

Third Party Lenses Resource Megasite Home Page

by Robert Monaghan

Related Links:

[Third Party Lens Incompatibility Pages](#) (and known compatibility pages too!)

One of the [Top Ten Myths of Photography](#) is that lens brands matter a lot. A study of [ultrawide 35mm lenses](#) showed that the biggest difference was in your pocket-book. Third party ultrawide lenses were only a third the price of ultrawide OEM lenses!

Check out our [Cult Classic Third Party Lenses](#) page for our listings of the best third party lenses from [Vivitar, Sigma, Tokina, Tamron, Kiron and others](#) through the early 1990s. Our [handy tables](#) will help you figure out who made what brands of lenses too!

Our [Wierd Third Party Lenses and Adapters](#) page will amaze you with the odd-ball third party lenses such as T-mount fisheyes and telephoto shift lenses that nobody has tried to copy since!

Wondering who makes or imports all these third party lenses? So did we until we created this [Who's Who in Third Party Lenses](#) listing of manufacturers, importers, and distributors.

Want to know the [Secret about which Lens Manufacturer is Really the Best?](#) Care to guess how the cheapy Minolta MC 50mm f/1.4 and Pentax SMC 50mm f/1.4 did against the Leitz 50mm f/2 Summicron and classic Elmar 50mm f/3.5? ([Surprise!](#)) [[Warning!](#) Leica/Leitz fans - don't look!!!]

Planning on buying a some lenses? [How much Quality do You Really Need?](#) Unfortunately, you have to be very proactive and smart in using your lenses to beat the [50 lpmm barrier](#). Using the wrong [lower resolution films](#) can be more detrimental to your quality of results than switching from a high cost OEM lens to a lower cost no-name importer lens.

Don't forget to price [OEM Lenses](#), as some older lenses and consumer grade lenses (e.g., Series E) may be good buys.

You can use a variety of tricks to get the optimum performance out of your camera and its third party lenses. We provide a [page of tips](#) on getting the maximum performance out of your lens by using the right films, lens hoods, and other tricks. Our [Mirror Lockup](#) page has some sharpness improving tricks and tips if you have that feature on your camera body(s).

So third party lenses can save you a lot of money. We can help save you more via our [Buying Grey Market Photo Gear Direct to Save 40% to 60%](#). Check to see if you qualify for a [student discount](#). If you are looking for used lenses, we can also provide Jeff Albro's [IMPACT! Used Photo Gear Pages](#) with hundreds of dealers and classified ad sources. Be sure to read our *caveat emptor* articles too! You may even find your [camera manuals](#) online if you're lucky!

Another way you can reduce the financial pain of buying new or used lenses is by [Turning Semipro](#). The tax advantages can provide tremendous savings if you turn

your hobby into a part-time profession. Third party lenses also provide a low-cost way to provide [Backups in Photography](#) in case of theft. [Professional insurance](#) is also handy too!

Be sure to check out our [Tips on Buying Third Party Lenses](#). But which lenses do you need? Find out in [Lens Kit Suggestions](#). Our [Alternative Camera Bags](#) pages will help you save on camera bags too. Don't forget to double-check our list of [camera bag contents](#) so you don't forget anything on your next trip.

We have some unique listings of third party lenses at this site, viz.:

[Listing of 1,600+ Third Party Lenses by Mfger from 1960s to mid-1980s](#)

[Listing of 1,600+ Third Party Lenses by Focal Length and Speed \(1960s-80s\)](#)

[Big 4 \(Tamron, Tokina, Sigma, Vivitar\) Lenses from early 1990s by Mfg](#)

[Big 4 \(Tamron, Tokina, Sigma, Vivitar\) Lenses from early 1990s by focal length](#)

[Late 90's Zoom Lenses](#) (manual/AF, by f/l, price...)

[Late 90's Zoom Lenses](#) (manual/AF, by *filter size*!, f/l...)

[Vivitar T4/TX Lenses](#) (low cost interchangeable auto lenses surprising test results)

[Miscellaneous Lenses Suggested by our Readers and Other Posters](#) (via [Email](#))

You can also check out our [third party lens related postings](#) and [Third Party Lens Reviews in Popular Photography Index](#). You can also check Pop. Photo's [OEM Lens](#) reviews in a related resource page.

We believe that third party lenses offer a unique advantage over OEM lenses for the person who has multiple brands of cameras or who may change camera mounts someday. See our [Interchangeable Mounts - Third Party Lens Advantage?](#) page for details.

Our [Camera Mount Adapter FAQ](#) also covers the use of mechanical and optical adapters for letting you use one brand of lens on another brand of camera (e.g., Nikon lenses on a Pentax M42 camera). The history of interchangeable mounts is under Tamron on our [Third Party Lens Manufacturers](#) page. Usage of the T-mount, T2, Tx, and Tamron adaptall mounts is described [here](#) too. We also look at [Obsolescence of Camera Mounts - Was it Avarice or Necessity?](#)

If you have an older camera mount, you may benefit from [Collecting Third Party Lenses for Fun and Profit](#). With the right mounts, you can use newer lenses on your old camera!

Interested in the history of camera prices? See [Deja Vu](#) for some amusing older prices and CPI tables. Our [Economics of Third Party Lens Sales](#) shows how third party lenses boomed in the mid-1970s, but it has been downhill since then. To understand why, read our [Death Spiral of Serious Amateur Photography](#).

Our [Lens Flare](#) by [Manufacturer](#), [by %flare](#), and flare in [zooms](#) pages helps explain what lens flare is, and how bad it can get. Our [Lens Recoating FAQ](#) will explain why multi-coating older lenses is so expensive too.


Most third party lenses are prime lenses. Most of today's photographers are more familiar with zoom lenses. So we present a [Prime Lenses versus Zooms](#) page to highlight some of the benefits of prime lenses. Be sure to price the cost of [filters](#) for those fast lenses before you buy!

Learn more about [Third Party Lenses - Design, Glass, and Quality Control](#) issues. Third party lenses also offer a variety of [Lens Diaphragms - Auto, Preset, Manual, Fixed...](#) You can find out more about [Optical Glass Manufacturing](#) too.

How good is your lens? To find out, read [Lens Variations - Why You Have To Test Each One](#). Then see our [Camera and Lens Testing](#) pages with how-to-do-it lens testing tips. Before you clean that new lens, check out our [lens cleaning tips](#) pages.

If you do find dust in your lens, don't panic! See our [Lens Faults Hierarchy](#) for information on how to evaluate lens problems, and how bad are they anyway? If you need to get a lens or camera repaired, check our worldwide list of [Independent Repair Shops](#). You can also check our [Manufacturer's Addresses Listings](#) to get factory direct repairs.

You can also find out more about [MTF Charts](#) and [MTF use](#). We can help you pick the right [film](#) for your tests, based on [film resolution](#).

 A new section expands our coverage to Russian and Ukrainian lenses for both [medium format](#) and [35mm SLRs and rangefinders](#). Some of the more interesting rangefinder cameras and lenses are [Leica clones](#). And who wouldn't be tempted by those low cost [fisheye and ultrawide Peleng and Zenitar](#) lenses from Russia and the Ukraine turning up on [EBAY](#) nowadays!

Believe it or not, but there were some third party 35mm lenses that were also used as [Medium Format Third Party Lenses](#). In fact, many medium format folks resort to making their own [Homebrew Lenses](#). The Bronica 6x6cm S2/EC had the most third party lenses for any medium format camera as shown on our [Bronica Lenses](#) listing. If you want to read more about medium format lenses, see the links at our [medium format camera and lens library](#). But before you buy, our [Budget Guide to Medium Format](#) and Danny Gonzalez's [Medium Format Camera and Lenses Reviews](#) are must-reads!

If you wonder what your 400mm f/6.3 telephoto would be like on a different mount, we have a [lens equivalency table](#) for nine formats. Our calculator links can compute [lens field of view](#) or [depth of field](#).

Our [medium format megasite](#) and Bronica 6x6cm megasite have more information too. Our [links page](#) has lots of unusual and interesting photo-page links. You can find some more [photography articles](#) and collected postings here too.

Good Luck and Enjoy!

Notes:

[Big Brand Names Don't Guarantee Results](#)

[Build Quality Surprises; Can Cheaper be Better?](#)
[Cheapy Lentar & Soligor zooms scores many Excellents in Tests](#)
[Degradation Factors \(Erwin Puts\)](#)
[Different Brands - Same O/C Statistics](#)
[Lack of Progress in Fixed Lenses since 1970s?](#)
[Mfgers Select Best Lenses for Magazine Testing](#)
[Nikon Kilobuck Zooms Q/C Glitches](#)
[Spiratone 18mm - Sigma or Tokina-made? f/3.2 or f/3.5?](#)
[Tale of 3 Telephotos \(preset tele savings\)](#)
[Variables in Chart Testing](#)
[Vivitar TX lenses Surprises](#)

Related postings:

Date: Fri, 25 Jan 2002
From: Martin Trautmann traut@gmx.de
To: Robert Monaghan rmonagha@post.cis.smu.edu>
Subject: Re: third party lenses

Robert Monaghan wrote:

> Wow! Nifty and massive effort ;-) I tried to convert to HTML using
Excel
> several times, but the sheer size of the conversion evidently locked
up
> Excel ;-) I have posted the database on the new medium format
development
> site at <http://medfmt.8k.com/third/lensdb.xls> so the emailing worked,
> just not enough memory on our campus lab pcs to convert it (yet ;-
)...

That's a password protected area?

With your feedback I've added a first experimental version on
<http://home.arcor.de/objektive> : [AFF.html](#) [AFZ.html](#) [MFF.html](#) [MFZ.html](#)

I'll have to add some credits later on, while that's just plain data up
to
now.

How do you feel about this? What's your suggestions?

Kind regards