



Smart Photography

21ST
ANNIVERSARY

**Smart
Photography
Awards
2026
The Winners**



Special Feature

- Vaishnavi Karelia
- Mohit Ghatak

Printing & Beyond

**The Evolution of
Photographic Print**

Postcards

Busan

Learning

Crop or Use a TC?

Also Reviewed

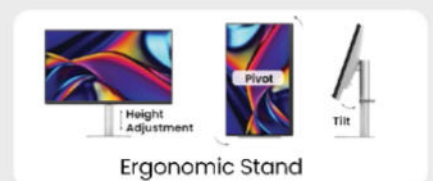
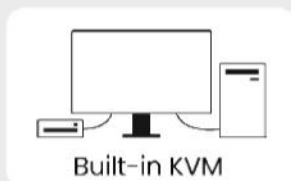
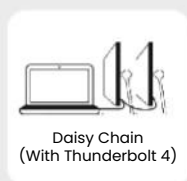
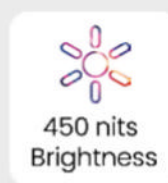
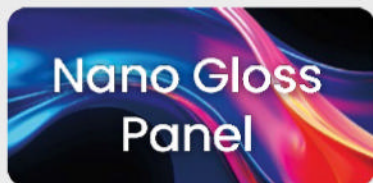
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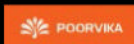


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WELCOME

Smart Photography

INDIA'S NUMBER 1 IMAGING MAGAZINE!

Just when everything started looking better, political issues threaten to derail the imaging industry. Tariffs and war are enemies of any business and the imaging business is no exception. Last year the industry grew by over 7% and the driving force was not high end full frame cameras but value driven entry level mirrorless cameras and compact cameras. Expect the launch of some new models to be delayed.

With this issue, Smart Photography completes 21 years of publication. In the currently fickle world of media, this is indeed an achievement. We profusely thank all our stakeholders and well wishers and look forward to the future.



This issue also features the much awaited Smart Photography Awards. Our congratulations go out to Nikon for winning the CAMERA OF THE YEAR award with their highly competent all rounder, the Z 5 II.

H. S. Billimoria

HERE'S WHAT MAKES US #1

WE ARE GLUED TO THE GLOBAL IMAGING INDUSTRY

Our team is updated with all the benchmarks and road blocks that the field of photography and imaging across the globe experiences. This helps us record the changes in the global perspective, thus making us the first to predict which products will be a rage in the Indian markets.

WE'RE IMPARTIAL

Loyalty towards our readers is a given, and their best interests are always on our mind. Every verdict is honest and not influenced by advertisers or personal favourites. So when we say a product is a 'BEST BUY', then, it is just that!

OUR TESTS ARE CONDUCTED BY EXPERTS

All equipment go through a series of tests at the hands of our experts. Our reviewers are experts in the field of photography across the country and have many years of experience. That gives us the foresight to distinguish between a passing trend and a big change in the field of photography and imaging. And finally, our reviews are not extended to just fill up the pages!

WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU

There is no debate on why we are here. Our sole goal is to provide you options and better your judgement in product purchase while, sharing tips and tricks to improve your images. Our biggest joy is in building a bridge between you and your perfect picture!

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Editor - Hoshang S Billimoria

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Photographer : Srini Swaminathan



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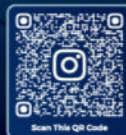


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SNIPPETS

- Samyang is developing a 200mm F/1.8 lens. This is in addition to the already announced 60–180mm F/2.8 full frame telephoto zoom lens. A 300 mm F 4 OIS lens is also likely.
- To mark the 30th Anniversary of the launch of Canon's popular PowerShot series of compact digital cameras, the company has announced a special limited edition of the PowerShot G 7 X MK III. The camera will bear the 30th Anniversary logo.
- Nikon has issued an advisory notice regarding a manufacturing issue with three of their full frame cameras – the Nikon ZR, Nikon Z6III and the Nikon Z5II. This defect has been observed in only a few batches of the camera models mentioned. Nikon will repair for free any model that is affected.
- In 2025, the Top Three camera companies in the compact camera section according to BCN were :
1) Kodak : 24%
2) Fujifilm : 13.9%
3) Tokina : 13.3%
- In the case of mirrorless cameras, the Top Three in Japan for 2025 were:
1) Sony : 29.9%
2) Canon : 27.4%
3) Nikon : 15.1%
- DSLRs represent a fast declining market. Nevertheless, the Top Three in Japan for 2025 were:
1) Canon : 44.3%
2) Nikon : 38%
3) Pentax : 17.7%
- Viltrox has announced a new retro compact folding flash, the Z 2 for Nikon cameras. The flash features a foldable design for higher flash position and portability. The Z 2 promises up to 700 flashes per charge.
- The Nikon ZR gets a firmware upgrade version 1.11. The firmware upgrade does not add any new features. Instead, it makes some improvements and provides some nice fixes.

CP Plus attracts record crowds

CP Plus 2026 was held in February and attracted a record 23000 visitors in the first two days. The event also saw 45 exhibitors exhibiting for the first time.



Introduced at CP Plus were the following new products:

- Brightin Star launched the 35mm F/1.7 for the Leica M mount.
- Sigma announced the development of the 85mm F/1.2 Art, the 15mm F/1.4 DC Contemporary for APS – C cameras and the 35mm F/1.4 DG II Art.
- Samyang with partner Schneider
- Kreuznach announced the new AF 60–180mm F/2.8 telephoto zoom for Sony FE and Panasonic L mount.
- 7 Artisans announced a full frame 40mm F/2.5.
- Cosina announced two Voigtlander lenses for Leica; a APO Skopar 75mm F/2.8 and a APO Lanthar 90mm F/4 Close Focus.
- Megadap unveiled the world's first Leica M to Canon RF autofocus adapter.
- Valoi introduced a new film scanner, the Easy 35 V2.
- New camera launches were absent. The show signalled a shift towards thoughtful design and creative differentiation rather than mere technical specs.



Panasonic to launch TZ 300

Spurred by the uplift in compact camera sales, Panasonic has announced the TZ 300, a 20 MP camera with a 1-inch Type sensor. A Leica DC Vario Elmarit 24–360mm zoom and an ultra close 30mm minimum focusing distance are some of the features. 4K video recording is also enabled.

SNIPPETS

- New Chinese brand Vistilen is planning to launch autofocus lenses for the Canon RF mount.
- A new high end Sony camera is about to be launched in May. A Sony a 7 R VI ? New lenses are also expected.
- Nikon has announced an extended free 5 year warranty on all Nikon cameras and lenses sold in Europe with immediate effect.
- Nikon has reduced prices internationally for its Coolpix P 1100 camera.

Rising storage costs could affect photography

Memory chip prices are going up and fast. The reason is that companies using AI models need tons of memory and storage. Only three companies currently make chips viz DRAM and NAND chips, and they are S K Hynix, Samsung

and Micron. Currently, they are hard pressed to meet demand leading to spiralling prices. Yes and SD cards have been affected as well since they use the same kind of NAND chips as data centres. So have CF Express cards.

Sony World Photography Awards 2026: National and Regional Winners Announced

The Sony World Photography Awards today announced the 2026 National and Regional Award winners, recognizing remarkable photographic talent from across the globe selected from the Awards' competitions.

The National & Regional Awards programme is an initiative by the brand

to support the local photographer communities around the world. Across this year's competitions, over 430,000 images from over 200 countries and territories were submitted. The Award winners were chosen from the Professional, Open and Student competitions this year highlighting global talent across a span of career stages.



ART
35mm F1.4 DG II

SIGMA

Postcards from **Busan**



Srini Swaminathan

Srini Swaminathan's curiosity has taken him to 50 countries. He began his career on oilfield rigs and is now a marathoner and long-distance cyclist who has cycled from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and Bhuj to Assam. An author and translator, he lives in Chennai and hopes to travel the world carrying his Indie dog, Oreo, in a backpack. He is @srini091 on Instagram and X.

Busan is a coastal city in the southeast of South Korea, known for its beaches, busy port and views of the sea framed by hills. It feels very different from Seoul, with the ocean never far away. People come here to walk along the shoreline, explore traditional markets and take in wide views from bridges, temples and coastal paths. The rhythm of Busan is shaped by the sea, from its fishing harbours to its lively waterfront districts.

The boardwalk curves along the coast at Haeundae Blueline Park's Dalmaji Tunnel walkway in Busan, with waves on one side and the skyline rising ahead. In the distance, the towers of Haeundae stand tall against the soft colours of the evening sky





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The Haeundae BlueLine Park coastal train rolls slowly along the tracks near Dalmaji Hill in Busan, with the sea just beyond the walkway. There is a nice walkway right next to the tracks where you can enjoy a pleasant and scenic coastal walk.



Colourful dragon-like sculptures walk in a line outside the Ramada Hotel near Busan Station, dressed in human clothing like a group on the move. This playful public art installation has become a popular photo spot welcoming travellers arriving in Busan.



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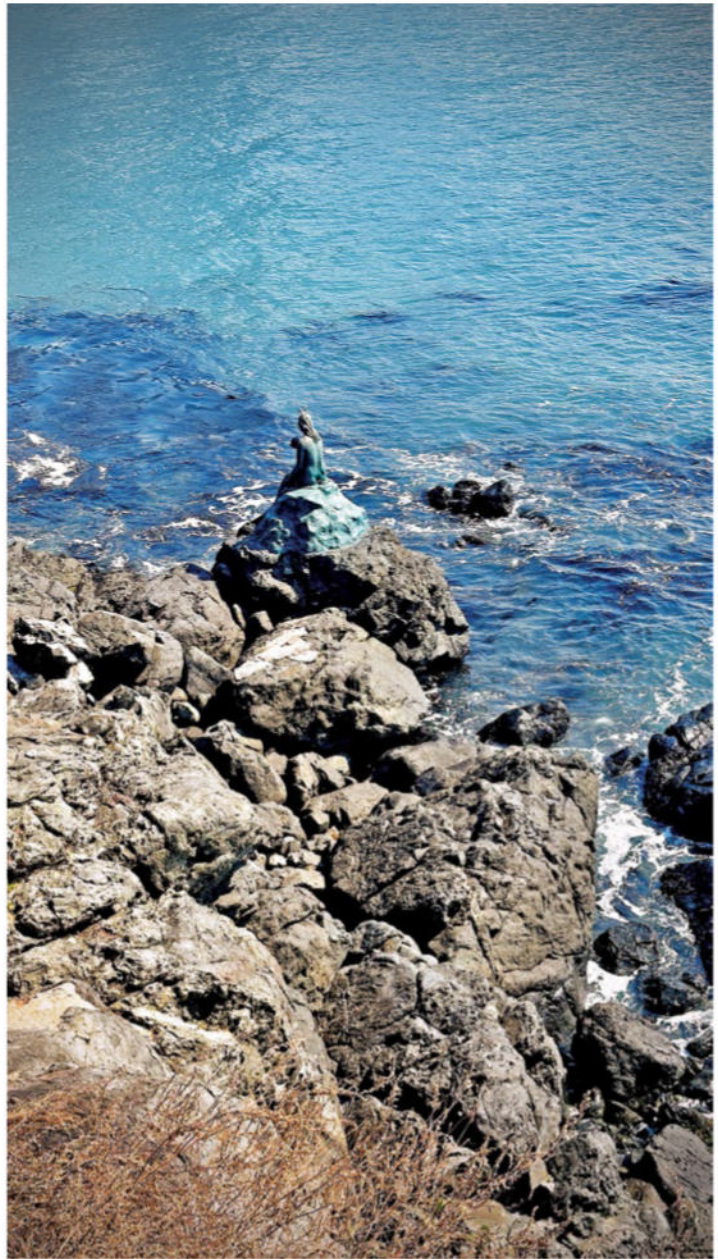
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A sleek KTX high-speed train waits at the platform before its journey to Busan, linking it with Seoul in just a few hours. South Korea's high-speed rail network, among the fastest and most efficient in the world, has made long-distance travel across the country quick and comfortable.



At the edge of the sea in Busan, the Mermaid of Princess Hwangok watches quietly from the rocks of Dongbaek Park. The 8-foot, 4-ton mermaid sits on a natural rock facing the sea, holding a marble sphere in her hand. This is a quiet symbol tied to local legend and the maritime history of Busan.

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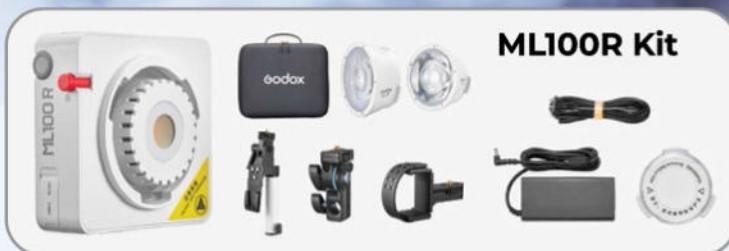


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PHOTO FEATURE



These traditional Korean dolls are dressed in miniature versions of the royal hanbok, reflecting the elegance and symbolism of the Joseon Dynasty.



A very popular tourist attraction in Busan. Gliding quietly above the city, the Sky Capsule offers one of the most unusual rides along the coast of Busan. Running along the scenic tracks of Haeundae Blueline Park, these small retro-style cabins move slowly above the shoreline, giving uninterrupted views of the sea, cliffs, and beaches below.

From the rocky edge of Dongbaek Park, the skyline of Haeundae Beach rises dramatically from the sea. Glass skyscrapers, sandy shoreline, and the deep blue of the East Sea come together to show why Busan is often called Korea's most scenic coastal city.



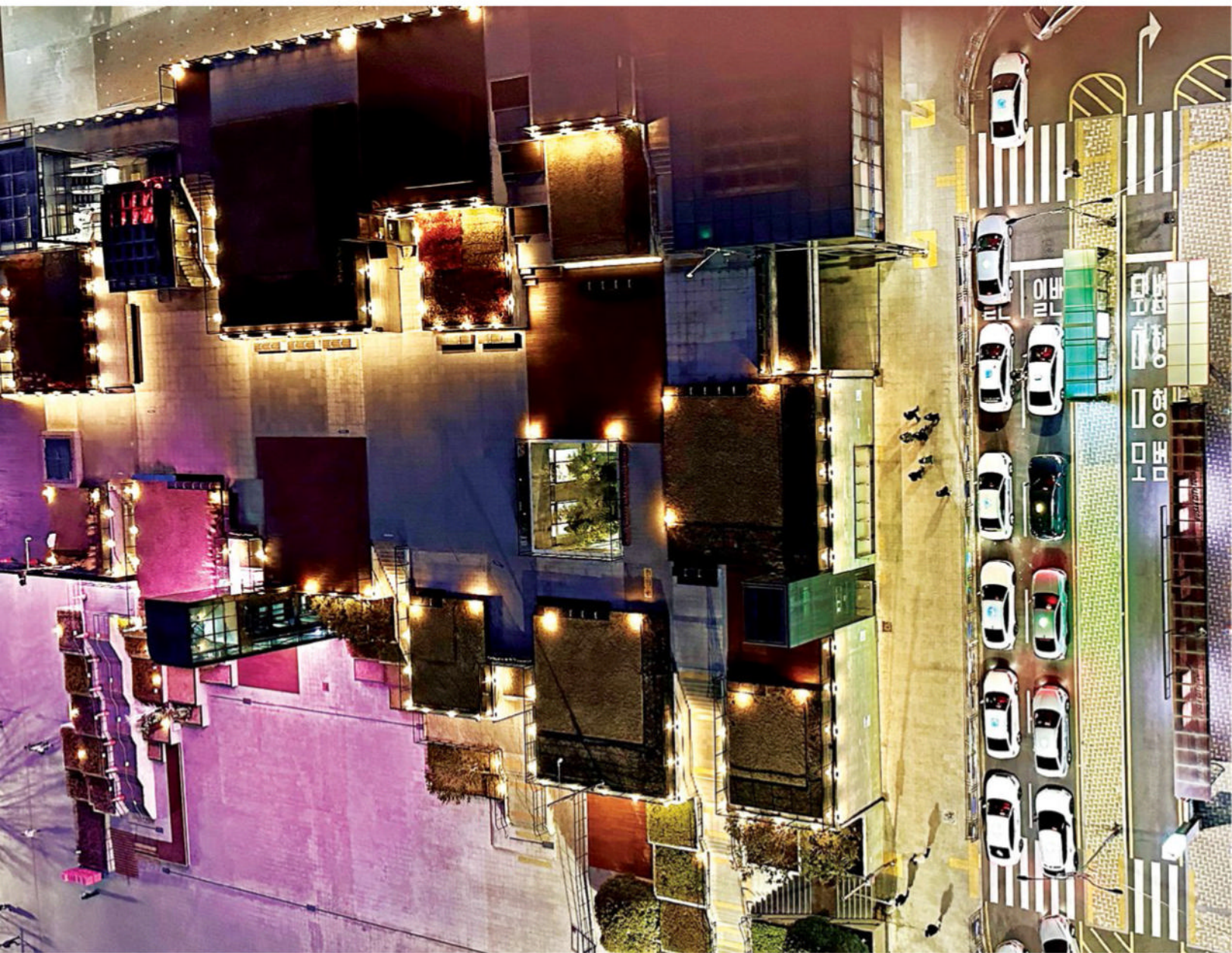


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Seen from above, the streets outside Busan Station move with quiet precision. Cars line up neatly, lanes are clearly marked, and every vehicle follows its turn with almost choreographed discipline. The other half shows the square outside Busan station for passengers and others to spend leisurely time.



Perched quietly above the waves, on a small cliff, this seaside pavilion at Dongbaek Park reflects the balance of nature and tradition that defines much of Busan.



Inside the same pavilion, we can see an ornately carved and painted ceiling. It is a fantastic experience to sit here and spend time looking at the sea.



The Cheongsapo Daritdol Skywalk in Haeundae, Busan, stretches out over the sea with glass panels revealing the waves below. Walking here feels like floating above the water, with wide coastal views and the sound of the ocean beneath your feet.



Skyscrapers rising over the coastline showcase a modern Busan city. Yet beneath this skyline lies a port city shaped by centuries of trade, war, and resilience. This is a city where history and heritage quietly coexist with one of Asia's most futuristic skylines.



Shreenath Veer Mhaskoba Festival



Vaishnavi Karelia is a Mumbai-based photographer documenting cultural life and public gatherings across Maharashtra. Her work focusses on festivals where devotion, colour, and human expression intersect. She is particularly interested in how communities come together through ritual, music, and shared spaces. She prefers an immersive approach, photographing from within the crowd to capture spontaneous expressions and quiet human moments within large celebrations.



Vaishnavi Karelia

Every year in rural Maharashtra, thousands of devotees gather to celebrate Shreenath Veer Mhaskoba, a revered folk deity worshipped by farming and pastoral communities. The festival is intense and immersive, where drums, processions, and sacred rituals transform the temple courtyard into a sea of movement and colour. The unmistakable red of 'gula' (vermilion powder) slowly settles on faces, clothes, instruments, and the ground beneath. I photographed this

series from within the crowd, moving through the rhythm of drummers and devotees. What stayed with me were the quiet moments hidden inside the chaos — an elderly man staring into the lens, his face covered in vermilion, a child watching the rituals unfold, and a devotee gently placing colour on someone's forehead. Over time the red 'gula' stopped feeling like powder and began to feel like the pulse of the gathering — a visual language of faith, community, and tradition. **[SP]**













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THE EISA PHOTOGRAPHY MAESTRO CONTEST 2026

This year's theme: Traveling

Scope and Contest Rules:

The competition has two categories.

Single: You may submit one picture based on the theme of 'Traveling'.

Series: You may submit a total of 5-8 pictures as part of a portfolio based on the theme of 'Traveling'.

Photographers may compete in one category only. All entries must be in digital format (camera or scanned film originals) and must not have won a prize in any other competition. AI-generated images and pictures older than 2023 are excluded.

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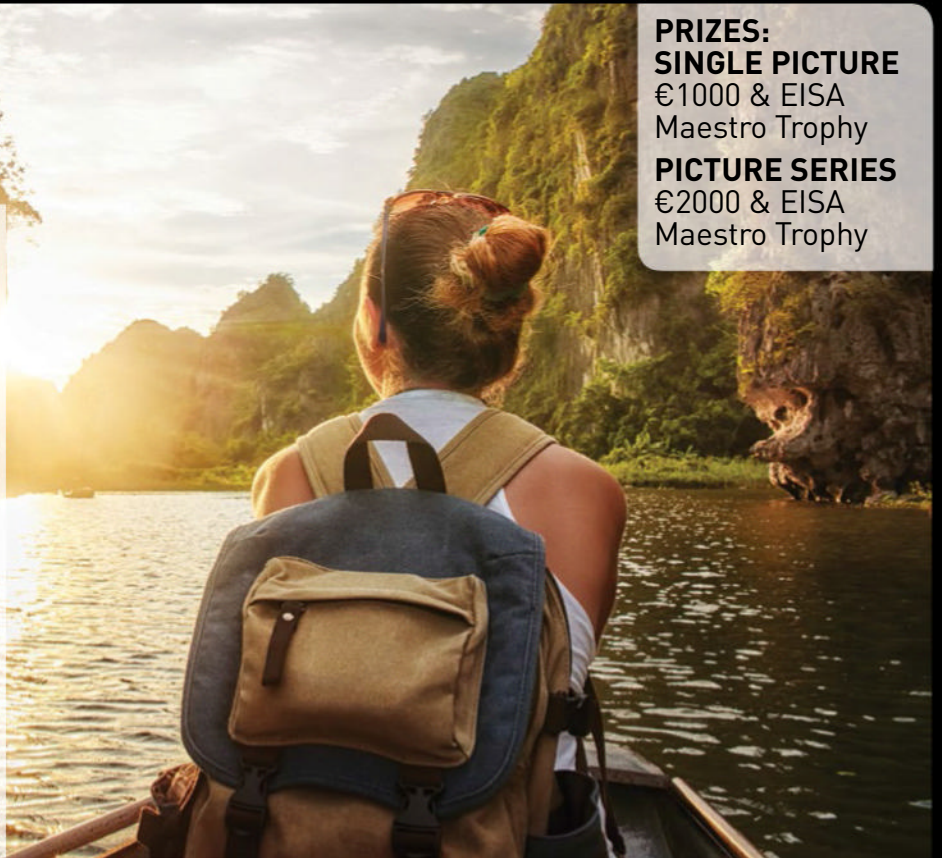
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NATIONAL DEADLINE: MAY 15TH 2026

All entries must be received by this date. The winners (and runners-up) in each category will be chosen by the editorial staff of Smart Photography and the National results will be published in the July/August issue.

National Maestro winners will also be published on Facebook at the end of June for the EISA Public's Choice competition. Prize for Single and Series winners: €500

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INTERNATIONAL JUDGING: JUNE 2026

The winning entries from each of the 15 participating EISA countries will then be judged together at the Association's General Meeting in June 2026. The final results of the International Maestro contest will be celebrated at the EISA Awards Gala in September 2026 and revealed, online, alongside the EISA product Awards on August 15th 2026.

The winning photographs will be published in the Sept/Oct issues of all 15 EISA photo magazines/websites.



For further details, terms and conditions visit www.eisa.eu/maestro and <https://smartphotography.in/contest-eisa-maestro2026/>

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Victoria Memorial

Before the City Woke up



Mohit Ghatak

Mohit Ghatak from Singapore is a businessman as well as an enthusiastic photographer. His love for photography extends to several genres, be it travel, nature, enjoying a lazy afternoon in thickly wooded forests, et al.

Text and photos by Mohit Ghatak

I cajoled a boatman to take me into the middle of the Ganges, just as the morning was turning blue. The river was still, the air cold, and the Howrah Bridge revealed itself slowly—steel emerging from mist, as if the city was deciding whether to wake up yet. That moment set the tone for everything that followed. I spent three early December mornings walking Kolkata. No plan, no rush. Just returning to streets that shaped my way of seeing long before I ever held a camera. The quiet hours here have always mattered to me—when the city is unguarded and deeply itself.

Wrestlers practicing in the akhara, a shoe polish man bent over worn shoes, books passed hand to hand, flowers carried through the dark—these are not scenes arranged for a photograph. They are continuities. Lives repeating familiar gestures, completely indifferent to time, change, or the presence of a camera. These images are not an attempt to explain Kolkata. They are fragments of an ongoing relationship—formed early, carried forward, and renewed on this return. **|SP**



Lady in Yellow



Newspaperwala



Mallicxk Bazar Flower Market



Taxi



Flowerwala



Yellow Taxi



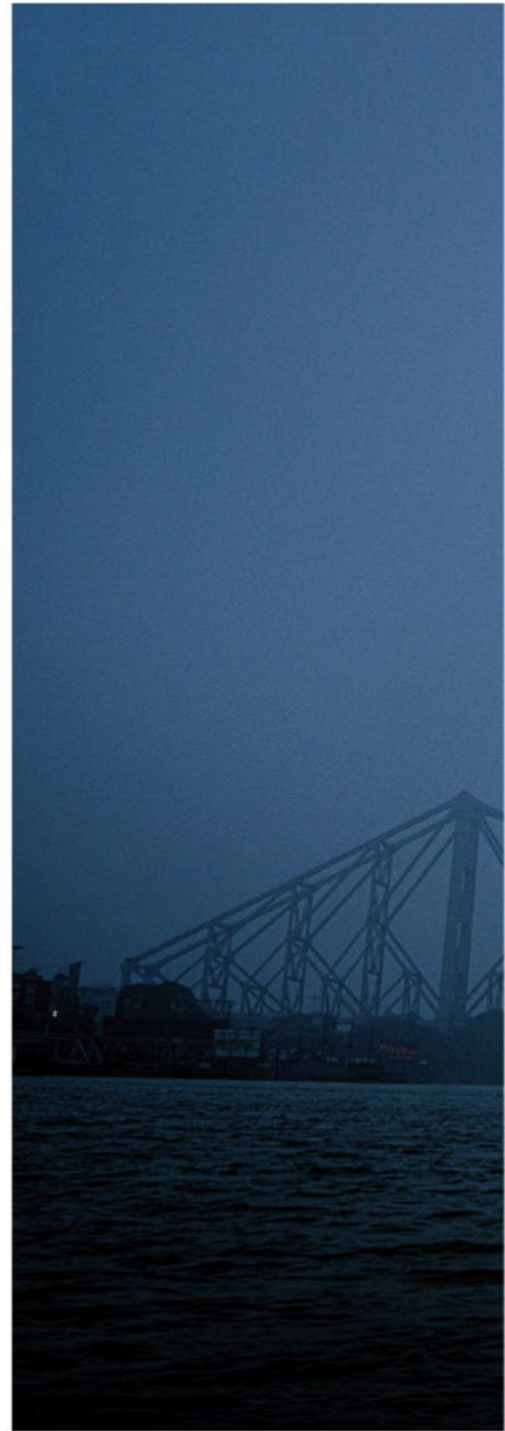
Akhara



College street



Shoe polish





Howrah Bridge



Shaving



Newspaper



Presents

INNOVATION TECHNOLOGY & IMAGING AWARDS 2026

Powered by

Smart Photography

Smart Photography

AWARDS 2026

Yet another year has passed and it is now time to highlight the best products launched in the past year. No new DSLR was launched in India during that period. Again, no new DSLR lenses saw the light of day. Medium format cameras became more affordable with the launch of the Fujifilm's GFX 100RF. An array of lenses were launched by Chinese firms like Viltrox, 7 Artisans, Laowa, Sirui and Meike. Compact cameras did well and expanded their sales considerably. Smartphones held on stimulated by newer models.

As before, the Smart Photography Awards are given to products that have gone through the SP testbench. SP's membership of EISA along with its members give that extra touch to our award winners.

The Smart Photography Awards were first announced in 2006. This is the Twentieth Edition of the Awards. Previous winners are listed below.

PAST CAMERA OF THE YEAR AWARDS

2006 :	Nikon D 200
2007 :	Canon EOS 400 D
2008 :	Nikon D 300
2009 :	Panasonic Lumix DMC G 1
2010 :	Canon EOS 5 D Mk II
2011 :	Canon EOS 60 D
2012 :	Olympus PEN E-P 3
2013 :	Nikon D 600
2014 :	Olympus OM-D E-M1
2015 :	Sony Alpha 7
2016 :	Canon EOS 5 Ds
2017 :	Canon EOS 5D Mark IV
2018 :	Sony Alpha 7 Mark III
2019 :	Sony Alpha 7 R IV
2020 :	Canon R 6
2021 :	Nikon Z 9
2022 :	Sony Alpha 7 R V
2023 :	Nikon Z 8
2024 :	Sony Alpha 9 Mk III

BEST PHOTO QUALITY MONITOR



The BenQ provides excellent 5K resolution, studio display quality, seamless Mac integration and factory calibrated colour accuracy. Pricing is also aggressive. The BenQ is our choice for monitor of the year.



AND THE WINNER IS...

**BENQ PD 2730S
5K MONITOR**

BEST CAMERA IN A BUDGET SMARTPHONE



Co-engineered with Zeiss, the Quad Curve Display vivo X200 offers great user experience.

With a 6.67-inch AMOLED high-brightness screen, three main 50MP lenses including an ultra-wide-angle lens, and worldwide-known Zeiss T-star coating, the vivo X200 provides crisp and sharp images at a budget price point.

AND THE WINNER IS...

VIVO X200



AWARDS
2026

BEST CAMERA IN A FLAGSHIP SMARTPHONE



The OPPO Find X9 Pro excels in performance with a lens design created in partnership with Hasselblad, and includes

Hasselblad's colour correction and imaging software. It includes three rear cameras – a 50MP main wide-angle, a 50MP ultra-wide and a 200MP periscope telephoto lens -- offering natural and accurate colours, impressive dynamic range and awesome overall performance. A 4K 120fps Dolby Vision Video is the icing on the cake.



AND THE WINNER IS...

**OPPO
FIND X9 PRO**

BEST STANDARD PRIME LENS



Trust Canon to come trumps with its new standard prime lens. Canon's new 45 mm f/1.2 sees the world very much like the human eye. It also provides a maximum aperture of f/1.2. The lens is compact and lightweight (346 g). Although made from engineering plastics, build quality is good. Focussing is quiet and efficient. Performance on the field was very good. The final icing on the cake is the attractive MRP of Rs 40495. Great for Canon owners!

AND THE WINNER IS...

**CANON RF 45
MM F/1.2 STM**



AWARDS
2026

BEST WIDE-ANGLE PRIME LENS



Though large in size and heavy for a 35mm lens, the Nikkor Z 35mm f/1.2 S provides stunning image quality, albeit at a higher price point. It's super-fast f/1.2 aperture makes it the ideal lens for low-light photography. Further, the lens offers near-silent, fast and accurate autofocus, heavenly bokeh, and absolutely minimal focus breathing.



AND THE WINNER IS...

**NIKKOR Z
35MM F/1.2 S**

BEST MEDIUM-TELEPHOTO PRIME LENS



Chinese lenses are making steady inroads in the Indian market with Viltrox leading the pack. The 135mm f/1.8 LAB is a premium offering from Viltrox. An all metal lens, the Viltrox is heavy (1265 g). Performance is excellent with great sharpness, nice bokeh and minimal aberrations. Pricing at Rs.99995 is aggressive and good value for money. They used to say that the Chinese are coming. No, they are already here and with a bang!



AND THE WINNER IS...

**VILTROX
AF 135 MM
F/1.8 LAB**



AWARDS
2026

BEST STANDARD ZOOM LENS



Version 1 of Nikon's 24-70 mm f/2.8 was an excellent performer. Nikon has now introduced the Version 2 of this lens and the lens is now lighter and smaller. Performance is simply superb with hyper fast autofocus and excellent sharpness. Contrast was excellent and flare well controlled. Obviously such high quality comes at a price and at Rs 229995, the Nikkor is expensive. If you can afford it, grab it.

JOINTLY WITH

Sony FE 28-70mm F 2 GM

Sony's new 28-70mm comes with a maximum aperture of f/2 and provides extremely sharp still as well as video performance. The lens produces creamy bokeh and provides excellent performance in all daily work. It is expensive at Rs 299990 but quality never came cheap.



AND THE WINNER IS...

**NIKON NIKKOR
Z 24-70 MM
F/2.8 S II**



AND THE WINNER IS...

**SONY FE
28-70MM
F 2 GM**

BEST SUPERZOOM LENS



Lens manufacturers have been fighting for market share and one way is to introduce wider range in their superzooms. Tamron launched the 25-200 mm f/ 2.8-5.6 Di III VXD G2. Soon to follow was Sigma with their 20-200 mm f/ 3.5 - 6.3 Contemporary lens. Our tests found the Sigma lighter and more compact and also smooth and quiet. The Sigma currently offers the widest focal range in this segment. It is our choice for the BEST SUPERZOOM LENS.

AND THE WINNER IS...

**SIGMA
20-200 MM F
3.5-6.3 C**



AWARDS
2026

BEST TELEPHOTO ZOOM LENS

AND THE WINNER IS...

**OM SYSTEM
M.ZUIKO
DIGITAL ED
50-200MM
F/2.8 IS PRO**



Micro Four Thirds cameras have a special appeal for wildlife and action photographers because of the increased equivalent focal length. The OM lens offers a useful equivalent focal range of 100 – 400mm at aperture of f/2.8. The lens offers excellent image quality even at f/2.8. Fast, accurate autofocussing, weather sealing and good closeup capabilities make this new launch by OM SYSTEM a winner.

JOINTLY WITH

Sony FE 400-800mm f/6.3-8 G OSS



Sony's new zoom provides an excellent zoom range, very good build quality and sharp images. Autofocus is also remarkably fast for a lens that goes up to 800 mm. Both chromatic aberrations and focus breathing were well controlled. A superb lens for wildlife and sports photographers.



AND THE WINNER IS...

**SONY FE
400-800MM
F/6.3-8 G OSS**



AWARDS
2026

BEST WIDE ANGLE ZOOM LENS



AND THE
WINNER IS...

**SAMYANG AF
14-24 MM F 2.8**



Wide-angle zooms tend to be a little expensive. However, they are an essential part of an enthusiast's kit. The new invigorated Samyang has answered the prayers of enthusiasts wanting a more reasonably priced wide-angle zoom. In association with Schneider Kreuznach, Samyang has come up with a zoom that is not only small and compact but also produces quality results. The added attraction is the price that substantially beats the competition. This is SP's first ever award to Samyang.

BEST MICRO FOUR THIRDS CAMERA



The OM SYSTEM OM-3 is a retro styled MFT mirrorless camera reminiscent of the original Olympus OM - SLR. The new OM-3 features a 20 MP stacked sensor and impeccable build quality.

The Creative Dial, Computational Photography, Live ND filter, AI subject detection and two high resolution sensor shift modes are some of the features to be found on the OM-3. High image quality and remarkable battery life are other plus factors. MFT cameras are very popular with wildlife shooters and the OM-3 strengthens OM SYSTEM's position in the market.



AND THE
WINNER IS...

**OM SYSTEM
OM-3**



AWARDS
2026

BEST PROFESSIONAL FULL FRAME CAMERA

AND THE
WINNER IS...

**CANON
EOS R6 MK III**



On SP's test bench, Canon's R6 Mk III turned out to be a stellar performer. The Mk III has better autofocus, continuous shooting up to 40 fps and great video features including 7K 60p and Open Gate RAW recording. Paired with Canon's brilliant new 45 mm f/1.2, the R6 performed impeccably. The R6 Mk III is our choice for best professional full frame camera.

BEST 35MM CINEMATIC CAMERA OF THE YEAR



The acquisition of RED by Nikon has created Nikon's most ambitious hybrid cinema camera – the ZR. A superb camera with high-end cinema features that has become an indispensable partner of several professional and enthusiastic photographers. The Nikon ZR is the stepping stone for serious cinema workflows without breaking the bank to purchase an expensive cinema camera. At an MRP of Rs.1,86,995 body only, it's a steal!



AND THE
WINNER IS...

NIKON ZR



AWARDS
2026

BEST MEDIUM FORMAT CAMERA



AND THE
WINNER IS...

**FUJIFILM
GFX 100RF**



With an imaging sensor that is approximately 1.7 times larger (in 4:3 aspect ratio) than the standard 35mm full frame sensor, the Fujifilm GFX 100RF outshines in achieving a higher dynamic range with superb image quality.

Fujifilm's well-known film simulation modes allows the user to change the 'look' of his images by simulating the look of various Fuji films. The user interface is reasonably simple. It goes without saying that for the additional image quality, one has to shell out much more than for most 35mm type mirrorless models.

BEST VALUE FOR MONEY CAMERA



In these days of geo-political and economic turmoil, consumers cannot be blamed for guarding their purse strings fiercely. In walks the Nikon Z5II with magnesium alloy build quality, weather sealing and improved ergonomics. The Z5II draws heavily on technology from the much more expensive Z 8 and Z 9. An upgraded sensor (EXPEED 7), intelligent subject recognition and faster and more accurate AF are on offer. Video capability is vastly improved and Nikon has brought 4K Raw internal recording to low cost SD cards. Performance is first class. The Z5II body carries a MRP of Rs 149995. Discounts can bring it down to around Rs 125000. No other camera currently beats it on value.



AND THE
WINNER IS...

NIKON Z5II



AWARDS
2026

AND FINALLY, THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS AWARD FOR CAMERA OF THE YEAR!

The nominees for this prestigious award are



Canon EOS R 6 III



Fujifilm GFX 100RF



Nikon Z5II



The Sony a7 Mk V is not included as Sony India were unable to supply a sample for review.



AWARDS 2026



AND THE
WINNER IS...

NIKON Z5II



All these cameras were evaluated on a number of criteria including technology, build quality, design, ergonomics, performance and value for money. Also relevant was the back-up system supporting each of the nominees. Taking all factors into consideration, the winner is the Nikon Z5II. No other camera presented the same combination of technology, performance and value that the Nikon did. Congratulations, Nikon!



LEARNINGS

LEARNING

Crop or Use a TC?

Ashok Kandimala has been in the photography field for over three decades and has extensive experience in both film and digital photography. Being an electronics engineer by profession, he has always been keen on the technical aspects of digital photography and equipment. He has published more than 1,000 articles on photography and camera-related subjects. He has also been published in the well-known international magazine *Nature*. Photographs are a collection of photographs, books, and images. Ashok has been known for his expertise in photography and is a great teacher. He is currently working as a photographer and equipment consultant. He can be reached at ashokk@rediffmail.com.

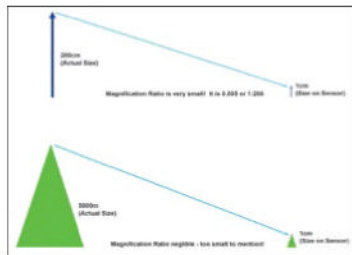


A wildlife photographer is potentially short of one thing and that is, reach. This implies that the image of the subject as captured on the sensor is not large enough. In technical terms, the magnification which is a measure of the image size versus the real subject size is small. Magnification, in turn, you might recall is a combination of focal length and subject distance. It increases when the former increases and the latter decreases (Picture 1). While it is used more often macro photography it is always present.

So, if you want to increase magnification, the first and the most advisable thing to do is to get closer to the subject. An additional benefit is that as the distance decreases, the image quality often improves since atmospheric haze that might be present also reduces. However, getting near is not always possible or feasible and at times even dangerous with predators.

The other method to increase magnification is to increase focal length. This means more expenditure like buying a new lens of a longer focal length or using a tele-converter, commonly called a TC. They are also called tele-extenders but that term is not popular now. Both involve additional expenditure, the latter being relatively less though it is not small change either, if you want a good quality TC. Even then the focal length you will get as a result of using a TC will cost far less than buying a lens of similar focal length.

An alternate method is to crop. Cropping means removing unintended parts of an image to bring attention to the subject. However, when you crop, you are tossing away pixels that results in reduction in the quality of an image. However, modern cameras create images with so many pixels that you can 'crop to an extent' and still get a 'very good quality image'.



Picture 1: This diagram illustrates the concept of magnification using two specific cases.



Picture 2: A teleconverter (TC) extends all the features as offered by the lens. The working lens distance is the reason why it cannot be used with every lens, even from the same manufacturer.



Picture 3: A TC is interpreted as 'between the lens and camera'. The lens is a Nikon 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6 lens.

What we do mean by 'crop to an extent' and a 'very good quality image'? After all, the needs depend on the end use, two extreme examples being Instagram or a large print, with the latter imposing far more stringent requirements. So, the question to what extent we can crop depends on what we want to do with the cropped image. And more importantly how does this compare with adding a TC to your existing lens? Which would be better and under what conditions? That is the topic we will discuss in this article.

Let us start with TCs first (Picture 2). In very simple terms a TC does the job of a magnifying glass that enlarges the centre part of the image formed by the lens. It is interposed between the lens and camera (Picture 3) and focuses the magnified image on the sensor. In effect, TC increases the 'real' focal length, and consequently the magnification. This is a very important point.

TCs have become optically complex these days employing many optical elements. Also, a sophisticated TC will preserve all the features of the original lens like, automatic exposure control, autofocus, image stabilization, etc. thus giving the user a seamless experience that is no different from using a lens without a TC. TCs are quite small, about the size of a 50 mm normal lens. Also, when you are using a TC, the resulting

focal length will make the lens plus TC combo cheaper, lighter, and smaller than a lens of similar focal length thus giving the user a big advantage.

TCs usually come in two magnifications, 1.4x and 2.0x meaning that they will increase the focal length of the lens by 1.4x and 2 times. So, a 400 mm lens will be converted into a 560 mm or 800 mm lens respectively. Teleconverters have traditionally been considered best suited for prime lenses. However, modern teleconverters paired with the latest zoom lenses deliver excellent results. What truly matters is the combined image quality of the lens and teleconverter, not whether the lens is prime or zoom.

TCs are designed mostly to work with lenses of longer focal length, usually 300 mm or above. When you are buying a TC, you need to check if the lens you are having is compatible, even if both the lens and TC are from the same manufacturer (Picture 3). In some cases, you can even physically damage both the devices if you try to forcibly mount them.

An interesting aspect of TCs is that the minimum focus distance of the lens does not change when you use a TC. Consequently, you will be able to get a higher magnification when you use a TC since the focal length has now

increased even as you maintain the same subject distance.

However, there are some minus points that you need to bear in mind.

There will be a light loss when you use any TC. With 1.4x and 2x TCs you will lose 1 and 2 stops of speed respectively. That is, if you are using 400 mm f/5.6 lens with a 1.4x TC the result will be a 560 mm focal length but at f/8. Likewise, if you use a 2x TC you will get a whopping 800 mm in focal length but the maximum aperture will reduce to f/11!

As the focal length increases you might be forced to use higher shutter speeds (especially, if you are handholding the camera) and this may force you to increase ISO if the light is not sufficient forcing you to sacrifice dynamic range.

There is also a loss in image quality. As you would expect camera with sensors having higher number of pixels will show more degradation. With the latest 1.4x TCs, the loss is not of consequence. Needless to say, lenses that give high image quality to start with will yield better results even with TCs that is good enough for even critical work. However, 2x TCs will degrade the image more and are generally not recommended unless extra reach is absolutely essential.

Crop or Use a TC?

Ashok Kandimalla has been in the photographic field for over three decades and has extensive experience in both film and digital photography. Being an electronics engineer by profession and a photographer, he possesses a unique and deep insight into the technical aspects of digital photography and equipment. He has published more than a 100 articles on photography and some of his writings have also been published in the well-known international magazine *Popular Photography*. An avid collector of photographic books and vintage cameras, Ashok has a keen interest in the history of photography and a passion for sharing his knowledge on photography through teaching and writing. He is the only Indian photographer to be featured on the Nikon Centenary website. He is presently working as a Management and Engineering consultant. He can be reached at kashokk@gmail.com.



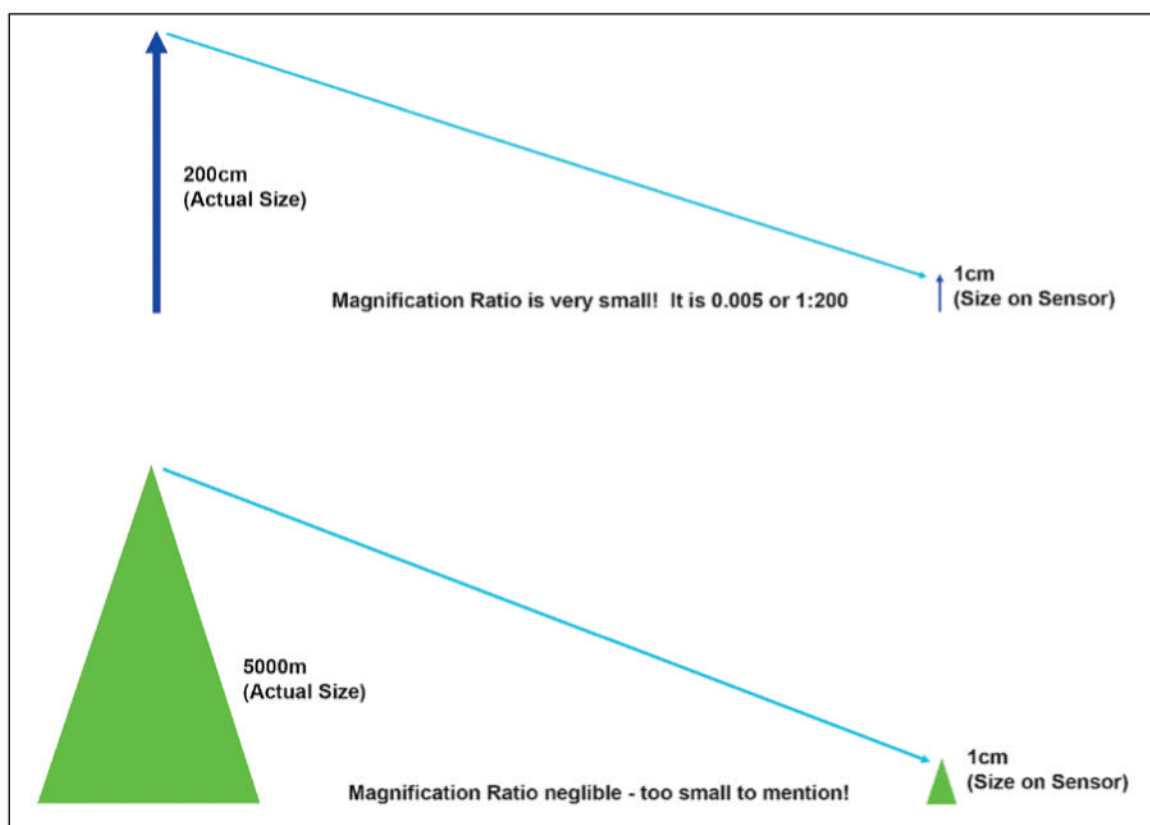
**Ashok
Kandimalla**

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Picture 2: A sophisticated TC that supports all the functions as offered by the lens. The protruding lens elements are the reason why it cannot be used with every lens, even from the same manufacturer.



Picture 3: A TC is interposed between the lens and camera. The lens is a Nikon 180-600 mm Z Series lens.

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Picture 4: The flange of a camera.



Picture 5:
A lens flange.

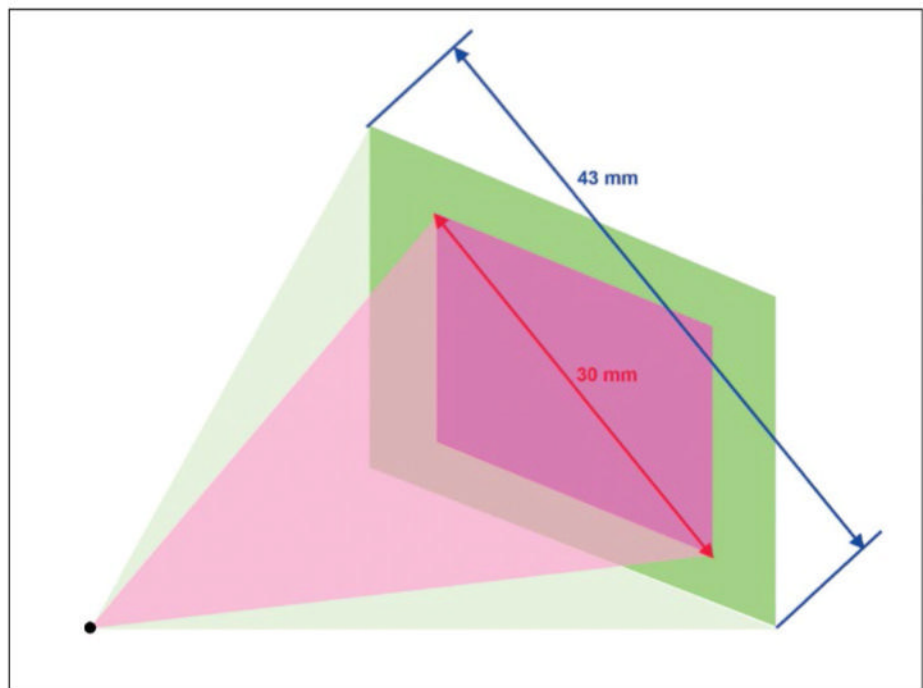
The AF speed will reduce (due to the lens losing light) but once again it is not something to worry about when using 1.4X TCs unless you are shooting some high-speed action but you need to keep this in mind when using 2X TCs. Another point is the issue of alignment. All elements of a lens must be perfectly parallel the camera's sensor. This is ensured by precision manufacture of the camera and lens flanges (Picture 4 and 5). When a TC interposed, two more flanges will be added thus increasing the possibility of misalignment. Hence, it is a must to use TCs with the highest mechanical precision, preferably from the OEMs themselves.

Now, let us look at cropping. As you might recall it is just trimming away unwanted parts. If we want to know how much of this trimming we can or cannot do, we also need to have a measure. While there is no standard metric for this, we can rely on two interrelated aspects. These are crop-factor, and the percentage of pixels remaining after cropping. It is the latter item that we are most interested in, from the point of image quality.

Readers would be very familiar with the term crop-factor as it is used to describe the relative size of a sensor with reference

to the standard full-frame. By definition it is the ratio of the diagonals. The most commonly used cropped sensor measures 16 x 24 mm and for full-frame it is 24 X 36 mm. The corresponding diagonals are 30 mm and 43 mm. Picture 6 shows the areas in magenta and green colours

respectively. The ratio of the diagonals is the crop-factor, and in this case, it is 1.5 (approximately). Note that the effect of using a cropped sensor or cropping an image after taking the image are the same, provided the remaining pixels are also the same.



Picture 6: The frames of a cropped sensor and full frame shown in magenta and green.

Table A					
Crop-factor	Number of pixels as a % of the original	Pixels after cropping (MP)			
1.0 (uncropped)	100%	24	33	45	61
1.2	69%	17	23	31	42
1.4	51%	12	17	23	31
1.5	44%	11	15	20	27
2.0	25%	6	8	11	15

Table A gives the various crop-factors and their effect on the number of pixels. You can see that as the crop-factor increases so does the discarded pixels. The crop factor of 1.4 will give an angle of view (AOV) equal to what you get when using a 1.4X TC. At this level of cropping, you are nearly dumping half the recorded pixels! Likewise, the 1.5 crop AOV corresponds to what you will get when you use a cropped camera. Nikon (and other) users please note that when you switch to DX (cropped) mode for extra reach, you are sacrificing more than half the pixels.

So, how much cropping can one resort to? The standard answer is, it depends. There are a few important factors to consider.

- How many pixels did we start with?
- Are the pixels remaining after cropping enough for your end use?
- What is the quality of the original pixels in terms of sharpness?

As an example, a crop that produces an image on social media may look terrible even on a print of moderate size! Table B will give the number of pixels that each application needs. If you look at Table B along with Table A, then you can easily determine how much you can crop based on how many pixels your camera has, and what is needed for the end use.

The last point mentioned is important and often ignored. Your original image must be of excellent quality before you start cropping. Even if you have enough (mega) pixels after you crop, you may still not have an image with high quality if you have started with a low-quality image. Cropping is inevitably followed with interpolation (more of this shortly) and enlargement and any defect already present will only get amplified.

Table B	
Application (end use)	Pixels needed in MP
HD TV (1080p)	2
Social media	4
UHD or 4K TV	8
A4 or 8 x 12 in print (at 300 PPI)	9
A3 or 12x18 in print (at 300 PPI)	20

Before we go further, we need to understand what interpolation means and why it is needed. After you crop an image, you might be left with fewer pixels than needed, let us say to make a print. Then, you might have to increase the dimensions of the image, that is, number of pixels. This process is called the interpolation. It is also called upscaling and involves generation of pixels that are originally not there. The underlying mathematics and algorithms are complicated but most post-processing software like Photoshop offer interpolation and even give a choice of algorithms like Bicubic, Bilinear, etc. However, there is an elephant in the room now and that is AI based interpolation.

This feature is being offered by several software packages like Topaz Gigapixel AI, Photoshop and Lightroom Classic (called the Super Resolution feature). These have taken interpolation to a whole new level and give amazing quality. While I have not conducted exhaustive tests, I have taken images with small dimensions (in MP) and made fairly large prints (up to A3) and was impressed with results. So, at this stage we can say that advances in software are bound to make more aggressive cropping a reality.

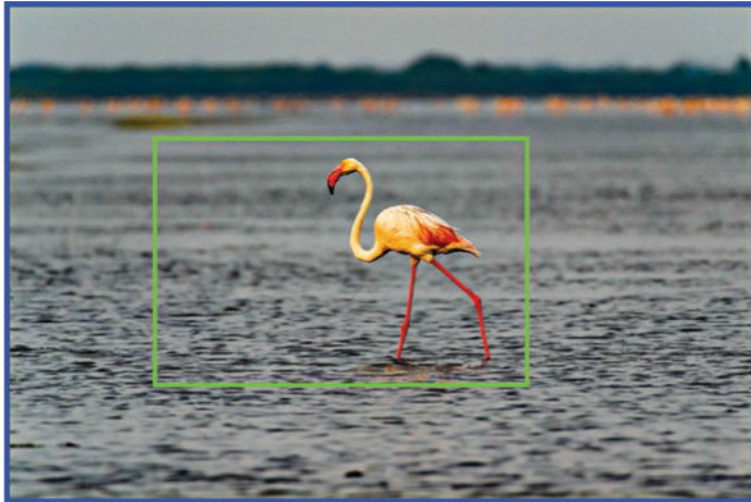
For reference, I have given Table C that gives the AOV of an equivalent focal length lens for different crop-factors. Just as a reminder, it is only the AOV that is changing when you crop, but the focal length remains the same unlike when you use TCs when the latter also changes.

Now, we are finally at the point where we can decide which is better, TC or cropping. Consider this example. If we have a 400 mm lens and we want to get more reach equivalent to that of a 560 mm lens, should we use a 1.4X TC or should we crop with the same factor of 1.4 that will remove around 50% of the pixels?

When to use TC or crop:

While many articles or videos put out comparative photos, what I am writing here is more out of my experience in photographing thousands of pictures with and without TC and with a high degree of cropping. Also, please remember that quality of the image or print is largely subjective depending on the viewer and will vary. What is given here is based on standards I follow which could be better or worse than yours. So, please consider what is given here as a guideline. I strongly recommend that you experiment and arrive at your own conclusions.

Table C				
Crop-factor	Focal length equivalent (AOV) in mm after cropping			
1.0 (uncropped)	300	400	500	600
1.2	360	480	600	720
1.4	420	560	700	840
1.5	450	600	750	900
2.0	600	800	1000	1200



Picture 7: The green border marks how much of the frame is retained with a crop-factor of 2 that corresponds to 25% of the frame.

Keep in mind this important point when you are cropping. You need to have at least 3000 pixels on the long edge or an image of 6 MP after cropping but before interpolation. Referring to Table A shows that 6 MP corresponds to a crop-factor of 2, if you start with a 24 MP camera and it can go up to 15 MP (for a 61 MP camera). This will yield a decent A4 size print even with a 24 MP camera and even larger with a camera with more pixels.

Note that a crop-factor of 2 will lead to discarding 75% (refer to Table A) of the total pixels available leaving behind only 25%. When this is done make sure that subject in the cropped frame is large enough as further enlargement is not advisable. Switch on the grid in the camera to give you an idea of what 25% means. If you are not having a grid, remember that this corresponds to one quarter (that is $\frac{1}{4}$) of the frame (Picture 7). A crop leaving more than this area is not an issue but if it is the other way around, then it is time to use a TC. This is because cropping beyond this will leave too few pixels, making the image suitable only for low-quality web use.

It is quite possible that you may not get the size of the subject you want even if you use a TC and, in that case, you can crop as explained, but in this case the camera and lens plus TC combo must be capable of delivering a high quality image to start with.

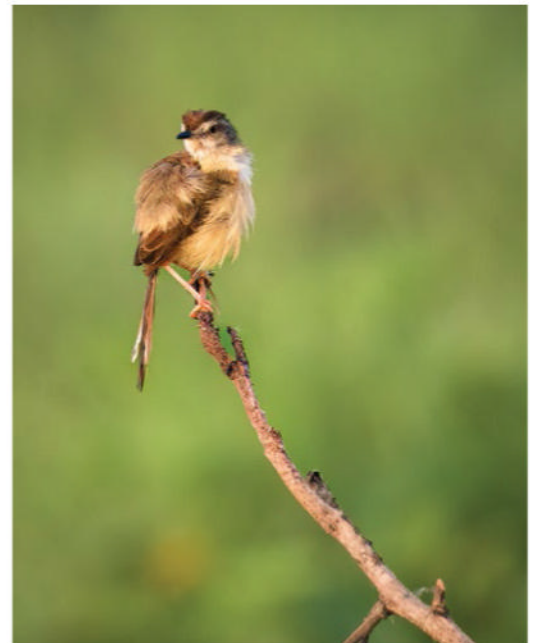
Extreme Cropping, a real-world example: How far can one really go? As mentioned,

that is very subjective but here is one example. The uncropped 24 MP image (Picture 8) was shot with a Nikon Z6 and Nikon 200-500 mm lens with a 1.4X TC for a focal length of 700 mm. The part that was cropped is shown with the red boundary. This extreme crop resulted in a small image of around 2.5 MP. Using AI based tools I was able to increase the size of the image to around 11 MP (Picture 9). This yielded an excellent 12 x 10 inch print.

Some points for you to remember:

- When you crop or use TC the perspective does not change since the subject distance does not change.
- If you crop, then the magnification does not change as the focal length and subject distance have not changed. The image looks bigger on your screen simply since it is enlarged more.
- When you use a TC, the magnification changes since the focal length has increased though the subject distance did not change.
- If you use a TC on a mediocre lens (or vice versa) then the result, will be

Picture 8: Image before cropping.



Picture 9: After cropping and interpolation.

even worse.

- If you want to crop more, you need to start with an image with more pixels.
- Even if you have enough pixels after cropping, you cannot get good results if the image you started with is not of good quality. |SP

CONCLUSION

If the amount of cropping you do is limited to leaving around 70% to 75% of the original image, then it cropping is perhaps the best option. You can of course crop beyond that if you are not going to use the image for critical work or prepared to use AI based tools. A TC, being an optical device is definitely better when you need to crop beyond a factor of 2, but that means extra cost and certain disadvantages. Based on all this, cropping or using TC both have a role and are complementary. It is not a zero-sum game!



PRINTING AND BEYOND



Vimal Parmar

An independent marketing consultant and digital print evangelist with over 40 years of experience in the imaging industry.

 [@vimalparmar](https://www.instagram.com/vimalparmar)

When Printing Becomes a Choice

As photography becomes increasingly digital, printing is no longer automatic. It is intentional. This month's issue explores the technologies, materials, and market shifts shaping the future of photographic print.

Dear Readers,

Photography has never been more accessible. We carry powerful cameras in our pockets, create images effortlessly, and share them instantly. Yet despite this explosion in visual creation, printing has quietly shifted. From routine to deliberate.

There was a time when printing was the natural conclusion of photography. Today, it is a conscious choice.

In this April issue, we widen the lens to examine the world of photo printing. What is happening behind the scenes? How have substrates evolved? Which technologies are shaping the products we see today—photobooks, wall décor, photo gifts, and textiles? And where does traditional silver halide stand in this transformed landscape?

As promised, I will continue bringing you conversations with industry leaders, both



Ina Hilker

domestic and global, to better understand this transition. This month, my discussion with Ina Hilker offers rare insight from someone who has witnessed nearly four decades of change within one of the world's leading substrate manufacturers.

Her perspective makes it clear that the real shift is not merely technological, but one of product mix, consumer behaviour, and value perception. Print is no longer just a 4x6 memory; it is a designed object, a storytelling medium, and increasingly, a premium expression of photography.

For serious photographers and enthusiasts, understanding these changes matters. The final print is not simply an output. It is the culmination of choices: material, surface, format, and intent.

As you read this feature, I invite you to reflect on your own photographic journey. Not just what you shoot, but what you choose to print, and why.

Because while images may live on screens, their legacy still depends on print.

Happy Printing,
Vimal Parmar

Printing Photographs: From Silver Halide to Substrates of the Future

For decades, photographic printing has evolved quietly, often overshadowed by cameras, sensors, and screens. Yet behind every meaningful print lies a complex interplay of technology, chemistry, substrates, and market forces. Few understand this ecosystem as deeply as Ina Hilker, who spent more than 37 years at Felix Schoeller—one of the world's most influential print media manufacturers, headquartered in Germany and established in 1895. From the golden era of silver halide to today's inkjet, electrophotography (toner), and thermal technologies, Ina has witnessed, and helped shape, the transformation of photographic substrates and global print markets.*

*Silver halide paper (often referred to as AgX) is a traditional photographic medium coated with light-sensitive silver halide crystals that produce continuous-tone colour or black-and-white photographs when exposed and chemically developed.

PROFILE SNAPSHOT : INA HILKER

- Former Market Intelligence Professional at Felix Schoeller
- 37+ years in imaging, print media, and specialty substrates
- **Expertise:** Silver halide, inkjet, electrophotography, D2T2, dye sublimation, specialty paper markets, strategic forecasting, competitor analysis



A cross-functional team at Felix Schoeller in 1988 studying emerging capture and printing technologies. Ina Hilker is seated at the centre, with then Managing Director Dr. Harald Siegers standing between her and a colleague to the right.

Why This Conversation Matters:

Photography today is created in unprecedented volumes, yet only a fraction of those images are ever printed. Understanding what happens behind the scenes, across technologies, substrates, and global markets, helps explain why print continues to evolve rather than disappear.

This conversation offers a clearer view of the forces shaping photographic printing today: shifting consumer behaviour, changing product mix, new materials, and emerging opportunities. For photographers and serious enthusiasts alike, it reminds us that the final print is not merely an output, but the result of an entire ecosystem of innovation.

Setting the Context

- **Vimal Parmar:** Could you briefly share your professional journey and your role at Felix Schoeller?

Ina Hilker: I studied business, briefly worked in banking, and soon realised it was not the right fit. In 1987, I joined Felix Schoeller as a market analyst for silver halide photographic paper. At the time, silver halide was used not only for photo prints but also in prepress applications such as phototypesetting. It gave me an early and fascinating view of how imaging and print technologies intersected even before the digital transition.

- **What initially drew you to this industry and what kept you engaged for nearly four decades?**

I was initially drawn to the industrial environment and the fact that we created tangible products—paper that eventually became photographs. There is something fascinating about watching pulp transformed into continuous paper rolls on massive paper machines.

Photography also shaped my upbringing. My father was a passionate amateur who documented both family life and his work as a civil engineer, and prints were always central to preserving memories.

What sustained my interest was the industry's digital transformation. The shift in technology and consumer behaviour was extraordinary to observe. Equally important were the people. This is a collaborative industry where I built lasting relationships worldwide.

Silver Halide: The Era That Defined Photo Printing

- ***At its peak, what was the approximate global consumption of silver halide photo paper?***

Around 2001–2002, global consumption was approximately 1.8 billion square metres annually and Eastman Kodak alone held nearly half the market.

- ***How many companies were manufacturing silver halide paper at that time?***

In addition to Kodak, Agfa Gevaert, and Fujifilm, there were companies such as Konica, China Lucky, and Ilford in Switzerland, along with several smaller manufacturers coating black-and-white paper.

It is worth noting that consolidation had already begun. Companies like 3M had exited the photo paper business, and Polaroid was already facing significant challenges.

- ***How sharp has the decline been, and how many AgX manufacturers remain today?***

Today, only two manufacturers remain active globally in silver halide photo paper—Fujifilm and China Lucky—clearly reflecting how profoundly the market has changed. The decline began gradually, but volumes dropped sharply during Covid and have not meaningfully recovered since.

When digital photography first emerged, many believed emerging markets would sustain colour film, and hence, silver halide paper demand for years. Instead, they leapfrogged both film and standalone digital cameras, moving directly to smartphones. In the end, convenience and accessibility reshaped the market far more decisively than legacy quality — a lesson every industry would do well to remember.

- ***Do you believe AgX consumption has now stabilised, or will it continue to decline?***

AgX consumption will continue to decline. While renewed interest in film photography may slow the fall slightly, it is unlikely to reverse the overall trend.

The shift is driven less by printing technology itself and more by a fundamental change in product mix. Photo printing is no longer limited to traditional 4x6 paper prints from film and digital cameras. Inkjet has expanded rapidly because it offers greater substrate flexibility and supports a wider range of photo products.



Ina Hilker during her first visit to CEWE in 1989, pictured with then Chief Technology Officer W. Schmidt-Sacht. The photograph shows images being printed using the analogue chemical process on silver-halide paper. Founded in 1961, CEWE has since grown into Europe's largest photo printing company, with much of its revenue now coming from the digital printing of photos, photobooks, and calendars.

At the same time, the growth of photobooks has become a key driver for electrophotography (toner-based digital printing), while demand for instant prints at weddings and events continues to support D2T2 (Dye Diffusion Thermal Transfer) technology.

The rise of personalised products, such as mugs, gifts, and printed fabrics, has further accelerated the use of dye sublimation.

With photographs now printed on everything from museum-grade fine art papers and synthetics to textiles and metal, the product landscape has fundamentally changed. This evolution in products ultimately determines technology choice and explains why silver halide continues to lose relevance.

Technology Transitions & Perceived Image Quality

- ***Which printing technology has replaced or surpassed AgX in perceived image quality?***

High-quality inkjet printing has, in many cases, matched or even surpassed traditional silver halide, particularly when comparing consumer AgX prints with six-colour (or higher) inkjet prints on resin-coated photo paper of similar weight.

At normal viewing distances, only a trained eye can reliably distinguish between inkjet, electrophotography—liquid or dry toner—or D2T2 outputs.

This raises an important question: what do we mean by “perceived image quality,” and which products are we actually comparing? In practice, technology is rarely chosen for image quality alone. The intended application usually determines the choice.

Electrophotography offers high speeds, duplex capability, and efficient lay-flat photobook production. D2T2 systems are compact, simple to operate, and well suited for retail or event-based instant printing. Inkjet, meanwhile, delivers excellent quality across a wide range

Rajan Vaswani,
Managing Director
and CEO of Felix
Schoeller India, whose
insights offered
Ina Hilker valuable
perspectives on India's
photography, proofing,
prepress, and textile
printing markets.



of substrates and formats, making it ideal for applications such as wall décor.

Today, quality, functionality, and application together determine the right technology.

- **What makes an image “feel photographic,” regardless of technology?**

Haptics play a crucial role. Which is, how a print feels in the hand. Photo paper has a certain stiffness and surface character that conveys quality. Surface finishes such as glossy, satin, or matte also influence perception.

With silver halide, the substrate itself defines the surface, without the need for lamination. These tactile qualities contribute strongly to the emotional response to a photograph.

Global Photo Printing Markets

- **How is global photo print consumption split between developed and emerging markets?**

Across all technologies, the split is surprisingly balanced. Roughly 55% in developed markets and 45% in emerging markets.

- **How do you define a “developed” photo printing market?**

Primarily through product mix, consumer behaviour, and technology adoption. Developed markets tend to show higher penetration of photobooks, wall décor, and value-added products, along with greater acceptance of online ordering and personalisation.

- **Is photo printing still declining globally?**

If we look only at single photo prints, the market is still declining, as most images remain on smartphones.

However, when photobooks, calendars, wall décor, and photo gifts are included, the market is clearly growing. These segments represent the future of photo printing.

- **What is the current sentiment within the photo printing industry?**

The general mood lies between cautious optimism and confidence. There is a broad consensus that photo printing will not disappear. The challenge lies in offering attractive products and communicating their value effectively, particularly as competition increases from commercial and large-format printers entering photo-related segments.

Pressures & Priorities for Photo Printers

- **What are the biggest challenges photo printers face today?**

First, commoditisation and margin pressure. Online platforms, automated apps and prints for free have driven prices down, shifting focus from quality to cost.

Second, operational complexity. Short-run, highly personalised products with fast turnaround times strain workflows, inventory, and labour.

Third, relevance in a digital-first world. Printers must convince consumers that prints and photobooks are lasting objects of memory and not disposable outputs.

- **What other factors matter?**

Sustainability is increasingly important, along with consistent availability of substrates that meet both environmental expectations and technical requirements.

- **Do these priorities differ across markets?**

Sustainability is a global concern, though driven by

local regulations. In emerging markets, consistency of media quality, especially for imported substrates, plays a particularly important role.

Product Mix & Market Segmentation

- ***How does India's photo printing market compare with developed regions?***

In developed markets, consumer photobooks dominate the photo products segment, followed by gifts and wall décor, with calendars playing an important but seasonal role. India differs significantly, where wedding albums remain central to the market. The level of bespoke craftsmanship seen in Indian wedding albums is rarely matched elsewhere, where production is far more standardised and automated. In contrast, markets such as Germany rely heavily on consumer photobooks for personal memory preservation.

- ***Which photo products dominate globally today?***

Globally, consumer photobooks lead the photo products category, followed by photo gifts and wall décor, with gifts growing fastest due to their affordability and customisation.

In regions where photobooks are less established, traditional 4x6-inch prints continue to remain relevant. At the same time, advances in digital textile printing are expanding the category further, bringing fabrics and soft furnishings into the broader photo products ecosystem.

Technology, Product & Substrate Alignment

- ***Is there a clear link between technology and product type?***

Yes. High-speed, high-volume products such as photobooks and photo cards align with electrophotography. Substrate flexibility and smaller volumes favour inkjet, while dye sublimation plays an important role in photo gifts and fabrics and D2T2 in retail.

The Indian Opportunity & Consumer Photobooks

- ***Did India feature in your market research during your time at Felix Schoeller? If so, how did you approach the analysis, which period did it cover, and what were the key findings?***

India featured in our research from the early days of black-and-white silver halide photo paper through the transition to digital printing substrates such as electrophotography and inkjet. When I joined Felix Schoeller in the late 1980s, we worked closely with an Indian black-and-white photo paper coating company, New India Industries, which gave us valuable early insights into the local market and its requirements.

Our focus deepened in the mid-2000s, when emerging markets were expected to sustain global print volumes. The analysis drew on trade data, distributor feedback, industry interactions, and demographic trends. One key finding was the strong dominance of wedding photography and album production, which created

a distinctly different product mix compared to many Western markets.

We also benefited greatly from insights provided by New (India) Imaging Industries, which later became our joint venture partner, Felix Schoeller India, in 2019. Managing Director and CEO Rajan Vaswani, Director Pranav Vaswani, and their team offered valuable perspectives across photography, proofing, prepress, and textile printing.

- ***How can India's consumer photobook market be developed?***

India's large and youthful population gives consumer photobooks enormous potential, but this must be actively developed. The first step is awareness: photobooks should be positioned not merely as print products, but as meaningful ways to preserve memories rather than leaving images buried on smartphones or in the cloud.

Simplicity is equally important. Easy, intuitive online platforms encourage adoption when book creation is quick and requires minimal design effort. Access also matters. Seamless ordering, reliable home delivery, and retail presence help make photobooks mainstream. Together with consistent marketing, these factors can unlock India's consumer photobook market.

- ***Is pricing the key barrier?***

Pricing is rarely the decisive factor when the fundamentals are right. Experience from developed photobook markets shows that awareness, ease of creation, smooth ordering, and reliable delivery matter far more than absolute price. When consumers understand the value of a photobook and how simple it is to create one, price resistance naturally declines.

The real challenge is communicating value, not cost. A photobook is not a commodity but a tangible archive of personal memories. Unlike digital images that may be lost or forgotten, photobooks offer permanence and emotional depth. When positioned as legacy objects to be shared across generations, consumers are willing to pay for quality and thoughtful design.

Home Printing & Emerging Behaviour

- ***Is home photo printing growing?***

Globally, dedicated home photo printing is declining as consumers increasingly rely on professional labs and online services for bulk prints and photobooks. Their convenience, consistent quality, wider material choices, and competitive pricing make them the preferred option for anything beyond a few images. Home printers, however, remain common, largely for multifunction use rather than photography alone. Entry-level inkjets are typically used for documents, school assignments, craft projects, and occasional photo prints.

In practice, home photo printing is sporadic and need-based—often a single image for a school project or quick

A range of personalised photo gifts, including a doormat featuring a pet dog (top right) and a table lamp (bottom left)



reference. One exception is A4 enlargements, which many consumers still print at home as it can be more economical than ordering from a lab.

- **How do substrates differ between home and professional printing?**

When using dedicated photo paper, home inkjet media is essentially similar to professional substrates. Both typically use resin-coated (RC) papers with specialised ink-receiving layers designed to control ink absorption, colour accuracy, and image sharpness.

The difference lies mainly in range and usage. Professional environments offer a wider selection of substrates—such as fine-art papers, canvas, and speciality finishes—and operate under stricter colour management. At home, many users print on standard uncoated paper, which lacks the coating required for true photographic quality.

Looking Ahead

- **Where is the photo printing market headed?**

Photobooks will continue to dominate, while photo gifts, across all print technologies, are likely to see the fastest growth. The key challenge for the industry, as I see it, is to develop new photo products that genuinely resonate with consumers.

- **Will emerging markets follow the same path?**

Wedding albums are already strong in India. Growth will increasingly come from wall décor, fine-art printing, photo gifts, and—most significantly—consumer photobooks, which represent only a fraction of their true potential today.

Closing

- **What continues to excite you about photographic printing and what advice would you give to photographers and print service provider navigating this changing landscape?**

What continues to excite me, even after nearly four

decades, is the emotional power of the photographic print. A well-made image on the right paper, with accurate colour and depth, has a presence no screen can replicate. Photobooks, fine-art prints, and thoughtfully crafted products turn images into objects of memory and meaning. My advice to photographers and print service providers is simple: innovate constantly and never compromise on quality. As volumes shrink and choices expand, differentiation comes from materials, design, craftsmanship, and storytelling—not price. In a fast, disposable digital world, the carefully made print will always endure.

Personal

- **After more than three decades in the imaging and print media industry, how does this new chapter of life feel?**

Exciting and liberating. I truly enjoyed my years at Felix Schoeller, but everything in life has its time. Now I value the freedom to decide how I spend my days. Focusing on family, hobbies, and occasionally doing nothing at all.

- **Looking back, what gives you the greatest sense of satisfaction—personally or professionally?**

My greatest satisfaction is raising two wonderful children who have grown into responsible and socially conscious adults. That is a source of deep pride for me. Professionally, it is the relationships I built across the industry that matter most. Business results are important, of course, but it is the human connections that make a career truly meaningful.

- **What continues to fuel your curiosity?**

Curiosity has always been part of who I am. Moreover, I am a strong advocate of lifelong learning. After following technological change in photography and printing for so many years, that fascination does not simply stop. I still find myself observing how imaging and images evolve and how materials continue to shape the way we experience them. **|SP**



REVIEWS

FINAL RATING

The final ratings given in the reviews are not an indication of the performance or features of the reviewed device in isolation. It is a combination of all parameters including the price of the product.



66

Camera Review
**Fujifilm
GFX 100RF**



70

Camera Review
Nikon ZR



74

Lens Review
**Nikkor Z
35MM F/1.2 S**

Lens Review

**Samyang AF
24MM-60MM F/2.8 FE**



78

Fujifilm GFX 100 RF ₹5,49,999/-

Photographer's Delight



In the Box

- ✓ Camera
- ✓ Li-ion battery NP-W235
- ✓ Shoulder strap
- ✓ USB cable
- ✓ Clip attaching tool
- ✓ Lens cap
- ✓ Lens hood
- ✓ Adapter ring
- ✓ Protection filter
- ✓ Hot-shoe cover

Rohinton Mehta

The Fujifilm GFX 100RF was introduced in India on 19th May 2025. Fujifilm describes the camera as 'medium format'. I prefer to call it 'cropped medium format'. 'Medium format' is generally 60x60mm or 60x45mm. The imaging sensor size of the GFX 100RF is 43.8x32.9mm. The camera is aimed primarily at photographers who want great detail in their landscapes, environmental portraits, and studio work, but can be judiciously used for indoor sports, photojournalism and by those who have reasons to crop their frames for a better composition. Let's see how the GFX 100RF performs.

Design & Build Quality

Magnesium alloy chassis, compact, lightweight, range-finder style EVF (hence the RF in its name), simplistic looks, 'handsome', and well-built. The top plate, baseplate hot-shoe cover and even the battery door is carefully machined from aluminum for strength and durability. The GFX 100RF sports a super-sharp non-interchangeable, newly designed FUJINON 35mm f/4 lens (equivalent to 28mm on the 35mm format). Filter size is 49mm and the camera weighs 735g. The camera is made in Japan and is available in all black as well as silver and black.



Key Features

Note: Owners of the Fujifilm 100RF are suggested to download the advanced User Manual from their website. This will allow you to understand and use the camera most effectively.

The Fujifilm GFX 100RF is a 102-megapixel cropped medium format camera incorporating a fixed 35mm f/4 FUJINON lens equivalent to 28mm on the 35mm format. The camera offers several aspect ratios: 4:3, 3:2, 16:9, 65:24, 17:6, 3:4, 1:1, 7:6, and 5:4. Obviously, the 102 MP is at the 4:3 aspect ratio, where the pixel dimensions are 11648x8736. For all other aspect ratios, the pixel dimensions drop due to a smaller area of the imaging sensor being used.

The lens is constructed with 10 elements in 8 groups that include 2x aspherical elements. Apertures range from f/4 - f/22 (9-blade aperture diaphragm). The minimum focussing distance – measured from the front of the lens – is 0.2m (7.87"). An internal 4-stop ND filter is provided. A digital tele-converter (80, 63 and 45mm) is incorporated.

ISO sensitivity for still photography is from ISO 80 – 1,02,400 (extendable) as well as AUTO 1 – 3. For movies, the ISO range is from ISO 100-12,800 (extendable), plus AUTO.

Exposure modes are P, A, S, M, and exposure control is via 256-zone metering – Multi Spot Average Center-weighted. Exposure compensation is available in +/- 5EV.

There is no in-built image stabilisation for still photography, but Digital Image Stabilisation is available for movies.

Shutter type is Leaf Shutter (incorporated within the lens) as opposed to the focal plane shutter found in DSLRs and Mirrorless cameras. The



Rohinton Mehta

Rohinton Mehta

Exif data not available



shutter speed range differ as per the shooting mode. In P and A modes, when using the electronic shutter, the range is from 30 seconds - 1/16,000sec. Mechanical shutter (P and A modes) allow 30 seconds - 1/4000sec, while S and M modes allow 60 minutes - 1/4,000sec. In Movie mode, one can use from 1/8sec to -1/4000sec. Electronic flash can be synchronised up to 1/4000 sec. 'B' (Bulb) mode supports up to 60 minutes.

Burst mode is up to 6fps (mechanical shutter) and 3fps with the electronic

shutter. Buffer size varies with the file format and recording media.

The GFX 100RF allows you to focus using Single AF, Continuous AF and Manual Focus. AF-Area modes are: Single point, Zone, Wide/All, while Subject Detection can automatically detect and track animals, birds, motorcycles, cars, trains and airplanes. Several types of Bracketing are available – Auto Exposure, Film simulation, dynamic range, ISO sensitivity, White Balance, and Focus. Fujifilm cameras are also known for their film-simulation modes. The GFX 100RF

offers you 20 film-simulation modes – each mode provides a different 'look' to your shots. These however, effect only the JPEG files.

The GFX 100RF offers two memory card slots – for SD/SDHC/SDXC cards. This makes sense as the camera is oriented towards genres that do not require very fast shooting. SD cards are much less expensive as well.

Video: While few might look at the GFX100 RF as a camera for videography, it is nevertheless quite competent and up

to the task. Apart from the many video specs which we will cover in brief, the GFX 100RF provides a very shallow DOF (Depth of Field) due the large sensor and a fast aperture, thus giving a very unique look to the footage.

While 100+ MP is a very large pixel count, the highest resolution video is limited to 4K and that to only up to 30 fps. However, high quality 10 bit 4:2:2 internal recording is possible for excellent colour reproduction. H.265/HEVC codecs are supported for compression. Two gamma profiles (F-Log and F-Log2) are available and Fuji claims they provide up to 13 stops of dynamic range. External recording of ProRes 4:2:2 is also possible to an SSD connected to the USB-C port.

Coming to the AF features most of the features available for stills photography are extended to videography. These include detection of subjects like faces, eyes, animals, birds, vehicles, and aircraft. You can also select the AF point by touching the screen. Exclusive to Fuji are the film simulation modes.

Video recording can be done in different aspect ratios including the standard TV format of 16:9. One of the most useful features is the built-in 4-stop ND filter. Overall, the camera offers a compact body with plenty of features making it a useful camera for videography. However, we would not call it a hybrid camera.

Ergonomics

Though a camera with a retro-style range finder, you'll love the bright and crisp view through it. The user interface is reasonably simple once you get a hang of it. The GFX 100RF is okay to hold for a while, but sooner or later, you'll wish it had a deeper grip. Several third-party handgrips are available to improve

VERDICT

High-end equipment doesn't come cheap. While the cost is high (for my pockets at least), the overall image quality is superb. I enjoyed the simplicity of the camera layout, and the user interface (took me some time to get used to it). Colours are neutral but you can change the 'look' by using the various film-simulation modes. Though the weight is quite low, I would have personally

stability, comfort and handling, but that will add to the cost.

Performance

Autofocus was fast and accurate, though I must point out that the GFX 100RF is not meant for outdoor sports or for wildlife photography; for landscapes, environmental portraits, studio work etc. it is fast enough.

The newly designed 35mm FUJINON lens is sharp from corner to corner, even when used wide open at f/4, and the high megapixel (102 MP) allows you to crop, when necessary, without any appreciable loss in image quality for the usual picture sizes that we generally create. In addition, the in-built 4-stop ND filter helps in overly bright situations. Video quality is good. Fujifilm claim that the camera offers up to 13 stops of dynamic range.

Digital noise performance is good at lower ISO sensitivities, with ISOs up to 6400 producing very acceptable amount of read noise. Either way, as far as I am concerned, I don't worry about noise at higher ISOs due to the easy availability of noise reduction software. We have no scientific method of checking the dynamic range, but I can say with confidence the GFX 100RF exhibits great dynamic range along with great colour. All-in-all, exceptional image quality with lively colours. However, while testing the Fujifilm GFX 100RF, we noticed a couple of shots with some weird distortions when using the electronic shutter.

Value for Money

The Fujifilm GFX 100RF is available at an MRP of Rs.5,49,999/-. Expensive? In my opinion, 'yes' – but if your pockets are heavier, your opinion may differ. In the same breath, let me tell you that several other cameras of this nature cost much more. **|SP**

preferred a deeper handgrip. The f/4 maximum aperture can be an issue in very low light situations, like astro photography but for studio work, environmental portraiture and landscapes, it is perfectly okay. Considering its excellent image quality, low weight, realistic colours, and simplicity, I have no hesitation in awarding it a Best Buy!

FINAL SCORE



Design and Build Quality



Key Features



Ergonomics



Performance



Value for Money



Overall



PLUS

- Great build quality
- Superb image quality
- Excellent 35mm FUJINON lens
- Very good dynamic range
- Built-in 4-stop ND filter
- User-defined aspect ratios
- 102 MP allows you to crop without noticeable loss in image quality

MINUS

- Expensive
- Troublesome to attach the provided neck strap and lens hood
- Handgrip not deep enough
- No image stabilisation for still images but Digital IS available for video
- Some may consider the fixed f/4 lens limiting their shooting experience

KEY SPECIFICATIONS

Image sensor:	43.8x32.9mm GFX 102MP CMOS II
Effective pixels:	102 million
Image Processor:	X-Processor 5
Storage media:	SD/SDHC/SDXC (2 card slots)
File format:	Still: JPEG, HEIF, Raw (14/16-bit), TIFF
Lens:	Non-interchangeable, FUJINON 35mm F/4
Exposure modes:	P, A, S, M
Exp. Comp.:	Still: +/- 5EV, Movie: +/- 2EV
EVF:	0.5-inch OLED Colour Viewfinder, approx. 5.76 million dots
LCD monitor:	3.15-inch, Tilt-type, Touch screen colour LCD
Power supply:	NP-W235 Li-ion (battery included)
Dimensions:	133.5 (W) x 90.4 (H) x 76.5 (D)
Weight:	735g including battery, memory card

Nikon ZR ₹1,86,995/- (Body only)

A Stepping Stone for Serious Cinematography

In the Box

- ✓ Nikon ZR cinema camera body
- ✓ Body cap (BF-N1)
- ✓ Battery (EN-EL15c)
- ✓ Camera strap
- ✓ Warranty card
- ✓ User's Manual
- ✓ USB cable (UC-E25)
- ✓ Digital Accessory shoe cover (BS-D1)

by Ashok Kandimala

The ZR is the culmination of Nikon's much-publicised partnership with RED Digital Cinema, two giants in their respective fields. With that heritage, it is no surprise that the Nikon ZR has been received positively in the markets, with many experts declaring it as a new benchmark setter. Some detractors have also called it a Nikon Z6III (an excellent camera no doubt) in a bespoke new suit. So, what is the truth? We at Smart Photography brings to you as usual an unbiased and unfiltered review. So, read on.

Design & Build Quality

Nikon might have bought RED but it appears that the latter took over for the design department! The ZR bears no resemblance to its siblings in the Z-line. The on/off switch surrounding the shutter button, a feature that harks back to decades is gone and moved to the left side. The shutter button is now the video recording start/stop button and the surrounding switch is the power-zoom control. There is an additional recording button in the front just below the lens release button. The top deck has three more buttons. While these are



marked with icons, they are also fully customizable. The top deck display is absent but there is slider switch to shift between Photo and Video modes.

As with many video cameras there is no EVF but there is a huge 4-inch fully articulating touch sensitive, high resolution, ultra-bright monitor (the biggest and brightest in its class). It supports DCI-P3 colour gamut, which virtually eliminates the need for an external monitor. The back of the monitor has the words Nikon RED in case you have any doubt about its lineage. The large monitor leaves little space for anything else. The multi-selector pad that was a staple control on Nikons from the film-SLR era is gone. There is however a joystick that is called the multi-selector, for the AF point selection

and menu navigation. There are just two more buttons (menu access and playback) at the rear and that is about it. Other design features are two control dials and a front facing tally light. While it is small and light, the body made with a magnesium alloy feels solid. The ZR uses a sophisticated thermal design employing passive cooling technology thus eliminating the need for a cooling fan. This feature along with weather sealing make the camera impervious to dust and moisture ingress. Ports provided are, audio in and out, USB port (for power and image/video transfer) and a mini-HDMI (needs Type-D cable) in case you want to connect an external monitor/recorder. The mode dial, a feature on all Nikon midrange bodies is gone and replaced with a mode button. The strap lugs are slot type unlike

Camera: Nikon ZR
 Lens: Nikkor Z 40mm f/2
 Aperture: f/3.2
 Shutter Speed: 1/160 sec
 Focal Length: 40.0 mm
 ISO: 125



previous Z series cameras making the camera more streamlined.

Key Features

We will start by issuing a 'RED' alert to our readers! The ZR starts with a Z6III sensor and Expeed 7 engine but that is about it. Thanks to its modern, software-oriented modular design that offers flexibility, Nikon has created an entirely different camera that is video centric.

The most important feature is the migration of RED technology into a body that is more affordable bringing benefits that were simply out of reach for many. The flagship feature is the capability of the ZR to record the renowned cinema grade, 12-bit raw footage in REDCODERAW at 6K, internally. As implemented on the ZR, it is called R3D NE where NE is stands for the Nikon Edition. This brings access to the well established workflows used in the professional cinema field. All the RED related features ensure uniformity between the recordings of high-end

RED Cinema cameras and Nikon ZR enabling mixing of the footage from both high- and low-end cameras, while maintaining consistent colour and other parameters. The R3D NE also offers a dynamic range of 15+ stops (a class leading spec) and dual base ISO values of 800 and 6400. It is also the first Nikon to store LUTs (up to 50) on board and this includes RED LUTs. On-screen LUT previews are also possible.

There also is support for two more RAW types, N-RAW and Apple ProRes RAW HQ. That is not all, the standard H.265/HEVC (10 bit) and H.264/AVC (8 bit) codecs are also supported. This comprehensive support lets user choose between flexible but cumbersome raw or easier to use and edit standard codec-based streams. Three video containers are supported, viz., .R3D, and the well known .MOV and MP4.

Coming to Log curves, the REDLog3G10 that is associated with R3D workflow and Nikon's own N-Log are supported along with HLG and SDR options.

Nikon has not neglected the audio part either. There are three built-in microphones (on the top deck) two of which are used to record stereo sound. A very interesting feature is the support of OZO technology that can be configured for different directionalities. The Nikon is the first among its peers to offer 32-bit float audio. This will enable recording over a very dynamic range and prevents distortion at high volume. It is particularly useful when the volume levels are difficult to predict. The accessory shoe, now called the Digital Accessory Shoe incorporates an interface to make a cordless connection with accessories. Nikon is currently offering an optional shotgun microphone that can exploit this feature.

For precise exposure control, you can use Zebra patterns to identify overexposed highlights or specific tonal ranges within your frame. The colour of the pattern can be chosen for better visibility. In addition, there is the wave-form monitor (customizable for size and position) that provides a visual representation of

Camera: Nikon ZR
Lens: Nikkor Z 40mm f/2
Aperture: f/3.2
Shutter Speed: 1/50 sec
Focal Length: 40.0 mm
ISO: 25600



the brightness levels across the frame, allowing you to judge exposure more accurately than a standard histogram which is also an available option.

An important missing feature is the mechanical shutter and this is the main hardware difference (apart from the body style) compared to the Z6III. The impact will be felt when the ZR is used for photography. More of that later.

Ergonomics

Traditional Nikon users will take some time to get used to the completely redesigned body and controls but that will not be difficult due to the very neatly laid out controls. The body has a body contour which helps in giving a grip but not by much. Nikon has been criticized for the short life of the 'skin' covering the body and hence we were pleased to see a new one that was just as nice to feel and grip. We hope that the durability has improved too. Missing sockets and the small size of the necessitate the use of a cage (and a grip) except for the simplest work. Lack of EVF will force

the use of the camera at 'arms' length but the monitor is superlative with high brightness and we had no problem in using it even in harsh light. The on/off switch is the 'soft type' (not a mechanical type) and has a green light surrounding it to show that the camera is on. The front record button was handy and the tally light was bright and highly visible. The Photo/Video slider switch on the top was very useful for instant switching between the two modes. The usual "I" menu button is present in a new guise and is called the 'menu access button'. As short press invokes the "I" menu and a long one the main camera menus. It can be identified by an icon with three horizontal lines.

Nikon has drastically cut down on the buttons. Apart from the already mentioned missing multi-selector pad, the Delete button is also absent! However, you can assign a function button to do that job. On the positive side, many functions that needed access to menus can now be accessed by touching the monitor. We were particularly

impressed with the monitor brightness control which can be made with a finger swipe. We were also pleased to note that the menu structure is the same as before, thus easing the migration.

Performance

The AF is virtually the same as the already reviewed Z6III offering the same types of AF modes, AF-Area modes and subject detect features. It performed similarly when comes to AF speed, target acquisition and tracking. The frame rate (in still photography) extends to 120 fps (for JPEGs only) and 20 fps for Raw. IBIS worked well. The noise level was also same as the Z6III.

Coming to video, the Nikon ZR camera can record continuously for up to 125 minutes without overheating due to the smart thermal design. However, we could not verify this practically as we always ran out of battery charge before that. If you are a regular videographer then we suggest you power the camera through an external power bank connected to the USB-C port provided. One drawback is

that external power will run the camera when it's switched on, or charge the battery when it's off—but it cannot do both together.

All the AF features available in the photo mode are carried over to the video mode and they performed just as expected. We also did some test recording with the RED codec and found the footage can be processed following the same workflow used for RED Cinema cameras. This is a huge boon and perhaps the main justification for this camera's existence. However, note that the raw footage in R3D NE is 12-bit and not 16-bit as given by its big brother. Compared to NRAW, R3D video was slightly brighter and shadow details were also better. Skin tones were similar. Special mention needs to be made of the enormous dynamic range. It was truly impressive and was above our expectations.

ZR as a photo (still picture) camera

Yes, it can be used as one, and the ZR can indeed double as a compact full-frame camera but there are a few caveats. Let us start with the absence of a mechanical shutter that will result in two problems. The first is the rolling shutter distortion that will be apparent when shooting fast moving objects like propeller blades. The second is the slow X-Sync (the fastest flash shutter synchronization speed) which is limited to 1/60 second. Also, those of us who have taken for granted the Delete button will find its absence an irritant. The other missing feature is the EVF so you have to rely on the monitor. Other than this, we found virtually no difference in performance (including AF, subject detect, etc.), or image quality as compared to the Z6III. To conclude the ZR will be excellent for travel, street, landscape photography or as a second body giving the nearly the same versatility as the popular

Z6III. However, we do not think it will be useful for action photography for the reasons mentioned.

Value for Money

The Nikon ZR body is currently priced at Rs. 1,86,995.00. At this price it is an unquestionable price/performance leader. It is priced slightly lower than its sibling Z6III. **|SP**

Acknowledgement: The author thanks Keshav Raja for his help in colour grading.

KEY SPECIFICATIONS

Camera type: Mirrorless, with Z-mount
Sensor type/size: 24.5 MP, BSI Partially Stacked, full frame
Image Stabilization: In-built 5 axes, up to 7.5 stops
Focus Points: up to 299 (Photo) and 253 (Video)
ISO sensitivity: Dual Base 800/6400; Native 100-64,000
Dynamic Range: 15+ stops
Monitor: Articulating 4", 3 M dots, 1000 Nits, and DCI-P3 colour
Shutter Angle: 5.6° to 360°
Autofocus AF-Area Modes: Pinpoint AF (photo only), Single point, Dynamic-area, Wide-area small and large, Wide-area customisable, 3D-tracking (photo only), Subject-tracking AF (video only), and Auto-Area AF.
White Balance: Several, set colour temperature or measure.
Gamma curve: Nikon N-Log, REDWideGamutRGB
Video Compression: R3D NE (12-bit), N-RAW (12 bit), Apple ProRes RAW HQ, Apple ProRes 422 HQ, H.265/HEVC (8 bit/10 bit), H.264/AVC
File formats (Video): NEV, R3D, MOV, and MP4
Movie Maximum Recording Time: Up to 125 minutes (for 12-bit recording) and 360 minutes for 10 bit recording @ less than 100 fps
Audio Recording: Internal (3 microphones) or external microphone; 32bit float audio via 3.5 mm mini pin jack, audio directivity (OZO Audio), adjustable input sensitivity, attenuator, frequency response, and wind NR functions.
Movie Audio Recording formats: Linear PCM (48 KHz, 24-bit or 32-bit float, for videos recorded in R3D, NEV or MOV format), AAC (48 KHz, 16-bit, for videos recorded in MP4 format)
Camera body size W x H x D: 133 x 80.5 x 48.7 mm
Weight: 540 g body only

FINAL SCORE



Design and Build Quality



Key Features



Ergonomics



Performance



Value for Money



Overall



PLUS

- REDCODE RAW 12-Bit recording
- Class leading dynamic range of 15+ stops
- RED log curve
- Wide codec options
- Large monitor with high brightness and DCI-P3 colour
- Internal 6K raw recording
- Proxy recording
- 32-bit float audio
- Excellent AF
- Compact size and weight
- Great Value for money

MINUS

- No open-gate video recording
- Very few buttons
- Needs a cage for any serious work

All text, diagrams, and images © Ashok Kandimala.

VERDICT

While Nikon was the first company to have bring video to the DSLR cameras with the D90, its efforts to capitalize on this were lacking. The first Z cameras showed its renewed interest in this area. However,

the real knockout blow came in the form of the ZR. This is by far the Nikon's most ambitious hybrid cinema effort to date and no doubt the acquisition of RED helped in no small way. The end result is superb camera

that brings high end cinema features (well known codecs and workflows) to a proven hardware platform. With one stroke Nikon managed lay down the path for filmmakers stepping into serious cinema

workflows without buying an expensive cinema camera. The ZR is a bridge between mirrorless and true digital cinema. Apart from this, it is also a handy full-frame stills camera! Take bow, Nikon!!

Nikkor Z 35mm F/1.2 S ₹2,57,995/-

Lens Extraordinaire

In the Box

- ✓ Lens
- ✓ Lens front cap (LC-82B)
- ✓ Lens rear cap (LF-N1)
- ✓ Lens hood (HB-110)
- ✓ Lens case (CL-C2)

Rohinton Mehta

The newly designed wide-angle prime lens from the house of Nikon is a S-Line (Performance) full frame lens with a superfast f/1.2 aperture. The lens is touted to offer dreamy bokeh and precise autofocus for photos and videos. The lens is basically designed for environmental portraits and pro-video production but can be used for landscapes, documentary and studio photography. Just for the record, Nikon offers three 35mm lenses for its Z-mount -- Z 35mm f/1.2 S, Z 35mm f/1.4, and 35mm f/1.8 S.



Design & Build Quality

Overall, the lens construction appears very good; the outer body uses engineering plastic which is very strong. The lens mount is made of metal. The view through the lens is super bright (it's a f/1.2 lens!). Filter diameter is 82mm and the lens is made in Thailand.

Key Features

The first thing you are likely to notice is the lens size and weight. Generally, 35mm lenses are compact and lightweight. But not this one. It's huge and weighs 1060g. Why so heavy? Being an f/1.2 lens, the front elements are quite large – which adds to the weight of the lens. The lens is weather-sealed; focussing is internal – hence the lens does not extend during focussing.



Aperture blades are controlled using an electromagnetic diaphragm mechanism – this offers very accurate control of the iris blades.

The lens construction uses 17 elements in 15 groups that include 3 x ED, 1 x aspherical ED, 3 x aspherical elements, and elements with meso-amorphous, Nano Crystal and ARNEO coats. This full frame (FX) lens offers an angle of view of 63°; 44° when used as a DX lens.

On the side of the lens is a A/M switch to toggle between autofocus and manual focus. The focus ring is customisable and so is the clickless Control Ring that can control the aperture or the exposure or the ISO. Two customisable Lens Function Buttons are available. These offer programmable shortcuts to quickly change metering, subject tracking or exposure compensation.

Ergonomics

As with all larger and heavier lenses, the size and construction of the camera body play an important role – balance. On Nikon Z9 body, the lens weight would be well balanced: a bit less on the smaller Z8 body. On the Z6III body, the weight distribution and physical comfort would be proportionately less. This is so for all heavier lenses.

Performance

The lens was reviewed using a Nikon Z8 body, and all auto corrections were enabled – a practice that I follow with all camera/lens reviews.

In one word, the performance of this S-line lens was superlative.

Autofocus was very quick and very accurate. AF was near silent as well. The lens offered very good contrast, and flare was very well controlled by the special lens coatings. In my limited tests, I did not notice any chromatic aberration worth mentioning – which is a good thing. Vignetting was noticed with the lens wide open at f/1.2, and f/1.4.

What about lens sharpness? I found the lens sharpness to be exceptional at all f-stops, except at f/16 where some softness could be noticed due to diffraction of light at such a narrow aperture. The lens was sharp at the center at f/1.2, but the sharpness improved at f/2. I felt the lens was the sharpest at f/2.8, but it was difficult to see if the lens was sharper at f/2 or f/4. For all practical use, you can consider f/2, f/2.8 and f/4 to be the sharpest. The sides and corners at the wider apertures, when pixel-peeped, did show a minute reduction in sharpness, but overall, there was nothing to really complain about. It was difficult to make out if there was any barrel or pin-cushion distortion.

The Nikkor Z 35mm f/1.2 S lens can focus as close as 30cm (12-inches) which can provide good closeups of medium-size



Camera: Nikon Z 8
Lens: Nikkor Z 35mm F/1.2 S
Aperture: f/11
Shutter Speed: 1.3 sec
Focal Length: 35.0 mm
ISO: 640

Rohinton Mehta

subjects like flowers or larger jewelry but do keep in mind that at such close focussing distances, depth of field will be practically non-existing if you shoot wide open at f/1.2, or f/1.4. Those who love dreamy out of focus backgrounds – especially wedding and function photographers -- will love this lens.

available at an MRP of Rs.2,57,995. So, is it expensive? My take on this is 'expensive' or 'not expensive' depends on how deep your pockets are. To me for example, it is expensive but may not be so for others. One point to

remember is that superfast f/1.2 lenses need to have larger front elements. Manufacturing glass elements of this size, plus the advanced lens coatings, are some factors that raise the costs. **|SP**

VERDICT

Without a question of doubt, this is Nikon's best 35mm lens. Supersharpest, perfect contrast, flare and ghosting controlled superbly. Excellent bokeh. Distortions practically nil. Though expensive, you'll love it. We have no hesitation in awarding it 'Best Buy'.

Value for Money

The Nikkor Z 35mm f/1.2 S is

FINAL SCORE



Design and Build Quality



Key Features



Ergonomics



Performance



Value for Money



Overall



KEY SPECIFICATIONS

Lens mount: Z mount
Focal length: 35mm
Format: FX (full frame)
Lens elements: 17 elements in 15 groups (includes 3 x ED, 1 x aspherical ED, 3 x aspherical elements, and elements with meso-amorphous, Nano Crystal and ARNEO coats)

Aperture range: F/1.2 – 16
Diaphragm blades: 11 (rounded)
Max reproduction: 0.2x
Min. focus distance: 0.3m (11.8")
Filter size: 82mm
Lens dimensions: 90mm (Dia) x 150mm (L)
Weight: 1060g

PLUS

- Exceptional image quality
- Very good build quality
- Fast, near silent, and accurate AF
- Super-fast f/1.2 aperture
- Absolutely minimal focus breathing
- Good weather sealing at 11 places
- Smooth bokeh

MINUS

- Expensive
- Heavy for a 35mm lens (but remember, it's f/1.2)
- Feels too large on smaller, lighter bodies
- OLED displays found on other S-line lenses not on this lens
- No IBIS (but most Nikon Z bodies have it)



Rohinton Mehta

Camera: Nikon Z 8
Lens: Nikkor Z 35mm F/1.2 S
Aperture: f/1.2
Shutter Speed: 1/200 sec
Focal Length: 35.0 mm
ISO: 4000





In the Box

- ✓ Camera
- ✓ Front lens cap
- ✓ Rear lens cap
- ✓ Lens hood



Samyang AF 24mm-60mm F 2.8 FE ₹63,990/-

Great Performance, Affordable Price!

 Hoshang Billimoria

The second lens launched with the joint efforts of Samyang and Schneider Kreuznach is the 24mm to 60mm F 2.8 standard zoom for the Sony E mount. Coupled with the 14 – 24mm F 2.8, the buyer gets a focal range extending from 14mm to 60mm by buying two light, compact lenses. SP had this second lens and our review follows.

Design & Build Quality

This Samyang lens is meant for full frame Sony bodies with the E mount. Interestingly, Panasonic has also launched a 24 – 60mm F 2.8 with a L mount. The origin of this lens may well be common. The lens is well designed and finished. The lens has an outer barrel made of aluminium; the rest of the lens uses engineering plastics. This combination has kept the weight of the

lens low at 494g. The lens is weather resistant and features IR 5 level dust protection as well as oil repellent coating. It takes 72mm filters and Samyang offers a 4-year warranty. The lens is nicely packaged and comes with front and rear caps as well as a lens hood but no case.

Key Features

The Samyang 24–60mm F 2.8 features 14 elements in 11 groups. Of these, three are Aspherical, two are ED and three are HR. 9 diaphragm blades are used. A UMC coating has been applied and the front element gets an additional fluorite coating. The lens is compact with a maximum length of 102mm at 24mm and 126mm at 60mm. Close focus can be achieved up to 0.18m at wide angle end and 0.32m at the tele end. A linear STM focus motor has been provided for smooth video. The outer barrel features a MF/AF switch and a USB -C socket for firmware updates.

There is no built in Image Stabilisation but it is really not required since all current Sony bodies feature stabilisation.

Ergonomics

The compact size and light weight make handling much easier. The lens balances well with Sony bodies like the a7 III & IV.

Performance

Autofocus is quiet and brisk. On the field, the lens produced very good results with excellent central sharpness and good sharp corners. No flare was observed. Distortion and vignetting are present especially at 24 mm but is well controlled. Colour rendition was also accurate. The lens also provides smooth bokeh.

Overall, a very good performer.

Value for Money

The lens carries a MRP of Rs 63990 but is widely available at less. There is competition at this level but the Samyang is a good buy. A 24–70mm F 2.8 from the major companies can cost much more. **SP**

VERDICT

Samyang has arrived! Both the lenses we have reviewed offer very good performance at aggressive prices. BEST BUY.

Camera: Sony ILCE-7M3

Lens: Samyang AF 24mm-60mm F 2.8 FE

Aperture: f/5.6

Shutter Speed: 1/30 sec

Focal Length: 26.0 mm

ISO: 12800



FINAL SCORE

Design and Build Quality

★★★★☆

Key Features

★★★★☆

Ergonomics

★★★★☆

Performance

★★★★☆

Value for Money

★★★★★

Overall

★★★★☆

PLUS	MINUS
• Compact and light • Good build quality • Sharp results	• Some distortion and CA • No built in IS • Why not 70mm?

KEY SPECIFICATIONS

Mount: Sony E

AF motor: Linear STM

Aperture range: F/2.8-22

Optical construction:
14 elements in 11 groups, includes ASP 3, HR 3, ED 2

Coating: UMC

Min focus distance: 24mm: 0.18m (0.59ft);
60mm:0.32m (1.05ft)

No. of aperture blades: 9

Weather sealing: Yes

Filter size: 72mm

Weight: 494g w/out hood and lens cap

SanDisk Extreme Fit USB-C Flash Drive ₹4,999/-

Lightning fast backup

by Girish Mallya

The SanDisk Extreme Fit USB-C Flash Drive, is one of those rare accessories that genuinely solves a common frustration: running out of laptop storage without adding bulk or hassle. This tiny L-shaped drive (just 18.5 × 15.7 × 13.6 mm and a feather-light 3 grams) plugs into any USB-C port and is designed to stay there permanently, a true “plug-and-stay” solution. It sits almost flush against the side of your MacBook, Windows laptop, or even iPad, so you can close the lid without it getting crushed or snagged in a bag. That low-profile design is its biggest strength. You’ll never misplace it because it’s always attached, unlike traditional tiny USB drives that vanish into desk drawers or pockets.

Performance is good too, USB 3.2 Gen 1 delivers up to 400 MB/s read speeds



and decent write speeds (130–180 MB/s depending on capacity). It handles photo libraries, document backups, 4K video offloads, and even light app storage. The optional SanDisk Memory Zone app makes backups effortless on Windows and Mac. It works plug-and-play across macOS, Windows, iPadOS, and even some Android devices. A 5-year limited warranty adds peace of mind.

The only real negatives? Price and risk. The 512GB model typically costs around

Rs.4,999, significantly more expensive per GB than a comparable external SSD. And the 1TB version would be even worse at Rs.17,999 (pricing often scales poorly at the high end). We strongly recommend buying two 512GB drives instead of gambling everything on one larger capacity; that way, if you somehow lose or damage one, your data isn’t all in one fragile basket. We also wish SanDisk had added some form of “Find My” tracking support for iOS and Android, a small Bluetooth chip could have made this near-perfect for forgetful users. If you need discreet, always-available extra storage and hate carrying cables or bulky drives, the Extreme Fit is brilliant and highly recommended for students, professionals, and travelers. Just budget carefully and consider multiple smaller units for safety. It’s not a full external SSD replacement, but as a set-it-and-forget-it storage expander, it’s genuinely useful.**|SP**

UltraProLink Mag-Vault MagSafe Magnetic SD/microSD Card Reader ₹2,999/-

MagSafe storage expansion

by Girish Mallya

When we got the Mag-Vault for review we were hoping for a clever on-the-go solution for the iPhone, but after a week of testing it mostly sits in the drawer. Priced at ₹2,999 (MRP ₹3,999), it feels overpriced for what is essentially a USB-C 3.2 Gen 1 card reader with a magnetic twist and 100W PD pass-through.

The design is the highlight, it snaps magnetically to MagSafe iPhones (or any phone with the included metal ring) while plugging into the USB-C port. Dual slots handle full-size SD and microSD cards up to 2TB each, with claimed speeds of 160 MB/s read / 120 MB/s write. You can copy between

cards, offload ProRes/8K videos, or back up photos directly from the Files app, no extra software needed. But who actually does this, as phone are not really file storage options given limited storage space?!

The PD pass-through is useful: plug a charger into the reader and your phone charges at full speed while transferring. It works plug-and-play on iOS 17+, Android, Windows, and macOS, and the upright stand is stable on a desk.

That said, real-world use is extremely limited. Most people (including me) already run low on phone storage, so importing huge files from a camera card just fills it faster. Offloading from phone to card does free space, but it’s a niche



workflow, maybe for vloggers, drone operators, shooting 4K/8K on their iPhone who want cloud-free backups between takes. For everyone else, it’s overkill. On a laptop or tablet I’d rather grab a ₹500 traditional USB-C reader; the MagSafe magnet and pass-through add zero value there.**|SP**

DID YOU KNOW?

 **Hoshang Billimoria**

Here's a list of the top 10 best selling cameras in Japan for the month of February 2026.

1		Sony a 7 V body	6		Sony VLOGCAM ZV-E 10 II double zoom kit
2		Hasselblad X2D II 100c body	7		Nikon Z50II double zoom kit
3		Sony a 7C II zoom lens kit	8		Canon EOS R 50 double zoom kit
4		Fujifilm X-T 30 III with 13-33 mm lens	9		Canon EOS R 10 RF-S 18-150 mm IS STM lens kit
5		Sony a 7 C II body	10		Fujifilm X-E 5 with 23 mm lens

The market seems to be shifting towards AI focused Autofocus, partially stacked sensors and specialised lenses. Full frame camera sales are plateauing.

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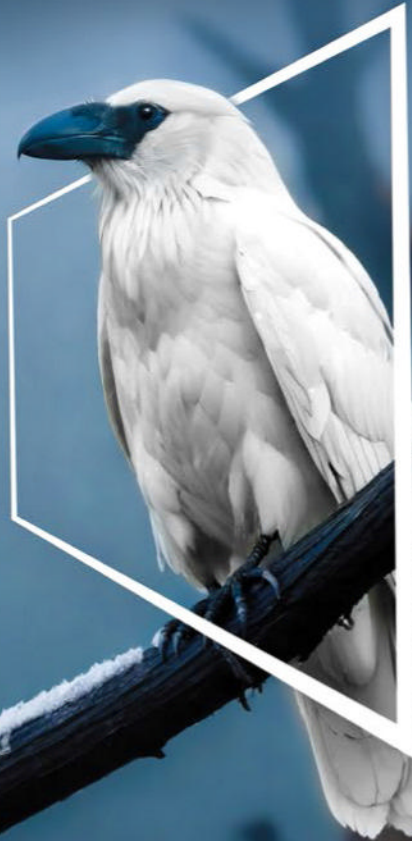
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