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### Third Party Primes

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#### 14mm

Sigma 14mm MF was rated very high on all tests. Unfortunately some users reported it to be so optically and mechanically bad that either the magazines performing the test were wrong, and/or there are huge sample to sample variations.

#### 16mm

Russian MC Zenitar-K 16/2.8 was reported (from different sources) to be a nice lens. It's heavy and solid, and appears to be all metal. The images are sharp, with accurate colors and good contrast at all aperture settings. Go Directly To...

#### 17mm, 19mm

Tokina SL 17/3.5 (not a fisheye) is soft at f3.5 but becomes quite sharp when stopped down 1 or more stops. As is common in ultra wide lenses, it is also prone to flare. It has very little distortions and, comparing it to Pentax-A 15/3.5 [which is a wonderful lens, although, so much larger and heavier than the Tokina], distortions are only marginally better with Pentax. Its build doesn't look as solid as Pentax 15/3.5, and the lens is quite light and compact. It takes 67mm filters.

In comparison, the Tamron 17/3.5 is very well made. The colour and contrast are satisfactory. Its linear distortion, or lack thereof, is excellent, with far less barrel distortion than most similarly priced ultra wide angle lenses. Light falloff at wide open is considerable, and wide angle stretch at the edge and corners is also more excessive. At around f8, a fairly even illumination shot is achieved with good, fairly even sharpness along with its much better than average distortion correction. The lens comes with a matching hood (flower-shaped, plastic for older version and metal for newer one), but has no provision for mounting filters. The hood itself allows one to mount an 82mm filter. Also the focusing is in the reverse direction to the Pentax norm.

Vivitar 19/3.8 has a decent build quality, is reasonably sharp, but very prone to flare. I heard that it might not be fully multicoated: the front element shows reflections just like an uncoated filter. This hurts performance especially for landscapes due to loss of color saturation. I also heard that it can possibly damage the AF Pentax body, but works fine on any non-AF Pentax body. However, Flavio Minelli reported that he used it on PZ-1p and did not have any problem with it.

#### 20mm

Mir 20/2.5 lens in Pentax mount is very sharp, but prone to flare. Its rear filter it reported to be a problem for Pentax cameras, as it can get in the way of the mirror. You must use a rear filter, though, as it is incorporated in the optical calculations. I heard that one can file away part of the filter (which has gotten a rather thick rim of aluminum) and it works with the mirror then.

#### 24mm

Sigma 24/2.8 MF is really nice and sharp, but flare is a major problem with this lens.

Sigma 24/2.8 AF has heavy light falloff, so-so flare control (hood is essential), some distortion. It is reported to produce metering problems with ZX-5.

#### 28mm

Sigma 28/1.8 MF is reported to be bad in literally all respects, not only in its optical performance. It could be focussed beyond infinity, exposure was off, etc.

Vivitar Series 1 28/1.9 is reported to be a very good lens.

50mm

Sigma 50/2.8 EX is a great lens. It seems to be fully compatible with ZX-5n. However, there are errors in aperture displayed on Super Program (but it still exposes correctly).

90mm, 100mm, 105mm

Vivitar 90/2.5 Series 1 tied some Zeiss lens for the highest resolution number ever recorded from a camera lens. It is said to be a great lens. It has a matching extension that makes it a 1:1 macro lens.

Vivitar 105/2.5 Series 1 is an excellent lens as well. It goes to 1:1 without any additional extensions. Tamron AF 90/2.8 SP Macro is known as a very good lens.

Tokina ATX 100/2.8 Macro is known as a good lens.

Sigma 105/2.8 EX Macro is a good lens as well. It doesn't seem to have any compatibility problems with PZ-1p, MZ-5n, and LX. The build quality and handling are very good.

Elicar 90/f2.5 Macro is also a very nice lens. This goes to 1:1.25 magnification, and it is only available in manual focus. It scores with a really nice bokeh and a very high quality "feel" on a par with, or perhaps better than, the Pentax macro lenses.

Tamron 90/2.5 Macro (adaptall mount) is an excellent lens, has not been made since 1988, is 2.6 inches long, has a 49mm filter thread, weighs 14.8 oz., and has a 1:2 magnification ratio. It is extremely sharp and contrasty, doesn't have any distortion. It focusses "the wrong way" comparing to Pentax lenses, and has no compatibility issues with PZ-1p. The Sigma 1.4X will not fit with this Tamron, though. As far as I heard, there were 2 versions of this lens: the newer one had a 55mm filter ring, the older one had a 49mm.

Kiron 105mm f2.8 is an exceptional lens.

135mm

Vivitar 135/2.3 Series 1 is a great lens.

180mm, 200mm

Sigma 180/2.8 and the 180/5.6 available in both AF and MF (both are 1:2 I think, but the first is expensive almost as much as the Pentax 200/4 ED Macro.

Tamron SP 180/2.5 LD IF is very sharp, quite heavy.

Vivitar 200/3 Series 1 is said to be as good as Pentax

Soligor 200/3.5 seems to be a good lens, more contrasty than Pentax M 200/4

Soligor 200/2.8 - All I heard is that it is solidly built.

300mm

Tamron 300/5.6 is not only incredibly sharp (even wide open), but is easily hand-holdable, as it is smaller than most 80-200 f4 zooms, and uses a 58mm filter.

Tamron 300/2.8 is wonderful, sharp, fast, heavy.

400mm

Tokina AT-X 400/5.6 is hand-holdable, not much larger than Pentax 80-200 2.8, and also very sharp at maximum aperture. It's very well constructed, very lightweight and compact. It's not the sharpest wide open, though, which is where a lens like this is often set. It's much lighter and smaller than Sigma, and has less gismos like AF clutch and limiter.

Sigma 400/5.6 APO is very close optically (gets just as sharp when stopped down) to the Pentax 400/5.6. It's well built, but contrary to Pentax, it's big and heavy, and rotating focusing ring gets in a way when one tries to hand-hold this lens. Pentax, on the other hand, is light, easy to hand-hold, and has a focusing ring that locks in place in AF mode. It's also about twice as expensive as Sigma. The earlier non-APO version of Sigma is not as well regarded, though. I also heard that Sigma lens might be slightly sharper wide open than its Tokina equivalent, and it close focuses at 1.6 meters, while Tokina does so only at 2.5 meters. Also, Sigma is reported to be not fully compatible with PZ-1 body (in terms of showing the correct f-stop), but works fine with PZ-1p.

Vivitar 450/4.5 Series 1 mirror lens features the first plastic aspherical element (brought out in 1983)

500mm

Soligor 500 mirror lens is well built and features good glass

Spiratone 500/8 mirror lens is good enough for 8x10, and is very well built.

Tokina 500 mm mirror lens was mentioned to be much worse than the Sigma 600mm.

600mm

Vivitar 600/8 Series 1 and Vivitar 800/11 Series 1 mirror lenses are said to be very good.

Sigma 600mm catadioptric was found to be a very good lens. All magazine tests of the 600 mm Sigma have been positive.

## **Sidebar Text below here**

First, about APO. APO is short from apochromat which is a lens that focuses the three primary colours on the same plane - other lenses are achromats which focus only two colours on the same plane - this results in colour fringing and unsharpness, especially in long teles. There are also Super Achromat lenses (by Zeiss for Hasselblad) that focus four wavelengths on the same plane but they are very expensive. There is no APO glass, the lens get apochromatic properties by combining different kinds of glass. There have been APO lenses long time before current glass types but they were horrendously expensive lenses or built for other very special purposes.

### **Sigma**

For older generation Sigmas, the APO versions are only slightly better at the long end than the other versions. The current generation Sigmas marked Super are a bit better, and the new APO beats the new DL by a greater margin. The new Super DL versions contain one Extra Low Dispersion glass element (and is said to be better than the old APO version), the old DL has none, the old APO has two of these and the new APO has three. The old APO is slightly better at the long end than the new version, otherwise the new one is much better.

Regarding Sigma - Pentax compatibility problems... In the past, Sigma reverse-engineered their lenses to fit some particular series of Pentax bodies. This resulted in many incompatibilities, when one tried to mount a Sigma lens designed for one series of cameras on body that belonged to another series. Currently, you will see that Sigma boxes display the words "licensed by Pentax". That means they no longer have to reverse-engineer the mount every time Pentax decides to change the electronics. But it doesn't mean that these new lenses are backward compatible, as they might be licensed for a particular series only.

### **Tamron**

Tamron currently uses the "ED" designation in their lenses' names. Their manual lenses that say "SP" for Super Performance were their best lenses prior to their using the "ED" and "Aspherical" designations. All of these lenses according to David (zx5lx@aol.com) tend to get a little softer towards the long end.

### **Tokina**

All Tokina ATX SD lenses use a form of low dispersion glass (like ED) so they could be considered APO.

### **Vivitar**

"Only the Series 1 lenses made from 1976 to 1981 feature the special in-house design, which has the great reputation for sharpness. While they were all made by Kiron (really good lenses also in their own name) the following list provided by the Collectable Camera site are the ones to have if you want to rival Pentax or any of the other camera makers. In fact the late Modern Photography magazine listed the Vivitar Series 1 90/2.5 Macro as tied with the Leitz Dual Range Summicron as having the highest resolution ever tested while the magazine existed. Here is the list:

- 28/1.9
- 90/2.5 Macro
- 135/2.3
- 200/3
- 24-48/3.8
- 24-48/3.8
- 35-85/2.8 Varifocal
- 70-210/3.5 Macro zoom (first macro zoom lens)
- 90-180/4.5 Flat Field Macro zoom
- 600/8 Solid Mirror
- 800/11 Solid Mirror

Only the 70-210/3.5 and the 800/11 were produced after 1981. And in 1983 they brought out the first plastic aspherical element lens (even before Tamron did) in the front of the 450/4.5 Series 1 Mirror lens. Any lens not on this list may be a fine lens as they were made by Kiron but they were not of the same optical quality as these in-house designs." Kent Gittings

"When it comes to Vivitar lenses stick with the Series 1 as those were all designed internally by Vivitar's optical design group. The rest are just rebadged from their builder. The Series 1 were built outside also but to their specs. They have 2 lenses from the Series 1 on the list of 10 sharpest zooms of all time, the 35-85/2.8 Varifocal and the 90-180/4.5 Flat Field Macro. The rest are decent also. " Kent Gittings

It's been reported that Vivitar 90-180 does not fit MZ-5n and it did not fit the earlier PZ-20 either. It works well with LX and ME.

<http://www.smu.edu/~rmonagha/third/cult.html#vivitar> Here it is, it's <http://cameraquest.com/pentx110.htm> . Go to the bottom of the page and click on Classic Camera Profiles. All kinds of good stuff on exotic lenses and cameras.

### **Soligor**

"In the US, "Soligor" was a lens trade name used by a photo products importer named Allied Impex Corp, a firm that also had a major investment in a Japanese SLR manufacturer-- the "Miranda" cameras. When Miranda failed in the late 1970's, Allied Impex also went into bankruptcy. Subsequently the Soligor name was sold to some European interests, and for a short while, the name appeared there on cameras and lenses. All the Soligor lenses were made by a variety of Japanese lens makers, just like the "Vivitar" and "Spiratone" lenses of that era. Most were pretty good. Some were not [but none are considered excellent - AN]." George Stanley

### **Spirotone**

"They were all made by Sun/Sigma who had other groups marketing them under other names (Polaris [my favorite], Lentar, Rokunar, Accura, Sun, Sigma, Upsilon [Sigma], and Mitake among others). I would say that they aren't as good as Pentax but some of the wide-angle and fisheye lenses have a good reputation. According to McBrooms the following lenses have good reputations for optics:

- 7.5mm f5.6 fisheye
- 12mm f8 fisheye

- 18mm f3.5
- 20mm f2.8
- 24-40mm f3.5

Kent Gittings

Like Soligor lenses, the quality of any of Spirozone gear has to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.