

Ricoh Theta Review

When I first learned about the Ricoh Theta I thought well this could be the Camera making work a lot easier.

What is in the Box?

The Ricoh Theta comes in an elegant white box. When you open the box the Theta lies embedded in rubber foam. When you remove it from the box you remove a carton to reach the lower compartment of the box containing the cable to charge the Theta or connect it to a computer to import the pictures. There is also a small pouch to protect the Theta and a



quick start guide in several languages.

The Theta appears slightly bigger than imagined and is pleasant to touch. It resembles the feel of hard rubber. The two relatively big bulging lenses immediately catch your eye.

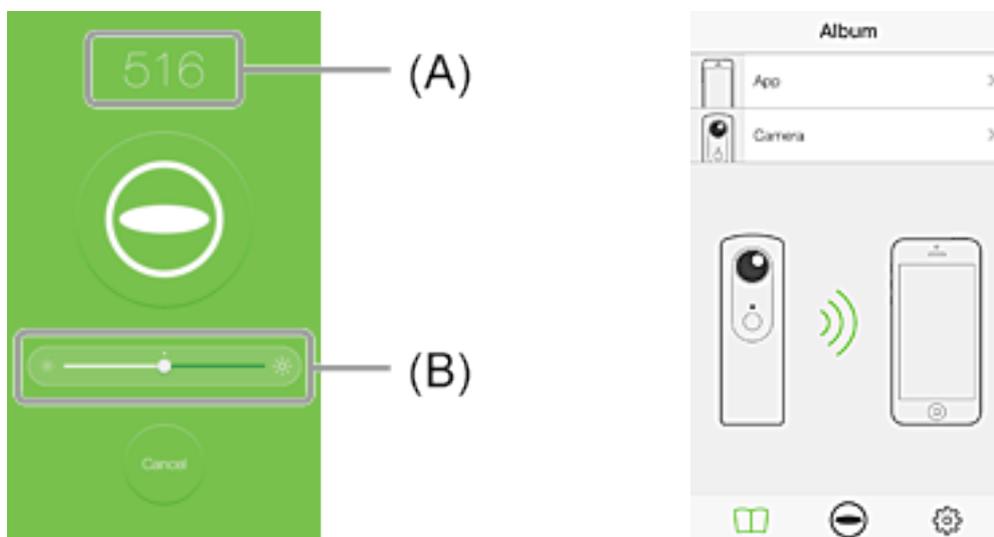


With the quick start guide it is no problem to connect the Theta to your iPhone or iPad. Simply enter the PW for the WLAN connection (serial-number of the Theta) and the

connection is done. After that you start the App in your Apple device. An Android version will be available later this year.

The App for the iPhone in general serves as remote control for your Theta. The spherical panoramas taken with the Theta are transferred to your mobile device after the camera has stitched the two pictures. This takes less than 10 seconds, while the time to transfer the panorama to your iPhone is considerably longer. Be sure to select „Copy“ and NOT „Move“ in the camera's settings. The Theta sends the panorama in a reduced size to your iPhone. If you choose „Move“ and not „Copy“ it erases the original panorama from the camera. I don't use the App to share my panoramas on social networks. For me it serves exclusively as a remote control and to check the results after the panorama was taken.

To get the Panoramas on my computer I use Lightroom. Just hook the Theta with the USB cable to your computer and immediately Lightroom recognizes the Theta.



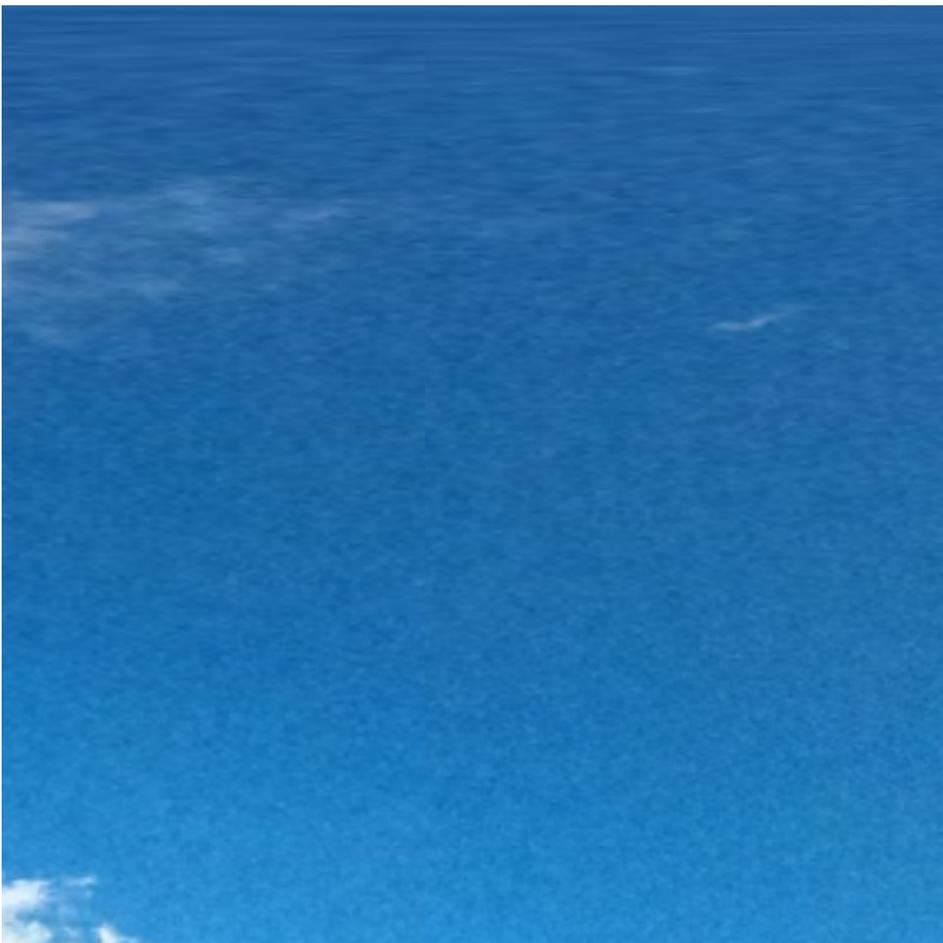
The two screenshots above show the the main windows of the App to control the Theta. The screenshot on the left side shows the part of the App where you actually take your panoramas. „A“ indicates the remaining shots, while „B“ lets you vary the exposure between +2/-2 ev. This offers the possibility to shoot HDR by moving the slider to the left, middle and right position and taking a picture at each position. By hitting the symbol in the middle you actually snap the picture. You can hear a twittering sound from the Theta.

The screenshot on the right side shows that the Theta is connected to your iPhone. It lets you access the Album on the camera and the album on your iPhone. It is the only way to delete the panoramas from your Camera. The tree symbols on the bottom of the window give you quick access to album, shooting menu ant to the settings.

All that said let me come to the practical side of the Theta. The big drawback is the poor quality of the pictures you get. The quality might suffice for social networks, but for serious work you have to work on the files. Very strange indeed is that you see noise at all sensitivities from ISO 100 through ISO 1600. I have been trying hard to get a statement from Ricoh. So far they gave no answers. I think that there is a slight possibility that they can solve the quality issue with a firmware update.

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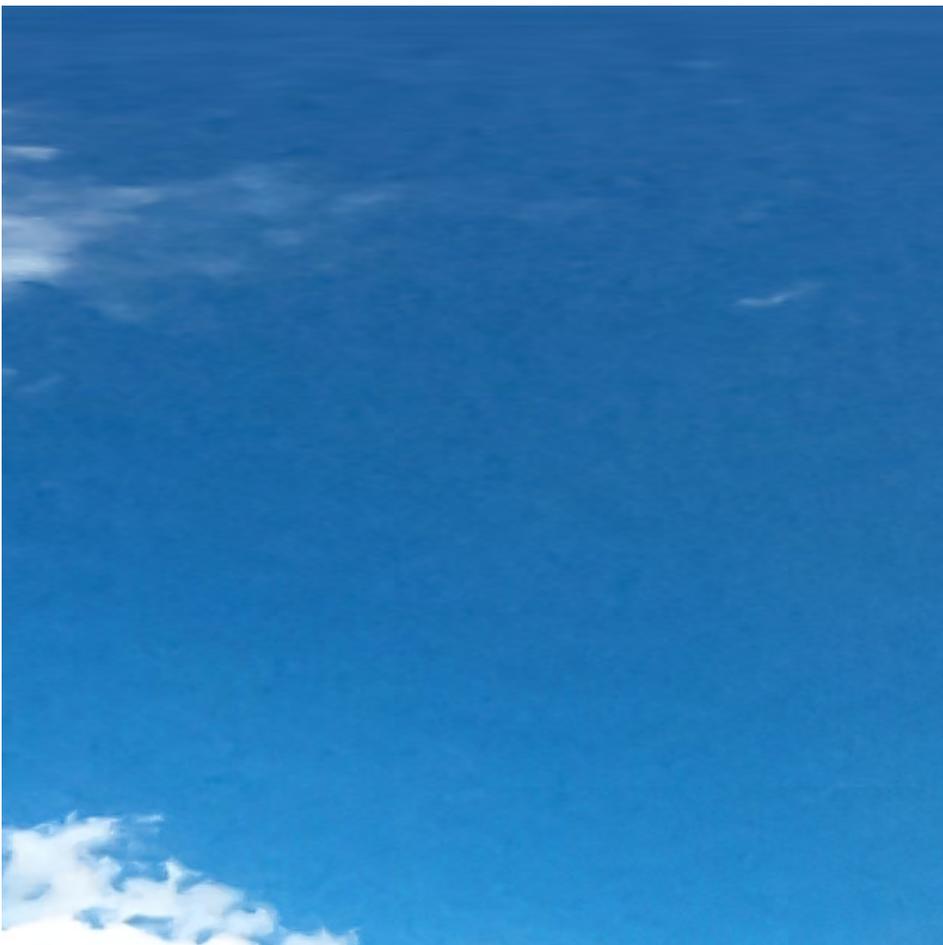
If you are familiar with Lightroom you can de-noise the image files of the Theta. You get much better results. So far I have defined several settings in Lightroom. I can use them on each file I import into Lightroom while importing them, or use them later on in the „Development section“ of Lightroom.



The example above show the panorama as it comes out of the Theta. The crop is @100% of the upper left corner. Lightroom helped me in cases worse than this example above.

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So I gave it a try. The result can be seen below.



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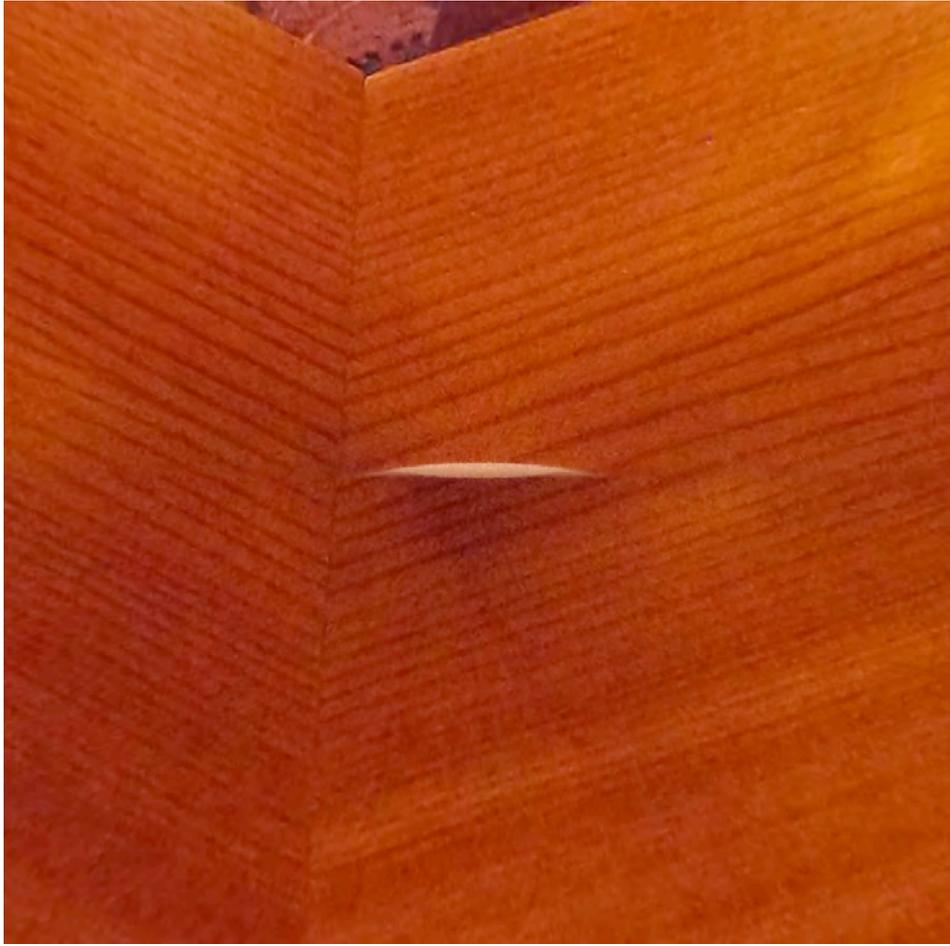
The example shows a night shot as it comes out of the Theta. 1/8 sec @ 1600 ASA. This is unusable.



This one is better. The biggest advantage of the Theta however is the really small footprint it leaves. This saves a lot of work. I prepared an example of the above shot.

But look yourself.

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This is all you normally see from the Theta. In this case you don't need a „Nadir-shot“. At the moment I don't know if I keep the Theta. Certainly the Theta offers many possibilities. You can place the camera in locations where you'll never be able to place your DSLR with a fisheye and panohead attached.

I think time will tell. The Theta certainly offers a cheaper method to produce. If a customer can live with the quality the Theta produces it's OK with me. Certainly the cost of this camera is high end and one can imagine to expect a better quality picture wise.