

## Why I Shoot JPEG (And Never RAW)

What's poppin, people? It's Dante.

Today I'm thinking about why I shoot JPEG and don't shoot RAW.

Essentially, I shoot with a JPEG file — even with a monochrome camera — with a JPEG recipe, with the image control settings and everything baked within the camera. And the reason is simple: I'm trying to remove all friction in my practice.

The goal for me as a photographer is to be in a perpetual **flow state of making new photographs**.

And I choose to shoot with a JPEG monochrome camera setup because I'm looking for the **fastest workflow possible**.

You see, I'm looking to photograph with speed.

I'm not shooting monochrome or JPEG because I'm trying to create some aesthetic stylistic choice. I really couldn't give a shit about that kind of stuff. I'm trying to **speed up the process of photographing**.

I'm trying to make it so photography becomes **effortless** and the **flow state is inevitable**.

And to get there, I had to strip away all the superfluous.

For the past three years, adopting a JPEG workflow has provided me with **insane speed** in terms of the amount of output I'm able to produce.

I mean, I have photographs everywhere.

I've got **13,000 prints stacked up on my table**. I've made **360,000 frames in three years**. I've never made this many photographs in the decade of my practice.

So the reason I'm shooting JPEG is simple:

**Speed. Speed. Speed.**

### **The Technical Reason: Speed and Simplicity**

If we want to get into the technical side of things, I'm also interested in the **longevity and simplicity of a JPEG file.**

My workflow is incredibly simple.

I'll take the JPEG file and import it directly into the **Photos app on my iPad Pro**, and I have this contact sheet where I can quickly go through, select, cull, and publish work at lightning speed.

It takes about **a minute to import 1,000 photos.**

Then I upload the photos and back them up immediately.

My entire archive from three years of shooting is only about **57 gigabytes.**

That's insane.

Initially, shooting JPEG was purely a technical decision. I was tired of the burden of coming home and dealing with RAW files — waiting for backups, putting things on hard drives, going through the whole process.

Back in 2022, I was in **Hanoi, Vietnam**, photographing with color and shooting RAW files. I'd be sitting in the hotel room at night thinking:

***Holy shit, this is so slow and clunky.***

It just felt ridiculous.

So I went home, sold my camera equipment, picked up the Ricohs, switched to JPEG, and I haven't looked back since.

Now I'm making **more photographs than ever**.

## **The Philosophical Reason: Creative Constraint**

But beyond the technical reasons, there's also a philosophical side.

Once the workflow became frictionless, the entire practice changed.

I go out.

I photograph.

I come home.

I upload.

I back up.

I publish.

No processing.

No Lightroom.

No tinkering.

And that constraint becomes **creatively liberating**.

The more creative constraint you introduce, the more creative freedom you actually gain.

Freedom isn't infinite choice.

**Freedom is the elimination of choices.**

The result is baked into the camera. I already know how the photograph will look. There's nothing left to tweak or adjust afterward.

So instead of obsessing over photographs I made yesterday, I'm just in this **perpetual photo flow state** of making new frames.

## **Photography as Instinct**

I'm not trying to make a perfect picture.

I'm not trying to make a photograph that describes life as fact.

I'm trying to make photography **inevitable**.

I'm stripping all the technicality away so that all I'm left with is **intuition**.

That's why the commitment to JPEG is so powerful.

Yes, there's a technical advantage — speed, file size, simplicity.

But philosophically, it's about imposing a limitation that allows me to photograph **prolifically, every single day**.

I haven't missed a single day of photography in three years.

Because there's no friction.

No decisions about color or black and white.

No editing afterward.

I'm just making **instant sketches of light** when I'm out on the street.

Quickly.

Instinctively.

## Creating Faster

With this workflow, I can go on a trip somewhere and photograph for a weekend.

By the time I'm on the train coming home from New York City, I've already:

- Culled the photographs
- Sequenced them
- Published them online
- Laid them out for a potential book

I can create a **photo series in a weekend**.

All because of a simple creative constraint.

By setting parameters around my practice, I'm actually forced to **think more outside the box**.

## Stripping Photography to Its Essence

At the end of the day, I'm not trying to create my own style through some JPEG recipe.

That's not the point.

The point is to **strip everything down to the essence of the medium**.

Just a black box.

A shutter button.

Light and shadow.

And when you remove everything else, you become a **vessel for the medium**.

That's why I choose JPEG.

That's my thought of the day.