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REVIEW



Sensor Swabs



Sensor Loupe

VISIBLE DUST SENSOR CLEANING SYSTEM

Let's face it, dust happens.

The first step is to use an ounce of prevention. Minimize your equipment's exposure to dust during storage and use, as much as practical. (I store and transport all my gear in Ziploc plastic bags.)

The second step is to remove dust from your camera's sensor.

To protect themselves against carelessness of a minority of their clients, camera manufacturers claim to void warranties if you use third party cleaning solutions and recommend instead that you send the camera to them to be professionally cleaned. Even if you are not on a tight deadline or traveling in remote locations, this is often impractical. Initially, I was concerned about my ability to clean my camera's sensor without damaging it. Then I found that cleaning your camera's sensor is surprisingly easy and that you have to go to some length to actually damage a sensor. A little care and forethought is all that's required.

(See cleaningdigitalcameras.com for more information.)

Visible Dust's (visibledust.com) Arctic Butterfly is my preferred sensor cleaning solution. Unlike many other solutions the Arctic Butterfly doesn't use fluids that may produce streaking on your sensor; instead, they use static electricity to attract the dust. Visible Dust has been making electrostatically charged brushes that won't damage your camera's sensor when you use them. The first brush solutions from Visible Dust used compressed air to create a static charge, which could be difficult to store and transport (impossible on airlines). The Arctic Butterfly uses motion to create a static charge; the brush rotates at high speed. (The new units and their cases are far more durable than previous models.)

How easy is it to use? Extremely. Simply remove the top of the Arctic Butterfly and press the button to spin the brush. Turn your camera (without a lens) to sensor clean mode. Sweep the sensor a few times. Turn the camera off and put a lens back on it. Done! It takes less than a minute. It will save you hours of retouching. I recommend making this a regular practice



Arctic Butterfly

whenever you change lenses – the time when most dust enters and moves.

Keep the brush clean; free of dust and oil (typically picked up from your hands or the chamber of your camera). If a brush becomes soiled, you can replace the ferules instead of the entire unit.

For difficult to remove dirt on sensors that can't be swept away, Visible Dust's Sensor Cleaning Swabs may be your final solution. Swabs and Sensor Clean or Vdust Plus liquid can be used to remove water and oil stains, providing even coverage without streaking and creating a light static barrier to help repel dust.

Optionally, a Sensor Loupe can be used to view the sensor under illumination at high magnification to ensure that the sensor is clean.

Whenever practical, confirm that your camera's sensor has been successfully cleaned, by making an exposure of a flat field of color (such as a sky) at a small aperture (to better resolve the dust). Thoroughly check the file in Photoshop (or the image editor of your choice) at 100% magnification.

The Visible Dust sensor cleaning system hasn't failed me yet. It goes everywhere I go. It's easy to store, transport, and use. It's saved me countless hours of time in image processing. It will save you valuable time too.

Ultra MXD-100 Sensor Cleaning Swab (\$37.95)

Sensor Loupe (\$79.95)

Arctic Butterfly SL700 (\$70.95)

Sensor Clean (\$35.90) and VDust Plus (\$19.95)

Visit visibledust.com for more information.

(See my website and review on ExpoDisc for creating dust maps. It's another practice that will save you many more hours of retouching.)