

Curing Lens Envy Home Page

Dedicated to helping you resist the insidious effects of lens envy
by Robert M. Monaghan - a recovering Lens-Aholic

Q: What fraction of photography contest winning photographs are taken with the normal lens?

A: Did you guess over 75%? Any guess less than 50% is a sign of being a lens-aholic ;-)

All telephoto, wide angle, and special effects lenses combined account for under one-fifth of 700+ surveyed contest winning photographs. My obvious point is that the lack of any given lens has a minimal effect on your ability to compose and take great photographs. Put another way,

Excellence in Photography is acquired by Practice, not Purchase - Tim Brown

Contest Winners:	Percentage
normal (50mm) lens	78%
wide angle lens	10%
telephoto lens	12%
aperture f3.5 or slower	89%
aperture f6.3 or slower	65%
shutter 1/40th sec. or faster	53%
shutter 1/100th sec. or faster	27%
The Amateur Photographer's Handbook by Sussmann, 1973, pp.115-6	

Bongo's Law

The cost of the lens is inversely proportional to the frequency of its use.

Have you secretly lusted for that 1000mm f6.3 telephoto, you know, the one that costs more than your car is worth? It may help you to realize that high cost is a result of low demand. Or maybe you want that 300mm f/2 EDIF Nikkor for your collection? At \$29,000 each, most of the 350 or so made went to Hollywood movie cameras rather than fellow impoverished photographers, right?

Most of these lenses cost so much because they are made in small runs on a hand-crafted basis. As an example, a 200mm-600mm f9.5 zoom lens by one major manufacturer had a total production run of 186 lenses [per page formerly at <http://www.hawk.igs.net/~gmartel/niklens.htm>, page not found as of 2/2003] - for the entire world market! If your dream lens is a 1000mm f6.3 telephoto, it is even rarer, being one of only 60 ever made (only \$12,000 used!). (see [posting](#))

So don't be misled into believing that you are the only one in your camera club who doesn't have one of each. The mere fact that the lens is so expensive is a sure sign that you probably don't need it either. If you need it, rent it like the pros do, don't buy it!

The table below demonstrates that it will probably cost you up to 800 times more per photo to own that ultra-wide or ultra-telephoto manufacturer's name brand lens compared to your normal lens costs.

More Lenses You Buy, More It Costs You!				
Lens mm	use %	lens cost	cost/roll	factor
<=21mm	<1%	\$1,000	\$200.00	800x
24mm	2%	\$400	\$40.00	160x
28mm	3%	\$250	\$16.67	67x
35mm	4%	\$200	\$10.00	40x

50mm	78%	\$100	\$.25/roll	1x
85mm	3%	\$200	\$13.33	53x
105mm	3%	\$250	\$16.67	67x
135mm	3%	\$250	\$16.67	67x
200mm	2%	\$400	\$40.00	160x
>=500mm	<1%	\$1,000	\$200.00	800x
Cost/roll=(lens cost/5 yr use)/(100rolls x use %)				

Compute the Cost Per Shot for Each Lens

Lots of people have literally thousands of dollars worth of camera lenses gathering dust in their closets and camera bags. You have to shoot a lot of film past an expensive lens to get your costs per shot into a reasonable range. Here is an exercise in estimating your cost per shot for each series of lenses.

The average SLR owning photographer shoots less than ten rolls of film a year, has more children than lenses (2.4 vs. 2.2), and doesn't have a separate flash unit. You have to get really far from the average photographer to get your costs per shot down to a reasonable level. Let's say you are in the top one percent of amateur photographers, shooting over 100 rolls of film each year.

Item:	Purchase Cost	Annual Cost	Comments
35mm SLR body	\$1,000	\$200	5 years to replacement
50mm lens	\$100	\$20	5 years to replacement
Wide Angle lenses	\$500	\$100	5 years to replacement
Telephoto lenses	\$500	\$100	5 years to replacement
Film and Supplies	100 rolls	\$1,000	100 rolls per year at \$10/roll

Lens:	Contest %	Lens Cost	Lens Cost/rolls	Lens Cost Per Shot	Factor
50mm	78%	\$20	\$20/78 rolls=\$0.256/roll	0.7 cents/shot	1x
wide angle	10%	\$100	\$100/10 rolls=\$10.00/roll	28 cents/shot	40x
telephotos	12%	\$100	\$100/12 rolls=\$8.34/roll	23 cents/shot	33x

Cost per shot with a normal lens is at least thirty to forty times cheaper than the lens cost per shot for standard wide angle and telephoto fixed lenses or zooms. You would have to shoot ten times as many wide angle and telephoto shots compared to your normal lens to bring these lens costs per shot into balance.

Lens Purchases Reflect Popularity of Each Focal Length

For Hasselblad 6x6cm C lenses, from the Hasselblad Compendium per <u>posting</u> :				
24mm f3.5 F Distagon	- about 50	0.01%	(cf 16mm on 35mm SLR)	
30mm f3.5 F Distagon C	- under 1000	0.24%	(cf 20mm ")	
40mm f4 Distagon C	- approx. 9,000	2.16%	(cf 24mm ")	
50mm f4 Distagon C	- approx. 75,000	18.03%	(cf 35mm ")	
80mm f2.8 C Planar	- approx. 210,000	50.47%	(cf 50mm ")	
120mm f5.6 S-Planar	- approx. 14,000	3.36%	(cf 85mm ")	
150mm f4 Sonnar C	- approx. 70,000	16.82%	(cf 100mm ")	
250mm f5.6 Sonnar C	- approx. 30,000	7.21%	(cf 180mm ")	
350mm f5.6 Tele-Tessar C	- approx. 3,000	0.72%	(cf 250mm ")	
500mm f8 Tele-Tessar C	- approx. 4,000	0.96%	(cf 350mm ")	
80mm Normal Lens is over half of all C lenses sold, add in				

Which Lens to Lust After?

What greater misfortune could befall a lens-aholic than to lust after the wrong lens, to discover it isn't what s/he wanted after all, but only *after* it is acquired?

The conventional approach to deciding on lens desirability is to look at a set of photos showing different focal length lenses view from a tripod, e.g., [Tamron's online guide](#). Even better, consider trying a borrowed zoom lens for a weekend. Using a zoom, you can get a feel for where your sense of seeing photographically may lie.

Here is an idea for a better guide, and one that will work for the particular camera you are using, whether 35mm or 6x6cm or other format.

Get an empty slide mount and a cloth tape measure with millimeter scale (saves calculations). Put the tip of the tape measure on the bony part of your eye socket just under your eyeball, and hold it there with one hand. Now move the slide down the tape measure, holding the slide vertically.

You should see a view as if you were using a zoom on a 35mm camera while looking through the slide. Stop when you get the desired perspective, and note how far in millimeters you are from the tape measure's tip under your eyeball. That distance corresponds to the lens that you would need to get the same perspective. This trick works very well with normal and telephoto lenses, regardless of format. For wide angle lenses, your eye must focus straight ahead and not look around the slide.

Another approach is to try a rule of thumb - namely, your thumbnail held at arm's length (yours, not mine) should just about cover up the image that a 500mm lens would make on a 35mm camera system. A 250mm lens would cover up four thumbnails, which you can also estimate pretty well.

For superwides, the distortional optics involved make their differences harder to visualize. You can use a protractor to measure out the angle covered by your super-wide angle lens. Now you can see if that extra eleven degrees of coverage is worth \$700 more for a slower lens ;-).

The millimeter ruler and empty slide holder are a very useful tool in deciding which lens to buy. You can also learn a lot about making pictures with just these two accessories. You can even simplify this kit by setting up a string of the right length, or one with knots in it at the popular focal lengths (105mm, 135mm, 180mm, 210mm, 350mm, 500mm etc.). Now you can quickly see which lens is the best for a given shot, with nothing more than an old empty slide mount and a piece of string.

With luck, you will soon get a feel for what each of the different focal lengths will do for you. This string trick can also help you once you get your lenses, to select which one to mount for a given photo session. Enjoy!

Lens Envy Alternatives

Praise of the Normal Lens (by Chris Bitmead)

[Ed. note: page was at <http://www.ans.com.au/~chrisb/photo/technical/normal.html>
not found as of 2/2003 link check...]

Use your normal lens in new ways.

Go Macro:

1. use closeup lenses to extend your normal lens into the macro realm, or
2. use a bellows to extend your normal lens into the macro realm, or
3. use a teleconverter with macro capability, or

4. use a reversing ring to use your normal lens as a closeup lens

Use Front of the Lens Adapter for Fisheye, Wide angle and Telephoto Views:

1. use a screw-in wide angle adapter, or
2. use a screw-in fisheye superwide angle adapter, or
3. use a telephoto adapter.

Use a Behind the Lens Adapter for Telephoto Views:

1. use a telephoto converter 1.4x to convert your normal lens to 1.4x telephoto
2. use a telephoto converter 2x to convert your normal lens to a 2x telephoto
3. use a telephoto converter 3x to convert your normal lens to a 3x telephoto

Approaches to Moderate Your Fast Lens Envy

Contest Winners	Percentage
F 3.5 or slower	89%
F 6.3 or slower	65%
1/40th sec or faster	53%
1/100th sec or faster	27%
The Amateur Photographer's Handbook by Sussmann, 1973, pp.115-6	

Rob's Law: *Lens cost goes up as the cube (third power) of its diameter...*

Lens-aholics typically want the fastest lens available, even if they don't do much low light or action freezing photography. Compromise. *Buy a slower lens and a better tripod.*

In general, money spent on a tripod will be much more evident than far more money spent on getting the fastest lens. You can also get a lot more than one or two f-stops of extra range from a tripod, while even the best and fastest lens can only get you a little bit more exposure.

The fastest lens in a given range will typically cost you *double* or more the cost of the 2/3rds of a stop slower lens. Using Rob's Law, a full stop means 2x more glass area, 1.4x the diameter, and 1.4 cubed or roughly 2.8 times the cost. Again, you will have to pay a lot more for something you will rarely use. The faster lens is harder to design and build to minimize aberrations at maximum apertures.

The contest winners chart above shows most lenses are shot at f 6.3 or slower. This setting is where lenses are at their sharpest, at least one or two stops from their maximum aperture. At this setting, the slower lens will often equal and sometimes outperform the faster lens. Today's faster films have also made faster lenses less of an issue too.

You could spend more than twice as much to get slightly faster lenses, but you will rarely use that fastest f-stop setting. If you find you need the extra speed, you will be able to justify the extra expense while finding a ready market for your old lenses.

Spending your savings on a good tripod and monopod is likely to have a far more beneficial impact on your photography results than that rarely used fast f-stop.

Original Manufacturer or Generic Lens Maker?

This theme is a constant flame war on some *rec.photo* newsgroups. You pay your money, and you take your choice. Check out some of the lens review sites on the WWW. These sites will help convince you that good lenses come from many different sources.

In general, you pay a good bit more for a Nikon lens than a very good generic lens of the same speed and overall quality. This *snob factor* surcharge is why camera makers price their bodies with a minimal markup (typically as low as 5% at discount stores), in the hopes of getting you hooked into buying their lenses and accessories. Sometimes, these items really do make a difference, but usually the main difference is felt in your pocketbook. Here is where some research can pay off in locating real buys in both new and used lenses.

What are you doing with your photographs? If you are only making 4" x 6" photos at the local drug store photolab, then you may not ever see the difference between most generic lenses and the more costly original manufacturer's lenses. Many times, the difference is too subtle even when seen on 8" x 10" prints, which are rarely used by most amateur photographers. So unless you are doing some unusually demanding work, you may be quite happy with the better class of generic lenses.

A caution is warranted here, however. You should also consider total lens cost, including salvage value. In other words, if you buy a high quality lens that holds its resale value, it may end up costing you less than a lower quality lens that loses 80% or more of its value on resale. In a few cases, professional cameras and high quality lenses may actually increase in value above the rate of inflation (e.g., hasselblad lenses), in effect paying you to own and use them.

Lowering Lens Costs with Changeable Lens Mounts

A related issue is the choice of permanent or convertible mounts. Certain lenses are designed to work with many different mounts, making it possible to buy a single lens and use it on multiple camera systems. This advantage is not important if you like your current camera body and intend to keep in the same body and lens line in the future. But if you have multiple camera types or bodies, it becomes attractive to buy a lens that can be shared by simply changing the camera body mount.

There are two types of adapter mounts. One type does not provide aperture information to the camera, being just a simple physical lens mount. The venerable T-mount is one such mount. Users meter using stop-down techniques, which is less convenient than the usual full metering automation mount. But for such lenses as a 500mm mirror lens, which is usually preset at f/8 anyway, the T-mount is a good and inexpensive choice. Many generic telephoto lenses also offer a T-mount version which can be shared among different camera bodies. This option also makes it possible to purchase a lens mounted for one camera, and use it on another camera body by simply swapping out the mount.

The second type of adapter mount does provide some metering information to the camera, so full aperture metering may be available. The Tamron adaptall-II lens mounts are examples of such lenses. Again, the advantage is that you can switch the lens from one camera body to another simply by using a different mount for the desired camera. If you decide to change from Minolta to Nikon camera systems, you will be able to convert these adapter based lenses.

Finally, it may be possible to convert a generic lens to a different body mount, but as a more costly manufacturer or camera repair shop operation. For example, Kiron is reported to provide different mounts for some of its generic lenses to switch that Canon mount to a Nikon mount (cost is \$35 and up). Re-engineering is a remote possibility, as most non-generic lenses can't be switched without major mechanical and optical work of a very costly variety.

Used Lenses

Used lenses are an obvious potential source for lenses at significant savings. Supply and demand explain only some of the price anomalies you may find, so it really pays to shop around. For example, I have a [home page listing used lens prices](#) for Bronica S series cameras. While lens cosmetics are subjective, the prices for similarly rated lenses range up to 40% between camera stores.

Individuals selling a camera typically should factor in a 20% discount, because they are unable to offer similar warranties and credit with dealer services. So a lens that sells for \$250 by an individual would typically bring \$299 when sold by a dealer.

My personal preference is to buy directly from individuals, especially where they are offering a package deal. Individuals want to sell off the entire setup, and will often price a package at just over the cost of the main camera and lens. You can get terrific buys if you really need and want all the items in the package.

Another reason for dealing with individuals is that you can assure yourself that the camera has not been abused and over-used in professional service. Books aimed at professional photographers also advise them to buy from amateur photographers. The prices asked by amateur photographers are likely to be much lower than those asked by dealers or other in-the-know professionals. Moreover, the equipment is very likely to be in much better shape than the worn and used up equipment they would be likely to buy from a fellow professional photographer. In short, buy the little used but professional equipment from an amateur photographer to get the best buys.

Shopping for lenses and other photogear on the Internet and photo dealer ads is a lot like traveling. *You can trade time for money.* If you wait long enough and look around enough, you can often find used lenses for half or less of the going dealer prices for similar used lenses.

A first step is to list and define your wants, listing the lenses you want and why you want it for each one. Justify any price raising factors such as faster lens speed or need for a macro version lens. Create a table listing sample prices for either new or used versions of these particular lenses. Do some research in Shutterbug Ads or other photo magazine ads to get price ranges. Look up prices in photo price guides in the library if available. Now you have the information to identify a potential bargain lens out of a morass of competing ads.

You may also wish to consider generic lenses for the extreme focal lengths on both wide angle and telephoto lenses. You may find it much more cost competitive to accept generic lenses for these rarely used lenses. So buying a generic 500mm mirror lens and a good generic ultra-wide angle lens can give you these extremes at much lower costs.

Conversely, you may find that there is relatively little dollar difference between the original manufacturer's lenses and generic used lenses in similar condition. This price compression is most likely for the middle focal lengths around the normal lens range, and for the slower standard lenses. Performance gaps between manufacturer's lenses and generics have closed in recent years. But you may find that older original manufacturer's lenses significantly outperform older generic lenses of the same vintage. Today's used prices may be very close, even though the original prices were very much higher for the original manufacturer's lenses. In this case, you may want to consider getting the slightly more expensive original manufacturer's lenses.

You can also trade off against the flaws of a particular lens against the usual buyers prejudice for mint condition equipment. Even dealers will discount used lenses by a large 50% factor for lenses that show significant wear even if the glass and mechanical operation are excellent.

Conversely, you should beware and test any lens that has significant defects such as scratches on the lens or rough focusing operation. Even here, it is possible to buy an ugly duckling that works great for your needs at 75% or more off the usual used cost of the particular lens.

Medium Format Lens Envy Issues

A particularly bad form of lens envy hits the 35mm photographer who develops a lust for the larger format cameras, especially the 6x6cm medium format cameras. The limited demand for generic lenses means that lenses are often only available from the original manufacturer. Zoom lenses are almost non-existent. Lenses cost about ten times what their equivalent focal length 35mm brethren cost, when they are available at all. In short, medium format cameras are a great place to practice lens envy reducing techniques.

The most common mistake is to assume that because you are buying a Hasselblad or Bronica or similar camera, you don't need your old Nikon or Canon 35mm system. Here is where you can really use our mantra about cameras with normal lenses taking 80% of all contest winning photographs. You can buy a new or used hasselblad with normal lens (80mm) for less than the next lens alone in the system is going to cost. So limiting yourself to the normal lens and 80% of the potential contest winning photographs is not such a bad deal, as long as you stop there.

You can use closeup lenses and fisheye adapters and the available wide angle and moderate telephoto adapters on your normal lens too. So I have occasionally used a fisheye adapter on an old 500c to add a bit of fun and special effects. I have also used wide angle and moderate telephoto adapters in series VII filter mounts to provide some additional range at very

low cost. While the results can't match the original Hasselblad lenses in quality, the costs are under one percent of what those lenses cost used too. Since you can also use these fisheye adapters and close-up lenses and filters on your 35mm equipment in most cases, you get double duty out of them too.

Another medium format option is to buy an older and cheaper camera with affordable lenses to supplement your pricey snob-appeal camera. For example, buying a Kowa 6x6 camera means you can add Kowa lenses for less than film backs cost on your Hasselblad system. Even cheaper alternatives, such as the Bronica ECTL cameras, provide a variety of Nikkor and other high quality medium format lenses for prices that seem more like 35mm than 6x6cm lens prices. Unlike the Hasselblad and Kowa cameras using leaf shutter lenses, the Bronicas (S/S2/C/D/EC/ECTL) featured focal plane shutters and lens helical mounts in the body. So the lens was just that, without built-in shutters, greatly reducing the cost of these quality lenses too. In short, it may be cheaper to buy another camera to get the better cheaper medium format lenses you want, than to buy them for your first medium format camera.

Conversely, if you suffer from Zeiss lens paranoia, you can get a nice German manufactured Zeiss planar lens formula in a quiet, light, high quality 6x6 camera that has zero mirror bounce. The camera is one of the older Rolleiflex twin lens cameras with the 2.8f or 3.5f Zeiss planar lens (see [note below](#)). You can also get earlier Rollei cameras of various types which feature similar performance at relatively low costs. Other twin lens reflex cameras can be outstanding buys for those who can get by with non-interchangeable lens cameras.

A final option may exist, depending on your choice of medium format camera and dual lens mounts. Most cameras have a standard proprietary lens mount, similar to the bayonet mounts on 35mm cameras. But many medium format cameras have a second screw-thread mount internal to the camera lens mount for mounting bellows and special adapters. These threaded lens mounts can be used to adapt lenses from other medium format cameras for your camera.

I have a threaded lens mount which I have adapted to mount a 135mm f/4 Nikkor preset lens onto a Bronica S2a medium format camera. With this type of mount, many of the lenses from older press cameras and even 4x5 plate camera lenses can be used as moderate telephoto lenses for these medium format cameras.

Sorry, but most 35mm camera lenses don't have the film covering capacity needed for medium format work. An exception might occur if you are using a superslide (1 5/8" x 1 5/8") back, as you might be able to get adequate coverage with some 35mm camera telephoto lenses in this intermediate format. Nor can you usually swap mounts from other medium format wide angle lenses, due to the problems of lens mount distances with these lenses. But for short, medium, and long telephotos, you may be in for some fun discoveries.

A bellows assembly and some adapter rings can be used in these experiments. Even a lens from a discarded polaroid camera may be glued and mounted to produce some interesting shots. You might also want to try reversing some 8mm film camera glass lenses in your bellows mount too (as well as trying them as eyepieces for your telescope too). The threaded camera mount also makes it possible to use any handy bellows with a simple to build adapter (check local machine shops for details and prices). Lens candidates are easily mounted on the bellows for testing. If results warrant it, the lens can be mounted in its own threaded metal adapter and added to your medium format arsenal. You can also do the reverse, for example, by using a custom adapter to mount a Bronica body thread to a telescope mount. Imagine creating a 2400mm f/6 medium format camera system using a \$50 adapter to a \$500 Dobsonian telescope. Now there's a medium format lens worth developing lens envy over!

Conclusions

1. 80-20 rule - 80% of your photos will be taken with the normal lens
 2. normal lens cost per shot will be 30 to 40 or more times cheaper than wide angle or telephoto lenses
 3. faster lenses are rarely used wide open by most amateur photographers
 4. know what lenses you want to buy, and why
 5. list and compare prices for used and new lenses to locate bargains
 6. consider both generic and original manufacturer's lenses and tradeoffs
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Date: Mon, 16 Mar 1998 14:50:40 -0800
From: Nick Fiduccia
To: Robert Monaghan
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.medium-format
Subject: Re: Which MF ?

Robert Monaghan wrote:

>

>

> I used the "80%" solution - see Curing Lens Envy by a recovering lensaholic
> at <http://www.smu.edu/~rmonagha/bronlensenvy.html> - basically, 80% of
> photos in contests studied were taken with normal lens; so go ahead and buy
> that hasssy or rollei with standard lens, but get a lower cost system for
> the other lenses.

Bob,

I looked at your "Curing Lens Envy" homepage. Very Interesting.

Your point is well taken, but I do believe that the data may be a bit, well..dated. In 1973, the 50mm lens was very prevalent being often sold with the camera. Since many people had the 50mm, that was the most used lens in the survey. The study that needs to happen is: what frequency of focal length lenses do you use if you had at your disposal all the focal lengths you could ever want.

If we did this study with me (who likes to shoot landscapes) I suspect the numbers would be not as skewed toward 50mm. I have a 24, 35, 50, and 85. Here is the approximate distribution for use:

24 : less than 5%
35 : 30%
50 : 35%
85 : 30%

Your suggestion about studying which which lenses you would use before you buy is a good one!

Happy shooting!

-Nick

Date: Mon, 16 Mar 1998 17:57:11 -0600 (CST)
From: Robert Monaghan
Subject: Hi - good points, ;-) Re: Which MF ?
To: Nick Fiduccia

Hi Nick

I agree with your post, and appreciate your point, and think it will be increasingly true with the normal lens now becoming a zoom lens ;-)
I will add your points to the article this evening in a postings section ;-)

that said, I think the low cost normal lens is underrated and underused

by many folks, and offers some of the best resolution and technical performance available ;-) And most folks have one, if nothing else.

I also agree that professionals tend to pick a style, say portraits where a nikon 105mm might be optimal, or landscapes (28mm? 18mm?), or sports (200mm? 300mm?). On the other hand, most amateurs tend to do even broader ranges of work, and so often end up with more lenses and more expensive extreme lenses than the professionals. ;-) There is an unfortunately tendency to buy faster than I can assimilate new lenses and learn their optimal use.

I partly rediscovered the normal lens myself from both medium format and large format (4x5) work, and partly from getting an available light fast normal lens to replace my favorite micronikkor 55mm lens.

So I still think it is a good idea for folks to explore their normal lens more, but agree with you that the range of improved zooms may displace many individual lenses in amateur use and so lessen the costs of moving towards those extremes. That said, I am still distressed that so many zooms are used at their extremes (esp. telephotos), at least by me, knowing that this is often the poorest part of their performance range ;-)

you just can't win ;-)

regards and happy St. Pat's day - bobm

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* Bronica 6x6 medium format: <http://www.smu.edu/~rmonagha/bronica.html> site *
* Medium Format Cameras: <http://www.smu.edu/~rmonagha/mf/index.html> megasite*

Date: Tue, 17 Mar 1998 08:38:06 -0800 (PST)
From: Nick Fiduccia
To: rmonagha@post.cis.smu.edu
Subject: Re: thanks for pointers - posted etc.

Hi Bob:

Thanks Bob for writing the "lens envy" page. I read it last night and enjoyed it very much. It gave me lots of ideas.

> That said, I think the low cost normal lens is underrated and underused
> by many folks, and offers some of the best resolution and technical
> performance available ;-) And most folks have one, if nothing else.

Yes, it is my favorite, least expensive (\$11 used from KEH), and probably sharpest and most corrected lens I own.

I am going to purchase a Bronica SQAi and am thinking about the 50mm, the 80mm, and the 135mm. This gives me the same horizontal angle of view as focal lengths of 33, 52, and 87mm in 35mm. These are probably my most favorite focal lengths. What do you think? Do you have any experience with these lenses?

-Nick

From: dannyg1

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.medium-format
Subject: Re: Which focal lengths do you use? contest winners, lens-aholic
Date: Wed, 18 Mar 1998

Bob,

On your lens envy page you suggest curing a lust for the Zeiss Planar by buying a twin lens R'flex. Problem is that the Planar in the R'flex TLR is a 5 element design that's no where near as capable as the H'blads Planar 80. Now the 100/3.5 H'blad Planar is very near (if not) identical to the 100 2.8 Planar for the Graflex XL and Linhof cameras. So, best way to get that Planar is probably the Graflex (\$650 w/ 100 Planar in ex/ex+ condition).

Regards,
Danny Gonzalez

From: "??*Carlee" <?*CLFITZ@inetone.net>
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.medium-format
Date: Thu, 19 Mar 1998 04:25:16 GMT

I use a Bronica ETRS (6 X 4.5) and only use two lenses:

40 mm (Probably 75%)
75 mm (25%)

I do a lot of landscape and architectural photography, chiefly outdoor stuff; I've done indoor shoots but don't have the equipment to do them well and decline all of them now.

And, of course, I do weddings until I'm sick of them...

Carlee

Worldwide production run of only 250 lenses example ;-)...

Date: Sat, 18 Apr 1998 10:21:58 EDT
From: Oldernell Oldernell@aol.com
To: rmonagha@post.cis.smu.edu
Subject: Re: PCS lens for ETRS

Mornin', Bob,

Got your note just now. The PCS lens was made some time ago for the ETRS only (to my best knowledge). According to one of the knowledgeable tech's that was with GMI (when they had the franchise) there were only about 250 of them produced. Half of that number were in 'circulation' in the world and the other half was in the possession of the U. S. Navy. It seems that when the Navy up-graded from Nikon 35mm to 6X4.5 format, they chose the Bronica ETRS system and ordered 125 complete systems, i.e., one of everything shown in the 'exploded view' in the sales literature. This was confirmed to me by my nephew who was on active duty at that time. The Navy really got some nice toys to play with on that deal!! Our gov'ment at work...again.

I'll look around and see if I still have any of the literature on this piece of glass and, if you'll e-mail me your mailing address, I'll send it to you.

Oh, yes, I almost forgot. The retail price for this lens was \$6,000.00 a copy!! Cough, hack, sputter...

Best, Tom

From: kirkfry@msn.com
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.large-format
Subject: Re: 135mm vs 150mm - Advice Requested
Date: Sat, 30 May 1998

photo882@aol.com (Photo882) wrote:

>
> I'm relatively new to large format, and have decided to get either a 135 or a
> 150 lens for the relatively normal perspective feeling it gives when shots are
> blown up to about 11x14 or so - landscapes, larger works of art, etc. But I'm
> having trouble deciding which one. I think I might prefer the slightly wider
> 135 somewhat, but those lenses don't seem to have that much coverage compared
> to 150 lenses, especially one like the Rodenstock Sironar S (135 lenses seem to
> have coverage around 195mm to 208mm, and 150s around 214 to 231mm). I don't
> know how much coverage I really need so I don't know if this is an important
> issue or not.
>
> Also, I wonder how easy it would be to focus a 135mm lens with 200mm of
> coverage, as compared to a 90mm lens with 235mm of coverage. Would the larger
> coverage of this particular 90 make up for the cosine light drop off effect so
> that it would as easy to focus as the 135mm lens?
>
> Thanks in advance for anyone with information that would help my decision.
>

The standard advice is 90mm, 150mm, and 210mm. No one is "standard". I do landscapes, I like 300mm. I started with a 210mm. The difference between 135mm and 150mm hardly matters. 200mm of coverage is enough for either lens. Wide angle (\leq to 90mm) lenses are hard to focus because you mostly have to shoot them pretty much straight ahead (no tilts, swings or at least not much) and it is hard to see the corners to get all 4 of them focused. Coverage is not the issue. What do I recommend? What do you shoot most in 35mm. Wide, get the 90mm. (usually not recommended as a first lens), normal get the 150mm, long (a 100 mm in 35 = 300mm in 4 X 5, more or less) get a 210mm or 300mm. The longer the lens gets the easier it is to focus. (A 480mm f 11.0 is easier to focus than a f5.6 135mm because the light rays hit the ground glass straight on with the longer lens.) One good piece of advice is to rent a lens and play with to see if you like it.

There are lots of 127 mm and 135mm's out there from press cameras. These I would not recommend, as while they are cheaper, they really don't have enough coverage unless you are using a press camera.

Good luck Kirk
kirkfry@msn.com

From: msherck@aol.com (Msherck)
Newsgroups: rec.photo.misc
Subject: Re: 35 mm SLR Lens quality, recommendations
Date: 10 Jun 1998

Try searching through DejaNews.COM under various conditions such as "New Camera" or "Lens Quality" -- this topic comes up regularly in most of the photo newsgroups.

My own personal opinion is that there's very little difference in quality of either cameras or lenses between the major brands. Pros typically choose their system for various and sundry reasons, usually either because of special features they just have to have, or because they have considerable investment and can't afford to replace everything. For your needs, you should try each camera you are considering to see if it fits your hands, handles the way you want it to, etc.

Mike Sherck

Wild Rose Photography, Inc.

From: Rocky Boudreaux rocky@pdq.net
Subject: Response to Notable Photographers who only use a normal lens
Date: 1998-06-14

Although not done with medium format, 4x5 photographer John Sexton's beautiful book Quiet Light was over 50% with a 210MM lens. Medium format equivalent would be about 110. I did a study on it a while back and I believe 26 of 45 were 210. The closest runner up was the 120 with 5 Other lenses did 4 or less images in the book.

His next book Listen to the Trees was about 70% done with 210MM.

Interesting question isn't it. It really addresses the question of what is the primary important information in a photograph.

Some of my most recent favorite images were made on a trip to New Mexico where I took only one camera,blad, and one lens 80-2.8MM. and two A-12 backs.

Good question. Good web site. Glad I found it.

Thanks

From: stefan poag stefan@icon-stl.net
Subject: Response to Notable Photographers who only use a normal lens
Date: 1998-06-16

Sorry to keep harping on this but think it is an interesting take on the normal question. The corner to corner measurement of the film gate method of determining a "normal" focal length sounds great; but I understand that when a camera manufacturer (I don't remember when in the 1940s came out with a camera in which the standard lens was a 45mm (because it was closer to normal) the camera did not sell. People were asked why, they said the normal lens was too short -- the Leica and Contax had set the standard at 50mm for normal in their minds. The reason why I want to bring this up is because I think too many people get locked into very rigid ideas about what lenses to use and when based on these conventions; i.e: this focal length is perfect for portraits, that one for landscapes, etc. It is, essentially, a form of bullshit that I think has been vastly helped along by manufacturers of camera lenses (can't have all those people using just one lens, can you? Gotta buy more!) and the industries moronic lackies in the photo-writing biz who try to write guides and articles on how to take great (i.e.: boring) pictures.

This thread started off with Cartier Bresson and his use of one lens. I like the example of Bresson because I believe that the use of the single lens actually spurred his creativity. His lens, camera, film always stayed the same -- to him that was just technical stuff. Photography was being out in the street, taking the pictures.

From: Robert Monaghan rmonagha@post.cis.smu.edu
Subject: Response to Notable Photographers who only use a normal lens
Date: 1998-06-20

I have enjoyed this thread on single lens using photographers - quite neat; very appropriate to Medium Format discussion, since so many of us are limited to only a few lenses in our camera systems (e.g., Koni Omega RF) or budget (e.g., my student budget ;-)) so we have to make do with less ;-)

as a recovering lens-aholic (we're the _worst_ kind ;-)) I have posted a page titled "Curing Lens Envy" <http://www.smu.edu/~rmonagha/bronlensenvy.html> a surprising 80% of contest winning photos were taken with the normal lens and most of us realize the normal lens is often the best corrected, fastest, and cheapest lens in our kit. So why are so many folks down on them?

Mr. Poag's point is well taken above; it is fairly amazing how much bullshit you have to forget in order to really start learning real photography again.

A good trick is to go on photo-safari trips with only one lens and make do. For example, with a 24mm lens (on 35mm camera) I discovered I could do portraits provided I worked hard at controlling distortion, and had a lot of closeup capability I hadn't realized I had until forced to explore the capabilities of the only lens I had with me, rather than reach in my bag for the macrolens or the portrait 105mm or whatever ;-).

Many 35mm users are shocked to discover that a typical full-kit of med fnt camera lenses equates to a 35mm, 55mm, and 135mm trio of lenses on 35mm; fisheyes and zooms probably aren't available, or affordable if they even exist ;-). No zoom lenses!!! Now there's a case of culture shock! ;-)

On a number of medium format systems, I have opted or been forced (TLRs ;-) to adopt the 80% solution - namely, that you could get nearly 80% of those contest winning photos by using just the normal lens.

Sometimes, I cheat by using closeup lenses, and my front-of-the-lens adapters for fisheye and superwide effects at very low cost (under \$50 each) <http://www.smu.edu/~rmonagha/bronfe.html> and [bronaux.html](http://www.smu.edu/~rmonagha/bronaux.html) provide some details ;-) These are really extensions of the normal lens, right ;-)???

In short, many folks can be happy and produce great photographs with just the standard, under-rated normal lens - and these noted photographers cited in this thread have helped prove it is the photographer, rather than the lens or camera, that makes the picture ;-)

Too often, readers of MFD or similar lists would conclude that you can't do good med fnt work unless you have the latest and most expensive lenses and kits of accessories. I suspect that many of us would do even better work photographically if we had fewer distractions and choices to make -and in fact, this may be one of the features of medium format photography that makes it so beneficial to newcomers as a new medium.

regards to all - bobm

rec.photo.film+labs

From: Jeffrey Karp jeffkarp@erols.com

[1] Re: Film recommendations

Date: Tue Jun 30 00:31:39 CDT 1998

Get a 50mm f1.8 lens. It is only \$75-, and the extra 2 stops will really come in handy. I would not be at all surprised if you later used this lens for more than half of all your photos. The images will be much sharper from it than from the zooms, and they will have more life to them. With the 50mm f1.8, you should be able to use 100ASA or 400ASA film most of the time. My favorite negative films are Fuji Reala(100 ASA), and Fuji NPH(400ASA). Get a small tripod and cable release.

From: "Fred Whitlock" afc@cl-sys.com

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: Give me a little perspective regarding lens quality

Date: Sat, 26 Sep 1998

While it's true that more expensive lenses are usually better optically than less expensive lenses that isn't always true (sometimes they are just faster, as an example) and it's also not true that less expensive lenses can't make good photographs. To put things into perspective, when one talks about sharpness in a lens, usually they are referring to the corner sharpness at wide apertures. Most lenses do a good job when they are used at smaller apertures. Distortion, that many people refer to, relates to the edges of the frame and not the middle. Many people (myself excluded) don't care about the edges. Speed is an expensive feature in a lens so if you typically use fast print film (ISO200 or faster) this and wide apertures may not be an issue.

I've tested several of the third party lenses and found that, while they are inferior to the camera brand lenses, they are only marginally so, particularly if you can shoot at small apertures. I've had the best results from lenses by Tokina which seem to be about the same as their nearest competitors optically but better mechanically. Good shooting.

Fred

Maplewood Photography

<http://www.maplewoodphoto.com>

From: rpn1@cornell.edu (Neuman-Ruether)
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Re: why out of production - specialty lenses? asRe: Help! Photography in the dark ages
Date: Sat, 26 Sep 1998

On Sat, 26 Sep 1998 19:49:24 GMT, johnknee.nospam@earthlink.net (john) wrote:

>I'm an on again off again photographer and I am curious about 2
>things.
>
>1. Why do some rave about the quality of older lenses (esp Nikon) I
>mean shouldn't all the advances in optical glass and optics technology
>mean current lenses just leave the older stuff in the dust? I can see
>how all the AF stuff means there is less selection for MF stuff...
>
>2. Why are certain lens out of production like fish eyes? I mean
>shouldn't there be even more demand now? Are we really seeing a
>"dumbing down" effect?

It boils down to market demand (but maybe with a little help from the sales staff to direct that demand...;-). Rarely-purchased lenses do not make money for a lens manufacturer, unless priced beyond the reach of most (really rendering them rather rarely-purchased...;-).

El-Cheapo slow AF zooms of so-so optical quality sell like the proverbial hotcakes, and are mass-produced cheaply, so they make a profit. Time was when some lens mfgs. competed on the quality and diversity of their output, figuring the reputation gained would serve them well in the long run. But it became obvious with time that mere advertising could be substituted for reputation, and the "reality" about lens quality was determined more by the quality/quantity of the promotional work. Mass-market lenses + advertising = profit.

Which isn't to say that great lenses (even in AF...! ;-)) aren't being produced now for the top end of the market, but a large low end market (in price AND quality) has opened up that wasn't there before, resulting, I think, in a lower overall level of lens image quality than once existed.

David Ruether

ruether@fcinet.com
rpn1@cornell.edu
<http://www.fcinet.com/ruether>

From: "donald haarmann" donald-haarmann@worldnet.att.net
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Most expensive lens on the Net?!
Date: 26 Sep 1998

Most expensive lens advertised on the Net!?

<http://waxman.com>

Nikon 1200-1700mm f5.6-8 ED \$74,999.00

donald j haarmann

From: Yeti-Man@webtv.net (Yeti Man)
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Re: Most expensive lens on the Net?!
Date: Sat, 26 Sep 1998

And i thought it was the \$90,000.00 Canon 1200 mm.

Guess either it took a hit in the exchange rate, or they must have one hell of a rebate on it :) (that was Adoramma's advertised price about two months ago, if my brain cells aren't as far gone as my gf thinks)

From: "Steven J. Schiff" tenrec@worldnet.att.net
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Re: Most expensive lens on the Net?!
Date: 27 Sep 1998

Now I don't feel so bad about that \$22,000 (used!) 300mm f/2.0 AI-Nikkor I saw...

From: TDAO@IS.RVH.MCGILL.CA (TD)
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Re: Fully Manual bodies advantage for beginners -- myth and conspiracy!
Date: 5 Oct 1998

>
>The thrill of seeing images produced with a Leica M has nothing to do with
>the expense of the system and much to do with the fact that the quality of
>the images created cannot be matched, imho. If those cameras/lenses sold for
>less than other systems, I would be very very happy. I'm talking about the
>results one gets using those optics. If you haven't experienced using those
>cameras and seeing the results, you just won't get what I'm saying, I guess.
>
> Cheers, Rene

I have seen pictures from Leica M class equipment and read reports on the quality of their lenses. I support your opinion that the mechanical quality seems very high, at least by appearance and weight, although I have heard the M6 does not match the M3's quality for example. Both are very good but not better than say Nikon or Canon equipment. Much of the satisfaction many people get stems apparently from their belief that their images are better from the M equipment than they could have had from any other type of "inferior equipment. That's fine, but that's not the case for everyone. I don't think that you would honestly be very very happy to find out that a used \$200 Yashica Mat 124-G would whip the pants off any 35mm camera/lens combo.

From: "JOHN LAKE" jlake@thegrid.net
Subject: Hasselblad, Bronica, Mamiya, etc.
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.medium-format
Date: Wed, 07 Oct 1998

Some of you will love this true story and others will hate it. But there is a moral to it, if you look.

About 15 to 20 years ago I decided to take the MF plunge. I purchased 2 Hasselblad bodies, 4 backs, and 4 lenses---all new. Now I am all set, yes? I believe Braun (not certain) was the servicing agent at that time so I took the new equipment down to have shutters and apertures checked along with the bodies and backs. They gave me a calibrated chart with the shutter speeds, and 1/500 sec. was slow by 40 % and the lesser speeds were off by about 20%. I asked them to repair them and I was told they were within spec's and nothing would be done. Naturally I came unglued!

I then found Mr. Hasselblad west of the Mississippi who turned out to be Rudy Ling. Most people know or know of him if shooting Hasselblads. Trained at the factory, went back about once a year for further updating, etc. and has or had a reputation that was world renowned.

I took the equip. to him, and his first comment was that he just loved working on brand new equipment! I left the gear and about a week later I came back for the pickup. He explained to me that the shutters usually sit on shelves, cocked, for about 2 to 3 years before being put in lenses and that is why they had to be re-timed. He did say everything else seemed to be OK and he even made me a little tool to uncock and cock the shutters when storing lenses.

At that time we got into a long conversation about the relative merits of cameras. I asked him--"Are Hasselblads really worth the money (retail) I spent for them?" I will never forget his answer-----

"If you were charged half of what you paid for them, then you would have had a fair deal !" This from a man who was known world wide for his expertise on that brand! I thought he was kidding and asked him if this were so. He said "No, I am not kidding you. You asked me an honest question and I am giving you an honest answer. They are good cameras and lenses, but there are many every bit as good, and somewhat less expensive! What you also got for the extra money was hype, advertising, and PRESTIGE. Was it worth it?"

I paid him the \$250 he charged for setting the lenses, and going over the bodies, and left in a state of shock. Later I found the 80 mm lens had an annoying habit of red fringing under certain circumstances. Subsequent years found me with the RB, Bronicas (6 sets), Rollei's(SLR), and I found they were every bit as sharp as the Hasselblad lenses.

The reason for posting this is that you will be hard pressed to find any of them out there that give greatly superior picture quality if you bought a top name brand. I don't want or expect any of you to write a response to this, but it is something the newbies should know.

John

rec.photo.equipment.35mm
From: ch644@torfree.net (C. J. Morgan)
[1] Re: Basic Reccomendations to Learn Photography
Date: Tue Nov 24 01:42:11 CST 1998

bmmcdaniel@my-dejanews.com wrote

> Hi-

>I am looking for some *very* basic information about how I should go about
>trying to teach myself photography as a hobby. I have used automatic cameras
>before, but I know nothing about shutter speeds, fstops, film speeds, etc.
>But I'd prefer a camera that allows the user the widest possible latitude to
>make these manual adjustments. I imagine that as I learn what I am doing, I
>will be taking a lot of black and white photos. In addition, I'd prefer a
>camera I could use both indoors to take portaits or close-ups of items, and
>outdoor scenery.

If you want to learn photography, consider the words of Edward Weston from almost 60 years ago (they are just as applicable today, if not more):

If your interest lies in the technical side of photography, there is nothing against trying all the gadgets and formulas you want or need. But if your interest is primarily in the picture, if you want to use photography as a medium of expression, then keep your equipment simple.

It is of infinitely greater value to know all the potentialities of one camera, one lens, one film, etc., than it is to have a smattering of superficial knowledge about several different makes and brands.

For my own part, shooting for well over a quarter of a century now, I can confirm the truth of Weston's words. And having studied photography for this amount of time, I can also say that this is the advice I would have given to myself if I were starting again today.

So if you want to learn photography, start with one camera, one lens, one type of film. There is much to learn with just this.

With the simplicity of this start, learn composition and light. Composition is how we arrange different subject matter within the confines of viewfinder space, and light is the essence of the medium, which, when illuminated properly, makes the ordinary look extraordinary.

Composition can be a very complex topic to learn (and even harder to teach), but as a beginning point keep this in mind as you go about your work: kill the clutter. That, in itself, leads to a great deal of fine images.

As for light, remember that for a photographer, it is not the objects of the world which interest us, but rather how they appear under any given lighting condition. When you stop looking at objects and start looking at appearance, you will see that a scene in the morning looks quite different from that same scene in the afternoon. Study the light -- or rather what light is doing to the appearance of subject matter. Soon you will start to see the extraordinary with in the ordinary as well.

Hope that helps,
C.J.

--

C.J. Morgan
ch644@torfree.net

rec.photo.equipment.35mm
From: "Michael A. Covington" covington@mindspring.com
[1] Re: Second lens?
Date: Mon Nov 30 18:41:14 CST 1998

I have an N70 with that same 35-80 zoom lens... the latest in a long line of cameras I've used.

I strongly recommend getting the 50/1.8. It's a real bargain... superb performance at a low price. It will open up low-light possibilities for you; at f/1.8, it collects 4 to 8 times as much light as the zoom. It is also remarkably sharp and free of distortion.

I keep a Nikon multicoated L1BC filter on each lens to protect it. Don't use cheap non-multicoated clear filters; the filter needs to be, optically, as good as the lens.

From: dalphotopr@aol.com (DALPHOTOPR)
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Re: Why is a 50mm lense a good thing to have?
Date: 21 Nov 1998

I would say that having a 50mm lens is NOT necessarily a good thing, or something you HAVE to have. For over 25 years I shot photographs without ever owning a 50mm lens. I seemed to get by alright. A 50mm lens is the cheapest way to get a relatively high speed lens both in financial cost and in bulk. It also distorts the least, if you care about those things.

I spend most of my time using a wide angle lens. You need to evaluate for yourself, WHAT would you do with that lens so that you can justify having it. Don't just buy one 'cause everyone else has one.' The four best things about 50s are their compact size, faster speeds (usually) and lower purchase price (they're commonly available) and they provide a perspective closest to that of the human eye.

Dan
DAL Photo Productions

From: anonymous@siscom.net (DM)
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Re: Why is a 50mm lense a good thing to have?
Date: Sat, 21 Nov 1998

I have two manual focus lenses: Sigma 28-80 f3.5-4.5 and a Nikon 50mm 1.8. I started with the Sigma and a few years later got the Nikon because I did not like the weight of the zoom (about a pound). I thought that I might only use it occassionally. I find that I use it nearly always.

Here is why I like the 50mm:

- 1) It is a lot lighter.
- 2) It is a lot faster.
 - a) I can use slower film with faster shutter speeds.
 - b) I can use slower film with wider apertures.
 - c) My flash reaches much further.
- 3) Pictures taken with it just seem to pop off the paper. I am not too technical when it comes to pictures so perhaps someone else would describe it differently.
- 4) It is much sharper. I think that this is for a few reasons:
 - a) I like to shoot in low light, without a flash or tripod, filling the frame with my subject. Bad technique but it works with the 50mm, but not with the zoom. The shutter speed is just too slow.
 - b) I have a hard time focusing the zoom.
 - c) But even when all other things are equal, the 50mm is just a better lens.
- 5) I like the perspective of the pictures I take with the 50mm more than that of the zoom.
- 6) It is easier to focus. It just seems to snap into focus. Also it is a pain when the split prism blacks out. (Does anyone know if an AF camera can more easily focus a 50mm f1.8 than a slow zoom at 50mm? Why? Is it more than just mechanics? e.g. the motor works faster on a lighter lens.)
- 7) Images seem to be brighter through the viewfinder.
- 8) I find that the lens is less obtrusive to others. The smaller lens seems to be less intrusive at the same distance.
- 9) I like how much more I can isolate a subject by throwing the foreground and background out of focus.
- 10) I can take a picture faster with it. I find that I think more about what I am doing and spend less time fiddling with the camera.

Having said all that, I think that a 50 is not for everyone, but I do think that a prime lens is for most everyone. You just need to determine what kind of photos you take with your zoom and note which focal length you use the most. If it is 35mm then get a 35mm, if it is 85mm or 105mm then get that. You may even find that you use a couple of focal lengths frequently. If so then think about getting a couple of primes. I find that in any given photo shoot I use a narrow set of focal lengths on my zoom. I could just as easily zoom with my feet to simulate the cropping that the zooming provides, if I had a lens within that focal length. I think that if you get a prime that matches your most common focal length need that you may find that you will use the primes more than the zoom.

From: "John R" nsJRiegle@worldnet.att.net
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Re: Why is a 50mm lense a good thing to have?
Date: 21 Nov 1998

A 50mm has many benefits:

- 1) very small. A 50/1.4 is smaller than a 35-70/5.6 zoom
- 2) very fast. A one stop increase in light means doubling your shutter speed. The fastest zooms are rarely better than f2.8, so the 50/1.8 will more than double your shutter speed - great for low light.
- 3) very sharp. 50mms are simple to make and are usually the sharpest lens in many photogs kit (including mine).
- 4) very cheap. You can get 'em used for under a \$100 (except for the super fast ones) and some for \$10-25.

It's a good normal focal length that's sometimes not wide enough or not long enough so has been replaced by the "normal zoom".

JCR

From: JBPHOTOS@webtv.net (JOEL AUTEN)
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Re: Why is a 50mm lense a good thing to have?
Date: Sun, 22 Nov 1998

You will almost always get a sharper image with a fixed focal length lens over a zoom. Sure zooms are convenient, especially in the field, but you will give up a little image quality. Side by side tests may prove this. Also, most lenses aren't at their maximum sharpness until you stop them down a little. If you're using a 50mm 1.8, you can stop down to 5.6 for extremely sharp images. Nowadays, that's wide open for most zooms. By the time you stop a zoom down, you could be down to f8 or f11, and you have to start watching your shutter speeds.

Also if you've ever looked at a scene and "seen" a great photo, I find it usually comes out closest to what you see using the 50mm focal length.

rec.photo.equipment.35mm
[1] Re: Highest Rated Prime Lens
Organization: Pacifier Online Data Service
From: dhogaza@pacifier.com (Don Baccus)
Date: Mon Dec 28 23:50:12 CST 1998

Richard Wong rwong@pc.jaring.my wrote:

```
>The best of AF prime lenses mtf tested in the 28 to 50mm range at
>www.photodo.com/lens are :
>
>First place:
>Pentax SMC-F 50/2.8 Macro with a grading of 4.6 and weighted mtf of 0.87
>Pentax SMC-F 50/1.4 4.6 0.86
>
>Second Place :
>Minolta AF 50/2.8 Macro 4.5 0.86
>
>Third place is a tie by the following:
>Canon EF 50/1.4 4.4 0.85
>Canon EF 50/2.8 Macro 4.4 0.85
>Nikkor AF 50/1.8 4.4 0.85
>Minolta AF 50/1.4 4.4 0.84
>
>Incidentally the best prime lens in range 28 to 50 tested is :
>Contax G Planar 45/2.0 4.7 0.87
```

If the sample size is one lens, this essentially says that 50 or 45 MM moderate aperture lenses from all manufacturers are in essence all equally really, really good. I mean, test other individual lenses from the factory and some of these results will switch as there is random error in manufacture.

So this proves a truism that all serious shooters know: when it comes to modern primes, for all practical purposes moderate aperture lenses will all test out in essence identical.

With ultra-fast, or long, or wide lenses tests will probably more closely correlate with the age of the design rather than the manufacturer, due to improved designs resulting from CAD. Any manufacturer correlation probably relates more to the funding available for R&D than anything else.

So all you N v. C v. L v. P v. M v. whatever folks out there, take heart, you can split hairs all you want and you won't mask the fact that all of the major manufacturers make truly excellent lenses.

--

- Don Baccus, Portland OR dhogaza@pacifier.com
Nature photos, on-line guides, at <http://donb.photo.net>

From: "Michael A. Covington" covington@mindspring.com
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Re: talk with PENTAX rep about lenses
Date: Tue, 15 Dec 1998

50-mm f/1.7 or f/1.8 fixed-focal-length lenses are almost invariably sharper than even the best zooms. They are cheap because they're built in gigantic quantities.

--

Michael A. Covington / AI Center / The University of Georgia
<http://www.ai.uga.edu/~mc> <http://www.mindspring.com/~covington>

From: tut@ishi (Bill Tuthill)
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Re: talk with PENTAX rep about lenses
Date: 16 Dec 1998

yusuf@my-dejanews.com wrote:

> Today I had a talk with pentax rep at san jose camera when I went to
> buy a pentax 50 mm/1.7 lense. I just hold my decision after his opinion.
> I have pentax 35-80/4-5.6 lense. He said that
> - the lense I have is as sharp and good as pentax 50mm/1.7 lense except
> for the speed (also 50mm/1.4), no difference in optical quality.
> - because of the advance technology, zoom or single focal length for
> 50 mm does not make any difference, which was the case 10 year ago.

This is very odd, because by giving you this advice, he prevented a sale? Perhaps he was trying to sell you a Tamron lens, on which they probably have higher profit margins.

Pentax 50mm lenses are the best on the market, in my opinion, although not the cheapest. Photodo (www.photodo.com) gives that f1.7 the same MTF rating as Canon's expensive f1.4, and the Pentax f1.4 scores even higher. Also, Pentax's 50mm f1.7 is the only model that stops down to f32! Photodo did not rate your 35-80, but it's likely to have an MTF rating around 3.

	performance	vignetting	distortion	flare	AF	build	MTF	
	open	closed			speed	quality		
C 50 f1.4	**	****	****	*****	****	***	****	4.4
C 50 f1.8	**	****	*****	*****	***	*	*	4.2
M 50 f1.4	***	****	*****	*****	****	*	****	4.4
M 50 f1.7	**	****	*****	*****	***	**	***	?
N 50 f1.4	***	****	*****	*****	****	**	***	4.2
N 50 f1.8	***	****	*****	*****	****	**	***	4.4
P 50 f1.4	****	****	*****	*****	****	*	*****	4.6
P 50 f1.7	***	****	****	****	****	* f32	***	4.4

rec.photo.equipment.medium-format
From: "S. Gareth Ingram" sgingram@venus.uwaterloo.ca

[1] Re: Can I get into used med-format for under \$1000?

Date: Sun Jan 17 09:41:22 CST 1999

Stephe wrote:

...

>I think you'll find that the "lens swapping game" that 35mm users are used
> to just isn't that important with larger negs. Alot of med format camera's
> can be cropped some with not much quality loss if the neg is big enough to
> start with. I shoot alot with a fuji rangefinder camera and these have

Yes I have to agree. Having recently added MF to my 35mm gear it is very refreshing to forget all the lens crap. You get to concentrate on taking the picture. Lenses are overatted - as I heard say many times, 80 % of winning photos come from the 'normal' lens.

GI

From: "Andrew" asford@ihug.co.nz

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: 50 mm prime=dull pictures?

Date: Tue, 26 Jan 1999

I TOTALLY agree! I am using my Pentax with 55mm lens now as my main camera over my Minolta Dynax 500si. If anyone reading this hasn't had the pleasure of using a good 50mm fast lens give it a go some time. I think it's the best way to improve your photography, it teaches you to move, you get a fast max aperture and amazing optical quality compared to a consumer zoom.

Andrew

--

Reply address in header has been altered to combat SPAM Please reply to asford@ihug.co.nz if you don't feel like stuffing around with the one in the header. :)

Peter Madeley wrote

>The 50mm is underated IMHO. Fast in low light, close focusing, short,
>light. Only poor photography gets poor results from a lens of any
>given focal length. Wide angle shots look crap unless you get
>foreground interest. If you're too far away walk closer. I'm using my
>50mm lens more now for portraiture in confined front lounge locations
>than any other lens. I pity photographer with newer cameras who start
>out with a slow aperture standard zoom and never have to walk around
>a subject to improve their photography. If your work is getting
>stale, just go out for the day with a body and 50mm lens and single
>roll of film and see how many different types of shot you can make. I
>bet you'll make more with a 50mm than any other length.

>--

>*** Make every day as if it were your last ***

> 'Cos one day you'll be right

> Regards and happy shooting

> Peter (DPS Design and Photography Services)

[Ed. note: another use for your normal lens - on your enlarger!]

Date: Fri, 26 Feb 1999

From: Godfrey DiGiorgi ramarren@bayarea.net

Subject: Re: [Rollei] Off Topic - Please Excuse

> In Kimngslake's book Lenses in Photography he states that there is
> no reason why an excellent camera lens could not make for an
> excellent enlarging lens. Go for it!

A dedicated enlarging lens would be superior in close range, high magnification flat field evenness of illumination and resolution. However, I've used Nikkor 50mm and 35mm camera lenses as enlarging lenses in the past with results that were virtually indistinguishable from my EL-Nikkors or Rodenstock, Schneider enlarging lenses.

On the other hand, just because you bought a medium wide to medium tele zoom lens doesn't mean your Nikkor 50mm lens is obsoleted. It should be lighter, faster and sharper than the zoom and thus remains one of my most used lenses.

Godfrey

From: PajamaMama@hotmail.com (Nikon Man)
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Re: **** Do I really need a basic 50mm F1.4D or 50mm F1.8???
Date: Fri, 01 Jan 1999

"Fred Whitlock" afc@cl-sys.com wrote:

>I have to disagree with the notion that photography is extremely expensive
>as a hobby. It is possible for an individual to buy a modest camera and
>make great photographs. If one is content with color print film, even film
>and processing can be very affordable since a roll of film and processing
>costs no more than a magazine. I realize this sounds strange coming from
>someone with enough camera equipment to trade for a house but I mean it.
>Expensive cameras don't make great photographs. Great photographers do.
>You should see some of the images made by my photography students with point
>and shoot cameras or cheap, old used 70's vintage SLR's. It can be
>humbling.

>

>I'm also reminded of a wedding photographer friend (full time pro) who has
>spent a total of under \$1000 on camera equipment over the past 10 years.
>His equipment would be poooh pooohed by the author below but this man does
>over 40 weddings every year. He can afford any camera he wants. He uses
>what he needs to use to get the job done and make a living. He turns down
>25 to 30 wedding jobs per year so his photographic equipment hasn't gotten
>in the way of his photography business. He just doesn't care about cameras
>even though he cares about photography a lot. So there can be success on
>either side of the tracks.

>

>I think this is a critical point. I'd hate to see an enthusiastic new
>photographer turn tail and run because of the price of a zoom lens.

>

>As to the question in the subject line above? No you really don't need a
>basic 50mm lens or any other specific lens to make good photographs. But if
>that's what you have or want to acquire, it's perfectly capable of making
>world class photographs. As I descend from the soap box I wish you all a
>productive and healthy 1999 and good shooting.

>

>Fred

>Maplewood Photography

I guess it all depends on your perspective, I'm afraid. If you happen to be a starving college student, and \$5 can be applied either towards your next meal or towards a roll of film, you would be in a quandary. I'm curious as to what equipment your friend uses because generally, wedding photographers need a lot of lighting equipment for the formals -- strobes,

softboxes, power supplies. The lighting equipment usually runs in excess of \$1000, yet you say that your friend spend about that much over 10 years.

Also, your friend spends a great deal on film and developing, but it's all covered when his portraits are purchased. For those of us who consider photography a hobby, film and developing are certainly not cheap. If you want half-decent developing at a minilab, the cost of a roll (36) plus printing is about \$20. Shooting one roll a week times 52 weeks/year is about \$1000/year!!! Regardless of what camera you shoot, you still need film and developing.

Working at a camera store, I assume that you know the prices of various equipment. When a customer comes in to buy a new Nikon N90s, do you tell him/her that he can take the same pictures with a P&S?

>His equipment would be pooh poohed by the author below but this man does
>over 40 weddings every year. He can afford any camera he wants. He uses

Be careful what you infer. You might be surprised to learn that my lighting system consists of the cheapest Photoflex umbrella (\$20) attached to a \$20 Walmart tripod with hose clamps, with a dedicated flash aimed at it. My background is a huge sheet of styrofoam available for \$3 at Home Depot, illuminated by another cheap flash with a slave trigger I got for cheap. My reflector is one of those automobile windshield heat deflector doohickies.

And you still can't obtain professional quality results without a hair light, real backgrounds, etc.

From: "Only me..." dgreg@globalnet.co.uk

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: **** Do I really need a basic 50mm F1.4D or 50mm F1.8???

Date: Fri, 1 Jan 1999

Fred Whitlock wrote

>I have to disagree with the notion that photography is extremely expensive
>as a hobby. It is possible for an individual to buy a modest camera and
>make great photographs.

How very true... yet not. The problem arrives when you find that you

have changed your outfit, almost without realising the consequences. I recently had cause to need a very long cable release for my F90X, only to realise that there is no such thing any more. What I had to buy was an infra-red remote release system costing LOTS. Or at least that's what I was told. Bah! I bought the standard electronic release, cut it in half, and just extended it. There's always a way out, even when a manufacturer tries to back you into a corner.

The fact that certain situations demand the very best equipment shouldn't blind you from the fact that over 90% of all shots I've seen could be taken with any manual SLR, regardless of cost. Photography is very cheap. Try motor racing, now THERE'S an expensive hobby :-)

David.

From: "Brad The Dog" Brad_The_Dog@prodigy.net

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm,rec.photo.equipment.misc

Subject: Re: Lenses -- Survey question

Date: Thu, 22 Apr 1999

>>Of those of you with more than a passing fancy in photography....which
>>lenses do you use most often? Which do you find most versatile? If,
>>for some reason, you were only permitted to have one lens and one body
>>-- which would it be?

If I could only have one lens (I assume that you want 35mm cameras) it would be a very difficult choice. My every day lense a tamaron 28-105 is hard to beat. I snap photos of my son, my wife, and the pets (just about in that order too) but I also rush out of the house hunting down traffic accidents for photos (I make alot of money selling those photos to lawyers, and insurance companies) I would say that it is probably the most versatile of my lenes on any camera and I have a lot of them.

From an artistic stand point though I would go with the camera and lens I learned from a very early age. I had a nikon f2 with a 50mm manual focus lense and f1.2 With this lense I have taken some of the best photos I have ever taken (My last count of the last 15 years i.e. since i was 9 was 30,000) With a 50mm manual focus you must think about the shot and take your time with it. You have to create the photo with the end in mind. It makes you a better photographer if you know how to do that. It isn't something you can easily master with a auto focus zoom.

From: Pál Jensen paal@norvol.hi.is

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: New equipment philosophy

Date: Thu, 15 Apr 1999

"Siu Fai Au" siufai@dds.nl wrote:

> Pál Jensen wrote in message <7f4db0\$4rq\$1@nnrp1.dejanews.com>...
> >No it isn't. The fact is that it is difficult to manufacture a fast lens
> with
> >good optical quality.
>
> On the other hand, lens companies are willing to spend more money and effort
> in the development of fast lenses knowing that these lenses are going to be
> used by professionals or serious amateurs who demand top quality.

Yes, some companies spend quality on fast lenses and sell the rest as "junk". However, in almost all cases a 50/1.8 or 1.4 is much better than a 50/1.2. A

85/1.8 or 2.0 is almost always better than a 85/1.4 or 1.2. etc. You can get some very good not so fast lenses from all companies. Just look at some of the gems from Leica, Zeiss or even the new Pentax Limited lens. All of them compact and excellent. Its a misunderstanding that fast lenses equal good lenses. If you stay away from obviously compromised cheap lenses, the oposite holds true. Speed is something you buy if you need it; if not, stay away. As one who shoot a lot in low light (nighttime) I've more and more ditched fast lenses since they do not hold up well used at those fast apertures. I'm using more medium fast lenses; they offer significantly better quality. I've also come to the conclusion that its better to use slightly faster film and stopping down than slower film wide open. Faster film give more grain but you don't loose sharpness as much as you do using lenses at those wide apertures.

Paal

From: rmmm9999@aol.com (RMMM9999)

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: Do I 'need' a 2.8 lens?

Date: 24 Apr 1999

Let me heartily join the chorus in suggesting that you look into a good old fashioned 50mm f 1.8 or so lens. It will be the cheapest, lightest, least expensive, brightest to focus lens you own. It may also be the sharpest, with the least distortion, and with an extremely useful focallength. It will fit nicely between your zooms, and its fast aperture and straightforward use and composition will be a refreshing change for you.

Frankly, the 28-70 seems absurdly redundant, considering your current lenses, and does not add any significant new capabilities that a 50 mm can't do better, for a lot less money. I presume the camera store salepeople love to see you visit their store?

Trust us about the 50mm. It is a tradition that has been much neglected recently, but it something you might really enjoy.

If you MUST drop a bundle of cash for a new lens, consider a 50mm or 100mm lens single focal length MACRO lens that focusses to 1:2 or 1:1 range. This could be very useful, and would open up nature photographs your current lenses can't approach.

Happy shooting!

Richard

Baltimore MD

From: shadcat11@aol.com (ShadCat11)

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: Traveling light with a 50mm Curing Lens Envy

Date: 01 Aug 1999

>I was wondering if
>any of you think that there is much of a difference or enough of one to
>own a 35mm
>and a 50mm. I already own a 24mm for my SLR.
>
>Mike

Short answer: Yes, definitely.

Long answer: I started doing photography in 1954 when 50 mm lenses were not only standard for 35 mm cameras, but only hard core. wealthy or professional photographers (and not all of them!) used anything else.

Even when I acquired other lenses, the 50 mm remained my most used for 10 years. I never regretted it. Altho I was aware of the benefits of lenses offering other angles of view, the one camera/lens concept simplified my life and made a portable package, essential for the kind of photography I liked to do. My attitude was that even if I miss photos because the 50 mm wasn't suitable, I had even more opportunities simply because I hadn't left a heavier outfit at home.

Then, one day I fitted my Pentax Spotmatic with a 35 mm lens, took a look through it and on the spot, it became my "normal" lens. Just like that. And it still is. When I am working with 1 lens/camera combos these days, the lens is invariably 35 mm. I have covered many events with that focal length alone. Without introducing much of a "lensy" look, it provides a natural rendering while opening up the picture area. It allows you to work closer to a subject while retaining context. A 50 mm, by comparison, puts you at a greater distance from your subject for the same coverage. In your deliberations over one or the other lens, I guess you should ask yourself how close you like to get to whatever you photograph. It's all so personal.

For almost 20 years I have been using mostly Nikon. Because of professional requirements I have an assortment of lenses ranging from 20 mm to 300 mm, and altho I like to play with them (it's always cool to stretch your eyeballs once in a while), I regard them mostly as tools to goose up the graphics but they have little to do with my personal aesthetic.

Professionally, I seldom use the 50 mm, although a 55 mm Micro gets a good workout. For my personal work, tho, I use a 50 f1.4 mm, but almost always in company with a 28 mm f2.8. It is part of my "toting-around-for-just-n-case" outfit. So I can't say the wheel has turned full circle. I used to be, at core, a one lens kind of guy. Now,

I am a twoie. Not as pristine, perhaps, but I can live with it.

From: Godfrey DiGiorgi ramarren@bayarea.net

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: Lenses...etc

Date: Mon, 02 Aug 1999

> Is a fixed lens truly better than a zoom lens? Does smaller f-stop on fixed
> lenses give better pictures?... I was thinking of getting a 50/1.4f lens.
> any advice on this?

Yes. Not necessarily. Sure, most 50/1.4-2.0 lenses are excellent nowadays.

> Will I get better depth of field by using zoom lenses? Is there a zoom lens
> that starts with the f-stop less than 1.8? is it worth getting a zoom lens?

No. Not that I'm aware of. For me, no.

> If not, is it a good idea to get 3 fixed lenses to cover all ranges that
> I'll need.(e.g. 28, 50, 80)...

My standard kit is a 20, 50 and 85 or 105. I substitute a 70-300 when I am traveling or need the reach. 85% of my photography ends up being done with a 50mm lens.

> Quality of lenses and camera bodies:

>

> I've learnt that the camera body is not the most important thing when it
> comes to taking pictures, but I've noticed that camera manufacturers make
> their bodies to fit their lenses best (is there any truth in this?).
> So, which company makes the best lenses?...and will I have to buy their
> camera bodies to fit those lenses?

The lens is what forms the image. You can do wonderful photography with a camera body that does little other than hold it in place steadily and accurately, allow you to focus it correctly. All the other gizmos are useful in their own way, but are non-essential. The lenses are everything.

That's the purist in me talking. Of course there are other distinctions about camera bodies that make one system more suitable than others. But overall, the lenses are foremost. Look at Hasselblad: they think enough of the Zeiss Biogon 38mm lens that they created a whole camera which does nothing but hold that lens. No meter, no reflex viewing, no rangefinder ... just a box with a lens, shutter, aperture, viewfinder and film transport. It's been a best seller for over 25 years.

So who makes the best lenses? Therein lies a quandry. Best in this instance can mean many things. The high buck brand names (Zeiss, Leica, Nikon, Canon, Olympus, Minolta, Pentax, et al) have reputations which they've worked hard to acquire for many years: buying one of these brands usually means you get a lens with above average performance, consistently, and also a lens which is built to high quality standards so that it will last for many years of use. There are exceptions - for instance, Nikon and Canon both have applied their name to lenses which were built to a price rather than to a quality standard in order to make a profit - but overall if you buy any of the top brands you should get quality that lasts. Each of the manufacturers have invested a lot of time and effort to build good quality lenses and high performance cameras that work with them to best effect.

ON the other hand, occasionally they screw up and a lens isn't as good as they'd hoped it would be. The independent lens makers occasionally make a very good lens which is up to the same standards of excellence as the OEM manufacturers. In addition, each of these lens families has different characteristics, features, etc. Figuring out what is "best" for your use is quite difficult.

The real good news is that virtually everyone today makes a lens decent enough to produce superb photographs, so you can either natter on about which one is best ad nauseam, or you can buy a camera and lens with due study that you think is reasonable, use it a while, and then decide whether something else would better suit your needs. Starting with a fast 50mm prime lens is a great place to begin, regardless what marque you are buying, because 50mm lenses are generally amongst the best of all and they're one of the most useful focal lengths around.

Godfrey

Date: Sat, 04 Sep 1999

From: Mark Rabiner mrabiner@concentric.net

To: hasselblad@kelvin.net

Subject: Re: 80mm limitations

wmshprd@webtv.net wrote:

> Would I be foolish to try to shoot a wedding with only a normal lens? I
> have had a 501CM outfit for a year but have been holding off using it
> for weddings till I get more H'Blad equip as backup. I have only one
> back, one body, a NC2 Kiev clone prism, a WL finder, a soft fx3 filter.
>
> Not wanting to tempt Murphy's law, I've been not leading with the Hass.
> What would you do in this situation? My day job, BTW, is as a Medical
> photographer. Lots of tech's and med assts get married , it's a market
> with good potential..
>
> Bill Shepard

I have gone that route. Lead with the Hasselblad and used my Nikons with plenty of film as a backup. A backup CM I got for \$500 eventually made it so I didn' have to bring the 35mm system along. Also I have done weddings with just a Rolleiflex so it can be done with just an 80. Actually I have to really watch it with my 50 and the 150 is an unnecessary luxury. An 80 in medium format is much more flexible and overall usable than a 50 in 35mm photography. It somehow seldom doesn't get the shot. I can see how someone who never had done one with one lens would think it is impossible but there is a huge precedent for it. A million weddings were done with Rolleiflexes.

Mark Rabiner

Date: Mon, 16 Aug 1999

From: Anthony Zipple tzipple@rcn.com

To: rmonagha@post.cis.smu.edu

Subject: Lens Envy

Great analysis. I confess to suffering from this dreaded and expensive

disease. While I generally agree with you I have two exceptions (excuses?). I love my 20 mm lens. It is fast, sharp and indispensable for some shots (though I admit it is a 2% sort of lens). Plus I love the effect. And I am a zoom fan...there are many times that reframing with a 50 mm is not possible or quick enough. I find a 28-70 to be the best all around lens for me. Fince it is the real bread & butter lens, I think that better quality is necessary. The Canon f/2.8 28-70 is expensive but well worth it to me.

From Rollei Mailing List;

Date: Wed, 22 Sep 1999

From: Bob Shell bob@bobshell.com

Subject: Re: [Rollei] Rollei 110/2.0 Any user out there ?

.....

The most expensive lens I've ever shot with is the 1000mm Mirotar. I got the Contax people to loan me one for a couple of days once. Ridiculously expensive at something over \$ 50,000! Sharpest mirror lens I ever saw, though. Guess you'd expect that.

Bob

Date: Mon, 30 Aug 1999

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

From: ch644@torfree.net (C. J. Morgan)

Subject: Re: Isn't buying a used manual camera a bad idea?

When I was young, I bought a manual camera and a 50mm lens. As I progressed, I bought more lenses and sold the 50mm. As I progressed even further, I bought more technologically advanced cameras and sold my original manual camera. As I progressed still further, I bought and tried every film and camera accessory I could get my hand on. And when I progressed beyond that -- when I exhausted my desire for gadgets but still had a burning desire to photograph -- I bought a manual camera and a 50mm lens.

C.J.

[Ed. note: an alternate view...]

Date: Tue, 14 Dec 1999

From: RedDrake@aol.com

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: Amateurs obsessed with pro equipment?

"Matt O" nojunkspam@nojunkspam wrote:

> One common question posted on this newsgroup pertains to whether or not
> "pros" use a particular camera,... These are obviously amateurs
> posting these questions, since a professional
> would already know better. I've met some amateurs fully loaded with
> "pro-gear" and hardly capable taking a better snapshots than someone with a
> cheap fixed focus single-use camera.
>
> Why should an amateur worry about "pro-gear" if all he or she is shooting
> are family snapshots and cliché travel photos? Is the perceived reliability
> and so-called "ruggedness" of pro-gear material for the snapshooter who uses
> maybe two dozen rolls of film per year, if that?

This post makes a lot of faulty assumptions. It assumes that all amateurs with "pro" cameras are only taking snapshots. In my experience, they are usually pretty serious amateurs, not family snappers (not that there's anything wrong with family pictures). Sure some people like to collect equipment, but where's the harm in that? It just makes it cheaper for the rest of us since the manufacturers sell more bodies.

Secondly it assumes that the features of a pro camera wouldn't appeal to non-professionals. This is clearly ludicrous. So called pro cameras (F5, F100, Maxxum 9, Canon EOS-1, Contax RTSIII, etc.) are rugged, durable, and feature rich. They're generally a pleasure to use, have large bright viewfinders (usually 100%), and will last about as long as you'd ever need a camera to last. A Pro might wear out a pro camera, but that same camera will last an amateur pretty much forever if he wants it to. These cameras have mirror lockups, depth of field previews, good spot meters, and a host of other features that even amateurs can learn to love.

Third it assumes that taking fewer rolls in a year means any camera will do. This isn't so. The right camera for the job is the one you enjoy using, especially if you're an amateur. If you're a pro, maybe you have to use whatever gets the job done in the most cost effective manner, but an amateur is out there for fun. If that's the goal, then the right camera is the one that has the features he needs and the one that is the most fun to use.

For me, that's a Contax RTSIII. Wonderful ergonomics/controls, plenty of the right features, great lenses, and solid as a rock.

Date: Thu, 06 Apr 2000

From: speedo greg@on.aibn.com

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.medium-format

Subject: Re: Stepping up to Med. Format

John or Jenn wrote:

> Either the 124G you used was a lot better than the one I borrowed,
> or the Hassy was a lot worse than the one I borrowed...

Absolutely no difference. Same day, same slide film, same subject, both cameras mounted on a tripod with a remote. I found the same results in 35mm between my new Nikon F90x and my old Olympus OM-1. There is a certain snobery associated with certain types of cameras and some people want to believe that by paying way more they will get better results.

Date: Tue, 22 Jun 1999

From: Todd & Sharon Peach tpeach@gte.net

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: The NEED for SPEED - do we need it?

Eugene wrote:

> I'd like to get opinions from others out there who have contemplated buying/have
> bought fast (f2.8 ish) lenses as opposed to slower lenses. I'm looking at all
> lens focal lengths, primes and zooms.
>
> Questions:
> 1) Apart from sports/action photography in available light, what other need is
> there for a fast lens? (Or to word this another way, what CAN'T i do with a
slow
> lens)

Anything else you may care to shoot in available light. Portraits by soft window light with an 85mm f/1.8, for instance. Street photos.

> 2) For those with fast lenses (2.8 or better) what situations do you find
> yourself using the additional speed (not including sports/action photography?
> What f-stop do you use most of the time?

Same as above. Obviously, I shoot whatever f-stop is needed, but I find myself using f/2 a bunch on my primes (24mm f/2, 35mm f/1.4, 85mm f/1.8); this may be a bit stilted because I tend to reach for my primes for speed. I have the f/2.8 zooms, and they aren't that "fast".

> 3) Is there much need for speed in wide/ultra-wide angle lenses?

If that's your thing. Shallow DOF w/a is a unique look. Here's one:

<http://home1.gte.net/tpeach/Images/PPToms-sm.htm>

> 4) Is there anyone who has bought slow zooms (f4+ variable or constant aperture)
> and now wishes they had a fast zoom? Why?

Actually, I need both. I use an 80-200mm f/2.8 when I know the work will demand it. However, it's big and heavy. If I'm just out fooling around, playing tourist, I leave the big 2.8 at home and bring the 70-300 f/4-5.6 instead. (The 85mm f/1.8 is always in my bag if I need the speed).

-Todd

--

Todd & Sharon Peach

<http://home1.gte.net/tpeach/NoPlaceLikeHome.htm>

Manual Focus Nikon

List: <http://www.onelist.com/subscribe.cgi/NikonMF>

Date: 29 Mar 1999

From: billda@West.Sun.COM.no.sp@m (Kill All Spammers)

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: cons of fast lenses? (was: Re: Who uses Leica, and what do you use, it for?)

RedDrake@aol.com wrote:

>Lastly, only Leica offers an f/1 lens as far as I know (currently in
>production).

On Wed, 24 Mar 1999, Bill Jameson wrote:

>Canon has the EF 50 mm f/1.0 L USM currently available/

Siddiq siddim01@student.ucr.edu wrote:

> Do I want to ask how much \$\$\$? .
>Off topic, but I recall reading somewhere, long ago (perhaps PopPhoto?)
>that there are certain disadvantages of too fast a lens--would anyone
>explain this or refer me to a source? Thanks.

1. In most cases fast lenses cost a lot more than their slower equivalents.
2. Faster lenses are usually heavier because they have more glass than their slower counterparts.
3. For rangefinders, their large barrels may partially block the viewfinder (Noctilux and Canon 7 f/0.95). SLR's don't have this problem.
4. When lenses are designed to be very fast, certain design compromises may have to be made which may cause the lens to not be as sharp as some slower lenses. I've heard that the Leica 50mm f/2 is sharper than the Noctilux for instance.
5. The faster the aperture, the shallower the depth of field. This can be an advantage or disadvantage depending upon your point of view. I usually consider it an advantage because I like to have background and foreground be out of focus with only the subject being in focus but that's a matter of taste. Also, with an SLR when not using full aperture the fast maximum aperture can make it *easier* to focus. When using full aperture, you have very little leeway though so that can be a disadvantage; especially if you need a little depth of field for your subject. It can be particularly difficult if your subject is moving around. I recently tried a Nikon 50mm f/1.2 and I had several images out of focus because my subject moved only a few inches on me.

--KAS

Date: Sun, 28 Mar 1999

From: nospam@imagina.com (Jan Steinman -- jan AT bytesmiths DOT com)

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: cons of fast lenses? (was: Re: Who uses Leica, and what do you use, it for?)

bg174@FreeNet.Carleton.CA (Michael Gudzinowicz) wrote:

> >Off topic, but I recall reading somewhere, long ago (perhaps PopPhoto?)
> >that there are certain disadvantages of too fast a lens...
>
> The very fast designs are always compromises...
> ... the better f/1.4-1.8 lenses will outperform
> the f/1 lenses for a lot less \$\$\$\$.

This is a gross generalization. Zuiko fast lenses consistently out-test their slower lenses. Their 50/2 macro out-tests their 50/3.5 macro. Their 20/2.8 macro out-tests their 20/3.5 macro. Their 28/2 out-tests their 28/2.8. Their 180/2 out-tests their 180/2.8. Their 350/2.8 out-tests their 300/4.5.

If you're only talking 50mm, then Zuiko follows your rule: their 1.8 is the best (and cheapest!), followed by their 1.4 and their 1.2. Zuiko doesn't make an f1 lens. The only other fast Zuiko that significantly underperforms the equivalent slow Zuiko seems to be the 24/2.

Another point that is missed is that when stopped down to an equivalent speed, many of a fast lens's problems go away.

So what you claim may be true in the camera systems you've used, but it isn't a hard and fast rule. It is certainly true that fast lens design is more challenging than slow lens design, but Olympus/Zuiko, at least, has proven up to the task.

From pentax mailing List:

From: CetusPhoto@aol.com

Date: Sat, 15 Apr 2000

Subject: Re: 50 mm lens- 1.4 or 1.7 ?

> > I have a Pentax PZ-1P and want to buy a 50mm autofocus lens for
> > low-light conditions. There are two Pentax 50 mm lenses available;
> > f1.4 and f1.7. Are the optical qualities the same ?
>

> No. Wide open, the 1.7 is sharper. f4 and smaller they are about
> equal. See the lens tests in the PDML Archives. Someone on the list
> will give you the URL for the 50mm shootout.

I state the following information as being relevant in the belief that the A 50/1.4 and A 50/1.7 lenses are each optically identical to their corresponding AF siblings. (I have never used any of the F or FA 50mm lenses). I do believe that the statement above is true for the M f/1.4 and f/1.7 lenses, but not for the A f/1.4 and f/1.7 lenses (or, by extrapolation, for the F or FA f/1.4 and f/1.7 lenses, either).

In my own resolution tests
() of three A 50/1.4's, five
M 50/1.4's, two A 50/1.7's, and three M 50/1.7's, I found that, in the case of the M versions, the f/1.7 lenses were slightly sharper at wide apertures, but they were virtually the same at all other apertures. However, with the A versions, the reverse turned out to be true - the f/1.4 lenses were slightly sharper wide open, but they were about the same at all other apertures. In these tests, the A lenses showed themselves to be a little sharper than the M lenses, but the difference from M to A was larger between the M and A 50/1.4 lenses than it was between the M and A 1.7's.

While the Pentax 50/1.7 lenses (M, A, F, and FA) all appear to be essentially optically identical to each other (small coatings differences notwithstanding), it appears that the longer series of 50/1.4 lenses does not show quite the same uniformity. While the Super Takumar, Super-Multi-Coated Takumar, SMC Takumar, SMC Pentax ("K"), SMC Pentax-M, SMC Pentax-A, SMC Pentax-F, and SMC Pentax-FA 50/1.4 lenses all have about the same configuration 6 groups of 7 elements (with visually indistinguishable lens diagrams) (ignoring coatings differences over time), Yoshihiko has pointed out previously that the 50/1.4 design underwent a little bit of "tweaking" at the time the A 50/1.4 was being developed. Therefore, there is a slight difference between the M-and-older 50/1.4 and the A-and-newer 50/1.4 lenses, and the higher cost of the newer 50/1.4 lenses does reward with slightly higher resolution as well as a half-stop of higher speed.

Well, I think this is all just about enough Pentax lens folklore for one post... (g)

Fred

From Pentax Mailing List:

Date: Sat, 15 Apr 2000

From: Alin Flaidar aflaidar@datalog.ro

To: pentax-discuss@discuss.pentax.com

Subject: Re: 50 mm lens- 1.4 or 1.7 ?

Image*I*Nation wrote:

> No. Wide open, the 1.7 is sharper. f4 and smaller they are about equal.
> See the lens tests in the PDML Archives. Someone on the list will give
> you the URL for the 50mm shootout.

Markus,

According to Yoshihiko Takinami's tests, FA 50/1.4 has an edge over
all
Pentax 50s (http://www.takinami.com/yoshihiko/photo/lens_test/index.html).

You might also want to have a look at the Lens Gallery for some
resolution
images (<http://gemma.geo.uaic.ro/~vdonisa/lensgal.html> or
<http://www.phred.org/pentax/lensgal/>)

Servus, Alin

From: bobr38@aol.com (BobR38)

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.medium-format

Date: 04 Jun 2000

Subject: Re: If you could only have 2 Hasselblad lenses, what would they
be?

ONE Lens is enough for me....an 80mm with a Series 7 adaptor and all kinds
of lens attachments for Wide Angle, Macro, Telephoto Doubler, Fisheye, and
an Anamorphic for "cool" effects.

Some folks complain of dark edges using attachments, but I never have experienced this. Cost-effective alternative to the super expensive Hasselblad lenses.

From Rollei Mailing List;

Date: Wed, 10 May 2000

From: Bob Shell bob@bobshell.com

Subject: Re: exotic lens sales & Hacking was RE: [Rollei] Our Sister List

You can look at Rollei brochures and see that the 1000mm used for quite a few years for photos was always the same one since you can read the serial number. The one I have shot with on 35mm with my RTS III is the one and only sample owned by Yashica/Contax USA, and they have only ever had one sample. Basically they told me that if anyone is rich or dumb enough to order one, they will have Zeiss build one. I'd guess the same was true for Rollei when they offered it. It is an astonishingly sharp lens, but very difficult to use due to its size and weight.

I'm hoping for a chance to shoot with the new 500mm Zeiss lens for 6000 series sometime this year.

Bob

>From: Robert Monaghan rmonagha@post.cis.smu.edu

>To: rollei@mejac.palo-alto.ca.us

>Subject: exotic lens sales & Hacking was RE: [Rollei] Our Sister List

>Date: Tue, May 9, 2000, 9:35 PM

>

> which brings up the question - how many 500mm f/8 (glass) zeiss lenses were
> sold in the rollei mounts SL66? slx?... - given its \$10,000+ US original
> cost? Or how about that SL66 Zeiss 1000mm f/8 for only \$37,973.50 from
> B&H (why the fifty cents? ;-) Low hundreds or even dozens of each? less?

[Ed. note: Mr. Shell is a noted photo author, workshop instructor, glamour pro photographer, repairperson, and editor of Shutterbug...]

Date: Wed, 12 Jul 2000

From: "Bob Shell" bob@bobshell.com

Subject: Re: [CONTAX] Dang! I should have bought a 135mm!

You may be surprised at how often a 50mm works just right for half length portraits (waist up). Just don't try to use it too close to the subject.

Bob

...

From Leica Mailing List:

Date: Sat, 11 Nov 2000

From: Jim Brick jim@brick.org

Subject: [Leica] Re: A previsualisation aid

>on 11/11/00 10:59 am, John Collier at jbcollier@home.com wrote:

>

>> I read about a helpful aid to visualisation the other day and, unlike most
>> things you read about, it works and is very useful. Take a cut out mount the
>> size of your film format 35mm and medium format use a slide mount, for LF,
>> you would have to make one and hold it the the focal length distance away
>> from your eye. Bingo, you see what is going to be in the frame. You can also
>> get a rough idea of the amount of shifting you may have to do but, of
>> course, it is no help with the tilts :-). With 35mm it gets a little hard to
>> measure and hold things accurately enough to differentiate between 21mm and
>> 24mm but it works very well for the longer lenses and larger formats.

I've been using this technique for decades. I currently use a pre-made device called the EFLS or Easy Frame Lens Selector. You knot the cord for

your various lenses so that when you hold it up to view through, pull the cord straight back to the edge of your eye and whichever knot is there, is the focal length of the view.

Since the cord is in a long loop, I have one side knotted for my 4x5 LF lenses and the other knotted for my Hasselblad. I use two flat rubber bands, which I move in place when needed, to mask the rectangular opening to a square.

See it at:

<http://www.summitek.com/easel.html>

Jim

Date: Sun, 10 Dec 2000

From: Anders Svensson anders.-.eivor.svensson@swipnet.se

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: Question on 50 mm lens

rusl53@my-deja.com skrev:

> What good is the 50 mm lens that usually comes with your slr camera.
> As a newbie, I have not seen nor heard of anyone taking photo's with
> one. Is it worthless?

No it isn't. Its worth is usually well over the 80-100 dollar it usually cost.

The reason why this lens isn't sold in larger numbers is probably because so many people are brought up on cheap zoom P&S cameras, and

that they see a single focal length lens as a "inferior" alternative to a similar priced, slow 28-80 mm zoom of so-so quality. In their defence, they know no better.

In reality, this lens is often the best combination of speed, optical performance and price that is available for any make.

--

Anders Svensson

mail: anders.-.eivor.svensson@swipnet.se

Date: Sun, 10 Dec 2000

From: Godfrey DiGiorgi ramarren@bayarea.net

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: Question on 50 mm lens

A fixed focal length 50mm lens is generally one of the sharpest lenses in a manufacturer's lens range. Also one of the fastest and cheapest.

It's generally not "hip" to shoot with a 50mm lens. Sounds so much more dramatic to say you used that exotic, expensive 21 to 723mm multi-motored, chipped, exoto-glass thing. But the 50mm will often do a better job.

Godfrey

rusl53@my-deja.com wrote:

> What good is the 50 mm lens that usually comes with your slr camera.
> As a newbie, I have not seen nor heard of anyone taking photo's with
> one. Is it worthless?

[Ed. note: Mr. Romney is a noted author of camera repair books and related articles...]

Date: Sun, 10 Dec 2000

From: eromney eromney@zianet.com

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: Question on 50 mm lens

Mike Chirnside wrote:

> Oh - I forgot to add that the standards are normally much better lenses,
> optically (sharpness, contrast, distortion, aberrations), than the standard
> zooms!

Ed says: Absolutely..I was photographing a car race at Road Atlanta in which my son was competing with an F4.5 zoom that went to 200mm. At dusk when the light got too dim for F4.5 even at 1/250 sec, I switched to a Yashica 50mm F1.4. The pictures enlarged 4x more were the equivalent of the zoom full open and just as sharp. I was amazed.

Some years ago when 1000 color film first came out, I used the Contax F1.4 50mm lens on a Yashica FX-3 for a night time car race in a rather poorly lit county fairground. I shot full open always, natural light. The pictures were unusually good; people were amazed with them. The others used big strobes and their shots were not nearly as good. Now 800 and 1000 film is common. I probably take most of my pix with 50mm. For sharpness the 50mm Nikon F2 AIS is unsurpassed, if you will accept a little less speed.

Ed Romney

<http://www.edromney.com>

Date: Sun, 10 Dec 2000

From: Tony Spadaro tonytony_tony@my-deja.com

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: Question on 50 mm lens

A fast 50 (f2, f1.8, or f1.4) is always worth having and they are inexpensive. Given the quality of the 28-80 (or thereabouts) zooms that come with most camera "kits" I would instead buy a 50.

I spent my first 8-9 years with ONLY a 50, and have never been without one for more than brief times since.

Re-post telling us which camera body you're looking at, and which 50. People familiar with them can give you more specific advice.

--

Chapel Hill artist and photo restorer

<http://www.homeusers.prestel.co.uk/magor/tony>

Date: Sun, 10 Dec 2000

From: "PDP" phild@clark.net

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: Question on 50 mm lens

Just about everyone will agree it is the best value lens going.

As example, I own a Minolta 85mm 1.4 'G' -- roughly \$600. The Minolta 50mm 1.4 -- according to PHOTODO -- is a sharper lens at about 1/3 the cost.

Go figure.

From: "Noah Spam" nospam@never.net

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Date: Mon, 11 Dec 2000

Subject: Re: Question on 50 mm lens

>What good is the 50 mm lens that usually comes with your slr camera.
>As a newbie, I have not seen nor heard of anyone taking photo's with
>one. Is it worthless?

Quite a lot of people have already mentioned that it's far from worthless because it's likely to be sharp, compact, and have a wide maximum aperture -- all of which are true. But I thought I'd take another tack and add some specific *kinds* of photographs for which I think a traditional 50mm "normal lens" is especially useful; feel free to add...

-- Natural-light and environmental portraiture: The 50mm focal length provides an ideal combination of perspective and working distance if you turn the camera vertically and make head-to-waist portraits; you're not too close to get perspective distortion, and not too far away to keep in psychological contact with the subject. Meanwhile, the wide maximum aperture lets you make good use of soft light sources such as window light, and helps throw backgrounds pleasingly out of focus. Get an interesting subject, sit him/her near a window in an attractive or evocative environment, frame up a nice tight vertical composition, focus carefully, then start chatting/directing/shooting. You'll probably find that a 50mm lens is worth having just for this type of photography alone.

-- Ad-hoc copying: If you can't afford a special-purpose macro lens, you'll find that the 50 probably focuses close enough for lots of routine copy and close-up shooting, and if stopped down to a moderate aperture it'll probably be significantly sharper and have less linear distortion than the typical "macro zoom" lens. The wider aperture makes it easier to focus accurately, too.

-- Night cityscapes, fireworks, etc.: A wide lens makes the subjects too small in the frame; a tele doesn't capture enough of the view; a 50mm is often just right. Again, the wide aperture lets you make shorter exposures. And with fewer glass elements than a zoom lens, it's less likely to be afflicted with flare and ghost images from the points of light in the frame.

-- Stage shows and concerts: If you get the chance (and permission) to photograph an amateur theater or dance production, music concert, or recital, a 50mm lens will be very handy. You will NOT be allowed to use flash in these situations (and there'd be no point as it would wipe out the effects of the stage lighting) so you'll need a wide maximum aperture, and a 50 is a much less expensive way to get one than buying the very costly high-speed 85, 100, 105, or 135 lenses that many stage shooters use. And if you're in a front-row seat in a small theater, the 50mm focal length will be just about ideal for pictures showing several performers in the context of a scene. Again, the simpler optical construction of a 50 makes it a better choice than a zoom for avoiding flare from the stage lights that might be in or near the edges of the picture area.

-- Buildings and architecture: A single-focal-length lens usually will have less linear distortion than a zoom (so straight lines near the edges of the picture won't appear curved) and if you've got room to move around, 50mm is a good "compromise" focal length for casual building photography: it's less likely to cause perspective distortion than a wide-angle, and you don't need to be as far away as you would with a tele.

More...?

Date: Mon, 11 Dec 2000

From: stephen@bokonon.ussinc.com (Stephen M. Dunn)

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: Question on 50 mm lens

\$What good is the 50 mm lens that usually comes with your slr camera.
\$As a newbie, I have not seen nor heard of anyone taking photo's with
\$one. Is it worthless?

I'm not sure whether to take this seriously ... if for no other reason that that the premise of the very first sentence is not generally true.

Most SLRs don't come with 50mm lenses these days. Most come with 28-80 (approximately) zooms. These zooms are generally of lower optical quality than the 50mm lenses their manufacturers also make,

and are usually 3-4 stops slower than the slowest 50mm general-purpose lenses from the same manufacturers. The zooms are usually also somewhat bigger and heavier, but not usually to the point where people would mind the extra size/weight.

Certainly, a zoom is more convenient. Many advanced amateurs and pros use zooms as their primary lenses (though they usually buy higher-quality zooms than the ones that are often included in SLR-plus-lens kits) for this reason.

There's a school of thought that says that you can learn better using a 50mm lens than a zoom. My personal opinion, worth exactly what you paid for it, is that I mostly agree. I learned photography with a choice between 50mm and 100mm. This taught me that perspective changes as you march back and forth; on the other hand, if you stand in the same spot and just adjust the zoom, perspective stays the same and all you're doing is cropping. If you learn using a zoom, you'll have to make more of an effort to remind yourself of this. Once you've trained yourself to think about what the scene might look like from different perspectives, you can do the same thing with the zoom because you've learned to think first and shoot second, but it's easier to slip out of this mindset if you're trying to learn with the zoom.

Here's a suggestion, if you're serious about learning photography: buy the kit with the zoom and buy a 50mm lens. Most manufacturers' 50mm f/1.8 or f/1.9 or f/2 lenses are quite inexpensive. Leave the 50 on the camera and the zoom in the camera bag most of the time; don't use the zoom unless you either

- a) tried to compose the scene with the 50 and failed because you need a different focal length
- or
- b) need a quick snapshot

--

Stephen M. Dunn

stephen@bokonon.ussinc.com

Date: Mon, 11 Dec 2000

From: riccardo@smile.org (Ric)

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: Question on 50 mm lens

To answer your question: yes! I still use the 50mm f:2 that I bought in 1978 with my Nikon FM. It's lightweight, compact, sharp, fast enough for me, and very handy for close-focus shots. No matter where I go it's the one lens I always carry, whether on the camera or in my bag.

My only complaint is the lube dried several years ago, and focusing doesn't have the same tactile feel that it used to.

It's true that people don't brag about their 50mm. They save their praise for their high-priced fast lenses and zooms. The 50mm is low-key, but this does not diminish its value or usefulness.

...

Date: Mon, 11 Dec 2000

From: LoveThePenguin dpcwilbur@my-deja.com

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: Question on 50 mm lens

They're usually pretty good.

But people have gotten so deep into zooms that they're almost requisite to making the sale. Consequently, to keep costs down, these cheap zooms are of much lower quality than the 50mm lenses that can be gotten for far less money.

My recommendation to people is a 3-lens system:

28/2.8
50/1.4 or 50/1.7
80-200 zoom

This makes for modest weight and good quality optics are

available in each length. Plus, prices are decent for these items.

In particular, I use Pentax.
My lenses are:

"A" 50/1.4 manual-focus,
"A" 28/2.8 manual-focus
"A" 100/2.8 manual-focus
80-200/4 Sears (really a decent lens, very under-rated)

In Pentax lenses the 50mm "standard" lens is really pretty decent -- definitely better than the cheap zooms available. And they go for \$20 to \$30 used -- an excellent value that is easily glosed over.

Hope this is useful,

Collin

...

Date: Tue, 13 Mar 2001

From: "Jason" jasoncheng@home.com

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: 50mm lens tests - Older tests comparing Konica, Leica, Canon, Nikon, Minolta, Pentax, Olympus...

I just thought I would share a nice website that has posted the results of a pretty extensive test originally done by Popular Photography years ago comparing ultra fast (f1.2) normal lenses, fast (f1.4) normal lenses and normal (f1.7-2) normal lenses from a variety of makes including Canon, Konica, Leica, Nikon, Pentax... The results are quite detailed and I found it quite interesting reading particularly since there are few tests available these days for older Konica Hexanon lenses. The tests show that they were actually among the best of the manual focus normal lenses.

Here's the link:

<http://photobluebook.virtualave.net/LensTests/LensTestIndex.htm>

Jason

From Nikon MF Mailing LIst;

Date: Tue, 10 Jul 2001

From: general257@aol.com

Subject: Re: sharpest 50mm lens

HI Jack

I own the 50 mm 1.8 A/F lens & have to say it is the sharpest lens in my kit. It's inexpensive, small, & feels very plastically but it sure can take some outstanding photos. I don't really care for the manual focus on this particular A/F lens, very loose focusing ring which doesn't offer much resistance when focusing. I guess the manual focus version would be better in this regard. It's such a simple lens design which probably accounts for it's sharpness. I have used it for available light photos in such places as churches, museums & other locations where flash is not permitted. That's not to say that it cannot perform well under normal conditions. For the money it costs it's probably the best buy in the Nikon lens line up. It's not the lens that resides on my camera that distinction belongs to the 35-70 2.8 A/F lens.

Having said that, it still is a lens that I don't leave home without.

Tomas

Date: Mon, 20 Nov 2000

From: Ryan Shaner rxshaner@home.net

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: 50 mm prime lens

"Koen Beets" koen.beets@luc.ac.be wrote:

>I'm thinking of buying a Nikon F80. Standard they sell a 28-80 f3.5-5.6 AF
>Nikkor with it, but instead of that one I'm considering the 50 mm f1.8
>Nikkor. This is not a D lens. I think I prefer this one because of its high
>speed, fast focus and low cost. But I'm afraid I'm going to miss the 38-80
>zoom I have in my compact.
>I'm shooting inside too, so i could make use of a zoom, but I don't mind
>constantly running through the place to get a good point of view. The
>question is: will I miss a lot of good shots without zoom, or not? Has
>anyone replaced his/her zoom for a prime lens, and was it a good or a bad
>experience ?

One of the first things I did after I bought my first Canon EOS camera was to replace the standard zoom with a 50mm f/1.8. It was easily the single best thing that happened to my photography. You aren't going to miss anything by losing the zoom except for maybe soft photos and some distortion. 50mm f/1.8 lenses are notoriously sharp as hell at a very wide range of apertures and are virtually free of distortion.

The first roll of film I got back after shooting with my 50mm f/1.8 convinced me that I had been wasting a lot of film shooting with the standard-fare zoom. Don't forget too that the 50mm is so cheap that you'll have some money to put toward a really nice wide angle prime or mid-tele prime if that is what you find you need next.

--

Ryan Shaner

E-mail: rxshaner@home.net

Date: Mon, 20 Nov 2000

From: brougham3@yahoo.com

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: 50 mm prime lens

"Koen Beets" koen.beets@luc.ac.be wrote:

>Standard they sell a 28-80 f3.5-5.6 AF
>Nikkor with it, but instead of that one I'm considering the 50 mm f1.8
>Nikkor.

I think you'll be happier with the 50/1.8.

At the tele end, that zoom will let in 10x less light than the 50/1.8. Your viewfinder will be noticeably darker. In the best case scenario using the wide end, it will be letting in 4x less light. Unless you take all your pictures in bright sunlight, you'll notice a big difference. I quickly re-sold a variable aperture 35-70 that I got with my Nikon in favor of the 50/1.8 lens.

Date: Wed, 13 Jun 2001

From: retoricus@hotmail.com (Vagabond)

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: 50mm wins war, 28-80 retreats to closet

When I bought my Nikon F65 six months ago, the consumer grade 28-80 f/3.5-5.6 zoom came with it. The camera store didn't have a 50mm/1.8 in stock, so I had to special-order it. The general agent in Norway didn't have 50mm's in stock either, so I had to wait while some where shipped from Nikon (!).

Then the 50mm arrived and something strange happened. At first I carried both the 50 and the 28-80 in my camera bag. But the 28-80 just wasn't in demand. So I started leaving it at home. And the other day I realised that I haven't used the 28-80 even ONCE after getting the prime lens.

My other lenses are a Tokina 19-35 f/3.5-4.5 and a Nikkor 80-200 f/4.5-5.6. You should think the 50mm had a hard time filling the gap between these to zooms, but not so. I don't miss the "missing" focal lengths at all. And I don't miss the softness and vignetting of the 28-80 either.

Now I wonder - when I get my 24mm f/2.8, will it make my 19-35 zoom redundant in a similar way?

Vagabond

Date: Thu, 14 Jun 2001

From: "Jim MacKenzie" jim@dusykbarlow.sk.ca

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: 50mm wins war, 28-80 retreats to closet

"Vagabond" retoricus@hotmail.com wrote

> My other lenses are a Tokina 19-35 f/3.5-4.5 and a Nikkor 80-200
> f/4.5-5.6. You should think the 50mm had a hard time filling the gap
> between these to zooms, but not so. I don't miss the "missing" focal
> lengths at all. And I don't miss the softness and vignetting of the
> 28-80 either.

This matches my experience. I'm using more expensive, heavier, professional-quality lenses (AF 20-35/2.8D, AF 80-200/2.8 ED), and I find that they cover 90% of the shooting that I like to do on vacation. A 50 fills in the gap quite well (I don't have an AF 50 but I have some manual ones and a 55/3.5 Micro which I tend to use). I have a 35-135 which is a good lens but I seldom use it unless I only want to carry one lens.

> Now I wonder - when I get my 24mm f/2.8, will it make my 19-35 zoom
> redundant in a similar way?

Perhaps. The images you get with a 19 or 20mm lens are a lot different from those with a 24. But the 24 is likely going to be a lot sharper than your 19-35. There's only one way to know!

I don't miss my prime wide angle lenses, but the 20-35 is one of the best zooms ever made in this range and its sharpness is right there with the primes. But there are times when I wish I had a small, lightweight wide angle lens, and I may still get one.

Jim

From Rollei Mailing List;

Date: Thu, 31 May 2001

From: bigler@ens2m.fr

Subject: Re: [Rollei] OT Another 'normal' lens question, 50 vs. 35

> I presumed, with no data to back it up, that the reason why most
> 35mm SLRs are sold with a 50mm lens while most 35mm RFs are sold
> with a 35mm lens is due to the lens being closer to the film plane
> due to a lack of mirror in the camera. Was this inspiration of mine
> better left to myself? Greg Fraser London, Ontario Canada

This is one possible reason ; but the first historical pre-war Leica had a 50mm and no mirror. I even think that Leicaphiles may have a story (I mean : a legend of course ;-) to tell about the way Herr Barnack introduced the 50mm as the standard for the Leica, and not, say a 43 mm which is actually the diagonal of the image.

Other reasons are : technically to cover a 24x36mm image, the fixed focal length that will deliver the best trade-off in terms of aberration corrections, wide aperture, lower cost, etc.. is the normal lens 45-50mm. Other focal lengths either will be heavier or with a smaller aperture or with a lesser image quality. This is true either for a reflex or non-reflex camera. Now it was until the computer era easier to build a good wide angle for a non-reflex camera than for a

SLR. See for 6x6 MF cameras the evolution of the 38mm biogon (design unchanged for 40 years) in parallel with the 40 mm "retrofocust" distagon (the design changed several times since the '60s, each time with a gain in compactness and performance).

Now about point and shoot cameras, the reasons why the 35 mm is preferred there is compactness and increased depth of field which makes life easier for the autofocus system and for the photographer.

--

Emmanuel BIGLER

bigler@ens2m.fr

From Nikon MF Mailing List;

Date: Mon, 30 Jul 2001

From: Dale Cotton dale-cotton@home.com

Subject: Re: Nikkor 50/1.2

Another aspect of the 50s rebirth is handholding. With a 50 or similar prime my F2 is steady as a rock in my hands; with the 35-70 there is a bit of tremor. With the 50 on the centre of balance is still within the camera body; with the zoom on the centre of balance is forward of the body. (Yes, I know: that's what motor drives are for!)

From: "eMeL" badbatz99@hotmail.com>
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: Is 50mm Really Useful? - was Re: Canon's "EF LENS 101" now online
Date: Sat, 3 Nov 2001

Woody Windischman woodrow3.hates.spam@home.com.too> wrote

> The absolute lack of 50mm primes (other than the special purpose macro and
> "special effects" f1.0) in thier listings, points up the question I've asked
> any number of times - just how "real world" useful is the 50mm length? When
> it isn't forced upon you by default - either as your "only lens" or as the
> longest, shortest, or fastest available in a situation that calls for a
> long, short, or fast lens - how often is 50mm the length you really shoot
> at? Really WANT to shoot at?
>
> I've heard a number of people say they like the length because it "forces"
> them to become more creative. In other words, they are forced to think about
> how to overcome the INTRINSIC WEAKNESS of the focal length. In virtually all
> circumstances, they would instinctively rather shoot at a different length.
> I'm not saying there are never times where a 50mm lens would provide the
> definitive composition and perspective, but are the "typical" situations
> described in Canon's 101 section among them? I think not.

Lenses are tools - one should pick the best one for the job.
If one starts with a set of preconceptions and ideological blahblah then one
will be burdened throughout his/her career with one or another "INTRINSIC
WEAKNESS" of this or that. But I've got a news for ya...the only "intrinsic
weakness" is one's "equipment" ideology and lack of mental flexibility.
Free your mind. Lenses, cameras, lab equipment, etc. are tools. Pick the
appropriate ones for the job...If you need a 50 mm lens - use it. 100 mm?
Voila! But look at WHAT you wish to accomplish FIRST and THEN choose your
tool. Sadly, the vast majority of photographers seems to be doing it the
other way around and then dwell whether or not a 50 mm lens has any "real
world" usefulness...

Michael

From: "eMeL" badbatz99@hotmail.com>
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Re: Is 50mm Really Useful? - was Re: Canon's "EF LENS 101" now online
Date: Sun, 4 Nov 2001

It was a rather general rant, you've had just supplied the trigger :-)
Seriously, nothing will improve one's photography more than actually
practicing it, critically evaluating the results (stress the word
critically...) and da capo al fine. Shooting and reshooting one subject
over and over again tends to sharpen one's skills IMO. To do so, one needs
a camera (*any* camera) and either a good, objective mentor or a healthy
dose of self-criticism (or both.)

Some people favor a simple approach to learning (say, a 50 mm lens to learn
photography, or a pencil and paper to learn calculus) whereas some people
tend to unleash big guns (say - criminally expensive zoom lenses and
scientific calculators) for learning the basics... In my view it doesn't
matter, as long as you can objectively evaluate both the process and the
results. I do not know whether or not a 50 mm lens is "intrinsically" good

or bad... If I go to a gallery, I take a fast 50 mm lens with me as the only lens...If I know that I'll be doing more intimate things, I pack a fast 85 mm lens. Of course I have the luxury (and over 30 years of experience) to choose (almost) as I please, but for most people having a "50 mm experience" should mean taping their 35-105 mm zoom at 50 mm and see what happens...

Good shooting!

Michael

P.S. Even though photography is dependant on technology and this group has the word "equipment" in its name, overestimating the importance of technology is detrimental to one's art/craft/skill. A couple of weeks ago somebody at the MF newsgroup posted a link to very, very good photographs made with a 20 dollar (or so) plastic-fantastic medium format camera... The guy (gal? but I believe it was a man) perfectly used the tool at hand ...
M.

Woody Windischman woodrow3.hates.spam@home.com.too> wrote

> Michael,

>

> Perhaps you misunderstood my lament. I'm all for choosing the right tool for
> the job, and I am not saying that 50mm has no value. I'm asking why so many
> people consider it a holy grail. e.g. the "Go with just a 50mm f1.8 for a
> while and you will improve your photography immensely." type of comment.

>

> I agree that the 50mm f1.8 is a light, fast, sharp, cheap lens. I own one.
> My "intrinsic weakness" comment was regarding the lens' merits relative to a
> lens more suited to a specific task (e.g. wider lenses for architecture and
> landscape, longer for portraits, and telephoto for sports and wildlife). I
> just feel that trying to "improve your photography" by forcing 50mm to serve
> in all of those capacities is silly outside of a one-off educational
> exercise.

>

> A more telling and inspiring campaign, IMHO, would be to have a series of
> such experiments, each with a different focal length. Then you can look at
> the results and ask, "Where did this lens excel?" "Where did it fail
> miserably?" "Where might I be able to put this particular effect to
> unexpected good use?" You don't even need a series of fixed lenses for that
> if you have a competent zoom.

>

> - Woody -

>

> "eMeL" badbatz99@hotmail.com> wrote

> > Woody Windischman woodrow3.hates.spam@home.com.too> wrote

> > >

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> > tool. Sadly, the vast majority of photographers seems to be doing it the
> > other way around and then dwell whether or not a 50 mm lens has any "real
> > world" usefulness...
> >
> > Michael

From: ramarren@bayarea.net (Godfrey DiGiorgi)
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.medium-format
Subject: Re: 50lcm/50lcm for landscape? RF? Help pls
Date: Wed, 23 Jan 2002

I have not found a single 80mm lens on 6x6 format a limitation. Even when I've had interchangeable lens cameras, I find I use the 80mm lens nearly all of the time. That's why I no longer own any MF cameras with interchangeable lenses.

Certainly the Hassy is good quality and will do the job very well. Comments on model differences are out of my experience, but they're all going to be able to do the job.

> 3. Any thoughts on the mamiya 7 or bronica 645RF? I like the rangefinder
> idea, but am leaning towards 6x6 format. Again with either of these I would
> still be limited to a single lens. The big drawback with these for me is
> the relative lack of parts i.e. lens, backs, etc on the used market if I
> later decide (can afford) to expand.

There is no doubt that the RF camera is a more limited system in terms of its ultimate flexibility. However, it is smaller, lighter, quieter and

less expensive: you have to decide whether these advantages outweigh ultimate flexibility.

Between the Bronica RF645 and the Mamiya 7, I would choose the Mamiya for landscape work and the Bronica for people/general purpose photography. While you can use either for either type of work, I would normally want the larger negative for landscapes and find the natural portrait orientation of the Bronica ideal for people photos.

I have to admit that the Bronica RF645 is very appealing to me personally.. it has a great feel, is beautifully made, the 65 and 45 lenses are excellent. But if you're likely to need the flexibility of an SLR system, you can't go wrong with the Hasselblad.

Godfrey

From leica mailing list:
Date: Fri, 8 Feb 2002
From: RHaigh5748@aol.com
Subject: Re: [Leica] Less (equipment) is more

On the same vein there is an excellent profile of a professional photographer in this months Photographic who for the most part would only use a Nikon F100 and a prime 50. He does not like the distorted prospective of the wider lens. Seems so many people feel they need to carry B&H Photo's camera and lens inventory to take a photograph.

Bob Haight

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Bob Haight

From: ramarren@bayarea.net (Godfrey DiGiorgi)
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.medium-format
Subject: Re: Which three lenses for 6x6?
Date: Mon, 01 Apr 2002

When I had medium format SLRs, my choices were the normal 75-80mm about

80% of the time with the rest of the time split between a 55-60mm and a 150mm. General purpose pictorial photography mostly, some dabbling into portfolio work and formal portraiture.

Since then, my needs have eliminated the need for interchangeable lenses to the greatest degree so I don't own any SLRs now.

I've always wanted, and still want, a Hassy SuperWide ... that 90 degree rectilinear field of view is just stunning. I just don't think I'd use one enough to justify the cost.

Godfrey

> So which lenses do you use for 6x6 photography, and for what types of
> photos?

From: "G. Fenstermacher" gfen@rcn.com
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.medium-format
Subject: Re: Which three lenses for 6x6?
Date: Tue, 2 Apr 2002

"Mxsmanic" mxsmanic@hotmail.com wrote
> Do you ever regret having only a single lens for the camera?

I'm not the person who you responded to, but I'm answering anyway.

No.

Matter of fact, if anything, its helped me. I have an entire 35mm kit, but I never use anything other than the 50mm, unless I have to. I've had to ONE time in the last three months, with the exception of macro use which makes me swap pretty regularly. When I pick up a reverse ring, I won't even need to give it up for that.

When I was (mostly) gifted with a 4x5 Speed Graphic, it came with one lens. That lens is ample enough for me. The only reason I will be replacing it is so that I get better coverage and can then use adjustments correctly.

I bought a TLR on purpose. It gives me one lens. It was cheap, it makes less headaches for me, and like in the above examples it forces me to compose correctly, and THINK about the photographs I want to make. And work to make them.

I think that's better. I think that's much better. I also think the way my photography has changed in the last six months with the advent of the first fixed focal lenght lens I bought has proven this technique is working very well for me.

From: R. Saylor rlsaylor@ix.netcom.com
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Re: When do you use a 50mm prime lens?
Date: Tue, 23 Apr 2002

Except for architectural subjects in an urban setting (for which 35mm or wider may be necessary), I generally use 50mm. I like tight compositions, and for most of my subjects, if I move in closer with a wider lens, it tends to create an exaggerated perspective, which can look unnatural. (On the other hand, moving farther away with a longer lens can flatten perspective too much, so that a subject may look like a cardboard cutout.) A 35mm is generally on hand in case something is too big for 50mm.

Richard S.

From: Paul Chefurka paul@chefurka.com
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Re: When do you use a 50mm prime lens?
Date: Wed, 24 Apr 2002

I use it as a general-purpose lens whose strength is isolating essential elements in the picture without including too much or too little context.

Its value for me lies in the fact that it is the least "lensy" of all the focal lengths. That means that it generally imposes very little overt optical character on the image, letting the subject and composition take center stage. The extremes of the "lensiness" I'm talking about can be seen in ultra-wides and ultra-teles, but even lenses like 28's and 105's exhibit some of it.

IMO it's this innocuous rendering that has earned the 50mm the sobriquet of the "boring focal length". A 50 does nothing to aid your photography - you have to do it all yourself, with your choice of subject, lighting, composition etc. There's no easy out with a 50 - you can't stretch perspective like with a 20 or compress it like with a 400. All too often these effects are substituted for thoughtfulness, and when a person who is weaned on them tries to use a 50, the results reinforce the lens' boring reputation.

As others have noted, 50's are usually fast, light, well-corrected and inexpensive. That last attribute may also contribute to their low regard - we don't tend to respect anything that's relatively inexpensive. To cure this misapprehension, one can always buy a Leica Noctilux. - it's expensive enough to even earn the respect of one's bank manager :-)

Paul

From: "Luigi de Guzman" luigi12081@cox.rr.com
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Re: When do you use a 50mm prime lens?
Date: Wed, 24 Apr 2002

1. When I don't want to carry a lot of unnecessary weight.

It's light, compact, and doesn't have very much on it to go wrong.

2. Because no other lens I have is as fast (f/1.4)

Available light shots are mine, if I can keep my hands steady. I've gotten a lot of very good photos of my friends--not HCB quality, but enough to show my friends as they really are. (Corollary to the above: because I hate using flash. It ruins the mood in some situations, and it broadcasts "I'M TAKING YOUR PICTURE," which tends to change behaviours. I prefer to get photos of people being natural.)

3. Because it's relatively cheap.

Speaks for itself.

Would a zoom be better? As time goes by, I'm beginning to doubt it. When I was just starting out and using a cheap kitzoom, I ended up taking most of my pictures at 50mm anyway. (Close second was 35mm, but nowhere near as often). Once I'd realised that, then I figured it was unnecessary to lug around the extra weight--and happily, discovered I could get four extra stops of speed!.

My ideal 'travel' kit would be just my Pentax MX and a 50mm f/1.4 SMC-A. No flash unit, no batteries, no worries. Mount the lens on the body and you have a suitably robust, compact piece of kit that will survive without need for special camera-carrying equipment, or indeed, without the need for you to stress about it all that much--all for less than the price of a new plastic-wonder, doodad body.

-Luigi

From: bhilton665@aol.comedy (Bill Hilton)
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Date: 03 May 2002
Subject: Re: When do you use a 50mm prime lens?

>>A number of world famous photographers, Ernst Haas among them,
>>built their entire careers around using only the normal lens!

>From: mceowen@aol.com (McEowen)

>I didn't realize Haas was a 50mm-only guy, though

Haas definitely WASN'T a "50mm-only guy", not by any stretch. I'm a big fan of his work and in the back of his book "The Creation" he writes "I work mostly with lenses of 21, 28, 50, 90, 180 and 400 mm." He also mentions a special fondness for the Micro-Nikkor 55 mm, which may be what the original poster was referring to.

>In general, though,
>professional photographers -- the overwhelming majority, in fact -- use
>whatever it takes to get the job done. Few would be so silly as to limit
>their work to one lens.

True, and well-put.

>All that being said, the 50mm is a useful focal length.

I agree. So is the 17mm, 20 mm, 24 mm, 35 mm, 85 mm, 100 mm, ... all the way out to 1,000 mm and beyond (grin).

From: "Jeremy 1952" jeremy@hotmail.com
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Here's Herbert Keppler's Answer
Date: Fri, 03 May 2002

Here is what Herbert Keppler wrote in his classic volume "The Pentax Way" (1976):

"The normal (50-55 mm. Takumar) focal length lens is the best compromise yet worked out for most picture taking needs. Physically it's small. Optically, it is very well corrected. In practical terms, it can handle almost any picture-taking situation with good flexibility, be it scenic or close-up. It can focus closer than two feet without additional accessories. Many have found that the lens fills every need and have never investigated the other lenses available. They should. The experience of at least trying other lenses is very enjoyable, even if you don't (or can't) purchase every single one of them."

Obviously, his remarks were directed toward Pentax users, but much of what he wrote was relevant to other camera lines as well. At that time, Pentax had a line of 27 SMC Takumars, all of which were prime lenses (except for an 85-205 zoom).

From: Charles F Seyferlich cfscnw@worldnet.att.net
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Re: When do you use a 50mm prime lens?
Date: Fri, 03 May 2002

paulisme wrote:

>
> Hi, I was wondering if anyone here ever uses a 50mm prime lens? I've
> heard them called everything from convenient to worthless, so I'd like
> to know when it's useful and practical to use this seemingly
> non-versatile lens type.
>
> Paul

I have found that the 50mm "normal" lens is a good point to start as it is usually inexpensive, good (or better) quality, reasonably fast and

not too bulky. The focal length is also a good average as a point to start with.

After a person gets used to a 50 it is then time to branch out according to whatever needs he/she has. No one "magic" lens or focal length serves all needs but starting with the basic 50 and working from there seems to make sense to me.

I have owned dozens of different camera brands and/or types and find the the normal gets more use out of all focal lengths (and I have had everything from 14mm to 600mm and all points in between).

From: nyphotoboy@aol.com (NYphotoboy)
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Date: 03 May 2002
Subject: Re: When do you use a 50mm prime lens?

I use a 50mm lens for 90% of my stuff... it's the closest thing to approximately your own field of vision. LOVE that.

Kerry

From: ramarren@bayarea.net (Godfrey DiGiorgi)
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.medium-format
Subject: Re: 35mm vs 645 focal length
Date: Tue, 04 Jun 2002

The adoption of 50mm 'normal' standard for 35mm pre-dated broad adoption of SLRs by about 30 years. The primary reason why 35mm format users chose a 50mm lens as normal was because 35mm is considered a miniature format by the standard of the early 1900s, a slightly longer normal lens maximized use of the full format without the need for cropping.

Godfrey
wiltw@aol.com
(Wilt W) wrote:

> Note that this
> illustrates the fact that a 50mm lens on the 35mm format is longer than the
> 'diagonal' dimension dictates, and that is an aberration caused by the fact that
> a 50mm lens allowed the mirror to clear the back of the lens easily without
> resorting to more expensive optics design in the mass produced 'normal' lenses
> that were provided with every SLR body!
>
> --Wilt

From: rmonagha@smu.edu (Robert Monaghan)

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.medium-format
Subject: Re: 35mm vs 645 focal length
Date: 4 Jun 2002

re: 50mm lens on 35mm SLRs,

in an old Modern Photography column, IIRC, Herb Keppler did an explanation that suggested the original rationale was that you could look thru the viewfinder with one eye, and at the scene with the other eye, similar to what rangefinder folks had been doing evidently, and get a fused image and other benefits (stereo, see subjects entering the frame etc.). This only worked for the older original large SLRs that had large screens and nominal (1.0) magnification, and so doesn't work in the newer and lighter and smaller SLRs, which use smaller prisms and different magnification ratios as a result etc. etc. The 50mm range lenses made this work pretty well, while a 35mm or other lens would have given a different view in one eye than in the other.

Others have suggested that there was a need to clear the rear of the swinging mirror, and the slightly longer than 43mm ideal diagonal value (e.g., 58mm on some "normal lenses") made this easier and cheaper too.

I keep thinking that it would be an interesting collection of lenses to pick up some of the odd ball values compared to today's standards (e.g., 25mm, 43mm, 58mm..) of 20/24/28/35/50... ;-)

bobm

From: T.P. t.p@nomailthanks.com
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Re: Normal lens
Date: Tue, 15 Oct 2002

"Jeremy" jeremy@no-spam-thanks.com wrote:
>Without splitting hairs on the precise definition of a normal lens, it is
>apparent that lenses in the 43-55mm range (at least with regard to 35mm
>film) to not introduce perspective distortion, and thus approximate the way
>a human being would view the scene.

No, they don't. And any claim that they do is pure BS.

There is only one reason why lenses around 50mm focal length are considered standard (or "normal") on a 35mm camera; they are cheaper to produce than any other focal length. It's also cheaper to produce an optically excellent lens in this focal length range than any other.

So that's why the cheapest *and* the best performing lenses tend to be in this focal length range.

Very little research has been done into what focal length people consider best reproduces "natural" perspective. The answer can only

be subjective, because the human eye works in a very different way to the camera lens. However a large sample of subjective opinions can be very useful in drawing some kind of conclusion.

Possibly the best available study was conducted in the UK during the 1970s by "SLR Camera" magazine. Various prints (of various subjects) from negatives taken with lenses of various focal lengths were shown to people who were asked to choose which had the most natural appearance. The most popular choice was around $f = 70\text{mm}$, and the bias in favour of this focal length was statistically significant.

As part of my current University course I am searching for original information regarding this and other research projects which are relevant (and of interest) to 35mm photography.

Date: Thu, 12 Dec 2002

Subject: Re: Which focal length is the most frequently used for 4X5?

From: Christopher Cline ccline@takemeout.westminstercollege.edu

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.large-format

I was wondering the same thing myself a couple of years ago. Both John Sexton and Bruce Barnbaum list some technical information about the images in their books, so just for grins I counted how often they used particular focal lengths. This is just a limited set of raw data and not broken up into particular subject matter. I'm not sure of what use this would be to anyone, but I thought it was kind of interesting.

Lens	% used	% used
	Sexton	Barnbaum
58	5%	0%
75	18%	9%
90	13%	26%
120	14%	0%
135	1%	0%
150	8%	47%
210	26%	1%
240	1%	0%
300	9%	9%
305	0%	3%
360	1%	3%
450	2%	0%
500	2%	1%

I also counted how often they used a particular f/stop .

f/stop	% used	% used
	Sexton	Barnbaum
16	7%	1%
22	25%	8%
32	48%	46%
45	18%	8%
64	2%	0%

(Barnbaum's don't add up to 100% because he used a lot of intermediate stops between f/22 and f/45)

Christopher A. Cline
Salt Lake City
<http://people.westminstercollege.edu/faculty/ccline/>

From: "Jeremy" jeremy@no-spam-thanks.com
Newsgroups: [rec.photo.equipment.35mm](#)
Subject: Re: Sigma Lenses
Date: Sun, 13 Oct 2002

"cam_man" sbaker04@midsouth.rr.com wrote
>The lens is what takes the picture rather than the body, so you
> are doing fine with your N65. Let me encourage you to consider starting out
> with one of the best Nikon lenses that is both high quality and "cheap".
> It's the 50mm lens. Your images will be tack sharp.

Let me second that advice.

The photographer's tool is his lens. The best camera in the world, coupled with an inferior lens, will yield disappointing results.

The recommendation that you start out with a normal lens is an excellent one. The normal lens will give you speed (typically they are f/1.8 or f/1.4), excellent optical performance (normal lenses have less optical tradeoffs than do wide angle or telephoto lenses), and economy (because they're made in large quantities, they cost much less).

Another possibility is to buy additional Nikon prime lenses on the used market. "Shutterbug" magazine has ads from many dealers that offer used equipment. EBay may also be a good source, but you need to know what you are doing--a lot of below-grade merchandise is "dumped" there.

The normal lens will set the standard for all other lens evaluation. It will, most likely, be the sharpest, contrastiest, saturated lens you will ever own. Don't pass up the opportunity to get one.

From: Alan Browne alan.browne@videotron.ca
Newsgroups: [rec.photo.equipment.35mm](#)
Subject: Re: Photography Equipment Quality
Date: Sun, 22 Dec 2002

Robert Monaghan wrote:
(snipping occurred here, sue me)
> But the on film

> results are usually so close that few photographers or viewers can sort
> out slides as being taken by a Nikon vs. a Canon, or even a Nikon vs.
> an older Miranda ;-)
>
> grins bobm

A few weeks ago a fellow gave a slide presentation on his adventures in Ecuador. Much of this was in the mountains (where O2 deprived he managed some very OOF shots), but towards the end it was in the jungle.

I had no prior idea what equipment he used. Eventually he got to a slide with a very sharp, perfectly exposed, nicely contrasted shot of a colorful lizard on a tree. In the OOF background were very harsh and unpleasant highlights from the light shining through the trees.

Verbatim:

I couldn't resist: "C'etait un Nikon 50 f/1.8?"

Perplexed, he answered, "Mais comment? Oui."

I burst out laughing, and received the glaring attention of the rest of the small audience.

While one would be hard pressed to identify most lenses that there are out there, some lenses just scream out from the results.

Cheers,
Alan

From: Tom Christiansen [tomchr@softhome.net]
Sent: Sat 3/8/2003
To: hasselblad@kelvin.net
Subject: Re: [HUG] Landscape tips please

you wrote:

>Despite Fritz Olenberger's (good) advice about lenses, if you only have a
>standard 80mm lens, don't go out and buy another.

I concur. Many people (including myself) get caught up in equipment lust and buy too much stuff. Then we spend too much time trying to select which lens to use rather than taking pictures. Get to know the lens(es) you already have. Only buy another lens when you **NEED** another lens. Don't just buy something to try it out. And with expensive Hasselblad gear, rent the gear for (at least) a weekend before you buy.

Some people will tell you that it is impossible to take good pictures with a standard focal length lens. Nothing could be further from the truth. The standard lenses are typically the lightest, fastest, and among the sharpest in the lens line-up. And the composition depends mainly on the photographer anyway...

Tom

From: "Sherman" sherman_remove_this@dunnam.net

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.medium-format

Subject: Re: pre-visualizing focal lengths without a lens...

Date: Fri, 11 Jul 2003

...

> > Grab a piece of cardboard [or something similar] cut a hole in the size
> > and shape of your negative. Now take a length of string tie it to the
> > cardboard. Tie knots in the string at distances equal to the focal lengths
> > you are worried about. Hold the thing up and look into the opening. The
> > distance should equal the length of the lens you want. Wondering about the
> > 80mm then find the 80mm knot and hold that to your cheek while you look into
> > the frame.

> >

> > I think somebody actually makes a commerical product like this.

> >

> > Nick

The cutout doesn't have to be the same size as your negative. For instance if you are using a 6x6 camera you can make the cutout any size square you want. It could be 12x12, 36x36 or whatever. It is sometimes easier to have the opening larger than the actual negative size. I use a viewer like this for my 4x5 and the opening is actually larger than 4x5 but is exactly the same ratio.

Put the string in it as mentioned above and set up your camera on a tripod with one of your lenses. Look at the viewfinder and check out the what is on each edge of the frame. (I lined up one edge with the edge of a house for each lens then all I had to do was remember what was at the other edge.) Now putting your cardboard cutout in the same position as the lens of your camera place your head close to the frame and slowly move back until the view is the same. Stretch the string to your face and mark it with a magic marker and/or tie a knot in it at that point.

Now just repeat the process with each lens. You can now look through your custom made viewer and select the proper focal length easily.

Sherman

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