

# Kine Exakta

1936 - 1996

A DIAMOND  
JUBILEE  
CELEBRATION



# KINE EXAKTA

The story of the Kine Exakta begins in 1932 when the design engineer Karl Nüchterlein at the Ihagee Kamerawerk, Steenberg & Co. Dresden was in the process of developing the standard Exakta of 4 x 6.5 cm format. That year was remarkable for the introduction of the Zeiss Contax, and of Agfa's new 35mm cartridge. It was also the year in which, one might say the Leica came of age on the introduction of the Model II with a coupled rangefinder. It is not surprising, therefore, that Nüchterlein should have begun to plan a 35mm single lens reflex in that year, and when the standard Exakta was into production in 1933, to have commenced the development of the Kine Exakta. Preliminary designs were in fact on paper in June 1932.

## The world's first 35mm SLR

Collectors have frequently debated whether or not this distinction should go to the Russian "Cnopm" or Sport. The last year or two has given opportunity for close enquiries to be made in Dresden and in Leningrad and Moscow. In particular information provided by the Polytechnical Museum, Moscow states that a prototype 35mm SLR was made in 1934 and this was improved and developed into the camera that became the Sport. "In 1937 it was perfected and brought into a state for production. The standard production began at the end of 1937, beginning of 1938".

The Kine Exakta was exhibited at the Leipzig Spring Fair in March 1936 and was in production from April 1936.

## Something Unique

What then was so special about this camera? The photographic world at that time was used to large reflex plate cameras in which the image could be scrutinised at the full size of the

negative, and even the standard Exakta, though very much smaller than other reflexes, had this characteristic. Many were sceptical about the practical possibility of a reflex for such a small negative as 24 x 36 mm. To meet this the Kine Exakta focussing screen was of condenser form which not only added brilliance but also provided an image magnified two diameters, which was further increased by the magnifier. The screen was the subject of a patent dated 13 November 1934. The original round magnifier was quickly recognised as giving too limited a view and was replaced by the rectangular magnifier in December 1936.

## A remarkable shutter

From the first the camera had the amazing 20 speed shutter, from 12 seconds to 1/1000th, with delayed action on 14 of the speeds. It had lever wind which was with simple logic put on the user's left, believing that the importance of the focussing function demanded the use of the right hand. This winding advanced the film, wound the shutter, set the mirror, moved the exposure counter, and prevented unintentional double exposures. The hood provided, in addition to the magnifier, a direct vision viewfinder for eye-level use, and when closed locked the shutter release.

## Other new features

The camera also introduced the concept of a shutter release button placed on the front of the body, operating parallel to the optical axis. There was a built in knife to cut the film, for quick development of short lengths. It was the first 35mm camera to have built in flash synchronisation, and an accessory flash gun to take the Vacublitz bulb was marketed. Nüchterlein actually patented a system of TTL metering on 28 July 1939 but owing to his untimely death in the war it did not come into production. In 1958 Ihagee introduced a pentaprism with a built-in selenium meter and also an accessory TTL meter (which slightly extended the lens) for laboratory use.



## Precision

Fundamental to the whole design was the determination to build a camera characterised by precision and versatility, which is why it became so extensively used for medical and scientific purposes, and it must be a tribute to the designer that it continued with only minor change until 1949. In this period it was undoubtedly the most influential design in camera manufacture. It then gave birth to improvements that made it even more versatile

The body was of die-cast light alloy weighing only about 30 ozs with the lens. It had a bayonet mount, and initially there was a choice of 5 standard lenses of 50 or 58mm focal length, and 5 long focus lenses.

The Kine Exakta was selling in London in 1937 with f2.8 Tessar for £38.10.0, and with f2.0 Biotar for £55.00

The Kine Exakta II came in 1949. The Varex, with the great advantage of interchangeable viewfinders in 1950; the Varex VX in 1951; Varex IIa in 1957; Varex IIb 1963; VX 1000 with instant return mirror in 1967; VX500 in 1969, and the RTL1000 in 1970. In the U.S.A. the Varex was labelled V and the Varex V X as VX because Argus Inc. had copyright of the name Varex.

## THE EXAKTA CIRCLE

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