

Shooting RAW vs. JPEG vs. DNG

In a recent survey of Photography Forum Members 3 members stated that they still use a wonderful medium called “film”, 19 members shoot JPG, 15 members shoot RAW and 1 member converts his RAW images to DNG.

While not for everyone, there are some real benefits to shooting RAW images over shooting JPEG images:

- All your conversions are done on a fast powerful computer at your convenience.
- Images can be “fixed” in ways which would be very difficult without the raw sensor data.
- You get the full range of data from the sensor.
- Without sharpening or compression you have not “lost” any data.
- You can change your mind about some of the picture settings after you have taken it.
- One great advantage of using a RAW file is that the original data is NEVER changed. All modifications to the image are saved to the XMP sidecar file.

The benefits of shooting JPEG are:

- JPEG files are smaller than RAW files.
- JPEGs are quick and easy to use, and produce excellent results.
- No special software is required to convert the files to a form that can be used in an image editing program.

One downside to using RAW files has always been that special software has been required to do the conversion since none of the camera manufactures’ raw files are compatible with each other. With the introduction of Photoshop CS and Elements 4.0 and later these programs have had Camera Raw included so that you no longer

need a separate conversion program to process RAW files. This has greatly improved the work flow for processing images.

Adobe has developed the Digital Negative (DNG), a publicly available archival format for the raw files generated by digital cameras which helps ensure that photographers will be able to access their files in the future.

Converting RAW files to DNG files has two immediate advantages:

- Smaller files save memory space
- Image modifications stay with image file instead of having the modifications attached as a XMP sidecar file

You can download a DNG converter from Adobe. A DNG converter is also included in Camera Raw. You can also convert all of your Raw images to DNG files when you download them from your camera using Bridge.