The Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens is an impressively high performing zoom lens. I regard it as one of the best general purpose lens available.

Sporting a red Canon L Series Lens ring, the Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens' build and mechanical quality are top of the line. The solid 24-70 L focuses quietly and very fast thanks to Ring USM (Ultrasonic Motor) that also facilitates FTM (Full-Time Manual) focusing. Focus and zoom rings are nicely-sized and operate smoothly. Weather sealing (when attached to a weather sealed body) completes the quality package.

Rounding out the Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens package is excellent optical performance.

The Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens is very sharp for a zoom lens. The 24-70 L is sharp in the center at f/2.8 at all focal lengths. Corners are also very good with one exception - the extreme full-frame corners are soft at 28mm and below until stopped down to at least f/8. There is rapid sharpness drop-off at these far corners below 28mm. Stopping down a stop or so improves sharpness slightly in the center and slightly more in the corners. While pictures from the Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens are very sharp, the excellent contrast and saturation are what strike me the most in real life applications. Very little contrast and saturation post-processing is necessary on most shots taken under good lighting.

The 24-70 L easily beats Canon consumer zooms (such as the Canon EF 24-85 Zoom Lens and the Canon EF 28-135 IS Zoom Lens) in direct sharpness and contrast comparisons.

Like most 24-xx zoom lenses, the Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens shows some barrel distortion on the wide end until disappearing around 35-40mm. This distortion is primarily evident on a full frame body. Vignetting is very well controlled, but apparent in the corners at 24mm, f/2.8 - primarily on a full frame body. Vignetting improves as the focal length increases and the aperture is narrowed. At comparable apertures, the Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens shows less vignetting than the Canon EF 24-105mm f/4 L IS USM Lens - typically expected results when comparing a fast lens to a slower lens. CA (Chromatic Aberration) is well controlled, generally only showing under harsh contrast conditions at the wide end of the focal length range.

A fixed f/2.8 minimum aperture makes this lens as fast as any Canon EF zoom lens made. The wide 8-blade aperture produces a nice background blur.

I find the focal length range of the Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens to be in my personal sweet spot on a 1.3x FOVCF body. It is slightly long on a 1.6x body - it works better for portraits and is slightly long for wide landscapes. It is slightly short on a 1.0x (Full Frame) body - great for wide landscapes but slightly short for close portraits.

Prime lenses (fixed focal length lenses) are often compared favorably to the Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens. They are generally less expensive, smaller, lighter, faster (aperture) and very sharp. Instead of addressing each prime lens in this focal length range in this review, I will compare the primes to the Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens in their individual reviews.

Some ask - can I post-process my consumer lens digital pictures to be similar to 24-70 L pictures? Well, you can adjust contrast and saturation, but you cannot add detail. Most primes and L lenses are noticeably better than consumer zooms. Incidentally, some lenses accept post-process sharpening much better than others. The Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens images take sharpening very well.

My personal preference is for zoom lenses for my photography applications in this focal length
range - very low available light photography being one exception. The ability to change framing instantly far outweighs the slight (usually insignificant) image quality advantages fixed focal length lenses offer to me personally.

If your application only needs one focal length, your budget does not reach the 24-70 L price, or you are shooting indoors at night without a flash, consider one of Canon's fixed focal length lenses. Otherwise, I highly recommend the Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens for its greater versatility.

Pictured above from left to right are the Canon EF 28-135mm f/3.5-5.6 IS USM Lens, Canon EF 17-40mm f/4 L USM Lens, Canon EF 24-105mm f/4 L IS USM Lens and Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens.

Pictured fully extended above from left to right are the Canon EF 28-135mm f/3.5-5.6 IS USM Lens, Canon EF 17-40mm f/4 L USM Lens, Canon EF 24-105mm f/4 L IS USM Lens and Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens. Of note is that the 24-70mm L reverse extends - it becomes longest at 24mm as shown above. Most lenses including the 24-105 L become fully extended at their longest focal length setting.
Pictured above from left to right with their respective lens hoods in place are the Canon EF 17-40mm f/4 L USM Lens, Canon EF 24-105mm f/4 L IS USM Lens and Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens. Of note with the lens hoods is that the 24-105 L's hood extends with the lens while the much larger 24-70 L hood stays in one place. The 24-70 L extends inside the hood. In other words, the overall size of the 24-105 with the hood in place changes while the 24-70 L stays the same length.

The Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens has a wide angle focal length of 24mm - not real wide on a Digital SLR with a high FOVCF, but is still wide enough to take nice landscape or group pictures. It is quite wide on a full-frame digital or film SLR.

The additional 4mm of wide angle focal length provided by the Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens over 28-xx mm lenses such as the discontinued Canon 28-70 f/2.8 L Lens and some of Canon's consumer zooms such as the Canon EF 28-135mm IS USM Lens is definitely useable and welcomed - especially on the 1.6x crop FOVCF Canon digital SLR bodies.

The Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens' 77mm filter diameter makes sharing filters (such as a circular polarizer filter) with most of Canon’s other L-Series zoom lenses easy (and more affordable of course). The Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens ships with a lens hood and a Canon Lens Soft Pouch.

The Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens is the bread and butter wedding lens for many professional photographers. The 24-70mm focal length range allows a large group shot or a closeup picture of the bride without a lens change. At f/2.8, available light shots are possible in most churches (a high ISO setting will usually be required).

The Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens is also the choice of many photojournalism style photographers.

At 70mm, the Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens makes a nice portrait lens - especially on a 1.6x FOVCF body. The zoom functionality makes capturing those quick frame-and-shoot situations (have any kids?) possible.

The Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens focuses close enough to take close-to-macro pictures. It will not take a 1:1 macro shot, but capturing the flowers around your house is one of this lens' capabilities.

The biggest downside of the Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens (in my opinion) is it's size and weight. With its large lens hood, this lens is not small or light when used as a walkaround lens. I quickly got over this downside after reviewing my results.

All that said, I think the Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8 L USM Lens is one of the best Canon walk-around/all-purpose lens made. Be sure to read the Canon EF 24-105mm f/4 L IS USM Lens review and if you are using an EF-S capable body, the Canon EF-S 17-55mm f/2.8 IS USM Lens review before making your decision.