In Review: Canon Rebel T2i

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The HD-capable DSLR race finds a great new entry-level option.

By Jay Holben

When I was first invited to attend a special press meeting about a new Canon product last year, I was bursting with excitement hoping that it would be the new version of the Canon 5D with 24p capability. I wasn’t far off, it was the Canon EOS 7D, and what an incredibly impressive camera that was. I was excited for the 7D, the smaller than the 5D chip size didn’t scare me – in fact, it was perfect, in my opinion. The APS-C-sized sensor was nearly identical to the size of those in the RED, Panavision Genesis, ARRI Alexa, etc. – a Super 35-sized sensor. The latitude and sensitivity (ISO 6400) of the chip was amazing. When I had a chance to test it, I was blown away at the quality of the images – ergonomics of using an DSLR as an HD camera aside.

When I read about the Canon Rebel T2i (also referred to as the EOS 550D), I was perplexed. On paper, it seemed like a nearly identical camera to the EOS 7D, but at half the price. I had to see for myself if this too-good-to-be-true scenario had a catch, so Canon sent me a T2i to test side-by-side with the 7D.

The end result was incredibly surprising. As soon as I got it, I realized the immediate differences and, having been a Canon EOS Rebel XT owner for years, I should have known. The camera is considerably smaller than the 7D – almost uncomfortably so after working with the 7D for a while. It is the same physical size as the Rebel XT, and it’s not a lot to hold on to. The overall tactile feel is very plastic-y, for my taste, and very light.

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As a DSLR, there is no comparison, really. The 7D is physically larger (5.8" x 4.4" x 2.9" compared to 5.1" x 3.9" x 2.4"), more comfortable and much more professionally-minded in its design and functions. The Rebel T2i is, without a doubt, an entry-level DSLR. It is only capable of 3.7 frame per second motor drive, as opposed to the 7Ds 8fps. This is due to two factors, a reduction in the size of the motor drives in the T2i to keep the size down, and a reduction in the number of data processors from 8 to 4 to keep the price down. The auto focus in the T2i has only 9 point sensor, as opposed to the 7D's 19 point. It does not allow the user to set manual Kelvin temperatures in the white balance setting and has a slightly inferior 95% coverage pentamirror with 0.87x magnification as opposed to the 7D's pentaprism 100% coverage with 1x magnification. The LCD screen is actually slightly better on the T2i with 1,040,000 pixels as opposed to the 7D's 920,000. Beyond that, the principle difference between the two is the recording medium, as the Canon 7D shoots to CF cards and the T2i shoots to SDHC cards.

And therein ends the differences. Seriously.

What does that all mean to the HD mode of these respective cameras? It’s identical. Both cameras have exactly the same 22.3mm x 14.9mm 5184x3456 APS-C 18MP CMOS sensor. Both shoot 1920 x 1080 (30, 25, 24 fps), 1280 x 720 (60/50 fps) or 640 x 480 (60/50 fps) video. The signal processing in HD, compression and final image are exactly the same. The lens mount on both cameras (indeed the entire mirror box assembly) is identical, meaning that both accept all of the same lenses. The LCD, as I mentioned above, is actually better on the T2i. 1920 x 1080 video, shot side-by-side with the two cameras is absolutely indistinguishable as to which camera shot which.

With an average price of $899.99 with kit lens, compared to the 7D's $1,899.99 with a kit lens, if you're purely looking to shoot HD video with a DSLR, there's really no contest. You get all of the benefits of the 7D at half the price. At that rate, you can turn your next project into a two-camera shoot for the same price! If you’re purely looking for an HD-capable DSLR, however, there’s no question the 7D is a more robust, professional camera than the T2i.

**Canon Rebel T2i**

**SCORE:** 📈قترحات
**PROS:** Affordable, HD video specs identical to more expensive Canon 7D; 1920x1080 24p; high ISO.
**CONS:** Smaller form size, almost too light, plastic-y.
**BOTTOM LINE:** Purely as an HD-shooter, an amazing camera for the price.
**MSRP:** $899.99
**CONTACT:** www.canon.com

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What about audio? The 5D Mark II has a mic input, but I'm not sure about the T2i or even the 7D.

Agreed. I've got a 5D Mark II and have been using the T2i side-by-side on a training video. Results are excellent and there's little noticeable quality difference. It was a bit annoying I had to go out and buy new storage (I've got lots of high capacity CF cards), but that's about the only complaint. As a still camera, meh, it's entry level for sure. But for a second video camera it's excellent. Jim Tierney Digital Anarchy