

Elinchrom THREE review: Possibly the most versatile off-camera flash on the market

The Elinchrom THREE battery-powered monolight has everything you could want from a portable off-camera flash.

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Despite its compact and lightweight form factor, the Elinchrom THREE packs a real punch. It is an extremely versatile battery-powered light that performs effortlessly in an indoor studio setting and on location, providing consistent light in both environments. The THREE's recycle time was very fast and instilled confidence that no moment would be missed.

Pros

- + Compact and Lightweight
- + Bright Modeling Light
- + Great Light Quality
- + Intuitive Controls with Touch Screen

Cons

- - Only has HSS with the Transmitter Pro



The Elinchrom THREE is an off-camera flash aimed at photographers who work in various locations and are often on the move. Located somewhere between the best flashguns and the best photography lighting kits, the Elinchrom THREE offers the best of both worlds, with studio power and quality in a compact and lightweight body that can be easily transported.

When it comes to studio lighting and light shaping modifiers, Elinchrom is among the best in the business, and the release of the battery powered Elinchrom ONE, THREE, and FIVE has enabled photographers to take the power of the studio anywhere. The THREE is the middle sibling of the range in both cost, power output, and size, but all of which offer the same great design, light quality, and user experience.

The Elinchrom THREE was released in October 2023 and has been marketed towards photographers on the move, with a special focus on wedding photography. This makes sense as the THREE offers a little extra than a Speedlight, and its tiny form factor makes it easy to carry around. The battery is integrated into the unit which allows for the smaller size, but this also means that it can work with external power banks via USB-C, enabling shooting from morning to first dance.



The rear of the Elinchrom THREE showing buttons and the light spread on a canvas backdrop. (Image credit: Kalum Carter)

Although weddings may be a slice of the target market, it is certainly not the only scenario in which the THREE can be utilized. As you can see further on in the review, I used it on location for an environmental portrait, and in a studio making it extremely versatile. I also have no reason to believe that this wouldn't be a fantastic option for fashion shoots on location, with the powerful HSS and fast recycle times.

This review came at a perfect time for me as I am in the market for a new portable off-camera flash that could be easily taken with me as an option if the location lacked enough light. Of late I have been working on assignments capturing environmental portraits and detail shots, often in environments that offer less than optimal natural light - so I was eager to test it out to see if it would become a new staple in my everyday workflow.

ELINCHROM THREE: SPECIFICATIONS

Output	261 Ws
Flash modes	Standard, HSS, TTL
Number of flashes	525 at full power
Weight	1.65 kg (3.6 lbs)
Recycling time min/max power	0.06s / 1.4s
Input	USB-C
Battery	Li-Ion – Built-in – 41.04Wh
Skyport	20 frequency channels, 4 Groups
Bluetooth	Version 4.2 / Compatible Studio Software Win, Mac, iOS, Android
Dimensions	25.3 x 16.5 x 10.5 cm 10 x 6.5 x 4.1 inches
LED modes	On/Off, free, proportional, VFC
LED color temperature	Presets from 2700 K to 6500 K
Power range	6 F-Stops
Fan cooled	Smart proactive cooling
Input	USB-C
Protection class	IP20

ELINCHROM THREE: DESIGN & HANDLING

The Elinchrom THREE is sleek and stylish and offers great design in build quality and performance output. The first thing I noticed was its compact size, measuring just 25.3 x 16.5 x 10.5 cm, around the same size as a 70-200mm telephoto lens. It was incredibly lightweight and could easily fit into my camera bag, or in the carry bag that comes with the light kit.

The light is the first that I have used with an integrated Li-Ion battery, making it even easier to transport. The battery is charged via the USB-C port located on the underside of the light body which enables charging whilst in use, and compatibility with external power banks, for extra shooting capacity. A full battery charge enables 525 flashes at full power, and up to 11,250 flashes at minimum power.



The rear touchscreen shows the power level, group, battery level, and option for modeling lamp which at the time was on. (Image credit: Kalum Carter)

The menu system is incredibly easy to use, with an intuitive touch screen to adjust settings with ease. Elinchrom has stripped settings back to the very basics, which makes navigating and changing settings so much easier.

I am not usually a fan of touchscreen controls and have it turned off on my camera but using it on the THREE sped up my workflow. It enabled the changing of settings very quickly with just the drag of a finger, which is often needed when working in a fast-paced shooting environment. There are also physical buttons that are positioned at the rear of the light which are just as intuitive, although I found the speed of the touch screen worked better for me.



The Elinchrom THREE comes with this diffusion dome that keeps the great light spread but diffuses for a softer light quality. (Image credit: Kalum Carter)

The bulb itself is designed around an unconcealed flash tube for optimal light spread, the Elinchrom THREE ensures you experience beautiful light quality even with light shapers/modifiers from other brands. The THREE comes with a diffused dome which softens the light further whilst still offering great light spread.

For my shoots, I also used the Elinchrom Rotalux Deep Octabox 70cm which is easily attached to the provided adapter and offers a beautifully soft light quality for portraiture. A 7-8 mm umbrella mount is included in the removable metal tilt head, making the THREE even easier to pack.

I was extremely impressed with the build quality of both the light and the accessories, and I felt completely comfortable that they could be used in all shooting environments. Not having to worry about the kit was a substantial weight off of my shoulders, enabling the focus to be on the photography.



The touch menu is very intuitive and it displays as easy picture options that can be pressed on and off. (Image credit: Kalum Carter)

ELINCHROM THREE: PHOTO PERFORMANCE

As soon as I found out I was to test and review the Elinchrom THREE, I knew I wanted to put it through its paces with a real-world test as though working with a paying client. Elinchrom has a stellar reputation for off-camera flashes and I was excited to push it to the limits, but it turned out to not have any. Being lightweight and compact I knew I wanted to shoot in multiple environments, both in the studio and on location - it handled both with ease, instantly highlighting its versatility as a major asset.

Set up was instantaneous with the flash unit and the transmitter connecting in a matter of seconds. From there it was a matter of positioning the light to best compliment the subject and scene. This is a major factor to love about the THREE, as it allowed me to focus on what I was shooting, rather than worrying about the light connection. The ease of use further enhanced this, and changing settings via either the transmitter or the unit's touch screen was intuitive and easy.



The Elinchrom THREE set up to shoot through a glass window at the subject in a dimly lit room. Attached to the THREE is the Elinchrom Rotalux Deep Octabox 70cm attached via adapter (provided in the THREE kit). (Image credit: Kalum Carter)

Shooting using off-camera flash often results in misfires and therefore missed shots, with the THREE I had zero during any of my shoots. I could rely on the flash to go when I pressed the shutter and recycle in time for my next shot, what else can you ask for?

Another noticeable highlight for me was the bright bi-color LED modeling lamp, pictured in use below. My location shoot was in a dimly lit workshop, with no natural light. The modeling light was a lifesaver, providing bright light on my subject to enable my [Fujifilm GFX 50S II](#) to catch focus, resulting in sharp images.

The quality of light that the THREE produced was very pleasing and complimented my subjects well. The use of the Elinchrom Rotalux Deep Octabox 70cm enhanced this further, by creating a soft diffused light.

The one thing that I haven't touched on is the transmitter. I used both the Elinchrom Transmitter Plus and the Elinchrom Transmitter Pro, both of which worked flawlessly with the THREE. However, an important note to consider is that HSS is only compatible with the Elinchrom Transmitter Pro, so you might need to check you have the right transmitter for your needs.

ELINCHROM THREE: VERDICT

I shoot a lot with flash, but this may be the best and most versatile portable off-camera flash I have ever used, and that says something. I put this light through shooting in several different scenarios and it handled each one with ease, providing me with confidence that it was going to perform as expected. It produced an amazing quality of light resulting in perfectly exposed images, and the ability to use additional Elinchrom Light Shapers with the adapter enabled further versatility.

I see this light being perfect for anyone who wants to take their first steps with an off-camera flash and take a step up from the traditional speedlight. I plan to incorporate one or two in my location camera kit, for portraiture, fashion, and documentary work in the future due to the quality it produces and the reliance on it doing what I need it to.

Overall this is a fantastic tool to enhance both studio and location photography!

Features	Couldn't ask for more from a light of this size	★★★★★
Design	Great build quality, intuitive menus, and easy to transport	★★★★★
Performance	Beautiful light quality, didn't miss a shot and recycled extremely fast	★★★★★
Value	Towards the higher end of the market - but worth it!	★★★★★

(Image credit: Kalum Carter)