D60 (which was itself a slightly updated D40X), it added ease-of-use features to make it a pleasant little camera despite a specification that was beginning to look rather out-of-step with the rest of the market.

The D3000 sold well, despite its rather aged 10 megapixel sensor and lack of both live view and video. However, there's only so long that clever product design and feature integration can make up for a specification that looks dated. So with this in mind, Nikon has announced the D3100 - probably the biggest refresh of its entry-level offering since it really attacked the low end market with the original D40.

The D3100 is built around a 14.2 megapixel CMOS sensor (possibly the one seen in Sony's NEX cameras?), bringing not only live view but also Full HD video capture to Nikon's entry-level model. This not only makes it the company's second-highest pixel-count SLR (after the D3X) but also makes it the first to offer 1920x1080 movie recording. It can only record clips up to ten minutes long but it's still an impressive feature addition at this level.

The body gets a slight refresh, gaining an extra button to the left of the screen, a drive mode switch at the base of the mode dial, a sprung lever to engage live view and a direct record movie button. There are also revisions made to the feature-teaching, hand-holding 'Guide Mode' and an additional autofocus mode to allow better focusing in live view and autofocus during video shooting.