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Sony A7R IV Review: Introduction

Dear Sirs,

I have been a member of the Leica fraternity for many years, and have used Leica cameras and lenses for my photographic work for over 40 years. I have also been a member of the Leica Forum for many years, and have contributed many times to the Forum, and have also been a member of the Leica Users Group for many years, and have contributed many times to the Leica Users Group Newsletter.

I am very concerned that a single photo processing company, Photo Direct, has been given the exclusive rights to process the digital files from the new Leica M Monochrom camera, and that Photo Direct are charging £30 per roll of film, plus postage and packing, for the processing of the digital files from the Leica M Monochrom camera. This is a very high price, and I feel that it is unfair that Photo Direct have been given the exclusive rights to process the digital files from the Leica M Monochrom camera, and that Photo Direct are charging such a high price for the processing of the digital files from the Leica M Monochrom camera.

I feel that the exclusive rights to process the digital files from the Leica M Monochrom camera, and the high price charged for the processing of the digital files from the Leica M Monochrom camera, are not in the interests of the Leica Users Group, and are not in the interests of the Leica Forum, and are not in the interests of the Leica Users Group Newsletter, and are not in the interests of the Leica Users Group members.

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repeated). editing them on the computer a) doesn't take very long; if i wanted to, i could (and sometimes do) glean 97% of the keepers out of a batch of 500 in under half an hour--and that's editing 20+mb raw files on a laptop. on a serious computer it would be even faster. but, b) usually i don't do it that way. instead i go through every frame, and spend long enough with it so that i learn at least one thing before i delete it, if i do, or more often, relegate it to zero-star rated obscurity. (btw, i /do/ sometimes go back and look at the raw sequences i shot, sometimes even years later. it can be helpful to have for documentary purposes, and even to jog my memory. and occasionally i have rescued an overlooked frame which went on to live a happy and productive life. the fact is, moore's law pretty much keeps us on top of the archive of photos most of us are likely to shoot at minimal extra expense and effort. maybe not zero, but insignificant as far as i am concerned, especially balancing the benefits of possessing the archive.) i've learned a lot. and relearned it over and over, which i personally find i generally need to do. and guess what--even this doesn't take all that long. more than a dozen minutes, perhaps, but then i clearly don't take nearly as long as ctein does to actually process my files and print them. which is fine by me--i find that part of the process far more boring, and less to do with the/my essence of photography than the editing--which is exactly the same /kind/ of activity as shooting is, unlike much of post processing.

there are other factors in favor of shooting more, in addition to the stochastic one (which is always a major factor in photography out-in-the-world, however much some practitioners would like to deny it). i constantly shoot test frames as i walk, judging the effects of my settings from the histogram and the led so that when something materializes i am already ready for it. (i consider this a significant advantage compared to film, and believe me, i love film.) as for the approach of one commenter who is annoyed by customers who think he should shoot more, again, whatever works, but especially if your clients expect it, rather than arguing with them, why not just snap some more photos? besides the fact that you never know when you might catch something worthwhile, you set your subjects at ease in more ways than one--they can stop worrying about you doing your job, and soon enough they will also stop noticing as much when you /do/ take the photos you know will be the winners, which translates into fewer missed opportunities for you (both when you snap that frame, and in terms of faster recovery time for your subjects to the next frame). that last part applies to anyone making unposed shots of people--there are benefits to shooting more frames, precisely because it bores most people.

so that's at least a part of my take on this. insofar as this blog is useful to many amateur photographers, i would encourage all of them to at least experiment with shooting more, rather than less. maybe i misunderstand how most people work, and actually the majority of you would be better served by cutting down on your exposure count (but, given that i have years of experience teaching photography to groups of inner city kids, i kind of doubt that). there's a false opposition happening here--the notion that working in a careful and considered way means shooting fewer frames. it needn't be that way. sure, we should all put as much effort as we can into finding the best pictures and make the most of them. but we should also take more photos. there are so many wonders around us, i think it's incontrovertible that anyone who can't make at least a hundred frames a day is missing a lot of possibilities (as i certainly do, as we all must). if you don't see them with your eyes, let your camera help you--it sees things you don't. that's part of the point. give it a chance to do it's thing.

Posted by: chris | Friday, 19 November 2010 at 01:33 PM

Chris,
To throw an odd wrench into this conversation, I shot much more liberally with film than I do with digital. I liked having lots of contact sheets to deal with, and I do not like having lots of computer files to deal with. I also liked the idea that a physical rectangle of film was a tangible and permanent record of where I'd been and what I'd seen. I always realized that at least half the pictures I took were just record shots, like a visual diary, and I'm aware that a digital file is evanescent, unlikely to survive a decade or two, and *highly* unlikely to outlive me. Someone might get some pleasure and interest out of discovering my negatives and prints a hundred years from now, but no one will ever be discovering my digital files, which will be gone, gone. I'm sure that doesn't matter at all to a lot of people, but it has an affect on me.

Although it's probably not helpful that this discussion has devolved to a film-vs-digital thing again. It really isn't; it's just about working methods, regardless of the medium.

Mike

Posted by: Mike Johnston | Friday, 19 November 2010 at 04:49 PM

First of all, I'd like to thank Mike for publishing the link to my Flickr site in my post above. The daily maximum has gone from 500 to a mere 11,200 since it hit TOP. Amazing to observe, but also very rewarding to get such attention for personal work.

Secondly, I'm thanking all that have visited from TOP and left comments and made me a Contact. I'll be coming back and do the same in the next week.

All this is confusing for me. There I was paying a small fortune for the best sensors and lenses in the business and being continually frustrated into buying more. All the time in the drawer was a Rollei that I paid £350 for in 1980 with the best sensor of the lot. Ha.

The 3 hour shoot was fun, the processing was ermm ... enjoyable and a very pleasant surprise, but the attention since I started posting them has been incredible and a delight. It's put a capital F into Fun this week.

Thanks again Mike.

Gary

Posted by: Gary | Friday, 19 November 2010 at 05:37 PM

The scatter-brained machine-gun approach to photography reminds me of the guitarist who rifles-off a million notes during a solo thinking that some of them are bound to sound good, and yet I can name players who bring me tears with three or four notes.

To me it comes down to how good of a musician or photographer are you? The best players don't play unnecessary notes (and I suppose words and writers apply here too), and the most accomplished photographers take just the amount of exposures necessary to capture the subject, no more, no less.

Posted by: Player | Saturday, 20 November 2010 at 08:06 AM

I find that different subjects and situations require different shooting styles.

If my subject isn't moving, and the light isn't changing, for instance many of the landscapes and architecture I photograph, then I can take the time to make sure a single exposure gets what I need. I have learned that I'd much rather spend my time in the field viewing the scene than spend my time viewing the scene in ACR.

On the other hand when shooting a rock band on a dimly lit stage, as they amp up to the finale and start bouncing off the walls I may end up with 200 shots in 2 hours of shooting. Most of those will be discarded, but the ones I keep will be much better than the shots I used to get when I was using 12 shot rolls of 120 film shooting live music.

Once at a show I overheard a guy toting a big, old Polaroid telling his friend "...he gets as many shots as he wants. I have to make do with a lot less..." Taking fewer shots may impress other photo-geeks, I used to say that stuff too, but over the years I've learned that the band is only interested in getting some exciting photos of the show. They really don't care if it took one shot or 1000, and I've learned that when it comes to looking at finished photographs hanging on a wall I don't care either.

Posted by: Matt Needham | Sunday, 21 November 2010 at 07:56 AM

@ mike: no, it probably isn't helpful if the discussion devolves to film-vs-digital. i didn't mean to take it there. but otoh, there are material, phenomenological factors that do depend on qualities of film and/or digital, as your archive concerns point to. as you allude to, more often, i think i see it going the other way, as people get a bit nervous about that little square of plastic they have to kill (albeit with the prospect of possibly creating new life) with each press of the shutter in film; there are consequences when you shoot film. shooting digital invites us to imagine that there are no consequences to pressing the shutter button, about which frankly i have to wonder if it isn't a factor in the photos which showed up from abu graib, etc.; would so many have emerged, were it not such an insignificant little act to take them?

@ player: at the risk of belaboring the point, the conclusion you reach ("the most accomplished photographers take just the amount of exposures necessary to capture the subject, no more, no less") based on your analogy (of the guitar soloist who plays too many notes with the "scatter-brained machine-gun approach to photography") is wrong both empirically and conceptually. empirically, it is a fact that most of the best photographers i know of in the world take many, many more pictures than are 'necessary' from the point of view of the finished project. take nachtwey as an example, if you want to consider a specific example of a 'most accomplished' photographer. conceptually, comparing taking photos to a guitar solo is completely wrong; the solo is a performance, the culmination of the process, while taking photos is part of the early preparation for the process, not the performance. you'd be right if you compared profligate soloists to photographers who fill their books or gallery shows with superfluous, uninspired images (but then, that makes a very different point). extending your analogy, would it make any sense to say that a great guitarist never practices, because he only needs to perform the music once correctly on stage? of course not.

i'm going to reiterate what i think is the most practical position on the best approach everyone should take to photography: whatever works. everything else is either a suggestion for something new to try (to see if it works for you), or empty posturing.

Posted by: chris | Sunday, 21 November 2010 at 10:34 AM

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