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Pro Lenses

With great new pro camera bodies hitting the market, it's no surprise there were quite a number of intriguing professional lenses

By Brian Matiash

Whenever discussing a new lens, the tendency is to look at its focal length, or range, if it's a zoom lens, and what its widest aperture is. You'll often hear photographers discuss lenses in the following manner:

"What lens is that you've got on your camera?"

"Oh, it's a 16-35mm."

"Ahh, right. Is that the $f/4$ or $f/2.8$ version?"

"That'd be the $f/2.8$ version."

In my experience, that has always been the line of questioning when it comes to lenses. But the truth is that there's so much more you can concern yourself with when it comes to the barrel of glass, metal and plastic that you mount onto the front of your camera.

For me, the quality of the glass itself is probably the single most important factor in a lens. That glass determines exactly how cleanly and clearly the very light that will make up your photo will hit your camera's sensor—or film—plane.

Oftentimes, when you read a review of a lens, one of the metrics will be how quickly sharpness falls off from the center—where it should be sharpest—outward to the corners. Other figurative metrics include how "punchy" the photo produced is, due to the quality of the color and contrast of the light passing through the various glass elements and aperture blades of your lens.

Many lenses can achieve a focal length of 16mm with an aperture of $f/2.8$. But what's more important, arguably, is how well the lens resolves the light passing through. And then there are fringe factors, such as on-board features, like image stabilization, and how well the lens resolves light with respect to the camera mount it's affixed to.



Sigma 14-24mm F2.8 DG DN | Art

In the past 18 months, we've seen a number of new cameras, primarily in the mirrorless space, come with new native mounts. Larger diameters and reduced flange distances both play critical roles in the quality of native lenses. You also have to factor in how quality is affected when using adapters that bring compatibility between legacy lenses and new camera mounts.

All of these items should be factored in when discussing lenses.

Fortunately, 2019 has been a robust year for new lenses, and we're going to take a look at some notable releases spanning four categories:

- Wide-angle prime and zoom lenses
- Standard prime and zoom lenses
- Telephoto prime and zoom lenses
- Specialty lenses

Wide-Angle Prime And Zoom Lenses

Sigma 14-24mm F2.8 DG DN | Art (for Sony E and Leica SL mounts): Sigma has been making waves with its Art series lenses, and this latest zoom will please both landscape and astral photographers alike, thanks to its ultra-wide focal range and fixed $f/2.8$ aperture.

It has been designed to work with full-frame mirrorless cameras using the Sony E-Mount and Leica SL mount (including Panasonic). While the fixed- $f/2.8$ aperture is a welcome feature, it's great to see the inclusion of a rear-filter holder accessory that will actually hold a gel filter in place. This makes shooting long exposures much easier and less cumbersome, especially when dealing with a lens that has a bulbous front element.

Price: \$1,399

Website: sigmaphoto.com

Panasonic LUMIX G LEICA DG VARIO-SUMMILUX 10-25mm, F1.7 ASPH: With a 35mm-equivalent focal range of 20-50mm and a fixed aperture of $f/1.7$, this lens brings serious versatility to Micro Four Thirds shooters. It covers some of the most popular focal lengths and allows for easy low-light shooting, thanks to that wide aperture. Its stepless aperture ring is also a nice touch for video shooters looking to silently adjust brightness using aperture.

Price: \$1,799

Website: shop.panasonic.com

Voigtlander 21mm/1:1.4 Nokton E: The Voigtlander 21mm prime lens for Sony's E-mount cameras is a solid contender for photographers looking to minimize the heft of their gear. While it's a manual-focus lens, it does



Panasonic LUMIX G LEICA DG VARIO-SUMMILUX 10-25mm, F1.7 ASPH



Voigtlander 21mm/1:1.4 Nokton E



Nikon NIKKOR Z 24-70mm f/2.8 S



Sony E 16-55mm F2.8 G

produce solid results, even at its widest $f/1.4$ aperture. Its aperture ring can also be set to de-click, allowing for silent adjustment while shooting video.

Price: \$1,199

Website: voigtlaender.de

Standard Prime And Zoom Lenses

NIKKOR Z 24-70mm f/2.8 S: Owners of Nikon's newest full-frame mirrorless Z-series cameras have undoubtedly been waiting for a standard zoom lens that can open to $f/2.8$. Fortunately, the company has answered with a 24-70mm $f/2.8$, further building out its Z-lens lineup.

Similar to the ZEISS Batis lens line, this 24-70mm lens sports an OLED display, providing a useful display of information, such as depth of field and focus distance.

Price: \$2,299

Website: nikonusa.com

Fujinon GF50mmF3.5 R LM WR: This lens weighs in at just 335g, but it's a 50mm prime lens made for Fujifilm's medium-format GFX cameras. That makes the lens its smallest and lightest yet.

It's an excellent lens to pair with the GFX 50R, for example, if you're looking for a compact street-photography medium-format kit. It's also rated as dust and weather-resistant thanks to its various lens seals.

Price: \$999

Website: fujifilm.com

Sony E 16-55mm F2.8 G: It's refreshing to see Sony release a new lens specifically for its APS-C mirrorless cameras, and this one is impressive. With a 35mm-equivalent focal length of 24-82mm and a fixed $f/2.8$ aperture, this zoom adds some much-needed coverage for users of Sony's popular a600-series cropped-sensor cameras.

This lens also has a customized Focus Hold button on the barrel that will lock focus when pressed. This button can also be customized within the Sony camera's menu settings to certain functions like switching between Right or Left Eye AF. Plus, Sony states that this lens is dust and moisture resistant, which is always a nice touch.

Price: \$1,399

Website: sony.com

Telephoto Prime And Zoom Lenses

Sony FE 200-600mm F5.6-6.3 G OSS: Sony has been busy in 2019, especially in the telephoto-lens space. First up is the impressive Sony FE 200-600mm $f/5.6-6.3$ G super-telephoto zoom lens. This is an excellent, cost-effective lens for wildlife and sports photographers who don't

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Fujinon GF50mmF3.5 R LM WR

necessarily need a wider aperture.

Plus, you can expand the focal length by combining a 1.4x or 2x teleconverter for even longer reach. One of the nicest features is that the zoom is contained within the body, so it won't telescope out like other telephoto zoom lenses.

Price: \$1,999

Website: sony.com

Fujinon XF200mmF2 R LM OIS WR: Built for its APS-C mirrorless cameras, the Fujinon 200mm f/2 is a portrait-and-sports photographer's dream. With a 35mm-equivalent focal length of 305mm, the super-telephoto prime lens will provide excellent image clarity even when shooting wide open.



Fujinon XF200mmF2 R LM OIS WR



Sony FE 200-600mm F5.6-6.3 G OSS

You can also pair it with the Fujinon 1.4x teleconverter, which extends the focal length to a 35mm-equivalent of 427mm at f/2.8.

Price: \$5,999

Website: fujifilm.com

Canon RF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM: While still technically under development and slated for a "late 2019" release, it's noteworthy to highlight Canon's addition to its new full-frame mirrorless lineup.

The first thing you'll notice is how svelte it is, at least at 70mm. When compared to other 70-200mm lenses, it really is compact. Additional features like a zoom lock, image stabilization and a focus limiter make this a well-rounded telephoto zoom lens for owners of Canon's latest full-frame mirrorless cameras.

Price: TBD

Website: usa.canon.com

Specialty Lens

Lensbaby Omni Creative Filter System: OK, while this technically isn't a lens, it's one of the more novel accessories that you can add to your

Many lenses can achieve a focal length of 16mm with an aperture of f/2.8. But what's more important, arguably, is how well the lens resolves the light passing through.

Lensbaby Omni Creative Filter System



existing glass.

The Lensbaby Omni Creative Filter System is a screw-on holder that mounts to the front of your lens. From there, you can magnetically affix one of several “Effect Wands,” such as a Crystal Seahorse or Rainbow Film. It’s a low-cost way to bring a creative edge to your existing lenses.

Price: \$99

Website: lensbaby.com

Tips For The Cost-Conscious Photographer

While many new lenses, with all of their bells and whistles, tend to come with hefty price tags, there are things to consider if you’re looking to expand your lens kit without breaking the bank.

First, ask yourself whether you truly need the fastest lens with every feature available in a given focal range. For example, the Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS II USM retails for \$1,799 at the Canon Store (U.S.). However, if you can live with a maximum aperture of f/4 and don’t need Image Stabilization, the Canon EF 70-200mm f/4L USM can be purchased for \$599. That’s big savings!

Another thing to consider is looking at third-party manufacturers who make lenses for your camera’s mount. In some cases, you can get a lens for an entirely different mount with the use of an appropriate adapter. Companies like Sigma, Tamron and Tokina offer a wide variety of lenses with varying focal lengths at budget-friendly prices. It’s something absolutely worth considering if you’re looking to save some money.

Finally, don’t forget about looking for used lenses. Oftentimes when a new lens is released, photographers will sell their existing lens because they no longer want or need it. This is an excellent way to score a solid deal on a great lens. Just be sure to do your research on the condition of the lens and the quality of the seller first.

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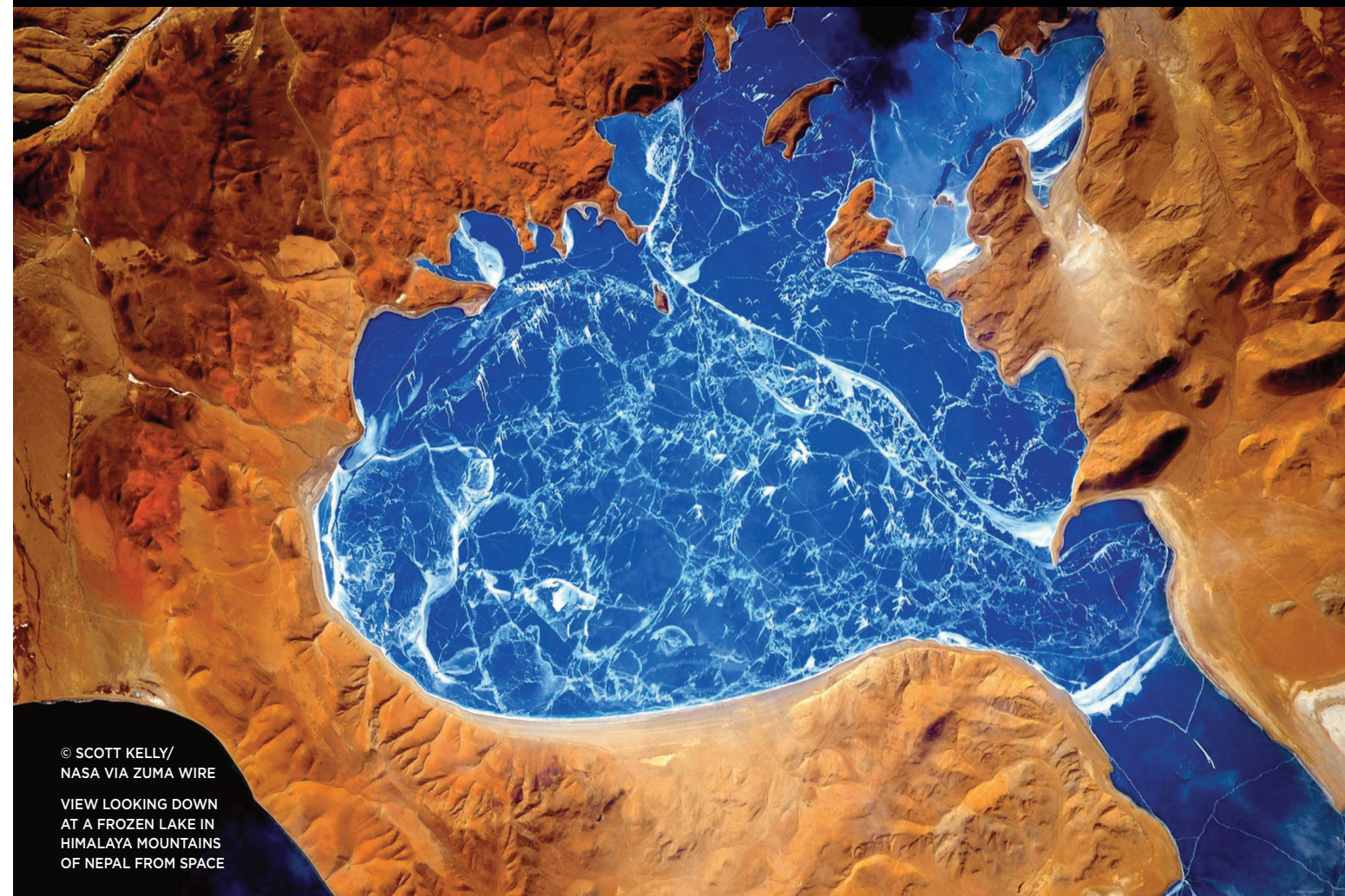
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