

# DIGITAL PhotoPro®

August 20, 2018

## Rotolight Neo 2

David Schloss

Published in [Gear](#)



The Rotolight Neo 2 is an exciting hybrid, designed for an age where photographers and videographers increasingly are the same person. The Neo 2 is a high-powered, consistent LED light, but it has a superpower, one that makes it more versatile than just about any LED on the market.

The Neo2 is a high-quality, precision-built and colour-accurate LED system, which is 85% brighter than the original Neo, but the Neo 2 is also a flash system, able to produce strobe

output at up to 500% of the power of the continuous lights. The Neo 2 has no recycle times and a top speed of 1/8000th of a second, allowing it to keep pace with the fastest frame rate from any camera on the market. On a single charge of six AA batteries, the unit can flash more than 85,000. (This is not a claim we tested since that would take an incredible amount of patience, but the light did operate for hours and hours on a single set of batteries.)

The Neo 2 can operate both as a flash and as a continuous modelling light, and unlike modelling lights in strobes, which come from a separate light source, what you see with the modelling light on the Neo 2 is what you get, in both light coverage and colour temperature. This is the first light in the industry that offers electronically adjustable colour temperature in both flash AND continuous modes.



Thanks to a partnership with Elinchrom, the Neo 2 has a built-in Elinchrom Skyport receiver and can be triggered by a Skyport transmitter from up to nearly 700' away. The Skyport system automatically connects to available lights at startup, meaning no awkward setup, as with some lighting systems. It can also be triggered via a cable, if a \$200 Skyport Transmitter isn't in your budget.

Multiple units can be triggered at once, thanks to the Skyport receiver, which makes them as versatile as any dedicated wireless strobe system. They're not as powerful as strobe systems like Nikon or Canon's Speedlights, but they're significantly more versatile. At three-feet the Neo 2 can output 2000 lux—which is about twice the brightness of an overcast day—and enough for an f/8 exposure at ISO 200 with flash.

I've sat several times with the people at Rotolight, and they are fastidious about the light quality and accuracy in their products. I've heard several times about how the LED elements are selected out of batches and tested to be within a precise tolerance, to meet the CRI of 96

and TLCI of 91. The Neo 2 can be adjusted from a colour temperature of 3150K to 6300K for quick light balancing. Colour filter packs can be added to the front of the unit, to provide coloured lighting on set.

Another smart feature on the Neo 2 is the ability to adjust the brightness of the system based on distance from a subject. Photographers or videographers enter the ISO setting of the camera, distance to the subject, and desired shutter speed. The system will provide an f/stop for the correct exposure, based on its known light output. If you want to change your aperture but still maintain the same exposure without trial or error, just enter in the desired f/stop and the system will change the lighting output to match the new aperture setting.



There's also a CineSFX mode which enables the Neo 2 to simulate a variety of lighting effects, including flashing police lights, lightning and old television pictures, complete with the ability to adjust the flicker rates and intensity. It's a smart way to quickly simulate lighting effects for broadcast and motion picture production (and is used for theatrical productions as well).

The rear of the unit seems overly-simplistic until you play with it for a while. Two knobs and a red LCD screen provide the interface to the Neo 2, but the engineers have done an excellent job making these simple controls handle all of the unit's features.

I've been carrying the Neo 2 around with me because it eliminates the need for me to take both a strobe and an LED for many types of shoots, and it's surprisingly versatile. During one shoot of mountain bikers in the high desert, our professional monolight system went down, and I was still able to get some portraits thanks to the Neo 2 I had brought along. It's also a

great companion when shooting videos, and when doing light painting during astrophotography shoots.

I'm also partial to the round shape of the Neo 2, preferring it in many portrait settings to the typical square or rectangular LED units often seen on camera. The form makes it more cumbersome to pack, but I think the light is worth the extra room it takes up in my bag. It also replaces a flash for many shoots, so there ends up being overall space savings.

The \$400 price already puts it on par with (or slightly cheaper than) many other high-accuracy portables LED lights, none of which can do double duty as a flash system.