

PRO FIELD TEST
NIKON D3x FULL-FRAME PROFESSIONAL DSLR

Nikon D3x

Nikon's latest full-frame flagship DSLR offers a staggering 24.5-megapixel-resolution. Pro photographer Ross Hoddinott puts it through its paces

Guide price: £6,000 Street price: £5,400

IMAGE RESOLUTION: 24.5-megapixels
SENSOR: Full-frame CMOS
LCD: 3in (920,000 pixels)
STORAGE: CompactFlash (Two slots)
WEIGHT: 1,260g (without battery)
PHONE: 0800 230220
WEBSITE: www.nikon.co.uk



REGARDLESS OF THE CURRENT gloomy financial climate, £6,000 is a substantial amount of money to invest in a camera. Even as a professional, it is difficult for me to justify spending such a large sum. However, if your budget can stretch to it – or you've recently had a windfall – you will struggle to buy a camera with a higher specification than Nikon's D3x. Boasting an FX-format CMOS image sensor with twice as many photosites as the widely acclaimed D3, the 24.5-megapixel D3x was designed very much with the high-end professional in mind. However, costing over £3,000 more than the 21.1-megapixel Canon EOS 5D MkII and the 24.6-megapixel Sony Alpha 900, can it justify its hefty price-tag? As an existing Nikon user – and owner of D700 and D300 bodies – I couldn't wait to get my grubby paws on the D3x in order to find out...

When Nikon announced the D3x last December, it came as no great surprise. Its launch had been widely anticipated, as had its huge resolution. Of great surprise, though, was its price tag. At a time when the cost of high quality DSLRs is tumbling, £6,000 doesn't appear to be good value. However, this is undeniably a high specification camera that is a genuine alternative to medium-format, and will, no doubt, appeal to studio photographers looking for something more portable. At first glance, it looks identical to the D3. The design and ergonomics, which date back to 2007, are unchanged. Whilst it might be unusual for Nikon not to tweak design, this is not necessarily a criticism. The D3 handles superbly – so the D3x is equally enjoyable to use. Weighing 1220g (without battery), this is a

heavy camera. Its magnesium alloy body is sealed for moisture and dust resistance. It is robust and solid with chunky, comfortable grips that are secure to hold – something that is welcome when, what you are holding, is equal in value to a small car! Admittedly, its weight and size might not appeal to consumers, but they suit the rigours of professional use.

Whilst its high resolution image sensor, with 12-channel readout, gapless micro lens array and on-chip noise reduction will make all the headlines, the D3x offers much more aside. It supports an ISO range from ISO 100-1600, extendable down to the equivalent of ISO 50 and up to 6400. The D3 is renowned for its impressive low-noise performance at high sensitivities, and the D3x also boasts fantastic image quality throughout its ISO range. This will prove particularly appealing to nature and sports photographers who need to capture fast action in low-light. However, it is worth noting that the D3x's sensitivity range is a couple of stops smaller than the D3, which boasts an extended range of ISO 100-25,600. Due to the larger pixel count, frame rate is also reduced. The D3 boasts a maximum burst of 9fps – at full FX resolution – whilst the D3x is capable of a more modest 5fps, which drops to just 1.8fps if capturing images in 14-bits. Whilst this is still fast, and more than sufficient for the majority of photographers, it may prove a stumbling block for action photographers who are required to shoot large, continuous bursts day-to-day. ▶



ISO PERFORMANCE SET: The Nikon D3 is superb at high ISOs so it was interesting to see how well the D3x would perform. Despite its FX-format sensor boasting twice as many pixels, the D3x still shows low levels of noise.



Supplied accessories

Rechargeable Li-ion EN-EL4a battery, MH-22 quick charger, UC-E4 USB cable, EG-D2 AV cable, AN-D3X camera strap, BF-1A body cap, BS-2 shoe cover, DK-17 eyepiece, BL-4 battery chamber cover, Quick Guide, instructions and software CD.



Viewfinder

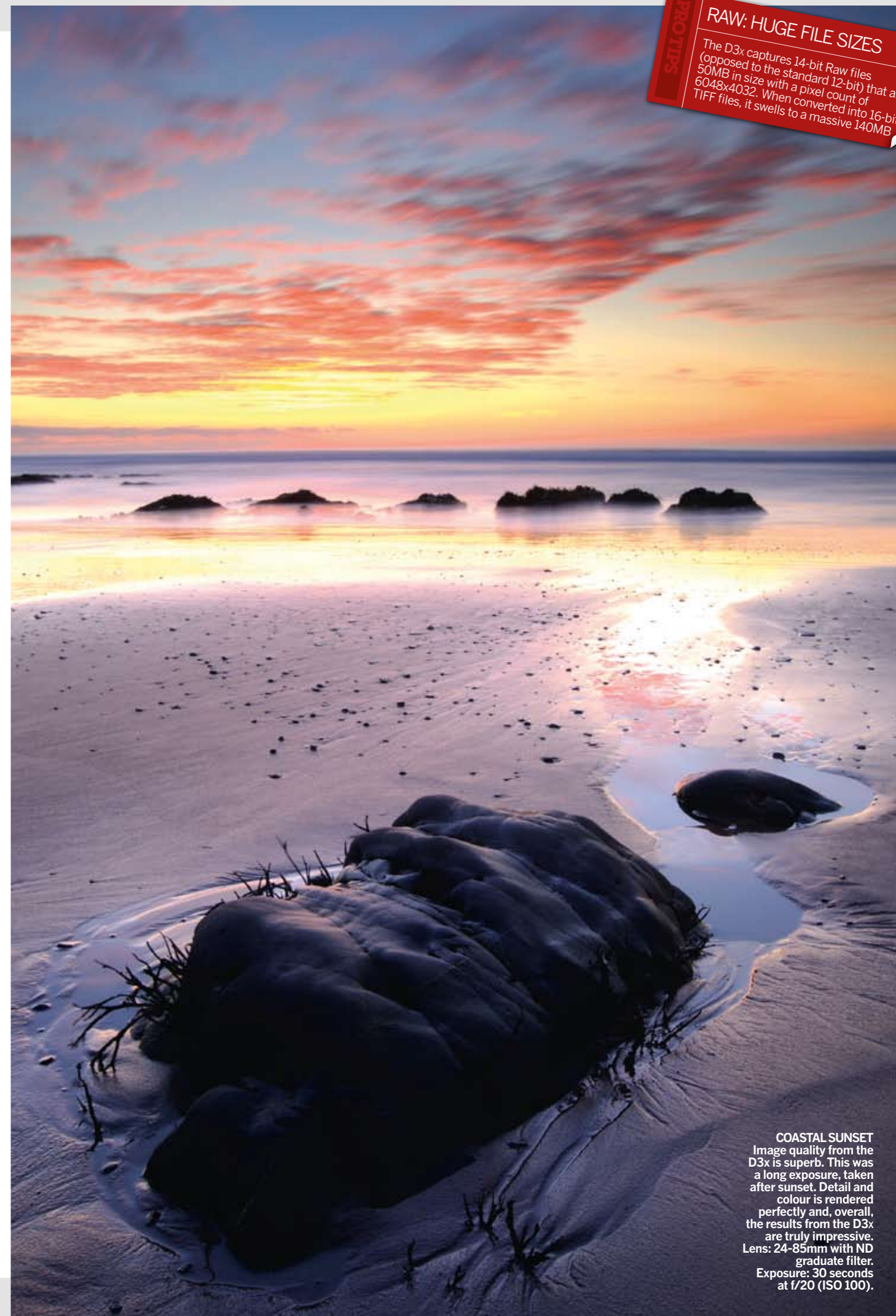
As with all full-frame DSLRs, the viewfinder screen is large, bright and sharp, while two sets of LED readouts provide a wealth of exposure information.



CMOS sensor

The FX-format sensor measures 35.9x24mm and was designed exclusively for Nikon's newest flagship camera, the D3x.

PRO TIPS
RAW: HUGE FILE SIZES
The D3x captures 14-bit Raw files (opposed to the standard 12-bit) that are 50MB in size with a pixel count of 6048x4032. When converted into 16-bit TIFF files, it swells to a massive 140MB



COASTAL SUNSET
Image quality from the D3x is superb. This was a long exposure, taken after sunset. Detail and colour is rendered perfectly and, overall, the results from the D3x are truly impressive. Lens: 24-85mm with ND graduate filter. Exposure: 30 seconds at f/20 (ISO 100).