



Ricoh GR Digital II

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Professional photographers have long set out to find the holy grail of compact cameras. In the days of film, many loved the Nikon 35Ti and the Ricoh GR. Now film cameras are slipping away, the quest for a superior digital compact has begun. On websites such as *Lightstalkers.org*, photographers can be found clamouring for photo examples and nuggets of information

from their contemporaries who have their hands on the latest pocket sized 10MP digital camera and are willing to tell the world how happy they are with the results and how little they had to spend.

The Ricoh GR Digital II succeeds the GR Digital released in October 2005, which itself was launched as the successor to the GR series of 35mm compact film cameras, first



Dog at Butchers, Holland Park



Norfolk Strawberry

“I shot some scenes you only find in Norfolk, most wonderful of which was a large red plastic strawberry. The smoothness of the image is very pleasing - **a major vindication of the GR Digital II**”

released in 1996. The GR Digital II retains the original concept of the GR Digital, achieving high-resolution, excellent resolving power from edge to edge, low noise, and low colour aberration. In addition, it is equipped with the newly developed GR II image processing engine, resulting in a reduction in noise relative to the GR Digital; and a new 10MP CCD for improved resolution.

I decided it was time to put this most talked about of digital compacts to the test. I could begin by telling you about its magnesium alloy rubberised body, its fixed f/2.4 28mm lens, Ricoh's GR Engine II and its array of settings – but I won't; instead I am going to tell you how the Ricoh performs as a pocket point and shoot for the professional photographer.

To enjoy the GR Digital II as a 35mm-type camera, it's best to select its raw 3:2 format

setting, which provides you with an impressive 9MB file. You also have the option of a 1:1 square format, producing a 7MB raw file. Many photographers have a distinct distrust of not looking through a viewfinder when taking a shot, and to address this Ricoh has introduced the sleek external 28mm hotshoe viewfinder, the GV-2.

My first outing for the GR Digital II was on my way to photograph Simon Cowell for *Glamour* magazine. Carrying an additional camera body when on foot can be punishing. The Ricoh however tucked neatly into my jacket pocket. As I came out of Holland Park tube, there was a dog tied up outside a butchers, with his paws up on the glass, looking in at the sausages and steaks, which the Ricoh was perfect for capturing, its metering and automatic white balance dealing with a difficult combination of natural and fluorescent lighting very well.

Next up was a group of Polish builders outside a large house. I asked them if I could take their portrait, and they happily lined up and posed for the unobtrusive Ricoh. When I got out my Nikon D2X to take a shot however, they went from relaxed to rather suspicious. Many Magnum photographers have talked about how the Leica - a small humble looking camera - has allowed them access, where photographers with larger cameras have been turned away.

The next day, I took my son to see his grandmother in the wilds of Norfolk. When we arrived, the light was stunning. While on the beach, I shot the promenade. Colour capture was superbly accurate, not something you can always rely on with digital compacts. The GV-2 viewfinder meanwhile provided excellent clarity with clear framing markers. I soon discovered however that it is



Polish Builders

inaccurate when pointing or tilting the camera downward. This proved a slight problem, as I was initially determined not to compose photographs using the LCD. However, the clarity and ease of use of the 2.7ins 230,000-pixel display soon made me feel extremely comfortable not using the viewfinder.

On the way home, the light was once again beautiful, and I was able to stop and shoot some scenes that you may only find in Norfolk, most wonderful of which was a large red plastic strawberry at a fruit-picking farm. I decided to test the 1:1 square format option. The smoothness of the final image, shot at ISO200, is very pleasing. Obviously, the light plays an important part in the success of this result, but for me this is a major vindication of the GR Digital II.

I carried the camera with me wherever I went for the next week, aiming to take a photograph a day. London throws up so many odd scenarios that not to have a camera with you can be upsetting. When I stumbled across a hen party in Leicester Square having their portraits done by a street artist, I was very happy to have the GR Digital II with me. However, due to the poor January light, the file was a little flat for my liking.

After spending some time with the GR Digital II, even taking it to the zoo to photograph my son and the animals, I must say I am impressed. Its pop up flash is very good, its noise reduction excellent, its array of functions easy to access, and its durability and weight inspire confidence. One quibble I have is that

the GR Digital II software is not Mac compatible, which seems odd, as creative types such as photographers would desire this camera and most of them use Macs.

Ricoh has managed to squeeze an incredible amount of technology into a very small camera, enabling you to have the freedom to photograph in whatever situation you find yourself. Ricoh has made important improvements over the GR Digital in the GR Digital

II, including shortening the raw write time and securing the battery.

For about £370, this camera is a steal. It's not a DSLR of course, and it doesn't have the highest megapixel count available in a digital compact, nor the longest zoom range (or any zoom range at all, for that matter!), but for what it's designed for – keeping in the pocket and producing high quality files in short order – it is unsurpassed. **f2**

Ricoh GR Digital II

- 10MP CCD
- f/2.4 5.9mm lens (equivalent to 28mm on a 35mm camera)
- GR II image processing engine achieves noise reduction
- Electronic level function tells you if the camera is level
- Square format photography enabled
- Colour, colour depth, contrast, & sharpness can be adjusted in +/- 5 steps
- Function button enables one-push mode switching
- 2.7ins, 230,000-pixel LCD display with a 160° viewing angle
- Raw writing time reduced
- Flash exposure compensation from +2.0 to -2.0 EV
- Approx 370 shots with one charge of the included rechargeable battery (DB-60)
- 107x59x25mm, 168g

www.ricoh.co.uk