

## Leica R-System

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Is it time to go digital or stick with film? For consumers, it's a no-brainer &ndash; go digital all the way. For professional photographers the question isn't as easy to answer. Digital is more convenient than film with no development requirements and thousands of images fit in a handful of memory cards. But film photography feels more intimate than digital. There's creativity and skill required to create the perfect picture with film. Digital photography feels sanitary in comparison. Leica's R-System brings digital and film together in a single body if you're prepared to pay the price.

The R-System is built around Leica's R9 body, a fully manual film camera. The Digital Modul-R turns the R9 into a 10 megapixel digital camera, but maintains all the manual control that professional photographers are sure to appreciate. Focus, aperture, and shutter speed are all adjustable with the R9's plethora of dials, buttons, and switches.

The Modul-R adds multiple pieces to the R9 including a Kodak sensor, a large battery, an SD slot, and LCD display. All the pieces make the entire package hefty, tipping the scale at 4.65 pounds with the 28 to 90 mm Leica lens that came with the unit I tried out. Hefty as it is, the images are spectacular thanks to the Leica optics. And the level of control is nothing short of amazing compared to many digital SLR's.

Portrait, landscape, or artsy photographers will love the Leica's control and feel. Sports and news photographers will probably prefer something that shoots faster than the two frames per second the R-System manages and an automatic focus.

With a price tag of \$2795 for the R9 body, \$5950 for the Modul-R, and lenses starting at \$1300, the entire package comes with a steep price tag. The package I tried came with a \$12,245 price tag. Only professionals need to consider adding Leica to their shooting package. And even then, buying a film and digital body from Canon or Nikon might end up being more affordable even if they don't come with Leica optics.