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Canon EOS 80D Review

Canon EOS 80D Review

October 2017, Carl Garrard



Canon's EOS 80D Review: Canon as a company, seems to have taken a huge leap forward with the 80D. Not only has Canon's semi-conductor division created a new sensor for the 80D that is much more competitive in the marketplace, it seems to have exceeded in image quality and overall performance than any other Canon branded APS-C sized sensors before it. Yet, it seems the value of what you get overall in the EOS 80D is extraordinary. This camera seems to be loaded. If you took most of the best features of its competitors that Canon has lacked, added the better sensor of its competitors, and put them all in an easy to use and versatile Canon camera body- you'd probably get a Canon EOS 80D. And while Canon still isn't offering 4K video in this body, there's no denying its value as a video device based on its features for the dollar. But value is always in the eye of the beholder. Let's get this review started.

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Canon EOS 80D Review- Introduction

Having owned, used, and reviewed so many Canon DSLR's I'm starting to realize that Canon are getting the message from its users and transfusing them into their newer cameras. Canon's 6D in my opinion was their best DSLR, and is still my favorite DSLR for the dollar these days. Yet the EOS 80D has features that my 6D does not (its new successor however does, but for a lot more money). While I often tout on this site that I love myself a simple Rangefinder or DSLR and a simpler overall shooting experience, there are newer features that are included in the 80D that I find that have real value in other's photography. And while I don't personally wish to have these features for still shooting, they could have a lot of value for some of my readers.

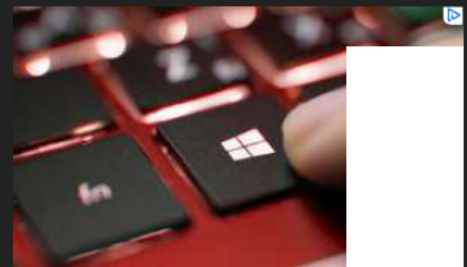
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Nikon D500 Review 2025: The Crop Sensor G.O.A.T? (Part 1)
January 2025, Carl Garrard Wow, I am finally getting around to my Nikon D500 review...



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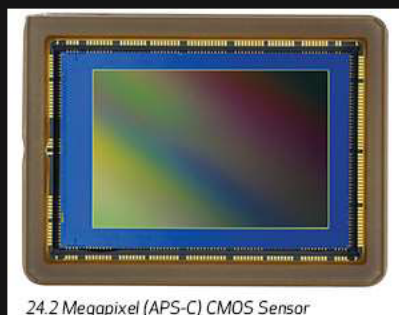


Now about newer features. I actually do like to use like NFC and Wifi at times (at least its growing on me), and having a camera that has a well implemented time lapse shooting/time lapse video option (more on this later) is also a valuable addition for my own needs. Having nice video options is becoming more important to customers as well. Also, it seems I and others prefer using sensors with as much dynamic range as possible.

I think we can all agree that we prefer having these features but not at the expense of a complicated body that doesn't handle well, or (clears throat), one that comes with a nightmarish menu system. No thanks. If I don't enjoy using a camera, I don't care what's packed inside, I won't use it or recommend it here.

Canon EOS 80D Review- Why Choose Canon?

Canon is a company that large in part has a slow-but-steady wins the race mentality, which I like. Until lately though, Canon might have taken that philosophy a bit too far. Canon generally make intuitively easy to use D/SLR bodies that operate and handle like they've been finely tuned over decades of progressive research and development. Body design and menu systems have never been a weak point for Canon DSLRs. But I, like others who are openly and unashamedly critical, have had a love hate relationship with many of their DSLR sensors in the past. And despite Canon's dominance as the #1 camera company in the world, no company is ever safe. Canon know this. Canon's newer sensors are proving to be catching up to the rest of the pack, but more importantly keeping its user base happy.



24.2 Megapixel (APS-C) CMOS Sensor

Canon's new sensor was the first for APS-C sized that caught up to the new wave of sensor design in many respects.

Until the arrival of the EOS 6D, I've nitpicked Canon's sensors for banding and/or lower dynamic range than I felt they ought to have fixed. The T2i is also a good DSLR that doesn't have those issues but I found them in a lot of their DSLR's. The Canon EOS 6D has an amazing sensor that excels at ultra low noise and exhibits no banding. It's also a simple and capable camera at the same time. I fell in love with it. And while I'm shooting rangefinders as my main system now, the 6D still gets use. To me it was a break out camera for Canon. And even though the dynamic range is good enough for me, many photographers have wished for more. With the new EOS 1D-X MK II and EOS 80D, Canon seem to finally have caught up in that department as well.

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► 2018 (48)

▼ 2017 (21)

► December (4)

► November (1)

▼ October (3)

► Oct 19 (1)

▼ Oct 08 (1)

Canon EOS 80D Review

► Oct 07 (1)

► September (7)

► August (1)

► July (2)

► April (1)

► March (1)

► February (1)

► 2016 (8)

► 2015 (13)

► 2014 (18)

► 2013 (36)



DIGIC 6 Image Processor

Canon's newer processing chip helps pull the most out of its new sensors

The arrival of the 80D and 1D-X MK II mark a point in Canon's history where they seem to be competitive with the best strengths their competitors have had to offer, all without sacrificing what Canon do best. I'm willing to bet that going forward, we'll see much less of the older sensor issues that have brought Canon criticism over the last several years.

Now that Canon are addressing the main weak point of their system, it looks like they will be winning back any lost business as a result. The EOS DSLR system as a whole is the strongest and most layered system out there- from service, to all of its well designed products (lenses, flashes, third party accessories support, you name it), it's hard to beat investing into a Canon system. With Canon's seemingly newer sensors being produced, they are effectively eliminating the one larger advantage of its competitors.

Wrap tin Foil around your Bananas, Here's Why

Nikon remain the only main competitor to Canon now as far as I'm concerned. Sure there are mirrorless system advantages from other brands, but I think Canon's new sensors and added features will bring back any lost business and keep them there. There are just too many advantages of the Canon system as a whole for professionals and enthusiasts alike.

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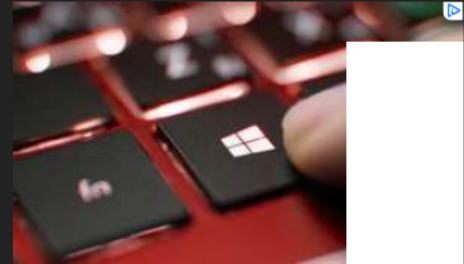
Canon EOS 80D Review- Body and Handling

Using the 80D you'll realize pretty quickly that this is a mid tier camera from Canon. While it lacks magnesium construction, it's still a very solidly built camera. In a way it feels like a super-Rebel, better in build quality, but not 7D MK II quality.



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Lots of control and buttons, but doesn't live up to the quality of build that say, the 50D did. The quality of build changed with the 60D and split the series into two lines- the XXD and 7D iterations. The 7D iterations have the same build quality of the 40/50D cameras.

I'm not overwhelmed with the feedback of some of the buttons or switches. The AF/DRIVE/ISO/Metering buttons feel spongy and unresponsive. The Live View/Video switch feels a little tight and unrefined. The rear control wheel/multi pad feel small and cramped in there. And I'd like to have a lock release for the mode dial too. It's just not as refined as I'm used too, or expect from a camera at this price I suppose.

However, the top control dial and the shutter release feel excellent- as does the AF area button right next to them. It's too bad all the others don't operate or feel as good, but they do the job just fine so don't be too worried, and try it for yourself. I don't want to make too big of a deal out of that, but it is worth mentioning here.



The 80D does not fall short on ports that help video shooters and/or still shooters alike. Headphone jack, mic, and remote ports are all included. None of this gets in the way of the 80D's handling either. Even the left side has a slight indent for portraiture held imaging.



A very comfortable grip, sculpted lines, and well placed controls really make the 80D a lovely camera to use. I much prefer the location of the control dial behind the shutter release personally. I like that Canon do this on a consistent basis just as Minolta did on some of their cameras. It's a proper position for such a control.



The back of the 80D is well laid out, mostly. I would prefer the AF lock/AF button to be where the AF-ON button is though, that said, it's just a nitpick. Overall the 80D is consistent with Canon's design philosophy and Canon shooters will feel pretty much at home no matter what Canon body you have, or have had in the past.

Holding and using the 80D is a wonderful experience mostly. It's a mid sized DSLR with a very comfortable grip even with bigger and heavier lenses attached. All day long shooting comfort is guaranteed even for those with a bit larger or smaller hands (mind are medium). Canon always design their DSLRS to be more comfortable and easy to use than most manufacturers, and the 80D is no different. Arguably, this fact is one of the major reasons I think Canon are so successful as a camera manufacturer.

Canon EOS 80D Review- Feature Set

Summarizing the highlights on the the EOS 80D here. These are newer or upgraded features that I believe will be most valuable to buyers considering this camera as a first Canon DSLR or as an upgrade to an existing body. The Canon EOS 80D is a feature rich camera.

- New 24MP APS-C sensor has less shadow noise and greater dynamic range over previous Canon APS-C sensors
- Time lapse/and Time lapse movie modes
- Excellent new 49 point AF system w/zone AF option

- 7 frames per second shooting
- 100,000 cycle rated shutter
- Excellent Live view modes incorporating touch screen for stills and video
- Wide native ISO range (expandable to 25,600)



A good camera app is essential when advertising a camera has wifi, Canons Camera Connect app is one of my favorites

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Time Lapse Movie Mode

Since I have a keen interest in making time lapse movies, I was excited to see that Canon have a comprehensive Time Lapse feature that includes in camera Time Lapse movie making. So I'll report my synopsis on how well it works.

I chose to use M mode since it gives me the most control over the movie making. This allows me to choose aperture, shutter speed, ISO, and other values that I want control over. If you shoot with any program modes such as TV, A, or P, you'll have less control over the exposure process and cannot choose ISO for example.

What I like is that when you choose the amount of images and the interval in between each shot, Canon shows you how long it will take to make your movie, and, how long the output movie will be. This is clever and really helpful. For instance if you need to make a movie at sunset, you can sync your time lapse shooting to end right as the sunset goes down perfectly just by knowing how much time you have till sunset. Example (sorry for the small video):



I don't like that you can't choose the frame rate of the movie. However, I do like that while you are shooting, the LCD goes black and stays black, and the top LCD gives you a countdown of how many images are left plus some basic information. This conserves battery life considerably.

Even though there isn't as much overall control as Panasonic's implementation, I actually prefer Canon's better- it's easier to use and there is still plenty of control of the images. The movie is made instantly too, not after you shoot which can be a bit confusing or worrisome at first, but it's just done.

Tips: Using Canon's HTP mode gives you great dynamic range in your movie allowing for a wide range of light to be shot. If you want to change your frame rate later (slower only of course) you can use a movie editor, but I find that 29FPS at full HD is a good balance. Still I'd like to have a choice.

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Canon EOS 80D Review- Image Quality

Image quality to be expected today, is excellent, both from raw and jpeg. Jpegs can be ultra fine tuned to ridiculous levels (amazing amount of choices), and noise reduction can be completely shut off to zero. Customization and control are in your hands just as they ought to be. Well done Canon.

First a couple of nitpicks- Even with the zero option, NR isn't completely off but it's very close to being off. I know this because I directly compared raw output to jpeg output with zero noise reduction of any kind using adobe camera raw.

Also, I'd like to see the sensor without an AA filter on the 80D but, Canon's choice of an AA filter is a good balance of getting the job done without removing too much detail. There is still a lot of detail, especially so with a good lens (such as the 24-70mm f/4 USM I used for this review).

Those are my only nitpicks about the image quality. Not bad really.



ACR RAW converted, with no sharpening or noise reduction done at all. A 100% crop below shows that the 80D could benefit from the lack of an AA filter (lens softness, and slight missed AF aside, of course).

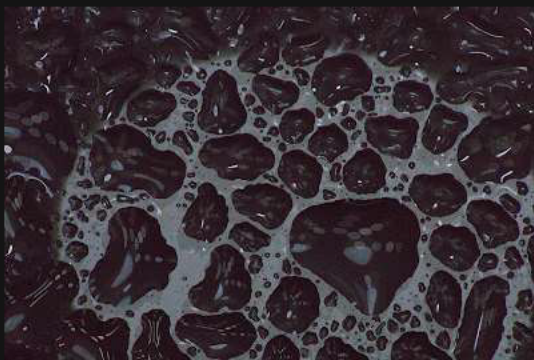


100% crop.

shadows a lot without adding much noise, and two, there's no banding penalty. Highlights can be pulled back a bit too, which is nice, but I'd expose for highlights and pull up shadows later, just to be safe.

Highlight Tone Priority works great with the raw and jpeg files and gives you added protection in keeping your highlights and making a great exposure. The new sensor seems to really benefit from HTP mode, so for certain circumstances I'd recommend using it. But try with and without so you can get an idea for our own needs which works best.

Noise, and ISO. I'd not really push the 80D past ISO 1600 for most images. Noise does creep in starting at ISO 400, and may be a bit more evident because of its resolution. If you want the cleanest files, keep your ISO down. If you don't mind a bit of noise or want smaller prints, the 80D will do fine up to 12,800 ISO but over this setting pushes the files too far.



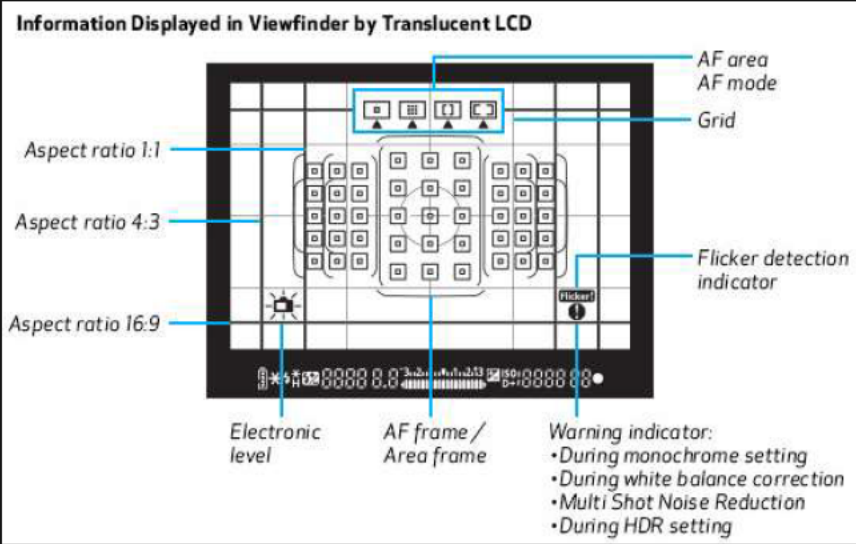
Macro shot ISO 16,000. Color shift and heavy noise are evident. ACR conversion, zero noise reduction of any kind. If you want integrity in tact, then I'd just shoot below 12,800.

Canon's image quality has now large in part caught up with competitors to the point that their advantages have dwindled greatly. Canon's dual pixel AF and its implementation blows away the competition for video capture, and works excellently for live view implementation as well. Considering the system as a whole, Canon are once again back on top as far as I am concerned so long as they continue with their new line of sensors in new models going forward. I anticipate this is the case considering the last two releases have a better sensor.



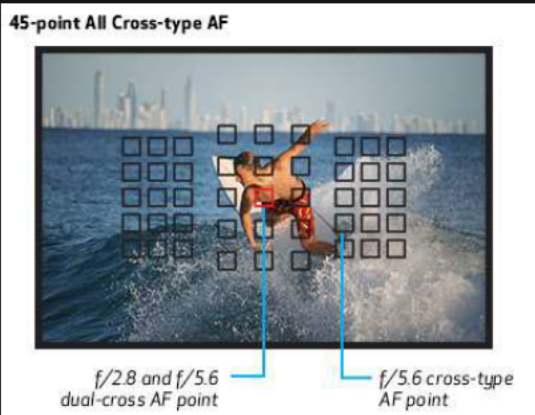
Canon EOS 80D Review- Autofocus Summary

Right about now you may be thinking that the 80D sounds like a well rounded, jack of all trades sort of DSLR, and you'd be right. But just how well does the 80D operate as a camera capable of action photography? The answer depends on what your expectations are, so if you expect EOS 1DX mk II performance for 1/6th the price, you may want to revisit your expectations for the dollar. However, if you have reasonable expectations for an action camera, you're in luck. Specs wise, the 80D has a 45 point all cross type AF system (f 5.6 for all but the center which is a "dual" f/2.8-5.6 type), and shoots up to 7 frames per second.



Specs alone do not translate into real world performance. That's what doing reviews is for. So I tested the 80D with two common lenses you've heard of- the newer Tamron 70-300mm f/4-5.6 VC (full frame lens) and the Canon 24-70mm f/4 USM (another full frame lens) to see how well it could track and hold moving subjects. Doing this test means that lens speed is a factor, and of the two the Tamron was noticeably slower- not the best action lens (the new Canon 70-200mm f/4 or f/2.8 would be better but much more expensive). Canon's 24-70mm USM was faster and more accurate, so I think you'd be better off sticking with a Canon lens with USM for action.

Judging however on the tracking abilities, I found the 80D to be a reliable camera (with a Canon lens), and I found choosing the manual select zone AF (9 points) to be the best choice for me, followed right behind with the total Auto 45 point selection. Both worked really well, but the manual 9 zone kept a tighter focus area to which I prefer. Keeper rates were high, above 90% in well light scenes, falling to about 50% in much dimmer circumstances. The more light the faster and better the AF system works (with both lenses).



In very low light, the -3EV rating wasn't as sensitive as expected- so don't expect it to be a sleeper low light demon. Considering I have 6D which can lock focus confidently, reliably, and consistently in near dark conditions- it had tough competition to go against. That said, it's still a solid performer in low light but could definitely benefit from a dedicated AF assist lamp (perhaps the red grid pattern type). I choose not to use the obnoxious on-board flash for this task, but that's just me.

- Best overall performing Canon APS-C sensor yet
- No fixed pattern banding at all in raw files
- Ability to push shadows far in raw (excellent dynamic range)
- Plentiful resolution (with a sharp lens, the AA filter isn't too strong either)
- Feature rich, excellent value
- A capable all in one stills/video solution (Canon created a super Rebel)
- Excellent advanced viewfinder, looks huge with the MG-Eb attached- 100% coverage too
- Big battery, very good battery life
- Excellent customization options for controls and screens
- Very good buffer
- Excellent AF system in most conditions
- Touch screen is done right
- LCD screen is 3:2 ratio even though its a variable (I don't like 16:9 or 4:3 screens)
- Excellent Time Lapse Movie mode (mostly), smart and easy to use

Areas the 80D could be improved, or to consider as a buyer:

- Low light focusing not quite as good as advertised (rated same as 6D but not as quick or effective). Also, it does not hunt long enough in live view mode, gives up quick, standard shooting AF is better
- Lack of dedicated AF lamp (flash is not always effective especially at close distances and quite bright and obnoxious at times... most Canon DSLRs are like this)
- Exterior finish is more delicate than I expected- not as good as 7D/6D
- Spongy smaller buttons, (top panel AF/DRIVE/ISO/Metering) give a lack of feedback
- Time lapse movie mode is limited in options in A/TV/P modes, examples: only allows one setting for one movie type, resolution, fps and will not allow ISO settings to be changed (M mode allows for ISO/aperture/shutter speed changes however)
- Lack of eye sensor (to switch off LCD automatically when looking through viewfinder)

Canon EOS 80D Review- Conclusion

I believe the 80D was one of Canons answers to criticism of their in house semi conductor division, and I believe that most users who purchase or use the 80D will think so too. Canon have a reputation for taking well calculated, progressive steps in designing their cameras. If Canon are good at one thing, it's that they do not abandon or alienate their user base that they have earned over the years. Canon cannot be everything to everyone, and no camera company can. But they do appeal to the widest range of photographers more than any other company for a reason.



Canon's 80D represents an excellent overall value for its user base, and makes a statement about Canon's dedication to them. For those not wanting pro level gear, the 80D may be a very good choice as an overall device that can handle a wide range of tasks and do them remarkably well in most circumstances. While the 80D isn't a personal favorite of mine to use, I found it to be well worthy of recommending to other readers who use DLRS here because of its incredible versatility, well rounded feature set, and competent capability overall.

It may not be the best performer in any single category, but as a whole, its hard to find another camera in its price range that would be more pleasant and capable to use. And that's the key really, real life use. When shopping for a camera you can compare specs all day, but until you use it, you won't know if you really like it or not. Pick one up and try it out for yourself, if you are in the market.

Stay focused.

-Carl Garrard

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