

SHOOTING WITH THE BIG CANONS

John Henshall has been using Canon's state-of-the-art EOS-1Ds MarkII and EOS-20D.

Canon introduced two new high resolution DSLRs towards the end of 2004. First came the 8.2 megapixel EOS-20D with 22.5 x 15mm sensor and 1.6x focal length multiplier. Then, after Photokina 2004, the 16.7 megapixel EOS-1Ds MarkII appeared with a full-frame 36 x 24mm sensor.

Physically big and weighty, the 1Ds MkII takes over from the 1Ds [MkI] as the flagship Canon DSLR.

The photograph on this page shows the two cameras in their relative sizes. Yes, the 1Ds MkII really is that much larger – and the 20D really is that much smaller. And it's lighter, though still big on features.

The EOS-20D weighs 850g, with battery, CF card and neck strap but no lens. At 1642g the EOS-1Ds MkII weighs almost twice as much.

The 22.5 x 15mm sensor in the 20D is less than half the size of the 36 x

24mm sensor in the 1Ds MkII is. Big sensors are rare and expensive.

The EOS 20D produces 23.4MB images with 3504 x 2336 pixels – less than half the size of the 1Ds MkII's 47.6MB images with 4992 x 3328 pixels.

When it comes to price, the difference is greater. The 1Ds MkII costs over £5,000. That's five or six times more than a 20D.

The difference in cost is not just down to the sensor. The construction of the 1Ds MkII is in an altogether different class.

Just look at that strong, rounded pentaprism housing – more reminiscent of a nuclear submarine than a DSLR.

In fact, the 1Ds MkII gives me the impression that it will still be able to take the hard knocks long after its electronics have been surpassed.

Yes, no matter how state-of-the-art this

camera is today – and there's no doubt that we are talking true state-of-the-art here – it will undoubtedly be superseded in the next year or two.

What price all that 'last forever' build quality then?

The controls on the 20D are already in a different league. Operations which need two button presses and a pause for thought on the 1Ds MkII are achieved with one button press on the 20D. I bet that the next iteration of Canon's flagship '1' series camera will adopt similar controls.

For me, the worst aspect of the 1Ds MkII is what you *can't* see on its colour LCD screen. When you zoom in for a critical review of a shot



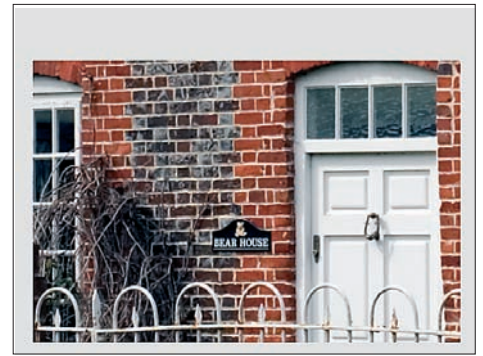
EOS-20D with EF-S 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 alongside Canon EOS-1Ds MarkII with Sigma 12-24mm f/4.5-5.6 EX DG HSM.



Canon EOS-1Ds Mark II



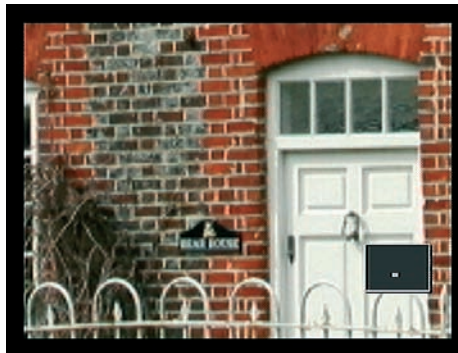
ABOVE: Screenshot from the EOS-1Ds2's LCD screen while reviewing a captured image, (LEFT) the whole image and (CENTRE) zoomed in fully. Note nameplate.



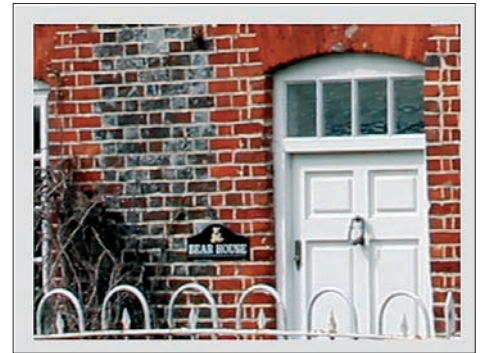
ABOVE: Same-size section as the zoomed-in section (CENTRE) – not from the LCD but from the raw camera file after processing. Note the much higher resolution.



Canon EOS-20D



ABOVE: Screenshot from the EOS-20D's LCD screen while reviewing a captured image, (LEFT) the whole image and (CENTRE) zoomed in fully. Note nameplate.



ABOVE: Same-size section as the zoomed-in section (CENTRE) – not from the LCD but from the raw camera file after processing. Note slightly higher resolution.



A Nikon lens on Canon body? Can this really be possible or is it just a Photoshop trick? The secret is in the thin silver ring with the red dot between the camera body and lens. This neat adapter converts Nikon F mount lenses (which have a smaller bayonet but longer back focus) to Canon EF mount. There's no exposure or autofocus coupling, though, so manual focussing and exposure is required – just like the old days. If you have a legacy of Nikon lenses, these adapters offer a convenient way of using them on a Canon body.





TONALITY: Old Berkshire Hunt, 15 December 2004. Overcast day, Canon 1Ds MkII, ISO400 1/125 F/5.6, 28–300mm Image Stabilizer zoom at 65mm.

ACTION: OBH Point to Point, Lockynge, 28 March 2005. Cloudy bright day, Canon 1Ds MkII, ISO1000 1/500 F/8.0, 70–300mm zoom at 300mm.



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**Sigma 12–24mm f/4.5–5.6 EX DG HSM
full-frame zoom on the Canon EOS-1Ds MkII**

on the 1Ds MkII it does not look sharp. When you import the image into a computer, however, all the detail is there – and was all the time.

This problem could be because the thumbnail embedded in the raw file is not of high enough resolution.

Whatever the reason, the problem defeats the object of being able to zoom in to check details such as eyes and focus in the image.

There was a time when most photographers looked forward to full-frame sensors. Now it seems that most consider APS-C sized sensors to be enough, and there's a growing supply of specially designed lenses (Canon's are called EF-S) which only cover the smaller format.

Well I can tell you that when you've experienced a full-frame camera such as the 1Ds MkII with ultra-wide-angle lenses – or long lenses with the reduced depth of field making the subject stand out – there is no going back. You will be convinced that full-frame is highly desirable.

I have a Sigma 12–24mm f/4.5–5.6 full-frame EX DG HSM zoom on the 1Ds MkII and I have never seen anything like it in my life. Curvature at the edges is virtually non-existent and the effects I can get ... well it has totally re-inspired my photography.

The two images on this page were taken using this lens on the 1Ds MkII. The way the sky bends over the top of the shot is amazing. Not just a branch in top of frame but the whole crown of the tree in the shot of 'Wonderworks' in Orlando. For the other shot I was about a foot away from the mower.

If you keep the lens horizontal the verticals don't converge. This lens deserves all the awards it is winning. The 12mm full-frame wide-angle has to be seen to be believed. It is stunning.

Of course it will also work on the 20D but then it only looks like a 20–40mm.

I can now fit my good old full-frame Fisheye-Nikkor and other lovely lenses, such as the Micro-Nikkor macro lenses, onto the Canon DSLRs, thanks to a small adapter ring which converts

Nikon F mount lenses to Canon EF mount. The fisheye is particularly effective on the full-frame 1Ds MkII.

If you change between the major camera manufacturer marques the highest cost is likely to be the cost of new lenses – not the cost of the camera body. These adapters offer a convenient and inexpensive way of using a collection of specialist Nikon lenses on a Canon body.

So which camera should you buy?

Keith Thompson uses 20Ds, feeling that the speed and resolution are perfect for his wedding work.

Top architectural and commercial photographer Norman Childs has completely abandoned film and now uses 20Ds for all his work. He is confident in the knowledge that his 20Ds will deliver images up to three metres wide and speaks of 'cut your finger' sharpness in an Annual Report he just received from the US.

I need both. A 1Ds MkII for its sheer image quality for stock shots and a 20D as a back-up and for all the other jobs.