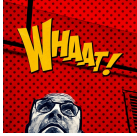


# Sigma 35mm f/1.2 DG DN Art II: A Deep Dive

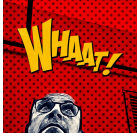
16.10.2025

this document is based on research with claude (sonet v4.5) und chatGPT 5pro mixed up with my own thinkings and tried to present in an understandable way

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## the (necessary...) refresh

So, Sigma's big 35mm f/1.2 just got a serious refresh – it's 30% lighter, way sharper, and built for modern mirrorless cameras. Dropped on September 25, 2025, this second-gen Art II lens is still the only autofocus f/1.2 for Sony E-mount, and they've apparently fixed all the gripes from the first one. At \$1,549, it's a pretty bold move: faster dual linear motors, almost no focus breathing, pro-level weather sealing, and LensRentals even called its optics "the sharpest f/1.2 lens we've tested."

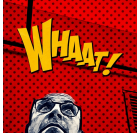
## Is this the right one? Quick facts & timeline

Yep, this is definitely the second-generation "Art II" model (A025), announced September 9, 2025, and out on September 25, 2025 – six years after the original 2019 version (A019). You'll see it called "Sigma 35mm F1.2 DG II | Art" or "Sigma 35mm f/1.2 DG DN II Art." It's in stock at most major retailers as of October 2025.

## The Nitty-Gritty: Tech Specs

### Size & Weight (Sony E-mount):

- **Weight:** 745g (26.3 oz) – that's 335g lighter than the original (-30%)
- **Length:** 113.4mm (4.5 inches) – 22.8mm shorter (-20%)
- **Diameter:** 81.0mm (3.2 inches) – 6.8mm narrower
- **Filter size:** 72mm – down from 82mm (filters are now two sizes smaller, so way cheaper)



## Inside the Lens (Optical construction):

- 17 elements in 13 groups (one more group than the original)
- 1 SLD (Special Low Dispersion) element
- 4 double-sided aspherical glass elements (up from 3 in the original)
- 11 rounded aperture blades for buttery bokeh
- Aperture range: f/1.2 to f/16

## Focus stuff:

- Minimum focus distance: 28cm (11.1 inches) – 2cm closer than the original
- Maximum magnification: 1:5.3
- Dual HLA (High-response Linear Actuator) motors with a floating focus design
- AF/MF switch and a customizable AFL (Auto Focus Lock) button

Field of view: 63.4° on full-frame sensors

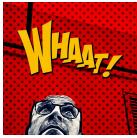
Current price: \$1,549 USD (as of October 2025) – \$50 more than the original, but you get a lot more for it.

## Built Tough: Quality & Materials

Made in Aizu, Japan with pro-grade construction, using aluminum alloy parts and TSC (Thermally Stable Composite) polycarbonate that expands like aluminum.

Weather sealing: It's got a full dust- and splash-resistant design, with a rubber gasket at the lens mount and a water/oil-repellent coating on the front element. Just remember, it's splash-resistant, not meant for underwater adventures.

Mount: A brass mount with treated surfaces, available for Sony E-mount and L-Mount, with a mount conversion service if you need it.



What's in the box?

A petal-type lens hood (LH782-04) that locks in place, a padded lens pouch with a strap, front cap (LCF-72 IV), and rear cap (LCR III).

Pro Features:

- Aperture ring with a click ON/OFF switch for smooth video work
- Aperture lock switch to prevent accidental changes
- AFL button can be customized for various camera functions
- USB Dock compatible (UD-11, L-Mount only)

Big Improvements Over the Original

The Art II really tackled every major issue the 2019 original had:

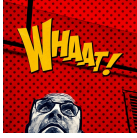
**Size and weight overhaul:** The original was a beast at 1,080g and 136.2mm long. This Art II is a game-changer with a 30% weight cut (745g) and 20% length reduction (113.4mm), all while actually improving the optics – reviewers are calling it an engineering marvel.

Optical upgrades:

- Sharper at every aperture, even wide open at f/1.2
- Better chromatic aberration correction thanks to optimized SLD and high-refractive-index glass
- Much better at suppressing sagittal coma flare (Sigma claims a 2-stop advantage over competitors)
- Less color bleeding and double-line bokeh artifacts
- Four double-sided aspherical elements (vs. three in the original) for better aberration control

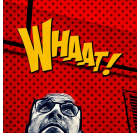
**Autofocus transformation:** The original's single HSM motor struggled with video. The Art II's Dual HLA motors bring:

- Significantly faster focusing



- Quieter operation, great for on-camera mics
- A floating focus system (two independent focus groups) for consistent performance at all distances
- Fstoppers reviewer Matt Johnson noted the original "struggled when racking from near to far subjects, often failing to refocus without switching into manual. With the DG II, Sigma's enhanced magnetic autofocus motors solve that."

**Focus breathing fixed:** PetaPixel says the improvement is huge: "While there is a slight change in field of view when shifting focus dramatically, it is very well controlled and would rarely be noticed in a conventional focus pull." Dustin Abbott agrees: "The Sigma wins for the lowest native focus breathing" compared to Sony GM and Viltrox.



## Image Quality & Sharpness

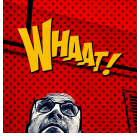
**Wide open at f/1.2 (seriously good):** PetaPixel tests show "incredible detail in the center, even wide open. Stopping down slightly improves contrast, but there are no benefits to resolution." This lens delivers pro-level sharpness across the entire full-frame image at f/1.2 – a rare feat confirmed by LensRentals' Roger Cicala: "For an f/1.2 lens, the MTF chart is really, really good. Center resolution is excellent."

**Center performance:** Sharp enough for 61MP sensors wide open; tested perfectly on Sony a7R IV and a7R V. The-Digital-Picture reports "only modest sharpness improvement when stopped down to f/2.8" because it's already so good.

**Corner performance:** PetaPixel notes "by f/2.8, the frame is sharp from center to corner." At f/1.2, corners are "relatively sharp" – way better than other f/1.2 lenses.

**Sweet spot:** Best overall performance is at f/2.8 to f/4, though center sharpness is already maxed at f/1.2. Diffraction starts to kick in around f/8.

**Resolution capability:** Sigma officially claims "overwhelming resolution that can resolve over 50 million pixels," which has been proven on 42MP and 61MP Sony bodies.



## Bokeh: How it Looks

Many pro reviewers are calling this the best bokeh ever seen on a 35mm lens. PhillipReeve states: "The bokeh is the best I have seen in a 35mm lens yet." Cameralabs agrees: "Its Bokeh is probably as good as it gets on a 35mm lens."

### Background blur characteristics:

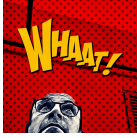
- Super smooth transitions from in-focus to out-of-focus areas
- Undistracting backgrounds with a subtle glow at wide apertures
- That "3D pop" effect for great subject separation
- Renders similarly to legendary lenses like the Voigtländer 50mm f/1.2 and Sony 85mm f/1.4 GM

**Specular highlight rendering:** The 11 rounded aperture blades create almost perfectly circular bokeh balls in the center. PetaPixel confirms the Art II shows "smooth specular highlights with no soap bubble effect and minimal onion rings" – a big step up from the original.

**Cat's eye effect:** You'll see it at f/1.2 in the corners (normal for ultra-wide aperture lenses) but it gets much better by f/2.8, becoming rounder across the frame.

### Performance at different distances:

- Close focus (28cm): "Really nice, smooth bokeh with very noticeable subject separation" (PhillipReeve)
- Portrait distance (1m): "Absolutely outstanding performance" (PhillipReeve)
- Full-body distance: "The best I have seen from a 35mm lens at f/1.4 or faster" (PhillipReeve)



## Aberration Control

**Lateral chromatic aberration (excellent):** The-Digital-Picture tests confirm "excellent performance" with minimal color fringing. PhillipReeve notes "lateral CA is very low to begin with" and lens profiles make correction mostly unnecessary. PetaPixel reports "zero issues with LaCA" in Art II testing.

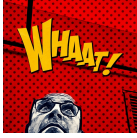
**Longitudinal chromatic aberration (well-managed):** You'll see some color fringing (green/magenta shifts) in defocused highlights at f/1.2, but it disappears fast:

- f/2.0: "Mostly gone" (PhillipReeve)
- f/2.8: "Almost completely gone" (PhillipReeve)

PetaPixel testing shows the Art II has "only a tiny amount of fringing before the plane of focus" – much better than competing f/1.2 lenses.

**Spherical aberration (barely there):** PhillipReeve points out something unusual: "Contrary to most other f/1.2 lenses we see almost no spherical aberration (glow)" at f/1.2. This gives you pleasant, soft bokeh without too much haziness and it's completely gone by f/2.

**Coma (under control):** Sigma made coma correction a priority, and it paid off. PhillipReeve reports it's "certainly one of the better 35mm lenses" with coma "completely gone" by f/2.8. Official Sigma tests show the lens has at least a 2-stop advantage in sagittal coma flare over the Sigma 35mm f/1.4 Art, making it good for astrophotography.



## Distortion and Vignetting

**Distortion:** The original had -2.53% barrel distortion, easily fixed with lens profiles. The Art II is way better: Dustin Abbott reports "only the tiniest amount of pincushion distortion, requiring just a -1 to correct" – a huge improvement, almost perfect optical correction.

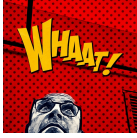
**Vignetting (noticeable at wide apertures):**

**Light falloff measurements:**

- f/1.2: 2.9-3.5 EV (stops) – "Strong light falloff will be obvious in most images"
- f/1.4: 2.6 EV
- f/2.0: 1.9 EV – "Under 2-stops, noticeably improved"
- f/2.8: ~1.0 EV – "About 1-stop, becoming less noticeable"
- f/4: 0.9 EV – well-controlled
- f/8: 0.8 EV – minimal impact

Dustin Abbott confirms the Art II "requires a full +73 (nearly three stops) to correct the vignette" at f/1.2, similar to the original. You can correct vignetting in-camera for JPEGs and with software like Lightroom/Capture One, though correcting it can increase noise in brightened corners.

**Context:** These vignetting levels are pretty standard for most 35mm f/1.4 lenses and actually better than smaller f/1.2 lenses like the Voigtländer 40mm or 50mm f/1.2.



## Autofocus Performance & Accuracy

**Speed (Art II - dramatically better):** The original took about ~0.15 seconds to lock focus but wasn't "super fast" due to heavy elements. The Art II's Dual HLA motors change everything:

- PetaPixel: "Lens now sports Sigma's latest linear motor, which allows the lens to jump almost instantly from minimum focus to infinity"
- Dustin Abbott: "Focus is reactive enough to stop action" with successful tracking of moving subjects at f/1.2
- Matt Johnson (Fstoppers): "The original "struggled when racking from near to far subjects, often failing to refocus without switching into manual. With the DG II, Sigma's enhanced magnetic autofocus motors solve that."

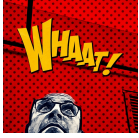
**Accuracy and consistency (excellent):** Dustin Abbott's real-world tests with the original (performance holds for Art II): "For stills, I have zero complaints. It focused quickly, quietly, and accurately on my a7RIII, a7RIV, and a9. Even more importantly for event or portrait photographers is the fact that Eye AF worked flawlessly. I shot a LOT of portrait shots at F1.2, and I never got a misfocused image."

**Non-photographer testing:** Abbott's wife got perfect focus in every burst shot using Eye-AF, showing how reliable it is even for casual users.

## Eye-AF and tracking (Sony bodies - amazing):

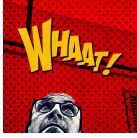
- Successfully tracked a spinning performer in very low light at f/1.2 with 7 out of 12 frames perfectly focused (PhotoFocus)
- DPReview forum users confirm "Eye Focus worked perfectly" even "in near darkness with strobes at f1.2"
- One user comparison: "I had both [Sigma and Sony GM] for a short time. Contrary to most reports, the Sigma was actually noticeably faster to focus than the 35GM in AF-C"

**Low-light capability (extraordinary):** Dustin Abbott's extreme test: Successfully focused at 1/15s, ISO 32,000 (-3.83 EV rating) – "You would need a 20 second exposure at ISO 100 to achieve the same illumination. This test exceeded the -EV rating of the cameras."



## Limitations:

- **Not ideal for fast action sports because of the shallow depth-of-field at f/1.2**
- **Not ideal as sony limits the speed in burst mode for oem lenses to 15 frames per second**
- **Art II shows occasional "focus slippage" when moving into very close focus range (Dustin Abbott)**
- **L-Mount cameras (Panasonic, Leica) had issues with the original due to contrast-detect AF; Sony's phase-detect works best**



## Video Performance

**Focus breathing (much better):** The original had a moderate +3% magnification change when focusing. The Art II's floating focus design is a huge improvement:

- **PetaPixel:** "Very well controlled and would rarely be noticed in a conventional focus pull. Makes this lens a great choice for videographers and cinematographers"
- **Dustin Abbott:** "The Sigma wins for the lowest native focus breathing" compared to Sony GM and Viltrox
- **No need for digital breathing compensation in most situations**

**AF tracking during video:** The original's single HSM motor created "visible stepping action as focus moves by segment rather than in one smooth transition – it's a little choppy" (Dustin Abbott). The Art II completely fixes this:

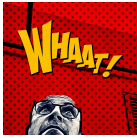
- **Matt Johnson:** "Tracked subjects in both low and bright light without hesitation"
- **Dustin Abbott:** "Autofocus pulls were fast and confident"
- **Fstoppers:** "Focus breathing is present but minimal, especially for a third-party lens without Sony's breathing compensation feature"

**Manual focus characteristics:**

- **PetaPixel:** "Focus ring is well-damped"
- **Dustin Abbott:** "Nice, wide focus ring with rubberized ribs. It has nice damping and moves well"
- **Full-time manual focus override available**
- **Not parfocal (normal for photographic lenses; focus shifts when changing focal distance)**

**Video-friendly features:**

- **De-clickable aperture ring for smooth exposure changes**
- **Quiet autofocus operation, good for on-camera mics**
- **AFL button can be programmed for video functions**



## Pro Review Scores & Opinions

### Cameralabs (Original):

- Award: Highly Recommended
- Quote: "The best 35mm I've tested so far. If you want a 35mm E- or L-mount lens for a full-frame mirrorless camera with an f1.2 focal ratio, the best 35mm for your full-frame Sony or L-mount mirrorless camera."

### LensRentals Optical Bench (Original):

- Technical conclusion: "It's a really amazing sharp lens at f/1.2. The sharpest f/1.2 that we've tested."
- Roger Cicala: "This is the sharpest 35mm wide-aperture lens you can natively mount to your Sony camera."
- Outperformed Canon 50mm f/1.2L, Leica Noctilux-M 75mm f/1.25, and Voigtländer Nokton 35mm f/1.2

### The Phoblographer:

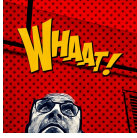
- Original: 5 out of 5 stars
- Art II: 5 out of 5 stars + Editor's Choice Award
- Quote (Art II): "The Sigma 35mm f1.2 II DG Art is a fantastic lens in so many different ways. And if you want the best, get this."

### PetaPixel (Art II):

- Should You Buy It: YES
- Quote: "If you want a 35mm capable of incredible subject isolation in a relatively small package, the Sigma is the best choice out there."
- "Extremely impressed with central performance. There is incredible detail in the center, even wide open."

### The-Digital-Picture.com (Original):

- Quote: "Aside from strong spherical/axial aberrations at wide apertures, the Sigma 35mm f/1.2 DG DN Art Lens leaves little to complain about. This lens opens wider than the rest and delivers image quality at least as good as and usually better than any alternative."



**Dustin Abbott (Original):**

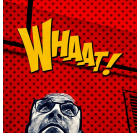
- **Quote:** "The 35DN is an optical beast with few flaws. When you think of the 35DN as a Zeiss Otus-lite type lens that just happens to also have effective autofocus, it suddenly becomes a very attractive lens."

**Focus Review (Original):**

- **Achievement:** Highest resolution score of 125+ tested lenses at 36° field of view
- **Quote:** "Even after correction of distortion, the score for resolution is still the highest of all 35mm (full-frame equivalent) lenses that we have tested."

**Digital Trends (Original):**

- **Assessment:** "Perfectly Impractical" – great but bulky
- **Quote:** "The Cybertruck of lenses. It's bulky and heavy, but you won't find a better 35mm. Insanely sharp. Three aspherical elements mean chromatic aberration just isn't there."



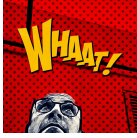
## Pros and Cons: The Full Picture

### Strengths:

- **Unique f/1.2 autofocus – the only option for Sony E-mount**
- **Insane sharpness at f/1.2 – LensRentals says it's the sharpest f/1.2 they've tested**
- **Best-in-class bokeh – everyone agrees it's the best 35mm bokeh out there**
- **30% lighter than the original (745g vs 1,090g) – they really fixed the main complaint**
- **Dual HLA motors – way faster, quieter AF with smooth video performance**
- **Minimal focus breathing – top-tier for video**
- **Pro weather sealing – dust and splash resistant all over**
- **De-clickable aperture ring – great for video**
- **Superior coma control – 2-stop advantage for astrophotography**
- **Handles 61MP sensors – tested on Sony a7R IV and a7R V**
- **Excellent CA control – lateral CA is almost non-existent**
- **28cm minimum focus – 2cm closer than the original**
- **Smaller 72mm filters – down from 82mm, so much cheaper**

### Weaknesses:

- **Still pretty chunky at 745g – not a tiny lens, even with the 30% reduction**
- **Pricey – \$1,549 vs \$1,399 for the Sony 35mm f/1.4 GM**
- **Strong vignetting at f/1.2 – 2.9-3.5 stops light falloff (but fixable)**
- **Some longitudinal CA – visible green/magenta fringing at f/1.2**
- **Prone to flare – ghosting artifacts if the sun is in or near the frame**
- **Cat's eye bokeh – in the corners at f/1.2 until you stop down to f/2.8**
- **Barrel distortion – a small amount that needs profile correction**
- **Not parfocal – focus shifts when changing focal distance**
- **Still too big for street/travel photography for many users**



## Compared to the Sony 35mm f/1.4 GM

Price:

The Sigma is \$150 more expensive (\$1,549 vs \$1,399) – which is a reversal of the usual third-party discount.

Size and weight (Sony wins here):

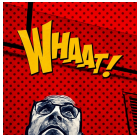
- **Sony:** 524g, 96mm length, 76mm diameter, 67mm filter
- **Sigma:** 745g, 113.4mm length, 81mm diameter, 72mm filter
- **Sony is 30% lighter and 18mm shorter with much better balance on mirrorless cameras**

Optical performance:

- **Sharpness:** Sigma is slightly sharper at f/1.2 compared to Sony at f/1.4; not much practical difference when stopped down
- **Bokeh:** Sigma wins for ultimate shallow depth and smoothness; Sony is great but can't match f/1.2
- **Vignetting:** Sony is better controlled (needs less correction)
- **Distortion:** Sigma Art II is now almost as good as Sony
- **Flare resistance:** Sony is significantly better (a major Sigma weakness)
- **AF speed:** Comparable for stills; Sony is better for video with breathing compensation

Feature differences:

- **Sigma advantages:** f/1.2 aperture (1/3 stop faster), de-clickable aperture ring, focus lock button, mount swap service, 28cm close focus
- **Sony advantages:** Focus breathing compensation compatible, lighter/more compact, better flare resistance, better balance



**Who should pick Sigma:** Portrait photographers who want that unique f/1.2 look, event/wedding photographers needing ultimate low-light performance, users with high-resolution cameras (a7R IV/V), and those who prioritize optical quality over portability.

**Who should pick Sony:** General purpose shooters, travel and street photographers, video shooters, those who prioritize handling and practicality, and budget-conscious buyers looking for better value.

**User story (DPRReview Forum):** "When the GM 35mm f1.4 was released, I sold my Sigma 35mm f1.2. While the Sony lens is near optical perfection, I missed the rendering from the Sigma lens so much, I re-acquired another one and now shoot both lenses."

## Other 35mm Options

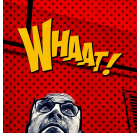
**Sony 35mm f/1.8 FE (\$750):**

- 280g (almost 3x lighter than Sigma)
- Half the price
- Sharp, especially stopped down
- Best value for most people
- Better for travel/street/general use

**Sigma 35mm f/1.4 DG DN Art (\$899):**

- 640g (lighter than the f/1.2)
- \$650 less than the f/1.2
- Optically excellent
- Only 1/3 stop difference from f/1.2
- A great "sweet spot" option

**Market verdict:** The Sigma f/1.2 Art II is a niche lens – it's not the most practical 35mm, but it delivers optical performance and a unique look that nothing else can touch.



## Why this lens is special (Key Selling Points)

### What makes this lens stand out:

1. **Only autofocus f/1.2 35mm for Sony E-mount – truly unique, no direct competition at this aperture**
2. **Unmatched optical quality – sharpest f/1.2 tested, handles modern 61MP sensors edge-to-edge**
3. **Unique look – creates that "special something" that users miss when they switch; great 3D pop and subject separation**
4. **30% lighter – they really fixed the original's biggest flaw while improving everything else**
5. **Pro-grade build – weather-sealed to professional standards with premium features**

### Best for:

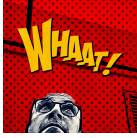
#### ★★★★★ EXCELLENT:

- **Portrait photography – environmental and close-up portraits with extreme subject isolation**
- **Low-light events – weddings, receptions, indoor events where f/1.2 is a clear advantage**
- **Nightscape portraits – combining shallow depth with wider scene coverage**
- **Studio work – where weight isn't an issue and rendering quality shines**
- **High-resolution cameras – a7R IV/V users who want cropping flexibility**

#### ★★★ ADEQUATE:

- **Astrophotography (amazing light gathering: ISO 500 astro shots are possible)**
- **Product photography (close focus and rendering)**
- **Video (with some caveats: no Sony breathing compensation)**

#### ★★ NOT RECOMMENDED:



- Street photography (too big, too noticeable)
- Travel photography (too heavy)
- Landscape with sun (flare issues are significant)
- General purpose/daily carry (better alternatives exist)

Is it worth \$1,549?

It makes sense when:

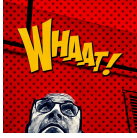
- You're a portrait specialist who will use f/1.2 regularly (40% of the target market)
- You're an event/wedding pro needing serious low-light capability (30% of the target market)
- You're pairing it with high-resolution bodies (a7R IV/V, a1)
- You're building a specialized 2-3 prime lens kit
- You prioritize "ultimate image quality" above all else

It doesn't make sense when:

- You need a general purpose lens
- You're on a budget (there are better value options)
- You prioritize portability over optical excellence
- Video is your primary work (Sony alternatives are better)
- You won't regularly shoot below f/2

Target audience

Professional portrait photographers, wedding/event photographers, image quality enthusiasts with high-resolution Sony bodies, specialized shooters who already own multiple lenses (not a first or only 35mm).



## What real users are saying

### Common praise:

- "Best 35mm for Sony" (lots of mentions)
- "Insanely sharp at f/1.2"
- "Incredible bokeh" (universal agreement)
- "Low-light monster" – ISO 500 for astro vs typical ISO 3200+
- "Eye AF works flawlessly"
- "Pro-grade construction"
- "Three-dimensional pop in images"

### Common complaints:

- Size and weight are still "the single biggest deterrent" even with the 30% reduction
- "\$150 more than Sony GM doesn't make sense" for many
- Prone to flare with sun in/near the frame (a big issue for landscapes)
- Heavy vignetting at f/1.2 (though fixable)

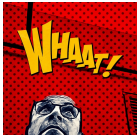
## Ownership pattern

Some users sold the original, then bought it again because they missed the unique look. A few own both the Sigma f/1.2 and Sony GM for different situations.

## Sources

### manufacturers

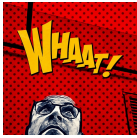
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