

Digital Rebel a match for mainstream

Canon's 6-megapixel model is a good fit for a high-end consumer market

All images ©Jack Reznicki

Funny, for most of my life the photography field has been a case of the tail wagging the dog.

The smallest part of the industry, the professional segment, has always commanded the new trends and new developments in the industry. New products, new features, new techniques, started with the pros, filtered down to high-end amateurs and continued to the mammoth segment of photography, the amateurs. Well, digital has knocked that familiar equation on its ear.

Professionals have resisted digital—"It's not good enough, fast enough, cheap enough." But consumer digital cameras have shown consumers that digital is good enough, fast enough, and economically better. And coincidentally, these consumers are the professional's clientele, be it brides, high school seniors, art directors, or magazine editors. Nothing will make a pro turn to digital capture faster than getting *that look* from a client that says, "Oh, you *don't* shoot digital?"

Like other camera makers, Canon has been greasing the skids with newer and better products. With Canon's introduction of the long-rumored EOS Digital Rebel, the Rebel 300D, I think we'll see this trend turn into a full-blown stampede. Canon has hit the right notes with the right product, with the right features, at the right price.

For a street price of \$900, the Canon Digital Rebel body will take any previous



This was an outtake from a Toys R Us catalog shoot. The little girl was a lot of fun and full of personality. Shot with a Canon Digital Rebel, the EOS 300D, and EOS 18mm-55mm EF-S lens shot at 28mm, ISO 100, shutter 1/125th second at F/11.

EOS lenses. For \$1,000, Canon will throw in an 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 EF-S lens. This lens, which is very small and extremely light, is the equivalent of a 28.8-88mm lens. (There's a 1.6X lens conversion factor

because the capture chip, based on the Canon EOS 10D CMOS chip, is smaller than 35mm film.)

The Rebel compares favorably with its slightly higher priced close cousin, the



This was taken on a leisurely Sunday in the country at a show called "Antiques in a Cow Pasture" in Western Connecticut. The lens was the Canon EOS 18mm-55mm EF-S, shot at 35mm at ISO 100, shutter 1/500th second at F/5.6.



specs:

Canon EOS Digital Rebel 300D

Resolution: 3,072x2,048 pixels
(approx. 6.3 effective megapixels)

Sensor: 6.5 megapixel CMOS,
RGB primary color filter, 3:2 aspect ratio

Bit depth: 12-bit RAW and JPEG files

Shutter range: 1/4,000 to 30 seconds,
bulb, sync at 1/200 sec.

ISO settings: 100-1600

Metering options: Max. aperture TTL metering
with 35-zone SPC; evaluative, partial,
center-weighted average (manual)

Viewfinder details: approximately 95 percent
coverage, horizontal and vertical

Autofocus range: 7 AF points,
EV 0.5 to EV 18 (ISO 100)

Lens options: 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 EF-S lens,
Canon EF lenses

Flash options: built-in, EX-series \
Speedlites (optional)

Burst rate: 2.5 fps for 4 shots

File format: RAW, JPEG
(various compression levels)

Street price: \$900-\$1,000

Canon 10D camera, at \$1,500. As a professional, I would strongly favor the 10D, as Canon cut some corners to bring down the price—corners consumers wouldn't be aware of, but would matter to pros. For one, the body is made of high-impact plastic rather than the 10D's metal magnesium body. It wouldn't take the abuse that a pro might inflict on it, but it does make the camera extremely light—something my wife and the women in my studio appreciated. As I wrestled it out of their hands, I noticed that it's also comfortable, easy to hold, and solid-feeling in my own manly hands.

The Rebel doesn't have a PC connection, a moot point for me in the studio, as I use a Pocket Wizard attached to the hot shoe. But it will make a difference to shooters who depend on a PC connection to their strobes. It does have a video-out port, which many people love because it enables you to view your images on a TV after the shoot. My wife thinks this is the best feature of all when we're on vacation. You can view later off the CF card or even as you shoot.

The image will pop up on the TV a few seconds after you shoot if you're connected. This makes the camera a great teaching tool.

The \$1,500 10D also has a video out, but strangely enough, the \$8,000 1Ds lacks this feature, which my client art directors would love to have. Seeing what I'm shooting in real time is a great studio function. Another feature that appears on the Rebel but not on the 1Ds is a 10X zoom and scroll on the LCD screen, great for checking focus and close inspection. There are two buttons to zoom in or out and a four-way controller to move horizontally or vertically in the file.

With 6 megapixels becoming somewhat standard in digital in the prosumer market, many of us have wondered when lens design would catch up with the new capture format. Traditional 35mm lenses are built to cover a much bigger capture area, so there's wasted size and weight when they're mounted on digital cameras. While the Rebel will accommodate any previous Canon EF lenses, the 18-55mm EF-S ("S" for "short") is a new design. By extending the back

element closer to the capture plane, and designing a lens that covers only the capture size of the chip, Canon has been able to build a surprisingly robust and lightweight lens. Moving the rear element back prevents you from using this lens on any other camera, but I suspect that being closer to the plane of capture will provide for a sharper image, due to the light traveling a shorter distance and having less internal flare. This is why rangefinder cameras, which have their rear elements closer to the film plane, appear to be sharper than SLRs. I'm anxious to see what new lenses will appear in this line.

When I held the Rebel, the first thing I noticed, other than the fact it seemed light enough to float away, was that the familiar EOS control wheel in the back, to which I've grown so accustomed, is replaced by four-way controller switches. Other than that, I was able to start shooting with great control without cracking open the instruction booklet. (Hey, I'm a pro and I don't need no stinkin' instruction book. This is on the same gene that prevents me from asking for directions on the road.)

If you've used any of Canon's EOS cameras, the Rebel will be familiar ground. The only thing that forced me to hit the book was being unable to locate the button that moved the aperture in manual mode. The shutter was the wheel next to the shutter release, but the aperture was controlled by the "AV +/-" button. Well, sure, make it obvious so I can't figure it out.

The burst rate is low at 2.5 frames per second, but the buffer fills up after 4 to 5 shots in the RAW mode. If you wait a beat between shots, it takes much longer to fill the buffer, like 10 to 14 shots before it stops to write to the CF card. Still, it's very quick and frankly more than adequate for the consumer market the camera is aimed at. During a commercial job at my studio, at my normal pace I did have to stop and wait for the camera to catch up, which hurt the flow. Before I filled the buffer, though, it behaved as any good film camera would.

You can get a battery grip, which enables you to shoot longer with two batteries, but as I would use this as an

everyday, carry-around camera or a vacation camera, I would rather stick a second battery in my pocket and not add the extra weight and bulk. A two week vacation means at least 100 rolls of film with the worry of how many fast ISO rolls vs. 100 ISO rolls, x-ray, heat and humidity worries. At a price of \$900 (I already own a lot of EOS lenses) vs. what

I used to spend on film, buying this camera is a no-brainer for me. Your mileage may vary. □

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