

Instruction Note to Cheltenham Camera Club

Copying negatives and slides with a DSLR - so called 'scanning'

These notes follow a demonstration I did in the 2021 /22 season.

DSLR (or mirrorless equivalent) scanning is increasingly accepted as a fast and high quality alternative to using dedicated film scanners or flat bed scanners, including high quality flat beds like the Epson 600 etc. The results are on a par with what can be obtained, at a cost, from professional services using drum scanners. If you win the Lottery you could buy one for yourself.

The Essential Film Holder, EFH, is often seen as the overall best option, hitting the sweet spot of price vs accuracy vs ease of use. It's not as clunky as the (old bloke devised the EFH) website. I have one.

<https://clifforth.co.uk/>

Many reviews on the web, especially on YouTube. Here are two.

This one, from a photographer who blogs and YouTubes as 'Pushing Film', is very convincing. He gives detailed, real scenic examples, when comparing the EFH against conventional good quality scanners and processes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqSvTJ0s5MM>

This one is more general about the DSLR process

<http://natephotographic.com/dslr-film-scanning-perfect-color-negatives/>

Pixl-latr is an even cheaper alternative to the EFH, with a far from clunky website (young bloke devised the pixl-latr). It has a lot of keen followers, some have developed additional accessories.

<https://www.pixl-latr.com/product/pixl-latr-film-holder/>

A comparison of EFH vs the much more expensive Valoi

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPMekdFH900>

Processing. Take your 'scans' into e.g. Photoshop or Lightroom etc. If it's a slide process as is; if colour neg. white balance with film rebate; if negative invert with curves (i.e. slide left end to the top and the right end to the bottom); do basic adjustment with levels... and off you go.

Alternatively, if you're keen with lots of slides / negs to do, here's the pukka software the experts use, at c. £100. Free trial available.

<https://www.negativepro.com/>

Here are some alternatives

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tF8P1XhkOxl>

Note: I use a diffused flash in a 'shoebox' to illuminate the EFH. There are four holes in the lid to hold the feet of the EFH, and a cut-out for the diffused flash to escape and illuminate the further diffuser layer which is built into the underside of the EFH.

The diffusion in the 'shoe box' involves a white paper lining and a couple of sheets of white paper in front of the flash. The flash is a speed light (Godox v850) which can be controlled from the wireless

trigger plugged into the camera's hot shoe, according to the exposure histogram on the camera back.

I also have a 4W domestic LED bulb in the box to serve as a positioning and focussing guide. I usually switch it off with an in-line switch to avoid possibility of colour contamination.

All other reviewers use an LED panel - but get a good one to avoid hotspots and bad colours. The advantage, IMO, of my set up is that it is slightly faster and eliminates any movement during the relatively long exposures needed with an LED panel.

Note2: You will also need a way of holding your camera steady and parallel to the film holder. A copy stand is ideal, but with a bit of faff a 'reversible' tripod does the job – that's what I use.

John Mallows, August 2023