

"Amateur Photographer" Test Report

by Neville Maude



The Praktisix II

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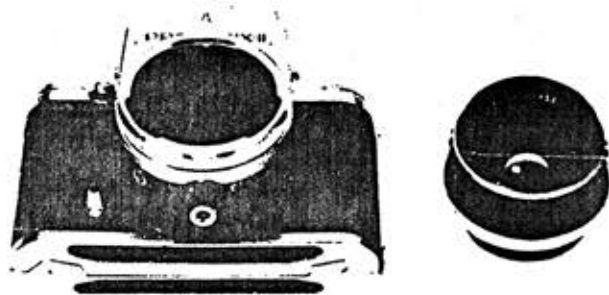
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THE photographer who desires a single-lens reflex camera, giving a 6×6cm negative, finds that the choice is very restricted. Price considerations often reduce the choice still further, since not everyone can afford a Hasselblad or Bronica. The Praktisix has, therefore, always been of great interest, and this new version is a considerable advance on the former model since there are internal improvements giving greater reliability, as well as the obvious change to a Biometar lens from the Tessar.

Many people have described their ideal cameras to me; frequently they turn out to be an enlarged version of a 35mm SLR. The Praktisix might be said to correspond to this description, since in some ways it resembles the Exakta—which is not really surprising. Like the Exakta, it is a reliable camera provided it is "repaired" by unskilled hands. The general style is that of a 35mm camera, but the negative size is nominally 6×6cm and in practice 56×56mm (which is normal).

Film advance is by a single-stroke lever moving through about 270°. Counting is automatic, using the system of setting the arrows on the backing paper against an index mark before closing the back. The shutter release is well placed for the index finger of the right hand, and is at about 45°. A standard cable release can be screwed in the centre and there is a locking ring to prevent accidental exposures.

The shutter is a focal-plane type, with cloth blinds. The speeds run from 1 to 1/1000th second, plus B, and, as the table shows, are in the main very accurate. In particular the four slowest speeds were absolutely spot-on and the 1/1000th just a trace faster than claimed. This is a good performance (1/15th is usually awkward with f.p. shutters). There is an additional speed supplied between 1/30th and 1/15th for electronic flash and on measurement this was found to be 44ms, say, 1/23rd second. Synchronization for

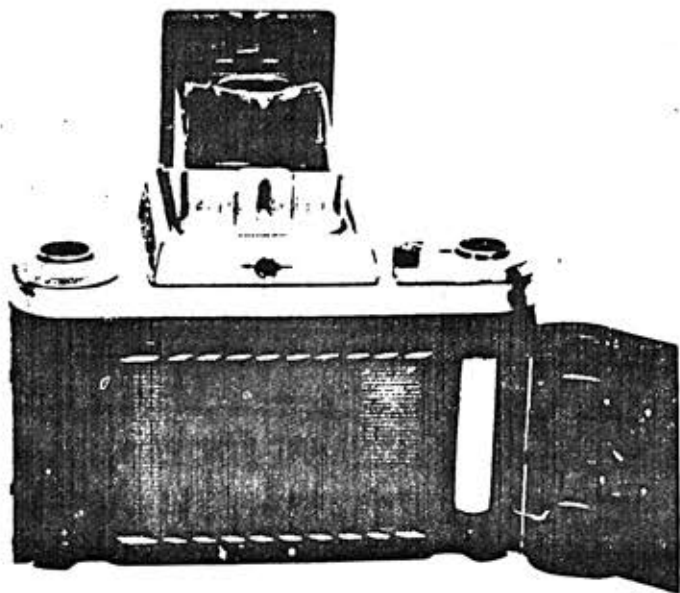


The lens has a bayonet mount. Note the excellent central placing of the tripod bush, the coaxial flash connection to the left, and the inclined release (with safety-lock collar).

SHUTTER TEST

Indicated	Measured milliseccs	Nearest fraction
1/1000th sec.	0.95	1/1050 sec.
1/500 "	2.5	1/400 "
1/250 "	4.3	1/235 "
1/125 "	10	1/100 "
1/60 "	18	1/55 "
1/30 "	35.5	1/28 "
X "	44	1/23 "
1/15 "	92	1/11 "
1/8 "	120	1/8 "
1/4 "	260	1/4 "
1/2 "	500	1/2 "
1 "	1000	1 "

These tests were made by Bowers of Gerrard St. using modern electronic apparatus according to a method laid down in the relevant British Standard. The figures represent effective exposure as received by the film; they do not relate to total opening time nor any other value save effective exposure.



The film runs across without any right-angle bends—a good feature. The hood is self-erecting and has a sportsfinder device incorporated.

bulbs is given in the booklet as 1/15th for short-duration ones and 1/8th for the others; in practice it is usually possible to use a faster speed with negligible cut-off.

The lenses are fully interchangeable, with bayonet mounts. The range goes from a 50mm f/4 Flektogon to a 1,000mm catadioptric lens. The standard 80mm f/2.8 Biometar (presumably 5 elements) has a fully automatic diaphragm with "preview" lever. Focussing is helical from infinity to about 3ft (lowest marked distances 1 metre and 3.5ft), turning through about 345°. Performance on test proved good, and an acceptable 20 x 16-inch print would be obtainable even at full aperture. The inevitable slight edge flare (not noticeable on most subjects) cleared up well at f/4 and really biting edge-to-edge sharpness was found at f/5.6 and f/8. The filter fitting is 58mm screw-in.

Viewing and focussing can be done by a waist-level finder or pentaprism. The waist-level finder has a four-times magnifier, large enough to cover almost all the screen. The standard screen is curved on top with a flat ground, lower surface. There is also a screen available with a split-image finder, and many people would find this a useful investment. However, focussing is very dependent on eyesight, and there is no real substitute for a personal trial. The front of the viewer hood can flap out and a rear aperture sight raised to give a sports finder. The whole waist-level hood is easily removable and replaceable by a pentaprism for eye-level viewing. There is no instant-return mirror, but this is not a vital point.

A delayed-action mechanism is fitted, the delay being timed at about 11 seconds. The tripod bush is very well placed at the centre of gravity. A film-reminder dial is placed on the back, which hinges open. All the usual accessories appertaining to SLR cameras are available, including extension tubes. The split-image rangefinder screen is particularly useful as an aid to easier and more certain focussing, and many people will like the prism which converts the camera to an eye-level one. With the better lens, and improved internal construction, this Praktisix II fills a most useful niche in the range of available cameras and well deserves its increasing popularity.

LENS PERFORMANCE

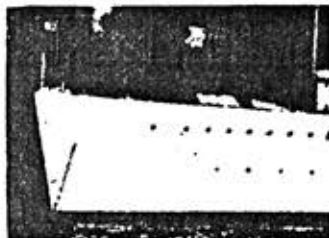
The first two pictures show the entire field of view with ship at centre and edge according to the finder. The other illustrations are same-size reproductions of parts of 20 inch prints, made from the whole of negatives taken at various apertures. Several series were made but only part of one can be reproduced here. FP3 film was used, developed in Unicolor.



CENTRE



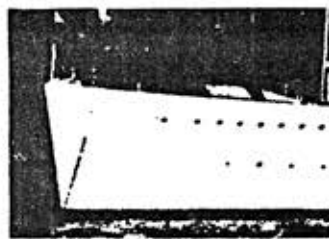
EDGE



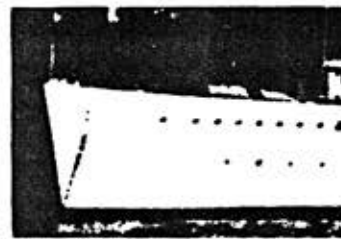
f/2.8



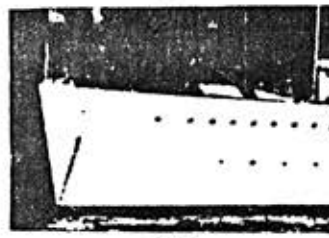
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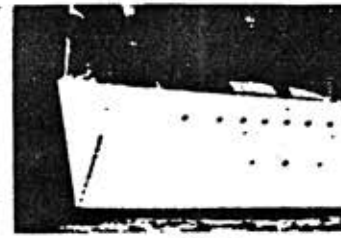
f/4



f/4



f/5.6



f/5.6

DATA IN BRIEF

Praktisix II with Biometar, £139 10s 0d.
 Detachable pentaprism, £25 17s 9d.
 Extension tubes, automatic, £10 16s 3d.
 Split-image screen, £17 3s 6d.
 Eye-cup, £1 17s 4d.
 Weight, about 2lb 14oz.
 Size overall, about 4½ x 4½ x 6½in.
 Manufacturers: VEB Pentacon, Dresden, G.D.R.
 Distributors: J. J. Silber Ltd., 11 Northburgh Street, London, E.C.1.