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Pentacon-Six: The System Camera

PART 2

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FOR PENTAICON-SIX owners, the 50mm f/4 Flektogon wide-angle, 80mm f/2.8 Biometar standard lens and 180mm f/2.8 Sonnar portrait/short telephoto make an ideal and versatile basic outfit, to which a 2X converter may usefully be added (the only item not of East German origin, but Campkins can supply an excellent auto converter from Panagor for under £25).

If you want a 300mm lens, go for the Zeiss Sonnar, which has numerous advantages over the Pentacon Orestegor lens of this focal length: it has fully-automatic diaphragm, shares the same filter diameter (86mm) as the 50mm and 180mm lenses, and is lighter and of much more streamlined construction. Both lenses have a maximum aperture of f/4. There is an adapter which permits use of all Pentacon-Six lenses (and even the bellows, extension tubes etc.) on your Praktica or Exakta camera - so no need to buy two sets of telephoto lenses!

Close-up

The sturdy bellows unit with double cable release gives full aperture for precise focusing right up to the

moment of taking the picture. It may be mounted onto the focusing slide, which in turn goes onto the tripod, to enable the photographer to achieve precise focusing with greater ease.

For faster work, or where an infinitely-variable extension is not required, the simple auto extension tubes retain open aperture without the need for a double cable release. They can also be used on the 180mm and 300mm lenses, to enable you to get in closer than the normal minimum focusing distance (1.7m or 5½ ft. and 4m or 13 ft. respectively).

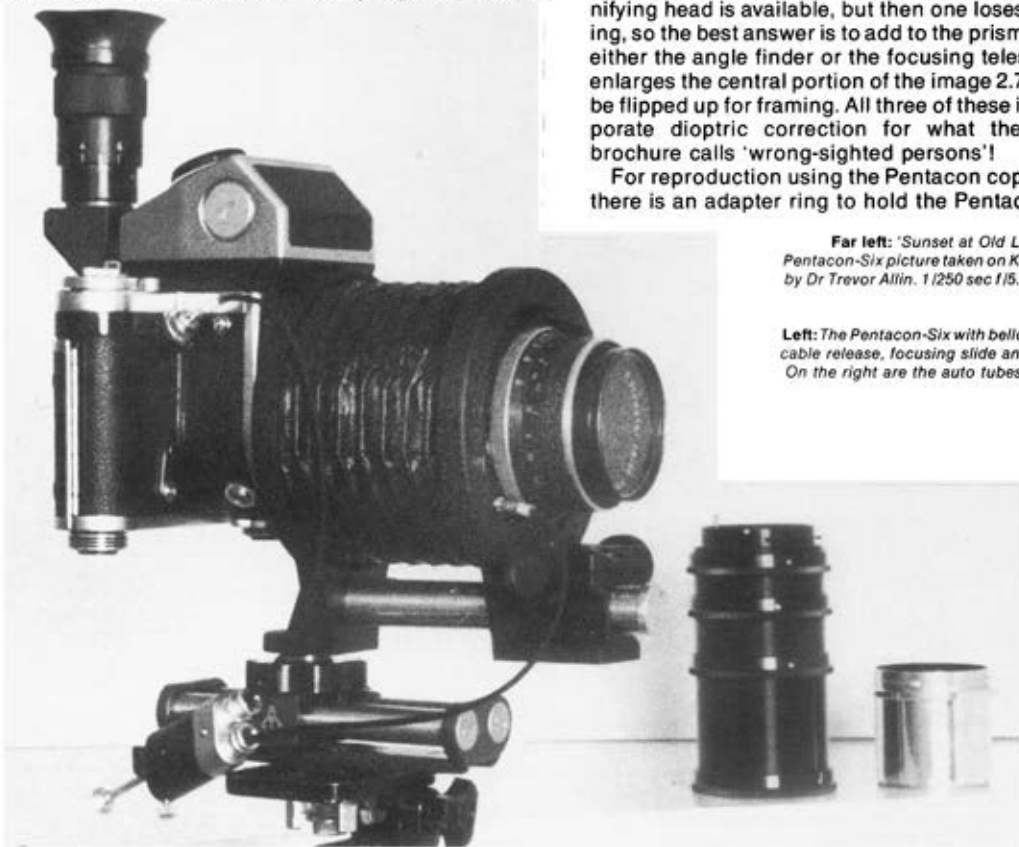
At a magnification of greater than 1:1 (life-size), the standard lens is best reversed, and a reversing tube is available for this. It may be used alone, or added onto the bellows for continuous variation of the degree of magnification. To retain full aperture operation, a double cable release connects to a special 'Z-ring' on the back of the lens. This depresses the diaphragm pin until firing. As always, the lens can be stopped-down for metering.

With macro photography, sharp focus is vital (and not always easy) so a tripod is a 'must'. A very good magnifying head is available, but then one loses the metering, so the best answer is to add to the prism viewfinder either the angle finder or the focusing telescope. This enlarges the central portion of the image 2.7x, and can be flipped up for framing. All three of these items incorporate dioptric correction for what the Pentacon brochure calls 'wrong-sighted persons'!

For reproduction using the Pentacon copying stand, there is an adapter ring to hold the Pentacon-Six.

Far left: 'Sunset at Old Leigh, Essex'. A Pentacon-Six picture taken on Kodacolor II film by Dr Trevor Allin. 1/250 sec f/5.6, 180mm Jena S lens.

Left: The Pentacon-Six with bellows and double cable release, focusing slide and angle finder. On the right are the auto tubes and reversing ring.





Here we can see the reversing tube in use with the bellows and double cable release connecting to the Z-ring. The metering prism has been replaced by the magnifier head.

Interchangeable screens

As with the VLC, focusing screens are interchangeable, and seven types are available, including one with rangefinder wedges (split-image). There are also both clear and groundglass screens with 5mm marking to facilitate precise degrees of magnification with macro work. A squared screen helps with architectural photos, and a fresnel lens gives a viewfinder image four times as bright as the standard groundglass screen.

Of course, as the metering is above the focusing screen, you have to allow for the varying light transmission of this when setting the film sensitivity on the meter in the TTL prism. In fact, the instructions for this say that

it can only be used with the groundglass and fresnel screens, and separate index marks on the meter allow for these. However, a pentacon technician in Dresden told me that any screen may be used with the metering head, provided one runs a test film through first, and makes a new index mark opposite the ASA dial to allow for the screen in question.

Other Accessories

There is an accessory shoe to fit the prism, and though you would be advised (for pictorial reasons) not to put your flashgun here, it can serve if you haven't your flash grip with you, or to take a separate sensor for computer flash. The shoe is available with or without a rubber eye cup, which will hold a corrective eyepiece for spectacle wearers. Unfortunately, the ever-ready case won't close over the shoe on the TTL prism (the non-metering prism is considerably smaller), but there is also a corrective eyepiece holder available without the accessory shoe, and this can be left permanently in place if required.

If part of your Christmas ritual includes family portraits round the tree (complete with photographer) and you need flash, you'll require a delayed-action device that screws into the shutter release; or, better, a pneumatic release. (Though the Pentacon-Six has its own delayed-action, this does not make the contacts for the flash.)

Of course, the Pentacon-Six lacks the interchangeable backs so liked by many 2 1/4 in. sq. workers. But, for little more than the price of what is no more than a film holder for most other medium format cameras, you can get a whole second body, with all the advantages that brings.

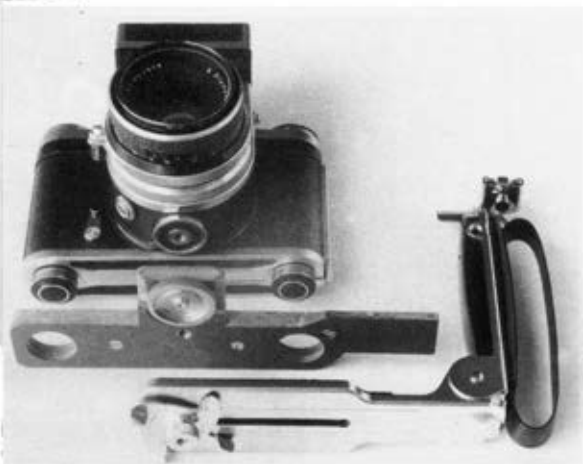
Conclusion

I personally have found the Pentacon-Six to be the finest 2 1/4 in. square SLR at any price, and haven't yet had time to explore its many possibilities. In his reviews of the camera and its predecessors, the Praktisix and the Praktisix II, in the professional publication *The British Journal of Photography*, editor Geoffrey Crawley



Above: The camera on a flash grip. As the knobs of the retractable spool holders protrude below the camera base, a special plate for use between the flash bracket and camera was made up by an engineer friend.

Below: Details of the special base-plate. Here the locking flash socket and the delayed-action lever can also be seen.





said: *'The Pentacon-Six is fully up to date optically and functionally, and makes a most important contribution to advanced amateur and professional photography.'*

Where can you get hold of one? Well, keep your eyes on the small ads. in the photographic press, and on the larger secondhand dealers. Or – at somewhat higher prices – you can buy new or second-hand from West Germany. (I'd be glad to let any reader have a few addresses of dealers.)

Otherwise, write to C.Z. Scientific Instruments Ltd. and tell them that you would like to buy a new

Above: 'Pointed Petals' Top quality close-up work with the Pentacon-Six. Print made from only small part of the 6 × 6cm negative. (By courtesy VEB Pentacon, Dresden).

Pentacon-Six. They haven't got any right now, but are, I understand, trying to persuade the manufacturers to recommence supplies, instead of exporting only the faster-selling 35mm equipment. If they receive enough letters from club members, this may convince the people in Dresden of the viability of the British market.