

### **DSLM all-round kit up to 2600€. Our criteria**

When we switched from analog photography to digital single-lens reflex photography (DSLR) in 2003, one of the questions we asked ourselves was what would be the optimal "always-on" system camera with a 5-8x zoom. Such a camera should accompany us in everyday life but also on hikes and bike tours, where a "full-size equipment" is too heavy, too unwieldy and simply impractical. As a system camera, however, it would be able to be equipped with additional lenses - as needed - in order to have a lightweight travel system available as well, if necessary.

In the first digital years, the "Olympus E1" with the "Olympus Zuiko Digital 14-54mm, F2.8-3.5" served us in this role, as well as subsequently the "Olympus E-3" with the "Olympus 12-60mm ED f2.8-4.0 SWD ZUIKO ED Digital" and later - in addition to our Nikon D2X system at the time - a "Pentax is DS" (later K10D/K20D) with a "Sigma Zoom 18-125mm F/3.8-5.6 DC OS HSM".

With the appearance of mirrorless system cameras (DSLM), such as the "Panasonic Lumix G1 and G2" and continuing following DSLMs, more and more interesting and very compact system camera options came on the market, which have improved more and more over the last years. Today, these DSLMs have increasingly displaced DSLRs in the market and are also conquering last bastions in professional reportage and sports photography.

With the increasing performance of the systems, but also from the desires of everyday photographic life, the requirements for such a system have grown successively, however.

In the following, we have listed our - albeit very subjective - current criteria for an all-round system DSLM, on the basis of which we have evaluated some systems for us from today's perspective and assigned a ranking. As mentioned, this can look completely different for everyone, depending on their personal preferences for such a system. If you are expecting detailed technical descriptions and tests of the individual systems, you are wrong here. Such very good technical tests can be found on the relevant well-known sites on the Internet, such as [dpreview.com](http://dpreview.com), [cameralabs.com](http://cameralabs.com), [photographyblog.com](http://photographyblog.com), [ephotozine.com](http://ephotozine.com), [photopxl.com](http://photopxl.com), [digitalkamera.de](http://digitalkamera.de), etc..

In the list of the following systems, it is immediately noticeable that we have not listed any DSLM systems from the two market giants Sony and Canon, which is simply because they do not fulfill two of our knockout criteria. For both full-frame systems, but also the Panasonic Lumix S system, there is no 5-8x standard zoom, which starts at 35mm equivalent focal length and has at least 120mm to offer at the end of the focal length range. The Sony DSLMs with APSC sensor of the a6xxx series unfortunately do not have a joystick until today, which became a knockout criterion for us - since a few years. We completely disregarded the Canon M system, since we are not convinced of its future viability. Furthermore, its body do not offer a joystick either.

**Criteria catalog (Market system price max. €2600.-):**

<b><u>AF-Lens</u></b>	<b><u>Description</u></b>	<b><u>K.O.</u></b>
Maximum aperture	F4, over the entire focal length range	x
5-8x zoom, from 24mm	35mm equivalent 24-120mm, with 120mm being the minimum focal length in the telephoto range.	x
Optical quality	The lens meets high optical requirements and provides homogeneously sharp, high-contrast images right to the edges of the image over the entire focal length range.	
Macro range	1:2x	
Weather resistance	Sealed against dust and rain.	
<b><u>DSLM-Kamera</u></b>	<b><u>Beschreibung</u></b>	<b><u>K.O.</u></b>
Body	Compact midsize body with handle, which is sealed and has a joystick mandatory.	x
Sensor size, resolution	Minimum sensor size is mFT, with at least 20 MP resolution to allow large format prints (with cropping if necessary).	x
Stabilization	IBIS, "Inbody Image Stabilization" to stabilize lenses without IS system if required.	x
Movable ext. Viewfinder	A movable ext. viewfinder should be given. Full mobility - with "selfie mode" - does not have to be present.	
Video capabilities	Since photography is the main focus, videography is a side issue, so FullHD modes are sufficient.	

## Our recommendations:



### 1. [Nikon Z5](#); [NIKKOR Z 24–120 mm 1:4 S](#)

#### Body:

This set is currently our preferred recommendation, even though it is priced at the maximum limit of € 2600. The Nikon Z5 is a slimmed-down version of the Z6(II) that meets the above criteria. The full-frame FSI sensor is not the same as that of the Z6(II), but still offers excellent values in dynamic range, noise performance up to ISO 6400, as well as extensive tonal value and color differentiation even at higher ISO values. If you want to criticize something, you might have to mention the low continuous shooting rate of a maximum of 4.5 frames per second and that unfortunately the portrait format grip of the Z6//(II) cannot be used with function elements, but only the battery pack of the older Z6/7, should longer focal lengths be used. Otherwise, the Z5 is a very good, handy and solid DSLM camera, which has a very good viewfinder (also for eyeglass wearers). Furthermore, the camera offers a good face and eye AF mode, as well as animal detection for dogs and cats, which will hopefully soon be extended to birds via a firmware update.

#### Lens:

Some may ask why the [NIKKOR Z 24–200 mm 1:4–6,3 VR](#) is not an alternative? For one thing, it doesn't meet the requirement for a continuous f/4 speed. But still, we took a look at the lens, as it is quite appealing with its final focal length of 200mm and has received many positive reviews to go with it. However, our own practical shots with the lens then showed the quite expected weaknesses in the peripheral areas, especially at 24mm and 200mm, so that the lens did not meet our requirements here either.

The [NIKKOR Z 24–120 mm 1:4 S](#), which belongs to professional Nikon S series, is clearly superior to the former, especially when it comes to homogeneously sharp and high-contrast

imaging over the entire image and focal length range. This lens is in a league with the two very good 4/24-105mm lenses of the [Canon RF-](#) and [Lumix S-Series](#), except that it has 15mm more to offer in the final focal length. Optically, mechanically, functionally and also haptically, there is nothing to criticize about this lens in our opinion. With a closest focusing distance of only 35cm over the entire focal length range, it is already possible to crop quite well and the bokeh is quite good for a zoom lens of this type. The maximum magnification of 1:2.6 allows moderate macro shots.

*Optional telezoom lenses:*

If you want to supplement the system with a telephoto zoom lens beyond 200mm focal length, you will notice that the Nikon Z system currently only offers the very good, but also very expensive [NIKKOR Z 100–400 mm 1:4,5–5,6 VR S](#). Beyond that, there are currently only adaptable lenses for the Nikon F-mount, which are also available from third-party manufacturers such as Tamron and Sigma. An example is the good [Tamron 100-400mm F/4.5-6.3 Di VC USD \(Model A035\)](#), which is available at a market price of under € 800.

2. [Panasonic Lumix G9](#); [Panasonic Leica DG Vario-Elmarit 12-60mm f2.8-4 Aspherical Power OIS](#), [Olympus M. Zuiko Digital ED 12-100mm f4 IS Pro](#)

*Body:*

We put the Panasonic Lumix G9 - alternatively with one of the two lenses mentioned above - in second place. The casing feels very good in the hand, is very solidly built, and the usability of the camera's functions and the entire menu system is excellent and on par with the Nikon Z5. Lumix cameras with their lack of phase AF are said in various reviews to have inferior AF compared to systems that do have phase AF. In our experience, however, the AF of the latest generation Lumix cameras is better than its reputation and quite on par with a Nikon Z5/6/7.

The relatively small "MicroFourThirds sensor" (mFT) with 20 MP delivers good to very good results in terms of dynamic range, noise behavior and color and tonal value differentiation up to ISO 800 in good lighting conditions. Beyond ISO 800, however, the values clearly fall behind the "full-frame sensor" of the Nikon Z5, i.e. those who frequently shoot indoors or in low light conditions are better served with the Nikon. However, the Lumix G9's favorable package market price, which is between € 1700 and € 2100 with the two lenses, speaks for itself, which puts it well below the Nikon package. Unfortunately, in addition to face and eye recognition for humans, there is currently only animal body recognition without the eye recognition of the Nikon Z5. It would be pleasing if Panasonic would retrofit the eye detection for animals via firmware update.

*Panasonic Lens:*

The [Panasonic Leica DG Vario-Elmarit 12-60mm f2.8-4 Aspherical Power OIS](#) is also optically, mechanically and haptically on a very high level and supports the [DFD autofocus](#) of the G9. The image quality is very homogeneously sharp and contrasty over the entire zoom range and does not give much cause for criticism. In addition, the lens is very compact and relatively lightweight, and lucratively priced to boot. The closest focusing distance is between 20 and 24cm, depending on the focal length. The maximum magnification of 1:1.65 allows for very decent macro shots.

*Olympus Lens:*

The [Olympus M. Zuiko Digital ED 12-100mm f4 IS Pro](#) is even more expensive, but has a maximum focal length of 200mm. Optically, mechanically and haptically, it is on par with the Panasonic lens. In our opinion, it is the best classic "superzoom lens" to date that covers this 8x range. It is clearly superior to the aforementioned Nikon Z 24-200mm lens in terms of imaging performance towards the edges of the image and thus also meets high demands for consistently homogeneous imaging performance. The lens has proven itself over and over again in combination with the Lumix G9.

*Optional telezoom lenses:*

There are quite a few high-quality telephoto zoom lenses. Examples are the [Panasonic Leica DG Vario-Elmarit 50-200 mm f2.8-4 ASPH. O.I.S.](#) or the [Olympus M.ZUIKO DIGITAL ED 40-150mm F2.8 PRO](#), which achieve a very good and sharp imaging performance even with the appropriate teleconverters. Only the bokeh is a bit choppy depending on the background (with both lenses).

[OM-D E-M1 Mark I bis III](#), as well as [OM-1](#)

From our own experience, we only had the first [Olympus OM-D E-M1](#) in use for a long time. When the camera came onto the market in 2013 with its 16MP mFT sensor, it was very remarkable and another milestone of its kind. In everyday use, however, it still had many rough edges and left a lot to be desired, which were significantly improved with further expansion stages up to the current OM-1. What always struck us negatively in comparison to the Lumix G9, however, is a certain functional overload of the camera, but also of the Olympus menu system. This may well be related to the high individual configurability of the Olympus OMD mFT cameras, but it is noticeable compared to some other systems, which in our opinion are simply easier and more coherent to use. In the end, however, this is also a very subjective feeling. Someone who has known and used nothing else for years may have a different opinion.

In terms of price, the Olympus OM-1 with a market price of currently over € 2200 plus the two lenses in question is unfortunately out of the ordinary and therefore does not currently fit our "recommendations". Should the body reach a significantly lower market price and we get our hands on the camera, we would possibly add it to our list, because on paper it is very promising. The Olympus [Olympus OM-D E-M1 Mark III](#), which is still available, fits the price range, but we have never used it in practice, so we cannot make a statement on this. On paper, it is on a comparable level as the Lumix G9. Ultimately, however, the new OM-1 represents the current state of the art and offers a very extensive range of functions and applications, even if certain limitations on the part of the mFT sensor will endure.<sup>1</sup>

*Panasonic Lens:*

See above.

*Olympus Lens:*

See above.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.photonstophotos.net/Charts/RN\\_ADU.htm](https://www.photonstophotos.net/Charts/RN_ADU.htm)  
<https://www.photonstophotos.net/Charts/PDR.htm>

*Optional telezoom lenses:  
See above.*

### 3. [Fujifilm X-T4](#), [FUJINON XF16-80mmF4 R OIS WR](#)

For several years, we worked exclusively with Fujifilm X system cameras and learned to appreciate them with the very pleasant analog operating concept. Most recently, we used the X-H1 and X-T3. As a new evolutionary stage, the X-T4 has brought some improvements - to the still available X-T3 - such as the IBIS and more powerful batteries, among others. The image quality of the Trans-X sensors with their 26MP is excellent. The camera offers a very good dynamic range, a very good noise performance and a very good color and tonal value differentiation. In our opinion, very good image results can be achieved up to ISO 3200. The performance of the autofocus is similar to that of the Lumix G9, also in terms of face and eye AF of people. Unfortunately, there was no animal detection on Fujifilm DSLMs until recently. The so-called film modes (e.g. Fuji Arcos) that are supported by common RAW converters like Lightroom and Capture One should be mentioned positively.<sup>2</sup>

*Lens:*

We had very high expectations for the [FUJINON XF16-80mmF4 R OIS WR](#), especially since we had had very good experiences with the FUJINON XF18-55mm F2.8-4 R LM OIS and the FUJINON XF16-55mmF2.8 R LM WR in previous years. The previously tested FUJINON XF18-135mm F3.5-5.6 R LM OIS WR had not met the equally high expectations, although it was not considered further here anyway due to the initial focal length of the equivalent of 27mm and the lack of speed.

The [FUJINON XF16-80mmF4 R OIS WR](#) showed such edge weaknesses already after the first practical shots, so that we could hardly believe it at first, because the lens was noticeably weaker than the XF18-135mm, which had also been rather average. At first we thought we had caught a "Monday model", but then had to find out on the "net" that there was a lot of similar feedback about this lens. We can only advise Fujifilm to rework this lens and achieve the usual quality of the two 3x zooms mentioned above. The only advantage of this lens is the built-in panning mode with automatic detection when pulling along, which unfortunately only the 200mm fixed focal length has to offer at Fujifilm so far.

If the [FUJINON XF16-80mmF4 R OIS WR](#) had delivered the expected image quality, the combination would have made it into our recommendation list and reached second place, together with the Lumix G9, due to the better APS-C sensor, as well as the very good usability of the entire system. On the other hand, the Lumix G9 has the advantage of pet detection and Olympus' very good 8x zoom up its sleeve.

However, in its current incarnation, we unfortunately cannot recommend the Fujifilm set, although it is a very good system, especially when including the two 3x zooms.

*Optional telezoom lenses:*

There are some high-quality telephoto zoom lenses for Fuji, but unfortunately none of them support a "panning mode" and are therefore less suitable for some sports. DSLM systems from Canon, Sony, Nikon and the Panasonic Lumix G and S systems support such "panning

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<sup>2</sup> This is also available with Capture One v22 for the standard film modes of the Nikon Z cameras.

modes" with many of their lenses or via IBIS and are thus well suited for sports in which this dynamic design element plays a role in sports or even wildlife photography. Fuji is currently still at a disadvantage here.<sup>3</sup>

Beyond that, however, you get a fast and optically very good telephoto zoom lens with the FUJINON XF50-140mmF2.8 R LM OIS WR plus two teleconverters (1.4x and 2.0x). Also good telephoto zoom lenses are the FUJINON XF55-200mmF3.5-4.8 R LM OIS, the FUJINON XF70-300mmF4-5.6 R LM OIS WR, and the FUJINON XF100-400mmF4.5-5.6 R LM OIS WR. All lenses also make a good impression mechanically and haptically, even if they do not quite come close to the "gray giants" of the competitors.

### [Fujifilm X-T30](#), [Fujifilm X-S10](#), [FUJINON XF16-80mmF4 R OIS WR](#)

We have not had the two Fuji bodies mentioned here in our hands until today. While the X-T30 is a rather slimmed-down X-T3 with a strongly analog operation, the very compact X-S10 is more oriented towards the latest models of Fujifilm's GFX series and has a quite distinctive grip, which is not the case with the XT models. Here, it has to be mounted separately. The APS-C sensors are the same 26 MP X-Trans sensors that are used in the XT-3/4.

Due to the above-mentioned lens situation, we have not included these two models in our recommendation list.

*Lens:*

See X-T4

*Optional telezoom lenses:*

See XT-4

## **Further alternatives**

Potentially, a Sony a6xxx/a7xxx APS-C model with a joystick and the [Tamron 17-70mm F/2.8 Di III-A VC RXD \(Model B070\)](#), which has good references, would also be a candidate for our listing. Without the joystick, however, the current models fall victim to the formulated knockout criterion.

On the current Fujifilm lens roadmap, a [Fujinon XF18-120mm f/4 7x](#) zoom is promised for this year which is supposed to have a 35mm equivalent focal length range of 27-180mm, with a continuous f4 aperture. Even if the lens with 27mm starting focal length does not correspond to the desired 24mm, it is of course still an interesting zoom lens, just because of the final focal length and the continuous aperture f4. Should this lens stand up to our high image quality requirements, it would definitely be worth a recommendation in combination with the Fujifilm cameras mentioned above.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, the [Tamron 2,8/17-70 mm Di III-A VC RXD](#) for the Fuji mount has been introduced quite recently, and according to everything that is known so far about the Sony version of the lens, it is clearly superior to the [FUJINON XF16-80mmF4 R OIS WR](#). Thus, both the Fujifilm XT-4 and

<sup>3</sup> The new Fujifilm X-H2s eliminates these drawbacks, but at around €2,700, it's out of the ballpark.

<sup>4</sup> On a side note, Fujifilm has also announced a FUJINON XF150-600mm f/5.6-8 on its roadmap for 2022. It seems to be a very professional version, which leads us to expect a high price but also an extensive equipment, as well as "panning modes".

the X-S10 again become interesting candidates in our listing. However, we will wait until we can try out one of the two cameras with the Tamron zoom ourselves before making a final assessment.

Finally, it should be said once again that our recommendation list is completely subjective. The reader who uses other weightings as a basis or has completely different requirements for a similarly positioned system will inevitably come to a completely different assessment. This is a good thing and shows that the market of DSLM systems has a lot of variants to offer and thus the right equipment can be found for almost every need.

In a later report, we will compare the [CANON RF 24-105MM F4L IS USM](#) zoom lens with the [NIKKOR Z 24-120 mm 1:4 S](#) lens in detail and also document this with the help of a test chart.

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**Transparency:**

At this point it should be mentioned that the reports of our club, reflect the personal-subjective view of our members. We act completely independently and acquire or borrow the presented equipment independently. We are also not "sponsored" or otherwise financially supported by manufacturers and companies in any way.

As an "unincorporated association" for the purpose of promoting art and culture, we operate in accordance with our statutes in a cost-neutral manner without the intention of making a profit.