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[Third Pary Lens Incompatibility Pages](#) (and compatibility pages)
[Bjorn Rorslett \(Nikon\) Lens Review Pages](#)
[Olympus Lens and Third Party Lenses Tests](#) [8/18/99]
[Pentax Lens Resolution...](#)
[Comparing sharpness and photodo ratings](#)
[Classic Pentax Lenses Tested](#) (Peter Spiro) [10/4/99]
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[Photoblook Normal 35mm SLR Lens Reviews](#) [3/2001]

Local Reviews

[TX lenses](#)

Caution: Before you get too excited about any particular lens based on its magazine reviews, read about [variations in three lenses from the same batch](#) as reported in a [Modern Photography](#) review some years ago...

From [Joseph's List of Pop. Photography Lens Reviews](#)

LENS TESTED	DATE TESTED
Adorama M-series 21mm f/2.8*	4/96
Adorama M-series 28mm f/3.5*	4/96
Angenieux 28-70mm f/2.6	4/91
Phoenix 28-105mm f/2.8-3.8	8/96
Quantaray 75-300mm f/4-5.6	1/94
Samyang 18-28mm f/4-4.5*	2/92
Sigma 14mm f/3.5	1/93
Sigma 28mm f/1.8	3/93
Sigma 300mm f/4	11/95
Sigma 400mm f/5.6 APO	5/92
Sigma 18-35mm f/3.5-5.6 D	2/95
Sigma 21-35mm f/3.5-4.2	2/92
Sigma 24-50mm f/4-5.6	8/92

Sigma 24-70mm f/3.5-5.6 D	5/95
Sigma 28-70mm f/3.5-4.5	11/90
Sigma 28-70mm f/2.8	6/93
Sigma 28-70mm f/2.8-4	6/96
Sigma 28-105mm f/4-5.6	9/94
Sigma 28-200mm f/4-5.6	4/91
Sigma 28-200mm f/3.8-5.6	2/95
Sigma 35-80mm f/4-5.6 DL	4/94
Sigma 70-210mm f/4-5.6	11/90
Sigma 70-210mm f/2.8 APO	5/93
Sigma 70-300mm f/4-5.6	6/96
Sigma 75-300mm f/4.5-5.6 APO	4/92
Sigma 75-300mm f/4.5-5.6	4/92
Sigma 75-300mm f/4-5.6 APO	8/93
Tamron 300mm f/2.8 LD	4/93
Tamron 20-40mm f/2.7-3.5	2/95
Tamron 24-70mm f/3.3-5.6	3/94
Tamron 28-70mm f/3.5-4.5	11/90
Tamron 28-70mm f/3.5-4.5	10/92
Tamron 28-80mm f/3.5-5.6	5/96
Tamron 28-200mm f/3.8-5.6	4/93
Tamron 35-90mm f/4-5.6	4/92
Tamron 35-105mm f/2.8	9/92
Tamron 35-135mm f/3.5-4.5	4/91
Tamron 70-210mm f/4-5.6	11/90
Tamron 70-210mm f/2.8 LD	5/93
Tamron 70-300mm f/4-5.6	2/94
Tamron 80-210mm f/4.5-5.6	5/96
Tamron 90-300mm f/4.5-5.6	4/92
Tamron 200-400mm f/5.6	8/95
Tokina AT-X 17mm f/3.5	1/94
Tokina AT-X 300mm f/2.8	4/92
Tokina 300mm f/4	11/95
Tokina 400mm f/5.6	5/95
Tokina 20-35mm f/3.5-4.5	5/92
Tokina AT-X 24-40mm f/2.8	2/92
Tokina 28-70mm f/3.5-4.5	11/90
Tokina AT-X 28-70mm f/2.8	9/92
Tokina 28-70mm f/2.6-2.8	2/95
Tokina 70-210mm f/4-5.6	11/90
Tokina AT-X 80-200mm f/2.8	4/91
Tokina AT-X 80-200mm f/2.8	4/96
Tokina 100-300mm f/4	8/93
Vivitar Series 1 19-35mm f/3.5-4.5	7/96
Vivitar Series 1 24-70mm f/3.8-4.8*	2/92
Vivitar Series 1 28-300mm f/4-6.3	7/96
Vivitar Series 1 100-500mm f/5.6-8*	4/91

* Manual-Focus lens

Psst: Know of any reviews of third party lenses you don't see here?
Email Us! the info to post! Thanks!

rec.photo.equipment.35mm
 From: for7@aol.com (FOR7)

[1] Re: Why the huge price difference?

Date: Wed Nov 04 23:21:13 CST 1998

>Take the reviews with a "grain of salt." Have you ever read a truly
negative
>review?

Yeah the British Magazines usually give reviews that clearly state one lens is better than the other. Popular Photography may be careful to word their reviews but the numbers they come up with their sysytem have proven quite accurate for many.

for7@aol.com

rec.photo.equipment.35mm

From: "Marc P." marcp@ireseaufox.com

[1] Lens test sites?

Date: Tue Mar 16 11:01:12 CST 1999

I had only one reply to my original post with the following sites:

David Reuther - Grover Larkin

> <http://utopia.knoware.nl/users/leover/nikon/nikkor.htm>
>
> Michael Liu
> <http://www.mir.com.my/rb/photography/hardwares/speciallenses/index.htm>
>
> Photodo
> <http://www.photodo.com>
>
> Photozone
> <http://www.cmpsolv.com/photozone>
>
> Walter Pietsch
> <http://wpxx02.toxi.uni-wuerzburg.de/~winstel/walter/nikon.html>

I knew of the Photodo and Photozone sites. Two of the other three feature Nikkor lenses which I can't afford and the third deals with "special" lenses.

If you know of any good and extensive lens evaluating sites (current "regular" lenses from all companies), I would greatly appreciate any info on this. I've searching but have found nothing interesting so far.

Thanks.

Marc P.

From: bob@bobshell.com

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: Heres why I use Contax and not Nikon!
Date: Fri, 29 Jan 1999

remove the dot and y wrote:

```
>bob@bobshell.com says...
>
> >Magazine tests are another matter.  You can design your tests to
favor
> >whatever you want to favor.  If the majority of your ad dollars come
from
> >Japanese companies, then you can design your tests to favor Japanese
lenses,
> >and your results will show that the latest lens from Niknolta is head
and
> >shoulders bette than the best Leica lens.
>
> I thought you said advertising dollars had no effect on editorial
> content Bob. Remember the ongoing thread about fraudulent mail
> order firms ? Make up your mind now :)
```

Since Shutterbug does not do lab tests it should be obvious that I am not talking about Shutterbug in my comments. Do I have to spell it out for you??

```
> >Shutterbug does not do lab tests.  We tried it some years back in our
sister
> >magazine PhotoPro but stopped because people didn't want to hear
objective
> >test results.
>
> Probably because they didn't get them.
```

The lab tests for PhotoPro were done by Optikos Corp. in Cambridge, a totally independent optical company who do the lens and other optical design work for Polaroid. They provided totally objective tests on lenses submitted by the US distributors. Some well known lenses tested out as really super, as expected, while some others were clearly awful. We got indifferent reader support for our work and outright hostility from the industry, so we just gave up. But we did try.

Bob

rec.photo.equipment.35mm
From: canon50e@aol.com (Canon50E)
[1] Third party equipment incompatibilities?
Date: Fri Mar 19 22:47:09 CST 1999

Well, a Singapore professional photographer has asked me a few days ago if I had experienced any incompatibilities of my EOS 50E (Elan IIE) with attached my past-Tokina lens and my Tamron lens. And I said, "no, I haven't." Though he's been telling me that with his F100, F5, EOS 3, and EOS 5 he has been having

incompatibilities with third party lenses that sometimes it overexposes or sometimes it just basically doesn't work on that camera.

Therefore he has inspired me to write a survey/page that lets users to report situations where you feel that a certain lens and camera body just doesn't work out together. Usually the incompatibilities people encounter are from newer camera bodies with older third party lenses/flash.

For further info. please take a look at this page here:

<http://www.kyphoto.com/thirdparty/>

There will not be any kind of results given with these inputs, but I honestly hope that people will share their experiences with these problems and let other people be aware. I am also open up to opinions, like if you are interested or not interested...I know I can't satisfy all people but tell me if it's of some sort of interest to anyone.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely yours,
KY Mak

My Photography Page:
<http://www.asiaphoto.com/ky>

From: Hans Martens hans.martens@wildpicture.com
Newsgroups: rec.photo.misc
Subject: Telephoto lens tests
Date: Wed, 05 May 1999

Now online on the photography section of my website are test results of telephoto lenses. Tested are lenses of 300mm, 400mm, 500mm, 600mm and even a bit longer.

Have a look.

Greetings,
Hans

=====
Hans Martens
Wildlife Photographer, Field Guide

Wildlife & Nature Photography
<http://www.wildpicture.com>
=====

see [tele lens tests](#)

From: "Joseph Vogt" jvogt@ct1.nai.net
Newsgroups: rec.photo.marketplace
Subject: Re: NIKON LENS TESTS?
Date: Wed, 5 May 1999

Check the "Readers Guide to Periodical Literature" at your local library. It's in book form, by year. Look under "Lenses - Photographic" and it will give listings my month and year for all the periodicals with lens tests. (I just happened to do it today).

DAVE audio2000@my-dejanews.com wrote

> IS ANYONE AWARE OF AN INDEX TO NIKON LENS TESTS IN POPLULAR
PHOTOGRAPHY ,
> PETERSONS PHOTOGRAPHIC ETC.?
> THANK YOU!!!
> --
> DAVE

From: Bjorn Rorslett nikon@foto.no
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: New lens evaluation resource opened
Date: Fri, 30 Jul 1999

hi everybody I have recently added a comprehensive Lens Survey and Evaluation section to my web site at <http://www.foto.no/nikon/index.html> . If you pass the entrance test, select 'Lens Evaluation' from the menu bar. Here you'll find in-depth comments on a large number of lenses, mostly Nikkors. All lenses have been used by myself for actual shooting and my comments reflect this insight. You'll find, for example, precise statements regarding the best performing apertures for each and every lens. A number of fairly exotic lenses are presented, amongst these is the 300/2 Nikkor.

The resource is in its beginning stage so some lenses have only received their ratings and the corresponding comments will be added shortly.

Any criticism or comments are welcome.

regards
Bjorn Rorslett

Visit <http://www.foto.no/nikon> for UV Colour Photography and other Adventures in Nature Photography

rec.photo.equipment.35mm
From: mbergma2@popd.ix.netcom.com
[1] Re: Which is the sharpest lens according to photodo.com
Date: Sun Aug 22 00:05:53 CDT 1999

Photodo does have a search engine that allows one to compare ratings. Choose Lenses - 35mm - use the Advanced Search - pick 50mm as the min and max - when the results appear scroll down to the bottom on the left scroll bar and choose show as table.

In the 50mm the highest ratings are for the Contax 50mm f/1.7 and the Leica 50mm f/2.0 at 4.6.

For 28mm it is the Contax Distagon T 28mm f/2.8 at 4.3.

For 135mm it is the Canon 135mm f/2.0 at 4.5.

I believe the Canon 200mm f1.8 is the highest rated lens on photodo. It tested at 4.8.

Marc

Dr. A.Routh MD. wrote:

> Which lenses are the sharpest lens in the prime lens category among
> different manufacturers- [a] 50 mm lens [b]28 mm [c] 135 lens
according
> to Photodo.com? Is there a tabulated list where the lens sharpness can
> be compared at a glance? With thanks.

[Ed. note: possible cure for those lusting after Zeiss glass? ;-)]

From Nikon Digest:

Date: Wed, 25 Aug 1999

From: Don Lintner lintner@uwp.edu

Subject: Re: [NIKON] Autofocus Accuracy

Last January, I switched from Contax back to Nikon. I miss some of the Zeiss lenses a little but love the F100 bodies. Their interface is great and, while I put down autofocus for years, I now think its great. I can get shots I couldn't without it and while it may not be as accurate as perfect manual focus, I have many fewer out of focus slides due to dark conditions and my over 40 eyesight. I also think even a slow focusing autofocus lens is still faster than I can do manually with any chance of accuracy.

As an aside, Nikkor lenses are generally indistinguishable from Contax lenses in most situations in terms of sharpness and contrast, etc. (I haven't done exhaustive testing, this is just what I see on my slides). The big difference is the Zeiss glass had a subltly nicer and more consistant color from lens to lens but this is very subtle and subjective - - my wife doesn't see it at all.

[Ed. note: while a photodo score is of limited value as an average and only focused on MTF, not giving info about many issues, here is a review..]

From: Roland roland.rashleigh-berry@virgin.net

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: The great "Lens Resolution" Competition

Date: Fri, 20 Aug 1999

Welcome to the start of the great "Lens Resolution Ratings" competition where we have 4 of our players waiting to slug it out. Ratings are as given on the photodo site (<http://www.photodo.com>) and the judges award up to a maximum of 5 points depending on finishing position and performance. Competitors may skip an even at any point by playing a joker card. There are two legs to this competition, the "fixed" leg and the "zooms" leg. The winner will be the one awarded the most points by the judges.

Yes, they're lining up, they're under starters orders -- they're off !!!

FIXED

20mm (pentax=3.7, nikon/minolta=3.5, canon=3.4)

Canon 3
Minolta 4
Nikon 4
Pentax 5

24mm (canon=3.9, nikon/pentax=3.7, minolta=3.4)

Canon 3 + 5 = 8
Minolta 4 + 2 = 6
Nikon 4 + 4 = 8
Pentax 5 + 4 = 9

28mm (minolta=4.1, canon/pentax=3.8, nikon=3.2)

Canon 8 + 4 = 12
Minolta 6 + 5 = 11
Nikon 8 + 2 = 10
Pentax 9 + 4 = 13

35mm (pentax plays the joker and the other players fight it out to adjust positions. canon/minolta=4.0, nikon=3.9 - the judges declare a draw so scores unchanged)

Canon 12
Minolta 11
Nikon 10
Pentax 13

50mm (pentax=4.6, canon/ Nikon/minolta=4.4)

Canon 12 + 4 = 16
Minolta 11 + 4 = 15
Nikon 10 + 4 = 14
Pentax 13 + 5 = 18

100/105mm Macro (minolta=4.5, canon=4.4, pentax=4.3, nikon=3.9)

Canon 16 + 4 = 20
Minolta 15 + 5 = 20
Nikon 14 + 1 = 15
Pentax 18 + 3 = 21

135mm (canon=4.5, nikon=4.3, minolta=3.6, pentax=3.5)

Canon 20 + 5 = 25
Minolta 20 + 1 = 21
Nikon 15 + 4 = 19
Pentax 21 + 0 = 21

180/200mm F2.8 (Pentax plays another joker and the rest fight to adjust positions. canon/minolta=4.1, nikon=3.6 with canon also playing their 200mmF1.8 card). Canon up one point, minolta stays there and nikon moves down one point.

Canon 25 + 1 = 26
Minolta 21 + 0 = 21
Nikon 19 - 1 = 18
Pentax 21 + 0 = 21

The first leg is over. We have the "Zooms" leg to go but at this stage we have Canon as the clear leader with Minolta and Pentax in joint second place and Nikon not too far away in fourth.

ZOOMS

20-35mm (nikon=3.6, canon=3.5, pentax=3.4, minolta=2.8)

Canon 26 + 4 = 30
Minolta 21 + 0 = 21
Nikon 18 + 5 = 23
Pentax 21 + 3 = 24

28-70mm (canon=3.9, minolta/nikon=3.7, pentax=3.3)

Canon 30 + 5 = 35
Minolta 21 + 4 = 25
Nikon 23 + 4 = 27
Pentax 24 + 1 = 25

28-105mm (canon=3.3, pentax/nikon=3.2, minolta=2.7)

Canon 35 + 5 = 40
Minolta 25 + 0 = 25
Nikon 27 + 4 = 31
Pentax 25 + 4 = 29

35-70mm (nikon=3.8, minolta=3.5, pentax=3.1, canon=2.8)

Canon 40 + 1 = 41
Minolta 25 + 4 = 29
Nikon 31 + 5 = 36

Pentax 29 + 3 = 32

35-80mm (canon=3.2, nikon=2.8, minolta=2.4, pentax=2.2)

Canon 41 + 5 = 46

Minolta 29 + 1 = 30

Nikon 36 + 2 = 38

Pentax 32 + 0 = 32

70-210mm (canon=3.1, pentax=2.9, nikon=2.8, minolta=2.7)

Canon 46 + 5 = 51

Minolta 30 + 1 = 31

Nikon 38 + 2 = 40

Pentax 32 + 3 = 35

80-200 F2.8 (canon=4.2, nikon=4.1, minolta=3.9, pentax=3.2)

Canon 51 + 5 = 56

Minolta 31 + 3 = 34

Nikon 40 + 4 = 44

Pentax 35 + 0 = 35

100-300mm (nikon plays the joker card and the rest fight it out for position adjustments. canon=3.3, minolta=3.2, pentax=2.4. Judges put both Canon and Minolta up one position and Pentax down two positions).

Canon 56 + 1 = 57

Minolta 34 + 1 = 35

Nikon 44 + 0 = 44

Pentax 35 - 2 = 33

And that's the end of the "Lens Resolution Ratings" competition folks and the results are clear. Canon a full 13 points ahead of Nikon with Minolta 9 points behind with Pentax only 2 points behind failing to get a medal this time.

Canon = Gold medal on 57 points

Nikon = Silver medal on 44 points

Minolta = Bronze medal on 35 points

Pentax = (also ran) on 33 points

From: rmonagha@smu.edu (Robert Monaghan)

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: lens resol. doesn't matter cuz' Re: The great "Lens Resolution"

Date: 20 Aug 1999

first, a single point composite score on some selected MTF freq. analysis is not terrifically useful; that's why MTF charts are used, mainly to pick out the best performance points etc. - not to average out and pick lenses, since most of use our lenses at their best or sweet spots, right?

second, lenses vary a whole lot within and between batches, and esp. for used lenses, so the quoted numbers may be at least an entire unit better or worse than the one you have in your hand, so any arbitrary score is only valid for the lens they tested, not the one you have or buy (see my lens variation pages at <http://www.smu.edu/~rmonagha/third/variations.html>)

third, lens resolution is essentially irrelevant if you are using color films, either slides or prints, for your work (as most of us do). The reason is that the lens is not the limiting factor, but rather the overall system resolution, and that in turn is determined by the film. In other words, my 300 lpmm aerial resolution nikkors can at best deliver maybe 120 lpmm on black and white thin emulsion specialty films, but when used with average contrast, real world subjects, my Ektachrome 100 film delivers a lousy 50 lpmm (1:1.6 avg contrast ratio). This is also why all those pricey lenses which do great on lens chart tests (at 1:1000 contrast ratios in black and white) can't be reliability told apart on real world shots - as the film is limiting, not the lens.

In other words, if you are using color film (and 96% of amateurs do), then lens resolution is good enough, whether you are using a Zeiss or a Nikon or decent third party lens, it isn't the limiting factor, the film is see <http://www.smu.edu/~rmonagha/mf/lenslpmm.html> for more facts etc.

Finally, if you really want to do large blowups where lens resolution matters, it is much cheaper to switch to medium format. The larger film size will provide much more enlargement capability, and a \$100 used TLR like a rolleicord can blow away the resolution and tonality of any consumer or professional 35mm lens system - size matters, it is that simple. see [third/quality.html](http://www.smu.edu/~rmonagha/third/quality.html) How Much Quality is Enough for related info...

regards bobm

Subject: Re: Which is the sharpest lens according to photodo.com

From: "Jim Williams" jlw@nospam.net

Newsgroups: [rec.photo.equipment.35mm](http://www.smu.edu/~rmonagha/mf/lenslpmm.html)

Date: Sat, 21 Aug 1999

>Which lenses are the sharpest lens in the prime lens category among
>different manufacturers- [a] 50 mm lens [b]28 mm [c] 135 lens according
>to Photodo.com? Is there a tabulated list where the lens sharpness can
>be compared at a glance? With thanks.

Warning, warning, warning: Photodo.com provides modulation transfer function (MTF) data. While *interpretation* of MTF data can tell you a lot about how a lens performs, MTF does ***NOT*** directly measure "sharpness." In other words, comparing MTF numbers (or any other single numbers) will ***NOT*** tell you which lens is "sharpest." Sharpness is a perceptual, qualitative criterion which incorporates such quantitative factors as resolution, macro-contrast, micro-contrast, and "bokeh" -- AND depends on conditions such as subject distance (lens

performance can be optimized only for one specific distance, so one lens may be "sharper" at infinity while another is "sharper" at 10 feet), subject type, two-dimensional vs. three-dimensional subject, etc. It's been shown that it's impossible to quantify all the aspects of lens performance into any single "figure of merit" that would allow lens sharpness to be "compared at a glance."

I know this is not what you wanted to hear, but a lot of people waste energy and money seeking the "sharpest" lens without realizing that this is a very amorphous term, and any decision you make on how to determine which lens is sharpest will be partly an arbitrary personal judgement. That's why there are so many arguments about lenses on this group!

From: rlsaylor@ix.netcom.com (R. Saylor)
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Re: Which is the sharpest lens according to photodo.com
Date: Sat, 21 Aug 1999

....

Just a word of caution. The sharpest lens is not necessarily the best lens. A lens can be incredibly sharp but suffer from distortion, light falloff, and (yes) bad bokeh, among other things.

Richard S

From: LL lewislang@my-deja.com
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Re: Canon vs Minolta vs Nikon lenses
Date: Fri, 20 Aug 1999

Numbered lens tests are always a mixed bag at best. I prefer to see ³results²/blow up sections from a lens with my own eyes and mind/judgement. The main reasons that ³optical real world testing with your own eyes² are better than the best test labs is as follows. No manufacturing process is perfect - there will always be a certain degree of lack of consistency or optical quality variations from sample to sample. A magazine may test a plum while you get a dog. Even taking that into account the best judge of a lenses quality is your own eyes. Buy, rent, or borrow the lens you wish to use and do your own real world testing and come to your own real world conclusions based on your own real world film/shooting situations/lighting conditions/etc. Everybody has their own optical "standards" of quality regardless of any numbers or letters a photo testing lab, no matter how accurate/objective might assign to a lens. I can't comment on ³photodo² but in my opinion Popular Photography rates its lenses much too high at a given magnification. Lenses they would give an ³A² to would barely muster a ³B² grade in my eyes. Then again I probably have a more critical eye than most of the people they use to do their testing as I like to stand 10² or closer to a 16x20² print (and formerly a 30x40² print in my more critical days past) to see how both the lens and the film have rendered fine

detail. I am extra persnickety with my quality standards as I expect excellent quality at at least 16x20² for fine art prints as opposed to the ³5x7² or 8x10² (formerly 4x6² until they dropped that level of magnification as meaningless) at two feet away from the print mentality² of the more casual/less critical viewer. Also, Pop tests its lenses (on the bar chart at least), if I'm not mistaken, at infinity.

Since I like to shoot people (only with a camera :-)) most of my shots are not macro/micro and not at infinity (I'm not into shooting landscapes or U.F.O.'s in the night sky). For me infinity begins in the three to five feet range (I like to get close to my subjects than many other photographers). Many months ago (March 98 issue?) Pop did a² re-testing² of a Tamron and Sigma 28-105mm zoom lenses. What this re-testing showed was that the original SQF test results (numbers/% in colored bars test) indicated that one lens did better than the other at infinity but when Pop re-tested at closer portrait distances (a few meters) the positions of the lenses (in regards to which lens was optically better/sharper than the other lens) were literally reversed. The ³poorer² SQF lens now (in my opinion) way out performing the ³better² SQF rated lens. Don't ask me which lens did better/worse as I don't remember - if you're curious go back and look it up for yourself. For these reasons and more I ³know² longer have ³faith in (lens test) numbers.² For me, with regards to lens tests, anyway, ³seeing is believing.² ³The truth is (not) out there² - its in your own subjective quality factor evaluation(s) (and reality). Take lens tests worth a grain of salt or silver halide. Come to your own optical conclusions. Use your own eyes and your own mind. Don't allow a magazine/etc. to think about or vicariously experience a lens's qualities for you. To paraphrase The Beatles ³think (and experience) for yourself.² Colored graphs may be pretty to look at and numbers may be interesting to compare but the real truth about a lens's quality(s) is beneath the numbers and behind the colored bars in real world experience. Intimately experience your own lens's qualities and come to your own real world optical "subjective quality" conclusions.

Happy shooting (and testing),

Lewis (A+ at 24x magnification ;-)) Lang

From: golem@shell.acmenet.net (David Rozen)

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: Lens field evaluation

Date: Fri, 01 Oct 1999

Maryanne Lindsay (MLindsay@mail.net) wrote:

: Does anyone have a favorite routine for lens evaluation?
: purchase a lens or take one on trial how do shoot first
: roll of film?
:
: Shoot all stops using high contrast subject (scene or gridlines)?
:
: Who has a good tried and tested routine?

Some real-world procedures, if you want white-coat lab fantasies, read no further.

I tend to ignore sharpness, as too much hassle to test truly accurately, but I do test for unsharpness. Of course I pay for this privilege -- i just don't buy any trashy lenses. Beyond that threshold don't worry about differences between them, unless through regular continued use a certain lens begins to show itself as special. Even then, chances are that the particular lens would not have revealed this extra quality in formal tests, due to too many variables and too little reality.

Forget high contrast targets, they will falsify the results if you're testing sharpness, but a true black target is useful for flare testing. "Solid" black won't do [doesn't exist], you need a black hole against which to observe results at all stops of a flare inducer used just outside the field of view as well as within it, at various distances from center. You can do this pretty well even without film but it's better on film. Other than flare, I check distortion, which needs to be on film since finders lie. Don't forget that the focus range can affect this. Do the near and middle range as well as infinity. Any obvious target will work, and you only need to check the edge area. The only other concern I have is illumination, which can only be checked on film, best with underexposed chromes viewed by strong light. Choose your target carefully, and never trust the sky, in any weather, as an even target. I don't use any real subject but prefer multiple layers [space between] of diffusion material, similar to a multilayer softbox, right on the lens. The material doesn't need to be at the focus distance [better if not] but you should check a far mid and near range on the focus scale as this can also affect illumination. You only have to do the first few stops.

I did mention checking for unsharpness. I do look the first 2 stops to see if there is any obvious loss away from the central area, and especially if I've had to break my own rule and dabble in some cheap "f8 only" optic I'll look for any visible circular boundary at which sharpness takes a sudden dive, easily visible and visually disturbing. This I've seen only with zoom ultrawides. The effect if this flaw is present is to see a decently sharp circular image area outside of which things are visibly worse, and the circular boundary between is rather abrupt, though certainly not hard-edged. No special subject matter is required for this but a fairly strong, even texture shows it right away.

Regards, - dr

Date: Wed, 17 Nov 1999

From: Kar Yan Mak canon50e@netvigator.com

To: rmonagha@post.cis.smu.edu

Subject: Third Party Compatibilities & Incompatibilities Page

Dear Robert,

Hi, please be advised that I have slightly changed my third party page:

<http://www.kyphoto.com/thirdparty/>

Instead of just submitting the incompatibilities, I also offer people to submit the compatibilities amongst third party equipment. It might sound a bit repetitive and requires a little bit more work, but hopefully it'll be a good reference as well.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely yours,
Kar Yan Mak
<http://www.asiaphoto.com/ky>

Date: Thu, 30 Dec 1999

From: tssmith@best.com (Tim Smith)

Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm

Subject: Re: Why are they afraid of printing the truth?

es323@my-deja.com wrote:

>Ever buy a camera that is praised to death by magazines, but when you
>use it the camera breaks down consistently or is a piece of junk? I
>have. To say the least, it is not a happy experience. Defective
>cameras and lenses are out there, but we never read about these
>terrible "lemons" in Popular Photography, Outdoor Photography,
>Shutterbug, etc. We just eat the cost, while absorbing the economic
>pain and suffer with their garbage.
>
>Why are most Photo magazines afraid to have "frequency of repair
>records" just as the computer industry. At least they have the courage
>to let people vote on the best and worst. People respect that.
>
> How about service? I have been horribly disappointed the
>unprofessional, lousy repair service with one of big SLR giants.
>Believe me, if I knew a company had licensed mechanics trained in auto
>repair working on cameras, then there is no way I would buy that
>product. Would you?
>
> Information helps us all. Are the big magazines just protecting their
>financial pockets at our expense? How come we never hear of a
>photographic defective product, repair records, terrible service or
>anything negative about a manufacturer? Do photographic magazines know
>where their bread is buttered (not with us)? Why are these magazines
>afraid of printing us the truth? It's unfair, stinks and hurts all of
>us.
>
>Comments appreciated.

Edward, I think you do not understand how magazines work. You believe that you are the consumer, but in reality, you are the product.

You are the product that is delivered to the consumer (the advertisers). The more of you (as product) that can be delivered to the consumers via the medium (the producers: the magazine), the more the magazine profits.

This is not all bad. You, the product, benefit from lower prices, in most cases. It's only your self esteem that suffers.

(I value my precious self-esteem, which is why I try to preserve what little is left of it by not buying the stuff that the magazines are trying to sell.)

From Nikon MF Mailing List:

Date: Sun, 05 Mar 2000

From: Jonathan Castner jonathan@jonathancastner.com

Subject: Re: MTF and lens tests

The Photodo MTF charts are particularly biased because they are based on the lens focused at infinity. Some lenses are fine at infinity but are outstanding at middle distances. Macro lenses are usually better at close and middle distances than infinity, I know that the Nikon AF 105 Micro is like that. There are many lens characteristics that are not listed in an MTF chart that are important to take into consideration when buying a lens. There is: flair resistance, field curvature, coma, distortion, boke, actual resolution and not just the MTF combination of resolution and contrast, also the lens's contrast and it's "look", color bias in the lens not to mention build quality. How well a lens does at infinity on an MTF chart is the last thing that I want to know. Unless you do all of your photography at infinity of non-colored subjects in non flair situations where distortions will never be obvious, then you need to know more about your lens than that. The bulk of my photography is near to middle distances (3-25 feet) and often in low light where I have my aperture wide open. The Photodo charts tell me nothing about how my lenses will work under those circumstances. Every lens that I own was used and tested on film in the situations like those that I work in before I bought them. I know that they perform the way that I need regardless of what the numbers are supposed to say.

"Listen to the experts and then make up your own mind"

Jonathan Castner -Photojournalist

Denver, Colorado

Online folio at: <http://www.jonathancastner.com>

Date: Mon, 27 Mar 2000

Subject: Re: Mamiya 645 AF vs Contax 645 Lens Tests

From: Chris Lee chrislee1@home.com

Newsgroups: [rec.photo.equipment.medium-format](#)

(I swear I saw a very similar thread somewhere else very recently.)

Another fact to take into account is that Popular Photography do not test medium format lenses themselves. Lacking the proper equipment to test medium format lenses, PP assesses the lenses on the basis of the data that manufacturers supply to PP. (This is stated explicitly in the reviews.) As such, these so-called tests are all

done by different manufacturers under different circumstances in accordance with different standards, and are hardly comparable.

That is not to say that the Mamiya lenses could not better the Zeiss offerings, of course. But these tests alone are never conclusive. It would be so much better if magazines here begin to publish actual photos taken by these lenses under controlled conditions. This is very often done by Japanese magazines, and sometimes the results can be quite strikingly visible.

From: tab@IPA.FhG.de (Thomas Bantel)
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Subject: Re: Value of photodo ratings?
Date: 07 Jun 1999

"Billy R" willreed@worldnet.att.net writes:

>Can you elaborate on these multiple conflicting test results and
provide
>evidence that Photodo's ratings are incorrect?

There's no need to prove Photodo's ratings incorrect. I think they are as correct as they can be. But you have to understand how the measurements are done and how the ratings are calculated from the raw data. They are very clear and honest about all that - and probably they are aware of the shortcomings as well.

First, MTF values don't tell the whole story about a lens. There is also flare resistance, distortion, color rendition, bokeh :-) ... Other tests (or personal experience) might include these and other qualities in their ratings and therefor lead to conflicting results.

Second, there are only MTF values for 10, 20 and 40 lp/mm. Nothing beyond that and nothing in between.

Third, all the MTF measurements are done with the lens focused for the center of the image. For a lens with a perfectly flat field, this is ok. For other lenses, this decreases the off center MTF values. From photodo's MTF curves, you will never know if a bad value in the corners means the lens is not sharp in the corners or if it was simply not focused for the corners. If you're taking pictures of a three dimensional scene, flatness of field isn't all that important. A lens with relatively bad corner values may still be able to render a subject in the corner as sharp or sharper than a lens with better corner values. Therefor, the measured MTF values do not necessarily reflect the real world performance of a lens.

Also, one lens may be excellent when it comes new out of the box, but after some use it may get worse because the lens elements get out of alignment. So ruggedness and construction are also a quality factor.

Thomas Bantel

From: liam@ork.net
Subject: Re: Value of photodo ratings?
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm
Date: Tue, 08 Jun 1999

Billy R willreed@worldnet.att.net wrote:

> It's unfortunate that you chose to discount the value of MTF data because
> MTF measurements address specifically those same issues that you mentioned.
> MTF curves show the lens' ability to maintain the image spatial frequency
> (in number of line pairs per millimeter) from the center to the edges of the
> image field -- a lens which rapidly drops off in MTF away from the center
> axis will produce images that are not uniformly sharp. Typical MTF curves
> further evaluate the lens performance at different f-stops and include both
> sagital and tangential information. MTF is the key to modern optical
> technology and it is so accurate that lens designers can rely on MTF
> calculations to optimize the lens design without needing to run prototype
> samples. It is clear that Photodo did not randomly choose to rate lens
> performance based on MTF data.

However, it has been suggested in the past that Photodo simply chose one lens of a type, and tested that one only. So while its tests are correct, perhaps they should have at least tested a few, maybe 2 or 3, in case they got an especially bad (or especially good) sample by accident.

Do you have any further information to shed on this issue?

From: johnchap johnchap@wdn.com
Newsgroups: rec.photo.equipment.35mm,rec.photo.equipment
Date: Tue, 25 Jul 2000
Subject: Free Lens Testing Instructions/kit

I have finally gotten my lens testing site, which I had to move last December, back up and, I believe, operational. Please go to <http://wdn.com/~johnchap/lenstest/testlens.htm> for some description and links to the instructions which you can download and print out. Also Included in the material are the resolution charts which are needed.

The material will instruct you how to set up the charts, shoot the tests, and interpret the results. I have always found it very enlightening how certain lenses do. The results you will get may very well surprise you. I have found several inexpensive

lenses with excellent optical quality. On the other hand, I have found some very expensive lenses that are not nearly as good as their much less expensive brothers.

If you encounter any problems, have any questions, or have any advice how I can improve access and usability of the site, please email me.

From Leica Mailing List:

Date: Thu, 24 Aug 2000

From: "Erwin Puts" imxputs@knoware.nl

Subject: [Leica] Value of test reports?

Recently we could read on this list a remark about the value of the measurement of characteristics of a lens that are related to image quality.

In fact a reappearance of Mr. Johnston's well-known view about lens testing, it is stated that any objective lens test (that is a test that tries to establish numerical values on a set of parameters) can only capture those characteristics of optical performance that are irrelevant or unimportant for the true appreciation of a lens' performance by an artistically or expressively trained photographer's eye. Those aspects of a lens that delight or excite the working photographer in viewing his/her results in print or on screen, cannot be measured or even discussed objectively. As we are entering the domain of belief or even religion here, it is futile to try to argue against this view. You can not discuss in any meaningful way unless you try to follow the same set of rules or basic premises.

The more intriguing question is why do some persons believe that objectivity in lens testing is irrelevant or counterproductive. The obvious fact that all manufacturers use MTF tests and all other kinds of measurements to create and produce the lenses with characteristics that some only wish to discuss in personalised statements is a logical contradiction. But so be it.

Why negate the value of objectivity in lens testing and evaluation? One very obvious reason is a commercial one. Quite recently I was emailed by a customer in an USA store who asked me this: the salesperson had for sale two Summilux lenses 1.4/35, one the aspherical and one the ASPH. The aspherical was twice as expensive as the ASPH, because the salesperson stated that the first (aspherical) version was much better optically than the current (ASPH) version. Now this is nonsense and that I told the buyer, who went for the ASPH version for half the price. If the salesperson had presented the buyer with objective test reports he would never have made this statement and so could not justify the difference in price. Yes, yes, the aspherical is a collectors item and because of scarcity may demand a higher price, but that is not what the salesperson told the customer who was obviously not interested in a collectible.

Second reason why objective lens reports are not popular is the loss of fun factor. If we believe whatever report the discussion is closed. It is established that lens A is better than lens B. Period. So buy lens A if you need best quality and start taking

pictures. No fun at all? But if we believe that a test can not give conclusive evidence we are in for a never ending discussion, which is enjoyable in itself. Then we can point out that PopPhoto notes that the 1.4/35 asph has best wide open performance of all lenses tested, that Modern however remarked that stopped down the aspherical is better, that Viewfinder in an article did not find significant differences, but noted more coma in the far corners, that CdI gave 5 stars, but that a friend who is a professional photographer swears by the ASPH, but that a noted NatGeo-rapher had sold his as he was not content with the bo-ke and so on. Of course I am fantasising here, but the message is clear and recognisable.

The discussion on this list re the quality and merits of the Minolta and Leitz designs is a proof. I am not going to jump into this discussion, I already overstretched, regrettably, my backbench position by commenting on Dan's presentation of 4 comparative pictures. There has been a reference to a site which presents the results of several magazines of the same lenses. While it is helpful to note that test results stray widely, it does not answer the fundamental question: if we want to get reliable info based on measured results, which one to trust.

There are so many stories here that are not true that I do not know where to start: The notion that you should need a statistically representative sample to make meaningful statements, is not realistic: first: a representative sample would comprise at least 20 items. Which magazine can afford this? And what manufacturer can give 20 lenses per magazine. As there are about 200 magazines in the world who need fair treatment, so the factory would have to deliver 4000 lenses. Assume the Leica 1.4/35 aspherical which has been produced 2000 times. The full production is not enough to deliver the sample to all magazines. And would magazines be happy with 20 lenses. Not all all!

It takes me a few months to test one item!! And is it necessary? No, QC nowadays secures minimum standards. Is it true that a magazine gets specially prepared versions of a lens? Most unlikely. The magazines I work for get off the shelf boxes. My Leica test lenses are taken from the shelf by myself. Is it true that a magazine keeps testing a series of lenses till they find one that meets their standards? Nonsense. Try to work for a magazine and you will find out that this is impossible. You have a deadline: get a lens in week one, test it in week two, find in week three it is not OK, ask a new one (often if it is a new lens, only one is available!!!) and you get one three weeks later, you test it etc. Deadline passed. No review needed anymore as all other magazines have reports on the lens! Every magazine has its own procedure of testing and style of reporting. **YOU CANNOT COMPARE THEM!!!** Unless you know intimately and in great technical detail what they do and how they work.

Magazines do not tell you or in such terminology that you do not understand what exactly they are doing. Take Photodo. MTF tests are fine. The crucial question at what distance they set the focal plane, when testing the lens is never answered. I asked them several times to specify this simple fact. They refuse. Without such a knowledge the results are most misleading. If you do not know about the basics of optical shop testing and the magazines are as evasive as the Russians about the

sinking of the Kursk, you are in the desert. Compare this behaviour with the one at Zeiss or Leica where the people explain to the most minute detail what they evaluate, why they do it, what the results are, what interpretations they use, where the grey areas are, what the margins are and I must say I believe the manufacturers data more than the results in the magazines.

Erwin

From: mtclev@aol.com (MtClev)
Newsgroups: rec.photo.technique.nature
Date: 29 Aug 2000
Subject: Re: 400mm

It depends on how much you shake.

Here's how to find out:

Place a newspaper on a wall about 20ft from the front of your lens.

Start at 1/1000 of a sec. and shoot a photo of the paper.

Work your way down to 1/60 of a sec.

Remember to close down your f-stop each time you lower the speed.

Look at your chomes and see what is the slowest speed you can still read the normal-sized print . I use a 4x loupe. Some people use a 10x and think I'm nuts to try without a 10x.

That is the slowest speed YOU can hand-hold and still get sharp photos. Of course, if you have too much coffee, your results may differ.

Chris

From Contax Mailing List:
Date: Tue, 27 Feb 2001
From: Bob Shell bob@bobshell.com
Subject: [CONTAX] OT: doing new stuff

Just a note to let all of you know that I'm now working for BestStuff.com as their Photo Guru. Just signed on last week. I'm still doing all the same things as before, but just added this on.

If you go to www.beststuff.com you will see my report on scanners from PMA featured, and at the bottom is a click link to my longer PMA report.

I'll be doing monthly articles about things related to photography there, so take a look now and then.

Bob