



Viewpoint Mike Smith

Can you get pro results for a fraction of the price of a brand-new camera? Mike Smith sets himself the £150 challenge

The Canon EOS-1D X Mark II is currently £5,199, the Nikon D810 £2,399 and the Sony Alpha 6500 £1,499. Heck, the Sony RX100 V is £999. I always used to think the £1,000+ bracket was for the full-frame pro and semi-pro lines, but that price point was passed some time ago, so a recent second-hand purchase of a camera body set me thinking.

The Nikon D700 I bought in 2012 is still the same camera with the same capabilities. It's able to capture great photos and I still love shooting with it. In fact, in a recent back issue of AP, it was one of the highlights. So what cameras out there might be capable of some great output, but with a ceiling of £150 (body only)? I've lined up three to look at, starting with the one that set me on my quest.

I'm a big fan of the Fujifilm Instax Share SP printer but wanted to print directly to it – as some Fujifilm cameras can do. Having been intrigued for a while about the X-system, I decided to investigate a little further. For me the X-Pro and X-T1 were out of my price range, which left me looking at the X-E and X-M. The X-E1 is a beautiful camera and while it hovers in the £150-200 range, crucially it doesn't offer Wi-Fi. This feature was added to the X-E2, which is more expensive. However, the X-M1 turned out to be the first X-series to include Wi-Fi. There is no

electronic viewfinder, just the articulating rear screen and a much simpler set of buttons. Importantly, it still uses the 16-million-pixel X-Trans sensor – that's right, it's the same sensor and mount as the X-Pro, wrapped up in a tiny body. Retailing second-hand at £130-150, I think this makes it one of the best current bargains. By using a manual converter, I can use my Nikon lenses, which allow metering when I'm in aperture priority and the focus peaking is excellent. It has been truly joyful shooting with the X-M1 in combination with an old Nikon series E 50mm lens.

Second on my list is a 2006 Nikon D80 (which I've now had converted to infrared) that sat below the semi-pro D200 with a functional 10-million-pixel sensor, 2.5in LCD screen, SD card support, prosumer control layout and in-body autofocus motor (allowing the use of lenses without motors). Image quality is good and it's a steal at around £100. The D90 is worth the upgrade though (at under £200) and is essentially a stripped down D300, adding 12 million pixels and video recording. Both cameras are a great way to get into the Nikon system at a low price.

And finally? I'm mostly wedded to Nikon, so to feed my gear monkey I felt the need to marry my current lens collection to film. A new F6 will set you back £1,499, but the other options? Well, the F100 was the stripped down version of the F5. What is amazing about using this is that the firmware in the camera is just an old version of my D700. I felt right at home and could put all my lenses on and yet it shot film. It's wonderfully simple to use, with autofocus and metering – it just gets everything right. And at £100 it offers great flexibility in going back to film. Have you got a £150 bargain? If so, let us know.



The X-M1 – the first X-series to have Wi-Fi

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