

The Canon RF Revolution – More Gear Changes Than Ever Before

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Canon has started taking orders for the EOS R5 and a wealth of other gear, and it will result in me changing more gear in such a short space of time than ever before, so today I'm going to explain my strategy and expectations for the future. The [EOS R5](#) was first announced around six months ago, with Canon uncharacteristically publishing a news release about the fact that they were developing this camera and a number of other lenses including a new [100-500mm](#) RF lens.

If you've been following my blog or podcast for the last few years, you'll already know that I am all in on Canon's mirrorless camera range, but I'll step back a little further and explain what changed, and why I have been so happy to make this shift, and then move on to why I'm really looking forward to the R5 and how my gear bag will completely transform over the next two months. I'll also talk about how I'm essentially doing this with virtually no additional expenditure, although that is mostly due to past investment, and not some magic formula that I've stumbled across.

Why Canon Mirrorless?

First, let's talk about why I'm all in with the Canon RF Mirrorless system. You'll probably agree that Canon came late to the mirrorless camera market, and I have to tell you, that around the time they released the Canon EOS 5Ds R, I was seriously considering jumping ship to Sony. Sony has and continues to really push the boundaries with mirrorless and have probably been a big factor in finally forcing Canon to pull their thumb out of their aperture. The high resolution and image quality of the 5Ds R were enough to keep me loyal though, and since its release in the summer of 2015, I was in many ways totally happy with my gear, and my decision to stay with Canon.

I took great pleasure in blowing all of the myths about the 5Ds R out of the water, using it hand-held at low shutter speeds and high ISOs, and for most major genres, including wildlife, which no-one thought this camera was capable of. Even my friends at Canon told me that they weren't necessarily 100% happy with

what I was publishing, because they didn't think that everyone could pull as much out of the 5Ds R as I could, but for me, that just made me even happier to do what I was doing.

When the EOS R was announced almost two years ago, I initially pretty much ignored it, mostly because I was in gear nirvana. I was so happy with the gear that I owned that I just didn't have my antenna out looking for anything other than a higher resolution 5Ds R. But then I stumbled across a technical document about the RF mount, and after a few minutes looking at that, I realized that Canon had done what they needed to do to not only get into the mirrorless game but to put a foundation in place to help them lead it. It was also obvious to me at that point, that Canon wasn't playing at this. They'd developed a mount that would take their camera system into a new era.

The RF mount has more electronic contacts, helping them to do more with the lens, like the addition of the Control Ring, which I love having mapped to my ISO, but the biggest change was that the RF mount puts the back of the lens just 20mm from the sensor. Compared to 44mm with the EF mount, because they needed room for the mirror, the light coming out of the back of the lens has less distance to travel and therefore doesn't spread out as much, which of course, leads to sharper images.

Not to say that the images from my old EF lenses were bad in any way, but as I showed in my 5Ds R and EOS R Printoff post, a 30-megapixel image from the EOS R with the RF 24-105mm lens could be printed larger than a 50-megapixel image with the EF 24-105mm lens. I also have a quick test shot to share later from the new RF 15-35mm f/2.8 lens that absolutely blew me away with regards to edge sharpness on such a wide-angle lens.

EOS R Not Perfect, But...

I saw Canon's future in that one document about the RF lens mount, and it gave me enough confidence to sell one of my 5Ds R bodies, and replace it with my first EOS R at the end of 2018. On my Hokkaido Landscape Tour

& Workshop, I found the first problem with the EOS R that would hamper my photography a number of times over the course of the next year, and that was the tendency for the electronic viewfinder to fog up if the camera got wet. It didn't seem to be a problem when it was really cold, but in temperatures floating around freezing point, it was a pain.

As I got stuck into faster-paced shooting on my Japan Wildlife Tours in 2019, even with the settings adjusted to give the best possible performance of the electronic viewfinder, I found that I was always looking at a stroboscopic view of the subject as I released the shutter in burst mode, and although I got used to it after a day or so, it would occasionally cost me a few frames. These two issues were really the only issues though, and I could work around both and was in general very happy with the EOS R. So much so that I quickly replaced my second 5Ds R with a second EOS R, and sold my EF 24-105mm lens. I also sold my EF 85mm f/1.4 lens and replaced it with the RF 50mm f/1.2 lens, which is absolutely stunning!

No Newly Developed EF Lenses

I was all-in and confident that Canon was on the right track, and then they announced that they will not be developing any new EF lenses, to enable them to concentrate of the RF line-up, and I did a few mental fist-pumps, as this proved to me that my hunches had been spot-on. The RF mount is the future of Canon. Canon's lens mounts over almost a century of camera manufacturing have mostly lasted around ten years each, until the EF mount which was released in 1987, and lasted over thirty years. Although there will be no new EF lenses developed, they'll still be manufactured for a while to support current customers, so the EF era isn't necessarily over, but with the RF mount coming onto the scene in 2018, it makes me wonder if it's going to outrun the EF lineup. If it does, the RF mount will probably outlive me too, and that isn't necessarily a bad thing.

Looking Ahead

So, that's the background, now let's talk about

what's coming soon, and my strategy to move pretty much all of my work over to RF glass and the new EOS R5 which will be hitting the streets in about a week's time. The biggest change that I've just executed, although I decided that this would be what I'd do in January this year, is that I have just sold my 200-400mm lens, with the built-in 1.4X Extender. I loved that lens, but want to talk about the reasons for letting it go.

First and foremost, is that since Canon released the updated 100-400mm lens in the summer of 2016, I actually really only used the 200-400mm for the Red-Crowned Cranes, owls and foxes on my Japan Winter Wildlife Tours. Even for the rest of this tour I almost exclusively used the 100-400mm, so we are talking around 4 to 5 days of use per year, and that really isn't enough to warrant keeping it. For my other wildlife work, such as Namibia, and all other trips that I do, the 100-400mm was the longest lens that I took along.

That is the main reason for letting it go, making up around 70% of the incentive, with around 29% of the remainder being a financial incentive. With the virus hitting my business pretty hard, I simply cannot afford to buy all of the new gear that is coming along without selling something, and I was able to get the equivalent of around \$6,000 US for my six and a half-year-old lens, and along with the money I got for one of my EOS R bodies, will pay for both the EOS R5 and the new 100-500mm lens which is scheduled for release in September.

The other change which I have made just last week is that I have sold my EF 11-24mm f/4 lens, along with my Mark III 1.4X and 2X Extenders, and they came to around \$15 more than I needed to pick up the RF 15-35mm f/2.8 lens, which has actually been on the market for around six months already. I have been planning to make this change for a while, but because I wasn't in a position to also sell the Extenders, I held off until now. And if you are wondering what I'm going to do for extenders now, well, I actually had around \$1,600 of points from selling the second of my 5Ds R bodies, and that neatly covers the cost of the two new RF mount Extenders which are also being released in around a week's time.

Extender Zoom Restrictions

With the 100-500mm a couple of months out, the Extenders will have no lens to attach them to for a while, but I'll report on how these work with the 100-500mm as soon as I get a chance to shoot with them in September. One relatively large disappointment with this combination is that the 100-500 lens is restricted to a 300mm widest focal point when used with the new Extenders.

Looking at the design, it's obvious that the protruding elements of the Extenders prevent the back element of the lens from moving to their full extent, so instead of a 200-1000mm lens with the 2X Extender, we get a 600-1000mm lens, and with the 1.4X Extender, we're looking at a 420-700mm lens. This does reduce the versatility of the lens when combined with the Extenders, but this is, at this point, the first time that the shorter distance to the sensor has added a negative aspect to Canon's RF Mount and Mirrorless line-up. I'll live with it, and having the ability to shoot at up to 1000mm with such a small system will be very welcome too.

The Final Upcoming Change

To round out all of my planned changes, I will actually sell the EF 100-400mm and my second EOS R body in September, when the 100-500mm is released, and expect that the money I get for those two items will get me pretty close to what I need to buy a second EOS R5. I really like shooting with two identical bodies, and I know for a fact that once I start shooting with the R5, taking my EOS R as a second body will really mean that unless the R5 broke, the second body would hardly get used. It's not that the EOS R is a bad camera. I really do like that camera, but I know how my mind works, and when there are benefits to be reaped from using something else, I generally go with that.

I recall being in Iceland around six years ago with my 5D Mark III and a 1 DX body and killed my 5D Mark III in the rain to prove a point, and I hated the fact that I had to drop down from 22 megapixels to 18 for the few days that it took for my 5D to come back to life. That was me worrying over just 4 megapixels, so I know

that a drop of 15 megapixels from the R5 to the EOS R will be too great for my simple mind to handle.

A Tribute to the 200-400mm Lens

I can't say that I am all smiles regarding these changes. I will miss the 200-400mm and 11-24mm lenses. These two lenses are absolutely amazing and have been a pleasure to own. In the past, I've done entire posts as tributes to lenses that I've had to let go. I just opened Capture One Pro and started looking through my 200-400mm shots hoping to find just one that I could share and say, this is my favorite! But that plan went out of the window in just a few minutes. I managed to whittle it down to a selection of 10 images though, so I'll drop those into an album in case anyone is interested.

I was reminded too, as I looked through these images, how liberating it was to switch from the 600mm f/4 and 300mm f/2.8 to just the one lens, and the zoom and built-in extender made it incredibly versatile. I also remember though that in the few years before Canon releasing the Mark II 100-400mm lens, I would routinely hand-hold the 200-400mm on the boat photographing the sea eagles.

On the following pages you'll find the other eight images from this selection before we continue with the text...

That Missing 1%

I also just recalled that I didn't tell you what the last 1% of my reason for selling the 200-400mm lens was. Well, it was because as wonderful as it was to have that 1.4X Extender built right into the lens, there were a number of times in fast-paced shooting when I'd lose shots through being indecisive about the timing of flipping that switch. Of course, having to take the lens off the camera to add an external extender takes much longer, but when it's fitted, or not fitted, you generally run with it until the action stops. There's less to be indecisive about.





















A Tribute to the 11-24mm Lens

I did the same exercise with images from my 11-24mm lens, and actually found it harder to whittle down my initial selection of 41 images to just ten, but here again, is an album of my favorite ten images with this lens. I know I'm a big softy, but I enjoy looking back and taking a moment to pay tribute to the gear that has helped me to capture what I consider to be some of my best work.

There will be times when I miss that 4mm that I'm losing by switching from the 11-24mm to a 15-35mm lens, but I can't say I'll miss having to take the lens off my camera to put a piece of cut gelatin ND filter into the filter holder on the back of the 11-24mm lens, and then try to get it back on the camera without moving the focus or zoom rings, because with heavy filters, even by increasing the ISO, I couldn't see to compose and focus with the filter attached. But otherwise, I'll certainly miss the 11-24mm.





















Canon RF 15-35mm f/2.8 Lens First Impressions

Having literally only shot a handful of images with the [Canon RF 15-35mm f/2.8 L IS USM Lens](#) at this point, I'm not really in a position yet to do a full review, but I did want to share a few images in a First Impressions style update. The first thing that hit me as I took the 15-35mm lens out of its box is that it's bigger than I anticipated, but being an f/2.8 lens, and a sturdily built L lens, I guess I should have expected that, and it certainly isn't a problem.

I lose 4mm on the wide end of the focal length range and gain 11mm on the long end, and it will be nice to once again have a little overlap with my 24-105mm lens, which makes it more versatile. Here is a photo of the two lenses together, to give you an idea of their difference in size and shape. Note that the 15-35mm lens is slightly closer to the camera so that I could focus on the text of both lenses, and that might make the 15-35mm lens look slightly larger by comparison. At 840g though, the 15-35mm is a welcome 340g lighter than the 11-24mm lens, and dimensions-wise it's 20mm smaller in diameter, and 5mm shorter in height.

Before I boxed up the 11-24mm lens to send to the shop that I'd bought the 15-35mm lens from in part-exchange, I placed the 50mm lens on the table, and from approximately the same distance, shot a photo with each of the wide-angle lenses at the widest focal length. This may not be an apples-to-apples comparison, but with limited time, I found the information that I was most concerned about, and that was how much wider that 4mm gets me in practical use, and sharp the lenses are in comparison, at the center, and near their edges.



First, here are the two images uncropped, so that you can see the approximate difference between 11mm and 15mm. You'll have to excuse my shadow on the left of the frame and that I didn't use a tripod. As you can see, either side of the white background paper is more visible in the 11mm shot on the left, but it's not a huge amount.



Next, here is a crop of just the 50mm lens from the middle of the frame, so that you can compare the sharpness of the two lenses. The 11-24mm lens image is on the left, and the image from the 15-35mm lens is on the right. There is not a lot in it, but under close inspection, you can see that the 15-35mm lens image is slightly sharper.





In this final pair of crops though, all from the same image, we can compare the sharpness of the two lenses near the edge of the frame. On the left is the image from the 11-24mm and the image shot using the 15-35mm lens is on the right. I was blown away by how much sharper the 15-35mm lens is close to its edge, wide open, at 15mm.



I thought for a moment that the lens in the edge of the image shot with the 11-24mm lens might be out of the depth of field, but at 11mm, focusing at around 60cm or two feet, and with an aperture of f/5.6 which is what I was using, with my Photographer's Friend app set in Pixels Peeper mode, which is the most punishing, we still have almost 60 cm or two feet of focus, so that is not the case. The 15-35mm lens is just amazing! I was never really unhappy with the sharpness of the 11-24mm at the edges, but that was before I saw what Canon could do with the RF mount and their mirrorless camera bodies. This, to me, is a revelation!

This whole slew of new gear is a revelation in many ways too. Over the last six years or so, Canon has enabled me to gradually shrink my kit down, while continuously increasing the image quality of my work. I have, of course, yet to see what the Canon EOS R5 and the new 100-500mm lens is capable of, but I trust that Canon wouldn't release anything that is a smidgeon less than stellar at this point, so I'm really just not worried about that. I will continue to report on my findings and hope that it helps those of you that reside with me in the Canon camp or are thinking of jumping ship.

We'll start to wrap this episode up there. If you are thinking of picking up any of this new gear that we're seeing released in the coming months, and you found this post useful, please help to support my efforts by buying with our B&H Photo affiliate links to the right. You might also want to check out my [gear page on B&H](#) as this is updated relatively regularly, and some RF related changes will be implemented soon! No lenses or cameras were injured or ill-treated during the making of this review, and no-one paid me to do this or gave me any of the gear that I talked about today.

View Martin's Gear Page on B&H Photo: <https://mbp.ac/gear>

Canon EOS R5 Body: <https://mbp.ac/EOSR5>

Canon RF 100-500mm f/4.5-7.1L IS USM: <https://mbp.ac/100-500>

Canon RF 15-35mm f/2.8L IS USM Lens: <https://mbp.ac/15-35>

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