

# A look at Digital SLR cameras suitable for papers

## computer notes from the road

by WILMA MELOT

It has been awhile since we discussed the price of single-lens reflex (SLR) cameras – and the best type of SLR for your newspaper work.

If you already have an SLR you love, you may think this column doesn't pertain to you. However, it's worth looking over in case your camera gets dropped, damaged or stolen and has to be replaced.

If you're shooting those Friday night football games, you're going to need a camera with an external flash. And that means you should plan on spending somewhere in the neighborhood of \$500 to \$1,000.

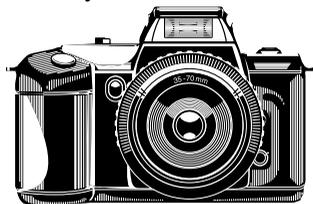
There are several choices in this price range. My personal preference is the Canon Rebel XS but you can also look at the Olympus E-520, Nikon D60, Sony A350 or Sony A200.

There's really not a lot of difference in any of these mid-range SLRs. Canon offers the best price but best specs go to Sony.

If you're replacing a camera, take a look at the lens you already own and see if it will work with the new camera you're considering.

Also look at the type of memory cards your camera currently uses as well as external flash units. These items can quickly add to the price of a new camera.

Once you have an idea of what you want to buy, go to a store and hold that camera in your hand. How does it feel? Is it easy to depress the shutter button? Is the menu easy to use?



Don't forget to look at online reviews. Some good places to look are:

[www.steves-digicams.com/hardware\\_reviews.html](http://www.steves-digicams.com/hardware_reviews.html)

[www.dpreview.com/reviews](http://www.dpreview.com/reviews)

[www.imaging-resource.com](http://www.imaging-resource.com)

[www.digitalcamerareview.com](http://www.digitalcamerareview.com)

Here you can compare cameras side by side and see all the specs. Manufacturer

Web sites often provide the best look at the camera and what it should come with out of the box.

If you're buying online, know what you're getting. I recommend that you go to a local dealer to buy a camera. The service you get after the sale is worth a few extra dollars. And dealers can generally offer the same deals as online stores.

A camera that's not on this list but one you may want to read about is the Panasonic LUMIX DMC-G1. This camera is trying to change the way SLR cameras work by using an electronic viewfinder instead of the standard Mirror system. Reviewers say this camera doesn't do well in low light, which means it isn't a good choice for night events. However, this type of camera is bound to improve and perhaps one day all SLR cameras will have an electronic viewfinder.

If the SLRs are out of your price range, some good point-and-shoot cameras to consider are the Canon A590 IS, Canon Cyber-Shot W120, Panasonic LZ8 and the Samsung L210. Although none of them are near the quality of the SLRs, they are some of the best cameras in the lower price range.

# The right RAID backup can help keep your data safe

More and more of you are asking about network hard drives with RAID backup. Although I wasn't a fan when they first came out, their compatibility and usefulness for small offices is improving.

Mirrored drives are called (RAID 1). If you wonder what RAID stands for it is an acronym for Redundant Array of Independent Disks. It simply means your files go to more than one drive as you save them instantaneously and automatically. RAID has several ways it can work but if you want good backup mirroring is the way to go.

With (RAID 1) you lose one-half the drive space. For example, if you buy two 500 GB drives, you get only one 500 GB as storage. The other 500 GB is your insurance policy. If one drive fails, the other one still has all your data on it. This is a good plan for small papers that want the archive of their ads to be live and the backup always current.

If you want real speed, look at setting

up a big drive as a (Raid 0) or striped mode. This saves the data over several drives at once and is very fast. However, if one drive goes down you run the risk of losing some of your data. It is not a backup system but for working on large files and networking, it is fast.

If you want both speed and redundancy you need to have three or more drives and use (RAID 5). You can lose one drive and still have all your data. By striping data across all drives it leaves three-fourths of the space for your data storage. In practice I have seen data loss with this system. Mirror (RAID 1) is best if you want a real backup.

If you want a reliable backup, you can use a network drive with two internal drives.

Some places have tried this as a server substitute. At first, they were hard to set up, would not work cross platform and just flat did not work well with Macs. Times change and now many support

Macintosh computers – but you need to make sure the brand you're looking at is Mac compatible.

Some brands worth looking at are LaCie 2big Network (2-disk Raid); Netgear's Readynas Duo (1x 500gb) RND2150; Western Digital's My Book Mirror Edition, which lets you mirror the two internal drives; and Iomega's ix2 Network Storage, which lets you mirror as well.

For a small office of less than 10 computers this can be a real solution. With more than 10 computers you need a server. Servers handle the network traffic better but you can have RAID drives in a server as well.

If you buy one of these high-tech drives, don't forget to plug it into a good battery backup surge suppressor.

All that fancy redundancy won't help one bit if it takes a hit during a spring thunderstorm.

# plugged IN

## Kill the virus software

Let's take a look at this scenario: You let last year's anti-virus software subscription expire and your machine is running slower and slower. You have a virus and you need a fix.

The virus may have disabled your current software so it's no help. What do you do?

If you're going to try to fix the problem yourself, the next step is to look for some software at the store or order a CD online from another computer in the office.

I think it's better to buy the boxed version each year rather than download anti-virus software over the Internet. If you have the boxed version, you may be able to install it on more than one computer.

The best Anti-Virus and Internet protection is, of course, the highest priced. Norton 360 and McAfee are two of the best at taking care of things for you.

More advanced users may be able to get away with cheaper software such as Panda, Shield Deluxe or Fix-It Utilities 9. However, you're going to have to set up and defend your own system.

AVG, now on version 8, includes a fire wall, which is useful if you understand the incoming request.

Don't just buy the cheapest software on the shelf. Look at what it does. Does it have a fire wall? Does it offer anti-virus and anti-spyware? Can you fix your computer with the disk if there is a problem? Do the instructions seem easy to read?

## Good Reading

If you're looking for a good book on InDesign, check out these:

*Adobe Classroom in the Books*. This step-by-step book leads you through the whole program. Many schools use Adobe's books as textbooks.

*Real World Adobe InDesign CS4* by Olav Martin Kvern and David Blatner is another good one.

Don't forget to look for books at your local library. Even books on older versions of the program are helpful.