

2005-09-27

Peter,

For What It's Worth...

You might be surprised to find that I recommend you should consider getting a Canon EOS 350D instead of a 20D - you will have more money to spend on lenses. The 20D is a better camera (for reasons you can find at many review sites), but I think that if the 350D had appeared on the market before the 20D, then I would be a happy 350D user who wished he had enough money for the 20D, but would rather spend it on lenses.

It is difficult to recommend a single solution, so I have attached two .xls files to help you decide. "Peter-vT" lists many lenses with current prices and quality scores from two of the www's best review sites. It also has other worksheets with specific selections and total purchase costs. You can copy the 'all' sheet and delete rows that you don't want to get a new selection with total cost. All of the options I have put here include the pricing for a 350D, but some have enough 'room' to substitute the 20D. The second .xls file is called "_ref-reviews" which explains the "pz" and "fm" average scores contained in "peter-vT", and contains a much wider selection of lenses.

All but two of the lenses in Peter-vT are worth considering; most of them are the "best in class", but the quality of the class varies quite a lot (the L series are the BEST, but the most \$\$\$). This is a classical cost-performance trade-off study and you are in the driver seat. Some of the lenses in the 'all' sheet are too expensive for your budget, but they are included to provide a view of the "top-end" scores. Two of the lenses in the list, [3] and [4], have poor optical performance - coincidentally, they are the "kit" lenses that are often offered with the 350D and 20D. When I read reviews, I assume that the really expensive lenses are usually reviewed by people with really high expectations (this has been substantiated by my experience with buying/selling and using approx 80 lenses).

You should be able to find a 'local' store (maybe in Amsterdam, maybe in London or New York) where you can get some of this gear in your hands. My primary criterion is optical quality, but "fit" and "handling" are of nearly equal importance - take some gear for a test drive.

The 1.6x "Cropping Factor" (CF) is a critical concept for a person who is moving to a 350D or 20D from a 35mm film camera. The Canon EOS 10D, 20D, 300D and 350D all have "APS-C" size CMOS sensors with a 1.6x CF. Nikon and Pentax dSLR cameras have 1.5x CF sensors. The difference between a 35mm "full frame" (FF) SLR and 1.6x CF dSLR is explained graphically in the attached files "fZones.doc" and "macro and crop factors.doc" (see folder Angle of View) . What you need to remember is that the "field of view" of a lens with focal length "f" on a 20D or 350D is the same as one of focal length "1.6 x f" on a 35mm film camera. For example, the Canon EF 50/1.8 which is included in all of the Peter-vT spreadsheets will be a most excellent (and inexpensive) very-fast portrait lens on a 350D, with a field of view equivalent to 80mm on a 35mm

“full frame” camera. In other words, a 50mm lens on a 350D will show the same image as an 80mm lens on your Minolta 35mm film camera. Another example is the EF 17-40//4L zoom: it is an “ultra-wide to wide/normal zoom” on a 35mm film camera, but it is a 27-64/4L “wide to normal/short-telephoto” lens on a 350/20D.

I have ignored macro photography in Peter-vT, but the 50/1.8 (and 17-40 and 70/200) will get you a lot closer to the subject than other 35mm lenses you have used before. Also, you can combine them with "extension tubes" to provide true macro at a very low cost; I suggest that you could try manual M42 tubes with M42-EF adapters on the 50/1.8 & 70-200/4L.

Have a look at the info I have sent (especially the links) and get back to me with any questions & comments. Also, I'll probably post this info on a new “for what its worth” section on my web site - any suggestions would be welcome.

Good luck (and welcome to the dark side)

Jim

P.S. my new LF system is a Shen Hao 4x5 wooden field camera with Fujinon 90/8 and 150/5.6 lenses (see www.badgergraphic.com/store/cart.php?m=product_detail&p=120)

P.P.S.

here are some more notes which I made while thinking about your ‘problem’, they may be disorganized, but at least they’re here...

read this <http://www.photozone.de/8Reviews/canonFAQ.htm>

compare 20D with 350D

<http://www.photozone.de/active/feature/dslrs.jsp>

http://www.steves-digicams.com/2005_reviews/rebelxt_pg7.html

read the photo.net > EOS Forum at: http://www.photo.net/bboard/forum?topic_id=1545

...many people ask “which lens” and “which camera”, you should also ask these questions on photo.net > EOS, but you should do some research first and be specific; some answers are from compassionate experts while other answers are from flaming assholes who have no idea what they are talking about (most answers are from somewhere in between) - you can’t always tell the difference if you have no knowledge of your own (sort of like buying a frigate...)

comments

- you will take a lot more pictures (they’re free, but you already know this)
- you need a (better) computer & redundant backup, there are no strips of film to go back to; will your Grandchildren be able to use a 25 year old Zip disk ?!... (think archival)

The resolution of a 20D or 350D far exceeds the resolution of the Canon EF 18-55 and 70-300 lenses - I'm confident that the sharpness, colour and contrast of these lenses will not be satisfactory for you. The resolution of a 20D or 350D is probably not as good as the Canon 17-40/4L and 70-200/4L lenses, I'm confident that you will be fully satisfied with them.

For shooting on open water: the Tokina AT-X 24-200 is an excellent compromise which I use on a "full frame" Canon EOS Elan 7 (EOS 30) 35mm film camera. I do this because (1) there is no way that I'm putting my 20D with L series lens in a "waterproof bag" on my sea kayak, (2) it is a "one lens solution" (i.e. you don't have to change lenses to get wide, normal or medium/long telephoto), and (3) on the ocean, a "good quality" lens like the Tokina 24-200 AT-X probably has better resolution than the atmosphere, where image sharpness is usually limited by air quality (i.e. evaporation/humidity/entrained water/salt). On the other hand, the Canon EF 28-135 IS (f.equiv.h = 45-215mm) has Image Stabilization which provides sharper pics in low light conditions, and gets to the 200+mm (equivalent) range. OTOH, you can change lenses more easily on a yacht, just don't drop anything into the salt water; even if you can reach it, don't bother, it's too late. OTOOH, the 70-200/4 L USM has significantly better optical quality than the other (affordable) options - with L series lenses, the limit is you, not the equipment.

zoom distortion

- the Sigma AF 18-50/2.8 EX DC (and others) may be a good choice for a cost-effective wide-normal zoom (29-80mm), but check its distortion at a local camera store - stand in front of a door and line up the door frame with the edge of the viewfinder image (for both landscape and portrait modes), you will probably see significant "barrel" distortion at 18mm and "pincushion" distortion at 50mm (the 'faster' Canon 50/1.8 will have almost no distortion). This will not be a problem for seascapes, landscapes, people, etc, but can be unacceptable for photos with obvious straight lines. BTW the Canon EF 17-40/4L has very small distortion (i.e. it's one of the BEST).

- I have decided that I will not buy any EF-S lenses, as I hope to get a "full frame" dSLR soon (e.g. like the EOS 5D but cheaper next year) and the EF-S lenses won't work there (the lens "image circle" is smaller than the FF sensor), but it is a reasonable choice for photographers who are less anal than I. Also, I haven't identified any ultra-wide-to-wide lenses for your 350/20D; the Canon EF 10-22 might be a winner here (but you don't need one yet and it's \$\$\$). see attached file "future of dSLR.txt", published on photo.net > EOS in June this year (it stirred up a lot of controversy, but much less than my 'reminder' after the 5D was announced in September) [it's my horn and I'll blow it whenever necessary]..

buy one 1GB CF card (I prefer SanDisk Ultra II) and one extra battery

save RAW + coarse small jpg files, use the jpg for email, www and thumbnails, use RAW for processing and/or printing at A4 & larger sizes

if you buy the camera with the 18-55 kit lens, don't use it - you may convince yourself that it will be good enough. This would be a mistake. Sell it or give it away, now! You might want to use it to take a picture of a bullet aimed at the lens, but that would be bad for the camera and possibly for the photographer if you didn't use a tripod and remote shutter release...

(sooner or) later, buy a used EF 24/2.8

1. cameras 20D vs. 350D both have

- MLU
- dof

2. Lenses

IS vs noIS

canon vs 3rd party

3. importing used camera gear to EU (a) dSLR, (b) photo optics (lens)

Here's a list of my Canon gear

Prime Lenses

- Canon EF 24/2.8
- Canon EF 50/1.4
- Canon EF 100/2.8 USM Macro [1:1]
- Canon EF 300/4 L IS USM

Zoom Lenses

- Canon EF 17-40/4 L USM
- Tokina AT-X 24-200/3.5-5.6
- Canon EF 28-80/2.8-4 L USM
- Canon EF 80-200/2.8 L

Teleconverter

- Canon EF Extender EF 1.4x
- Canon EF Extender EF 2x II

dSLR

- 20D with grip BG-E2

SLR

- Elan 7 (aka EOS 30) with grip BP-300
- Elan (aka EOS 100)

I also have some other lenses which I can use in manual focus and manual aperture modes on EOS cameras, but I don't use them often and I'm going to sell most of them. I will keep the specialized manual lenses (e.g. 100mm bellows lens for macro) and a few nice small ones for my last Pentax film body, which I use for IR film and as a really small and light system for travel and walking around.

I plan to sell my Canon EF 80-200/2.8L (many think it's the sharpest 80-200 ever made) and my SMC Pentax 500/4.5 (which is my wicked Big Glass lens) to buy a Canon EF 70-200/2.8 L IS USM. Some day I hope to get a Canon EF 600/4 L IS USM. In between, I'll probably pick up a few negative comments from Becky...

Some Links for your own research

Canon EF lenses

<http://www.photozone.de/8Reviews/canonFAQ.htm>
<http://www.tanchung.com/canon/canonlensesmain.htm>

Canon EOS dSLR

<http://www.canon.com/camera-museum/camera/index.html>
<http://www.photozone.de/active/feature/dslrs.jsp>

Canon EOS flash

<http://photonotes.org/articles/eos-flash/>
<http://www.photozone.de/2Equipment/canonflash.htm>

Canon EOS discussions & archive

<http://www.photo.net/> > Forums > Canon EOS

reviews, and user surveys

<http://www.photozone.de/active/survey/querylens.jsp>
<http://www.fredmiranda.com/reviews/>
<http://www.photo.net/equipment/canon/>

Current prices in North America

<http://www.jcolwell.ca> > CELOSdb

just in case you decide to buy used lenses, I've attached "used lens check list.doc"

ciao