

It may not be perfect, but the EOS-1D Mark III sets a new standard of excellence for image quality. Part II of our review gives you a closer look.

BY ELLIS VENER

# Unrivalled

PART II: CANON EOS-1D MARK III



All images ©Ellis Vener



*Editor's note: Ron Eggers reviewed the general performance and improved features of the Canon EOS-1D Mark III in the September issue of Professional Photographer. To expand that review, we asked Ellis Vener to test the new Canon in a variety of situations with an eye toward pro photographers' demanding needs.*

The real question about the Canon EOS-1D Mark III is: What is the image quality like? In every test, from studio portraits to landscape to grab shots to high ISO settings, the results were epoch defining.

As soon as you pick up the camera, big improvements are evident. The new 3-inch, 230,000-pixel LCD, which displays images at nearly 2.5 inches wide, makes it far easier to use the various control menus.

One new feature allows you to specify one of six aspect ratios prior to shooting, using Custom Function (C.Fn) IV-14: off

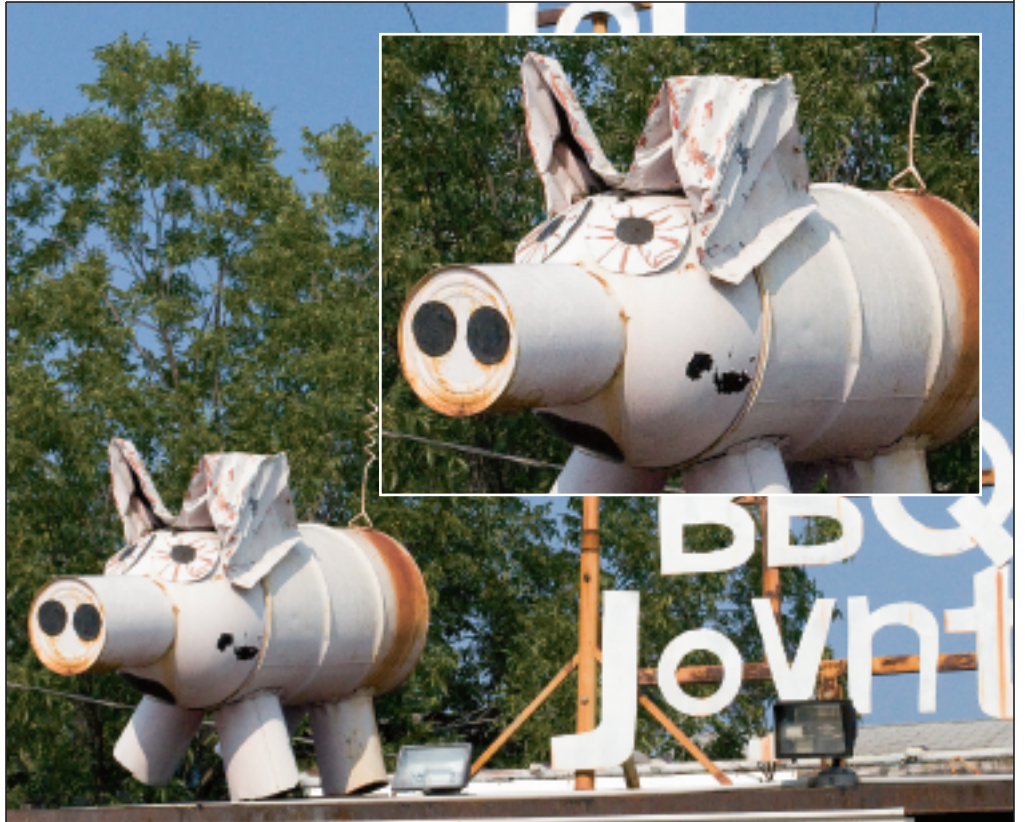
The Canon EOS-1D Mark III captured fine detail in "Alison With Ice Cream," shot in available window light with a 50mm EF f/1.4 lens at f/4 for 1/400 second, ISO 400.

(the native 1:1.5 ratio), square (called 6:6 for some reason), 3:4, 4:5, 6:7, 10:12, or 5:7.

The Crop bars then display on the LCD, giving you some on-camera framing guidance, while the sensor records the full, uncropped image. That's also a great feature for studio photographers who use Live View. In the processing phase, the Canon Digital Photo Professional software can apply the crops automatically on multiple images.

The camera's standard ISO range, 100 to 3200, can expand to ISO 50 and 6400 using C.Fn I-6. I found that captures shot in ISO 100 to 400 are blessedly noise-free, if not perfect. Critical users will still opt for the judicious use of noise suppression software,

I shot Daddy Dz's the BBQ Joynt in bright sunlight with the EOS-1D Mark III using a 50mm EF f/1.4 lens, exposing the sensor at f/10 for 1/8,000 second, ISO 3200.



particularly in large areas of smooth tonality. Captures taken with settings as high as ISO 1600 are surprisingly clean, based on my experience with older DSLRs from Canon, Leica, and Nikon.

I shot the ISO 3200 photo included here (*see p.51*) as an experiment. I wanted to see how the EOS-1D Mark III handled bright

lighting, high contrast and large areas of smooth tonality, particularly blues, where noise usually shows up first. Not that I'm often called on to shoot at ISO 3200 in bright sunlight, but it's good to have this option in my toolbox. I'd say the noise at ISO 3200 is comparable to the noise I formerly expected to see at ISO 800. Running this image through

the Noiseware plug-in for Photoshop CS3 (used as a layer, with reduced opacity) completely cleaned up what little noise there was. This truly opens up a lot of possibilities. In particular, it minimizing the need for high-power lights for location or studio shooting.

Shutter speed ranges from 30 seconds to 1/8,000 second. Canon states that the minimum sync time is 1/60 second with studio-type strobes, but I experienced no problems syncing up to 1/200 second via a Pocket-wizard MultiMAX system. In fact, it wasn't until I read the specs later that I was aware of the recommended 1/60-second sync shutter speed limit. If you use a hard-wire sync connection to the PC connection, make sure that the sync voltage for your strobes is no greater than 250 volts.

Handling characteristics over earlier EOS-1D and 1Ds models are improved as well. You'd think moving the ISO setting button from the left side of the top deck to the right is a small thing, but it's a more natural choice for changing ISO values without taking the camera from your eye. The more compact body makes for easier handling, and the weight reduction really makes a difference when work hours go long.

I did not test sports shooting using AF tracking. At press time, some users had reported problems with the AF in certain conditions, including bright light and the hot temperatures in much of the U.S. this summer. Also, be advised that the Mark III uses a new battery design that's not interchangeable with older models.

Canon recently released a 21-megapixel EOS-1Ds Mark III. If you don't need the ultra-high resolution and would rather keep the extra \$3,500 in your bank account, stick with the EOS 1D Mark III. Even with its flaws, it's the new standard for digital SLR cameras. ■

*At press time, Canon had begun testing beta firmware v1.1.1 for the Canon EOS-1D Mark III.*