

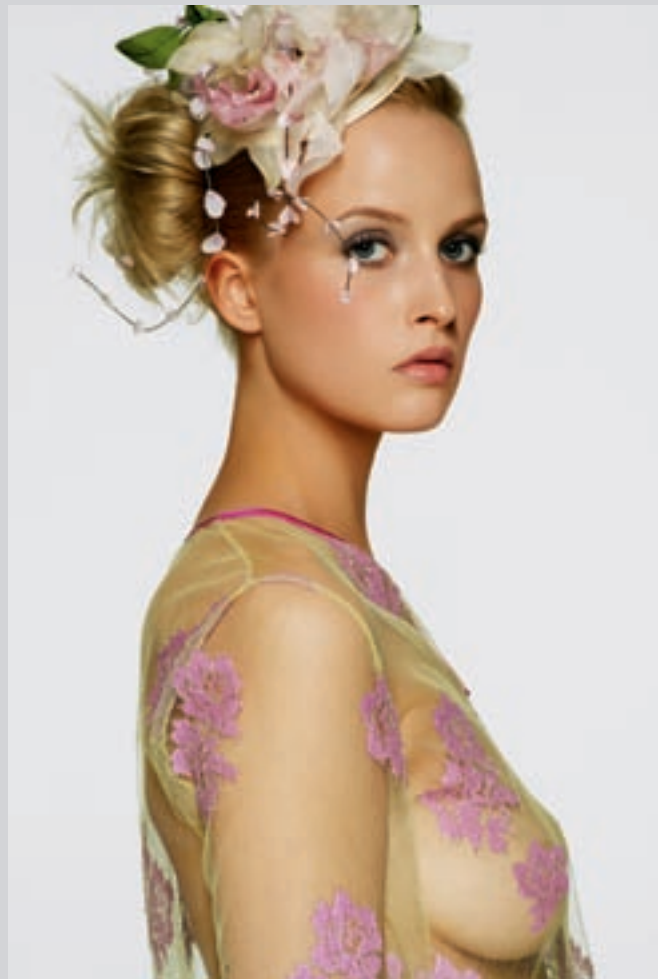
Douglas
Dubler
Puts
Fujifilm's
FinePix
S3 Pro
to the Test

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*Once More,
With Even
More Feeling*

The Fujifilm nameplate always brings something new to the marketplace. Think about it. What other camera company has introduced a more eclectic batch of 120/220 film cameras—running the gamut from a 645AF to a set of 6x7 and 6x9 rangefinders, a 6x8 studio camera, and a 6x17 panoramic camera? While only the GX617 and GX680III remain in Fujifilm's current film camera lineup, Fujifilm continues to shake the nuts off the trees with its latest DSLR: the Fujifilm FinePix S3 Pro.

The third-generation of Fujifilm's foray into the DSLR market, the Fujifilm FinePix S3 Pro, in many ways, carries on Fujifilm's talent for thinking outside the box, technologically and otherwise.



When the original Nikon-based Fujifilm FinePix S1 Pro debuted about five years ago, it was a whole lot of camera for a buck under four grand. Many film shooters got their feet wet in the digital world with this camera. Two years later, the much-improved Fujifilm FinePix S2 Pro hit the streets. Enhanced tone and color qualities, RAW file capability, vastly improved camera performance, and a street price of \$2,499 brought yet another legion of analog shooters into the fold.

The new Fujifilm FinePix S3 Pro once again raises the threshold of professional-quality digital imaging another notch or two for the same street price of \$2,499.

Though still based on a Nikon film camera, there is little of the original Nikon chassis to be found in the finished product. Aside from the top-plate, lens mount assembly, the metering and auto-focusing systems, the entire camera is built to Fujifilm specs around the newest Fujifilm Super CCD SR II imaging sensor.

Fujifilm has never shied away from new technology concepts, and its new Fujifilm Super CCD SR II sensor employs dual photodiodes to capture and record the light image, as opposed to the industry standard of using a single photodiode to gather the entire range of light. The 'S' photodiode resides within the pixel to record the normal or standard range of image data. The second, or 'R' photodiode, records image data beyond the imaging range of the standard photodiode. The net result of this novel technology translates to about 2-stops additional dynamic range, which is most apparent in the highlights and shadows.

By positioning the 'R' photodiode between adjoining pixels, as opposed to positioning it alongside the 'S' photodiode, the folks at Fujifilm also manage to record image data in spaces that were formerly dead real estate. The net result of this little maneuver is a noticeable increase in resolution.

Fujifilm's newly engineered 12-megapixel sensor found in the FinePix S3 Pro is comparable in resolution to the critically acclaimed FinePix S2 Pro, but with dynamic range capabilities 400 percent greater than its predecessor.

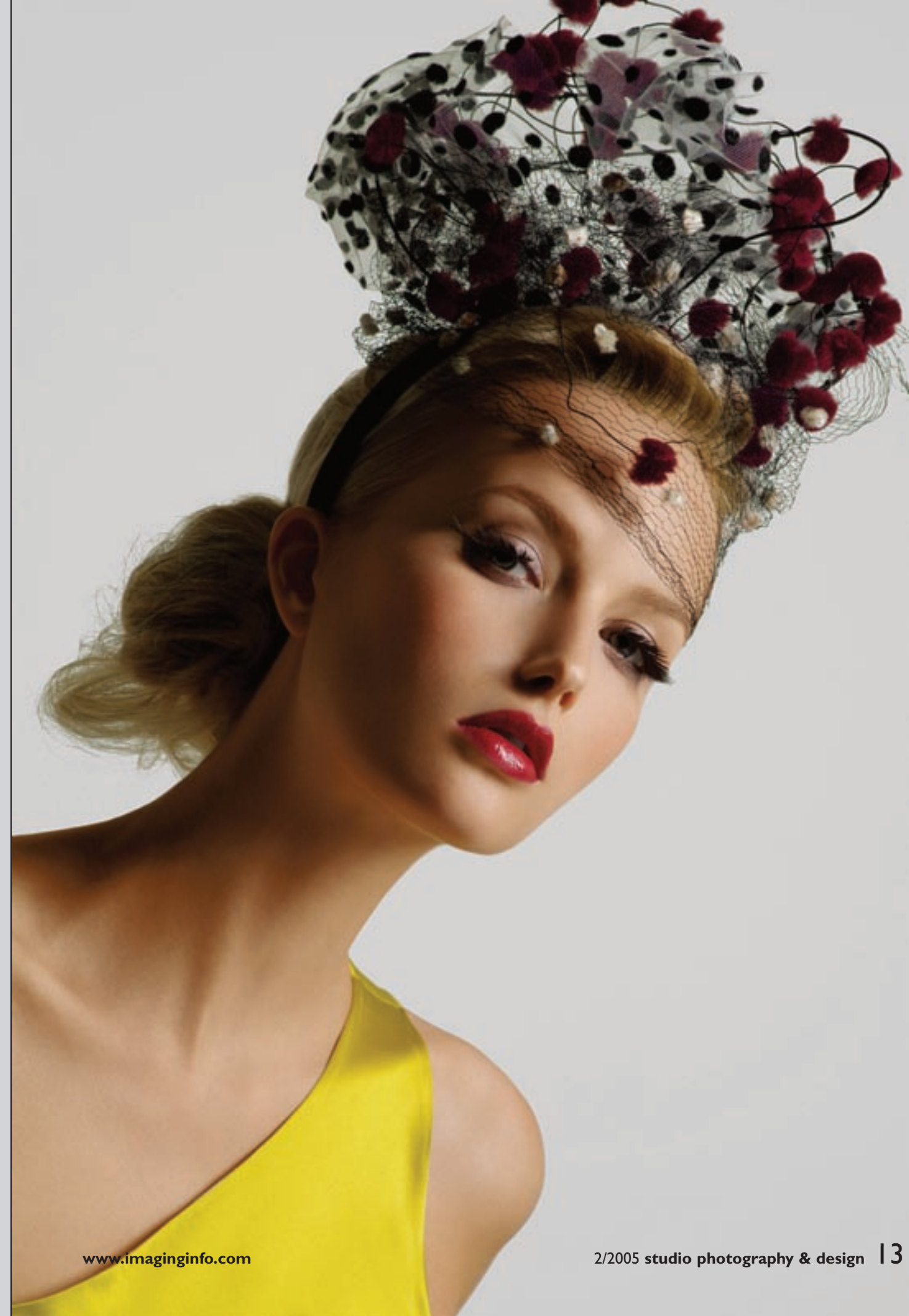
While one can argue the criteria of this point, the results speak for themselves. The Fujifilm FinePix S3 Pro more than holds its own against higher-megapixel cameras in its price class.

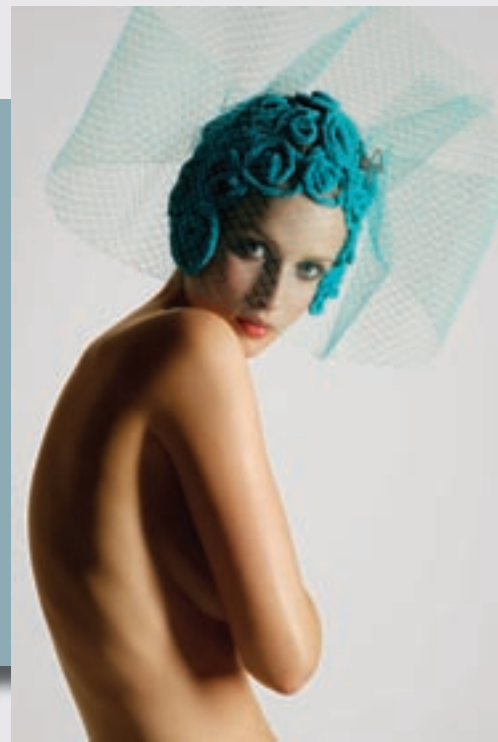
HATS OFF TO THE S3

To see how the new camera holds up to professional scrutiny—not to mention come up with some very cool marketing images—Fujifilm recently hired beauty and fashion shooter Douglas Dubler to put the S3 through its paces at New York's Splashlight Studios. Working with his team of hair, makeup, and styling professionals, Dubler photographed German-born model Svenja in a variety of makeup and styling combinations.

A self-admitted technical junkie, Dubler has extensive hands-on experience with most all cutting-edge digital imaging tools. More than a few leading manufacturers rely on Douglas for critical feedback on cameras, printers, and color management devices, and Douglas seldom turns down a chance to take new toys for a spin around the block. He was more than curious to see how the camera would perform in a real-world photo shoot.

The new Fujifilm FinePix S3 Pro is, physically speaking, a much-improved product over the Fujifilm FinePix S2 Pro. While slightly heavier than its predecessor, the new camera actually feels lighter and fits better in the hand. A built-in vertical grip along with improved rubberized body panels offers up a noticeably secure feeling the moment you pick it up. The rear LCD display is





MORE STAND-OUT FEATURES OF THE FUJIFILM FINEPIX S3 PRO

Super CCD SR II sensor aside, the new Fujifilm FinePix S3 Pro incorporates many new features and upgrades.

- The new camera offers the option of shooting CCD-RAW or JPEG (exif 2.2) image files. Gone is the option of TIFF found on earlier models.
- While ISO ratings remain at 100 to 1600, overall image quality as far as tone, color, and noise is noticeably better than the files produced by the Fujifilm S2 Pro.
- If you shoot strobe, you will appreciate a top sync speed of 1/180 second, up from 1/125 second. For outdoor fill-flash, this is a notable improvement.
- Images can be saved to sRGB or Adobe RGB. If you miss being able to switch films to match the look and feel of your photos, you now have the choice of setting the color range to emulate the look of color negative film, the brighter hues of chrome film, as well as the option of capturing images in black and white.
- CompactFlash cards (Type I & II) can still be used and there's a slot for the newer xD cards. For shooting tethered, you have a choice of FireWire or USB 2.0 connectors.

also a great improvement over earlier DSLRs bearing the Fujifilm nameplate. With over 235,000 pixels, the screen's image quality is vastly brighter and easier to eyeball when zooming in to check focus than earlier Fujifilm DSLRs. The totally redesigned menus are not at all intimidating to those still making the transition from analog.

The first thing you notice when examining the resulting image files is the smooth tonal transitions between highlights and shadows when images are shot in the extended-range mode. Compared to other cameras in this price-point category, they are quite remarkable. Even when viewed channel by channel, there is only the slightest noise in the blue channel. The red and green channels are smooth and whisper-quiet.

Under studio lighting, the autofocus system performed in a positive manner. The camera burst rate of about 2.5 frames per second (up to 12 frames flat-out) was faster than the recycling times for Dubler's Broncolor Grafit 4A power packs at full power.

If you plan on covering NASCAR races, you might feel squeezed, but for the average portrait or fashion shooter, especially someone accustomed to shooting medium-format, the speed is more than adequate.

The fine lacy hats adorning the model, aside from being a design element in the photographs, also served as a testing device to see how the new Fujifilm sensor handles fine lines and moiré issues. If you shoot weddings digitally, you know this is a major cause for concern. Blown highlights on a wedding gown—along with color artifacts shimmering on the bridal veil—can ruin an otherwise successful photo shoot.

The new camera proved quite worthy in this depart-

ment. As advertised, the new sensor holds fine highlight details without blowout.

Dubler was quite impressed with the results from this shoot: "Even digital backs which cost 10 times the price of the Fujifilm FinePix S3 Pro can occasionally have problems resolving finely detailed materials."

Like the man said, "We've come a long way, baby." ❖

For more information on the Fujifilm FinePix S3 Pro, visit www.fujifilm.com

For more Dubler images, visit www.douglasdubler3.com

DOUGLAS DUBLER'S GEARBOX

DIGITAL CAMERA

Fujifilm FinePix S3 Pro with a Nikkor 85mm f/1.4D AF

LIGHTING

Broncolor Grafit A4 power packs
Broncolor 120 Lightbars

DIGITAL DARKROOM

Apple Mac G5
Eizo CG-21 LCD monitor
GTI SoftView 2E
Adobe Photoshop CS
Phase One C-1 Pro 3.6
nik SharpenerPro
Color Think
ColorBurst X-Proof 3.8 RIP

CREDITS:

Model: Svenja, Elite Models NY. Makeup by Sylvia (www.makeuprules.com). Hair by Noah Hatton, Kramer & Kramer NY. Stylist: Carlton Jones (www.carltonjones.com). Hats by Parish. Flower Hat by Anthony Maxwell (www.anthonymaxwell.com). Fashion by Sylvia Hiesel. Digital Augmentation: Williew@cursorinc.com