

Developing from RAW

April 6th, 2011

Intended for: [advanced](#)

Many photographers idolize RAW, and many more take it less religiously but still use it as a matter of course. Then there are those who avoid it completely. If you do shoot to RAW, you need a way to get your pictures out of RAW into a format that can be used by anyone.



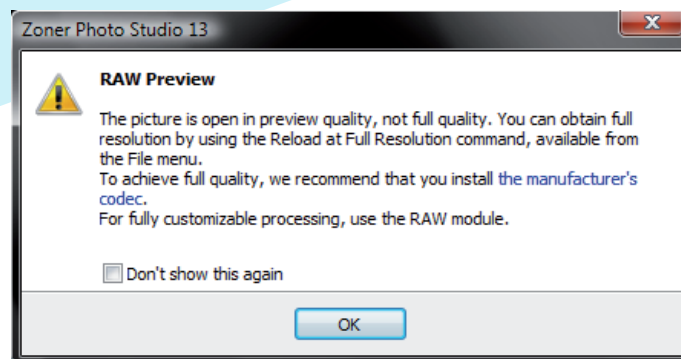
A brief refresher to start. RAW is actually less a format than it is a group of formats that share the trait of containing raw picture data. Normally your camera itself converts this raw data to the final format—typically JPEG. But when you are shooting to RAW, the raw data is stored unconverted instead, along with a low-resolution preview of the picture.

To display the picture in most programs or to print it out, you must then convert this RAW data on a computer. There are many RAW conversion programs. Most of them are provided with cameras themselves. These converters often have the advantage that you can save back to RAW.

However, if you do not want to use “one more program,” or if your camera’s RAW conversion software does not meet your needs, it’s simple to just convert the data in Zoner Photo Studio instead. With the help of Adobe DNG Converter (see the article “Maximize your RAW support”), you can use it to convert practically any RAW format.

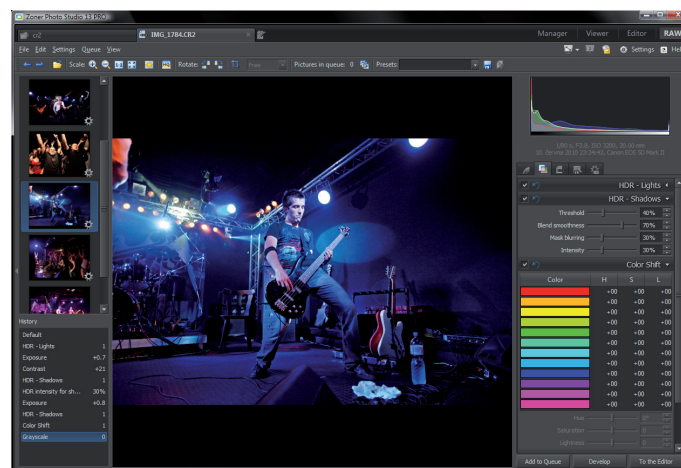
Your Digital Darkroom

Double-clicking a RAW picture in Zoner Photo Studio's Manager opens it up in the Viewer or the Editor, depending on your program preferences. The Editor warns that you have opened a RAW image. This should be a clear signal to you to switch to the RAW module instead. There you can convert the picture; this is also called "developing" it. Meanwhile you can still "edit" it thanks to a large number of conversion controls and settings.



The RAW module gives access to more photo development tricks than you've probably ever dreamed of. The RAW module's workspace differs strongly from that of the Editor, so let's take a look at it. A column on its left shows all the RAW images in the current folder. The top toolbar area offers functions like magnification and rotation.

But the most important controls are those on the right. That area contains all the module's tools for fine-tuning the conversion process. The center of the workspace shows a preview, which is constantly updated. This makes it easy to monitor how various adjustments affect the picture.



The tools are divided into five tabs. Each offers functions related to a different area. The most frequently useful tools are in the first tab's top group: **Exposure**. If you forgot to turn on exposure correction while taking a shot and the picture is too dark or light, the **Exposure** tools come in handy. Adjust them as needed and the picture becomes correctly exposed. Set a value either by typing it in or by hovering the mouse over the old value and rotating the mouse wheel. The other controls also offer this mouse wheel option.

The first tab also contains controls for adjusting white balance, sharpness, the histogram, color, noise, rotation, and vignetting. Vignetting controls are especially useful if your lens causes vignetting and you want to eliminate the resulting dark corner areas in the picture. As for how to use the controls: they work the same as their counterparts in the Editor

The second tab contains mainly filters for effects such as HDR, color editing, and conversion to black and white. Use the third tab to apply your camera's profile, if available. Use the next-to-last tab to set the conversion's path and output format. Several factory settings here—**JPEG**, the **sRGB** color profile, and **Rename** for the target file—should be kept unless there is a specific reason otherwise. Once all the settings are set up as needed, click **Develop** to start the conversion. When editing multiple pictures, you can add them to the Queue and then use **Queue | Process** to process all the pictures in the Queue at once. We think you'll be satisfied with the result!

