# Canon

## Canon EOS 1DS Mark III

When a digital SLR camera has a price tag of $11,999 — and that's just for the body — you know it's not something that everyday folk will appreciate. Instead it's likely it will only appeal to professionals who make a living from photography. Indeed, playing with a camera like the Canon EOS 1Ds Mark III, one quickly gets a sense of how the other half lives — photographically speaking — as it produces huge images with faithful colour reproduction and barely a hint of noise.

The Canon EOS 1Ds Mark III replaces the EOS 1Ds Mark II in the company's D-SLR line-up. It improves on the Mark II, which was released in September 2004, in a number of ways. Both cameras feature a full-frame (35mm) sensor (this is denoted by the 's' in the product name), but the Mark III is able to capture pictures at a much higher resolution. It has a 21.1-megapixel CMOS sensor, along with technology that makes sure enough light is able to reach each one of those pixels. The Canon EOS 1Ds Mark II only has a 16.7-megapixel sensor.

The extra resolution means that you'll need more storage than ever for RAW files, as each one will consume about 25MB. The Canon EOS 1Ds Mark III has a CompactFlash slot as well as an SD card slot. Either can be used to store images, and file transfers can also be made between the two slots.

Despite the huge resolution of the Canon EOS 1Ds Mark III, it is not slow. It's response time is instantaneous; the moment you press the shutter, you can feel the shutter release. There is no waiting time when capturing individual images, so you can quickly frame the next shot; in continuous mode we were able to shoot up to 13 frames in one burst before the camera had to slow down and process the images. We used a SanDisk Ultra II 1GB card for our tests, but got the same result when using a Panasonic Class 4 2GB SD card. The Canon EOS 1Ds Mark III uses two DIG!C III processors to handle captured images, and with a speed of five frames per second in continuous shooting mode, they can process up to 125 megabytes of data per second; this makes it much faster than the Mark II.

It's all well and good to capture images quickly, and this is one of the reasons to buy a professional camera, but the Mark III also captures them without a hint of noise. All of our test shots, whether in the studio or outdoors, were crystal clear, even when we shot at the maximum standard ISO speed of 1600 (you can use speeds up to 3200 via the custom function modes). The only time you will see noise is if you take shots in especially low light and then brighten them up significantly during post processing (and even then you can use noise removal to clean them up).

In fact, this is one of the things that make the difference between the Canon EOS 1Ds Mark III and an entry level D-SLR seem like night and day. The pictures taken with the Mark III just look noticeably cleaner, more natural, and also not as cramped (due to the full-frame sensor). Of course, this will depend on the type of lens you use, too, and the Mark III will accept any of Canon's EF-mount lenses. We used a Canon EF 24-105mm 1:4 L IS USM for our tests, and were able to produce near-perfect shots every time.

We did notice that some images came out a little too neutral, but this was easily fixed during our post processing. Most of our images — even ones taken on cloudy days — required only minimal post processing for contrast. We ran the camera in manual mode most of the time, as the f/4 lens didn't do a perfect job in aperture priority mode when taking photos in very bright light. Conversely, in low light the Mark III's performance while using a slow shutter speed was spectacular. Handheld shots at 1/20th of a second came out almost crystal clear thanks to the built-in image stabilisation of the lens. It's odd to hand hold the camera when using such a slow shutter speed, because it has a heavy shutter that you can really feel. The camera is heavy enough to keep steady for short periods of time (unless you use a massive lens). After long periods of time, you might get shaky hands. It's best to have a monopod on hand, just in case.

The Mark III's body has all the buttons you need to access the most common functions for affecting the exposure and the focus method (and there is a built-in hand grip for portrait shots), but we wish there was an extra dial near the shutter for the aperture control. As it stands, to change the aperture you must either press the exposure button and then move the hand dial, or set the camera's power switch to its third position to enable the thumb-wheel on the back of the camera and use it to change the aperture value. It's a tad unintuitive.

Live View makes an appearance on the Mark III, but it didn't show us the results of autofocus functions on the LCD screen; manual focusing did show up through the screen, however. We're not fans of Live View in the first place, especially on cameras that have a beautifully large optical viewfinder such as this one, but it can be useful when framing shots in a studio environment. While on the subject of focusing, the Canon EF 24-105mm 1:4 L IS USM lens allowed us to select from nine manual focus points towards the middle of the scene, which is not as comprehensive as we would have liked. For autofocusing, the Mark III has 45 focus points, which is six less than Nikon's D3x.

In the end, the Canon EOS 1Ds Mark III is a huge improvement over the EOS D1s Mark II. It's faster, has a much larger sensor and has a 14-bit analog to digital converter. It also offers Live View and built-in dust reduction. It's a beast of a camera for any professional Canon user who wants to take a step up from the Mark II.

Review by Elias Plastiras (Good Gear Guide) 26/02/2009 14:30:00

## Canon EOS 5D Mark II

The lowdown: This 21-megapixel camera with a full 35mm, frame-sized sensor is a revision of the 5D that was released to acclaim in 2005. The pixel count has been increased and a full-HD movie mode has been added as a function of live view. The body is as rugged and well-constructed as ever, and the ergonomics are good, but not as well thought out as the rival Nikon D700's. The LCD is now the industry-standard high resolution 75mm screen. Even with the large files produced by the camera, a burst speed of 3.9fps in JPEG is achievable. There is no pop-up flash - this is a serious camera.

Like: Used with the Canon EF 24-105mm L lens, image quality is superb. The resolution is such that small areas of the image can be cropped and enlarged without loss of detail. Low noise performance is exemplary at the highest ISO settings. Also, the movie mode is surprisingly effective, delivering true high-definition video straight from the camera.

Dislike: While the high-definition movies are excellent, we have reservations about the utility of this feature. To work properly, the camera needs to be tripod-mounted and the focus needs to be constantly tweaked manually. The user manual states "auto focusing is not recommended" when shooting movies. Maximum clip size is about 12minutes.

Verdict: There are three outstanding cameras in this market niche. The Canon 5D was the first by three years and the MkII is not a lot different from the MkI. Nikon and Sony have come at the design from fresh points of view. For anyone with an investment in Canon lenses, the choice is easy, but for the lucky few with (lots of) money, it is a little harder. But the good news is, whichever you choose, you will have a superb camera. It was sheer pleasure being reacquainted with the Canon 5D type.

Reviewed by Terry Lane (SMH) - March 12, 2009

## Canon EOS 550D

Following hot on the heels of the EOS 500D, Canon's (former) top-of-the-line consumer digital SLR, the 550D, certainly looks and feels very similar to its predecessor. The body shape and external appearance is almost identical, with the notable distinction of the front insignia and some extra buttons around the back of the camera.

The back of the 550D shows the addition of the Live View button, as well as the quick control button that can access the on-screen shooting functions.

(Credit: Canon)

In the hand, the 550D feels sturdy and secure, though those with larger paws may find the controls a little too nimble, and the body a little too light. At the top of the camera, the mode dial contains all the requisite scene modes that are suitable for beginners, the Creative Auto mode, as well as PASM controls. Finally, at the far end of the dial is movie mode, the big calling card of this camera.

Video on the 550D comes courtesy of 1080p recording, at a selectable 24, 25 or 30 frames per second. As well as full manual control within the camera, there is also a dedicated video record button at the rear which automatically activates Live View.

As part of the video functionality, the 550D is also equipped with something that Canon is calling movie crop mode. It takes the centre portion of the image and zooms in using the full resolution of the sensor to deliver a VGA quality clip that's equivalent to 7x zoom.

Inside, the 550D contains an 18-megapixel CMOS sensor and the Digic 4 processor. And while it may be tempting to say that there are many similarities between the 550D and 7D, the latter camera is equipped with dual-Digic 4's that afford it an incredible burst speed. The 550D has to make do with a more pedestrian-like 3.7 frames per second (fps), which is just a touch ahead of the 3.4fps from the 500D. The 550D is also not built to the same standard as the 7D.

The 550D does have a few other tricks up its sleeve though, mostly to do with the LCD screen, as it's a 3-inch, 3:2 aspect ratio, 1,040,000-dot one. The viewfinder is relatively small, just like the 500D which makes manual focusing a little more difficult. Fortunately, the screen and the Live View implementation helps with this enormously.

Review By Alexandra Savvides/CNET Australia