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**Above:** The Monastery at Zagorsk, near Moscow. Pentacon-Six TL with 80mm Biometar lens. Ektachrome film. Photograph by Dr. Trevor Allin.

# The Pentacon-Six Story (4)

The fourth in a six-part series of articles by Dr Trevor R. Allin, tracing the history of the famous Pentacon-Six camera.

## The Exakta 66

The latest camera to appear in the Pentacon Six mould is the Exakta 66. There was, of course, an 'Exakta 66' produced in Dresden in 1936. It was, however, of a totally different design. The new Exakta 66 first made its appearance in 1986, and apart from superficial differences of finish, it bears a striking resemblance to the Pentacon Six. In fact, it looks like an old friend in a new suit.



Above: The Exakta 66 with waist-level finder and its standard lens, a Schneider Kreuznach 80mm Xenotar MF with a maximum aperture of f/2.8. Photograph courtesy of Exakta Foto GmbH, West Germany.

## The Body

The publicity emphasises rugged reliability, and suggests that this is a camera for men! The all-black body is clad in matt-black rubber, which is designed to be easy to hold as well as to protect the camera from the knocks that come from heavy professional use, often in unfavourable environments. There is in consequence no ever-ready case for the Exakta 66.

The other major differences in comparison with the Pentacon Six are the following:

**1. Film advance lever.** As the Exakta 66 TTL prism is wider than either of the prisms available for the Pentacon Six, it has been necessary to re-design the film advance lever, so that it projects beyond the back

of the camera top plate. Although I have always found the Pentacon Six film advance lever perfectly satisfactory, I must admit that this new design both looks extremely smart and is very comfortable to use.

**2. Shutter speed dial.** The shutter speed index triangle on the body top plate has been moved further to the back to accommodate seven electrical contacts which transfer the shutter speed selected automatically to the TTL metering prism.

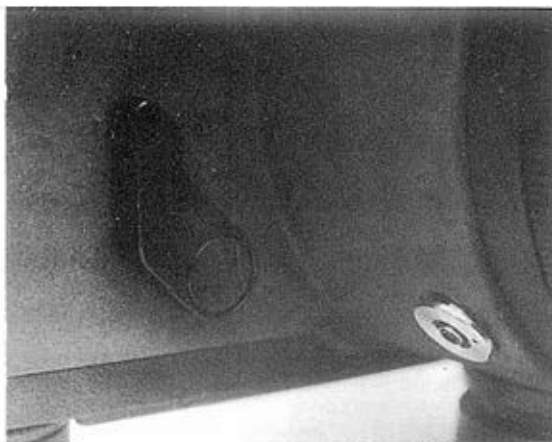
**3. Delayed action release.** The delayed-action release has also been completely re-designed, in the form of a stylised 'wing'. It contributes to the overall appearance of the camera, and is also easy to use. It is cocked by rotating it anti-clockwise through 90°. The shutter release is then pressed in the normal manner, and the shutter fires after approximately 10 seconds. If a flash gun is to be used with delayed action, the shutter release button must remain depressed until the shutter opens. This is simply achieved by using a lockable cable release.

**4. Waist-level finder.** A newly-designed flip-up waist-level finder incorporating a large magnifying lens is a great improvement on the waist-level finder supplied with the Pentacon Six. For those occasions when you wish to use a waist-level finder instead of a prism, this finder will be a pleasure to use on both the Exakta 66 and the Pentacon Six.

The very fact that these fairly modest modifications represent the major differences between the Exakta 66

Below: The Exakta 66 top plate, showing the shutter speed dial and new index mark, and the film advance lever. A 'Mark II' version of the Exakta 66 now incorporates a very slight modification to the shape of the film advance lever, a red band on the shutter speed dial to indicate that all speeds below the flash symbol can be used with flash, and a sprung-loaded release catch for the camera back. The camera is here fitted with the Carl Zeiss Jena 80mm Biometar standard lens, which complements it perfectly.





**Above:** The re-styled delayed-action lever, with the flash socket visible on the lens throat.

and the Pentacon Six indicate how much the Exakta 66 has inherited from our old and revered friend, the Pentacon-Six.

There are also several minor differences.

**1. Shutter release.** The all-black shutter release is threaded for a cable release and is ergonomically placed at an angle of approximately 45° on the front plate of the camera to the right of the lens (as viewed from behind). Unlike the Pentacon Six, there is on the Exakta 66 no shutter release lock to prevent accidental exposure after the shutter is cocked.

**2. Film pressure plate.** In common with most medium format cameras currently on the market, the film pressure plate has separate positions for 12-exposure 120 film and 24-exposure 220 film. This pressure plate is pressed down and slid sideways in the camera back when loading the film, and it locates with new pressure-plate guides on the film track.

**3. Flash contact.** The flash contact is located on the throat of the lens housing, as on the Pentacon Six, but there is now no lock, since the carrying strap and cradle would make this inaccessible. Although I am in the habit of locking the flash contact into place on the Pentacon Six, I know of no other camera that incorporates such a lock, nor has a flash lead ever come loose from any other camera in my experience. This minor detail is therefore not likely to be missed.

**4. Film memo holder.** This little pocket in the centre of the camera back will hold the end of the film carton, to remind you what film you have loaded, a useful and practical detail.

**5. Carrying strap & cradle.** This cleverly-designed accessory fits round the throat of the lens housing on the camera body, and is held in place by the thumb-wheel supplied as standard with the camera, which serves as a third 'foot' (along with the two grips for retracting the spool holders). These feet enable the camera to stand firmly and horizontally on any flat surface.

A 24mm-wide strap is supplied with this carrying cradle, although the plastic shoulder-pad on the strap is noisy, uncomfortable and slippery! It needs re-designing.

The top of the carrying cradle is very close to the shutter release, and a shutter release extension is available for users who find access to the shutter release difficult with the cradle in place. However, most users are likely to find that no problems are caused by the cradle, and will therefore not require the shutter release extension.

A useful characteristic of the carrying strap and cradle is that all the longer Schneider/Kreuznach lenses available for the Exakta 66 have at the centre of gravity for the lens/body combination the same diameter as the lens throat on the camera body, and a tripod bush at this point enables the strap to be attached to the lens here – a simple but brilliant design point!



**Top right:** Three medium-format SLR's with a lot in common. From left to right: the Russian Kiev 60 TTL with 80mm Voigta standard lens, the Pentacon Six TL with 80mm Biometar, and the Exakta 66, here seen with the 50mm Flektogon wide angle lens from Carl Zeiss Jena.

**Left:** The carrying strap and cradle. The third 'foot', also used to secure the cradle, is visible to the right. Photograph courtesy of Exakta Foto GmbH, West Germany.



## Lenses

Twelve Schneider/Kreuznach lenses are available or planned for the Exakta 66. The following lenses are designed for direct attachment to the camera:

series) reveals that, in keeping with the Exakta's chunky image, keeping weight down has not been a priority, but the zooms compare favourably in weight with their fixed focal length counterparts from Zeiss,

Lens Name	Max aperture & focal length mm	Angle of view deg.	Focusing range m	Front ring thread for screw-in attachments	Dimensions Diameter × length mm	Weight g	
Curtagon MF	f/4.40	89	0.5-inf		ø104×109	700	
Curtagon MF	f/3.5/60	66	0.6-inf	M 67×0.75	ø 81×84	570	
Xenotar MF	f/2.8/80	52	0.6-inf	M 67×0.75	ø 84×72	500	
Tele-Xenar MF	f/4/150	29.5	1.5-inf	M 67×0.75	ø 84×101	760	
Tele-Xenar MF	f/5.6/250	18	3.0-inf	M 67×0.75	ø 84×168	900	
Variogon MF	f/4.5/75-150	56.3-30	1.8-inf	M 95×1	ø 98×171	1770	zoom
Variogon MF	f/5.6/140-280	31.3-16	2.5-inf	M 86×1	ø 95×240	2070	zoom
PCS Super-Angulon MF	f/4.5/55	71	0.5-inf		ø104×157	1650	perspective control & shift/swing

The 40mm and 55mm lenses have outer bayonets with a diameter of 104mm for filters and other front-of-lens accessories.

All the above lenses are fully compatible with the Pentacon Six and each one has a fully automatic diaphragm, and a depth of field lever that permits stopped-down as well as full aperture metering. Pentacon Six users are likely to be particularly interested in the zoom lenses (each of which also has a very useful macro setting), in the perspective shift/swing lens and in the ultra-wide angle 40mm Curtagon. This last lens is the only one in the series that is not yet available. Schneider's target launch date for this lens is late 1990.

A comparison with the lenses produced in the GDR for the Pentacon Six (see the chart in part 2 of this

series) reveals that, in keeping with the Exakta's chunky image, keeping weight down has not been a priority, but the zooms compare favourably in weight with their fixed focal length counterparts from Zeiss, the 75-150 zoom being only a little heavier than the earlier version of the 180mm Sonnar, while the 140-280mm zoom weights exactly same as the 300mm lens and takes the same filters.

There is also a 2× converter that connects the lens automatic diaphragm pin with the body and apparently transfers to the metering prism the aperture value chosen.

In addition, there are four specialist lenses designed for use with the new-style automatic bellows. We shall describe these in the next article in this series, in which we shall also look at the TTL metering pentaprism, extension tubes, and other accessories.