

An Old Name Revived with the Exakta 66

From European editor Max Joseph Riedl comes word of the return of an old and much-loved brand name in a new Exakta 66 roll-film reflex to be outfitted with interchangeable West German Schneider Kreuznach lenses. The camera will be based upon Dresden-made Pentacon Six parts and subassemblies, with final manufacture and many newly designed refinements from a West German Munich factory now starting up.



This East/West German cooperation has been organized by Dr. Otto Stemme, an engineer and physicist whose background includes technical design and manufacturing responsibilities at Carl Zeiss, Jena, Rollei Singapore and Braunschweig, and the Agfa-Gevaert camera works in Munich, from which several of the project engineers for the Exakta 66 have come. Dr. Stemme is today the managing director of the Durst company in Bolzano, Italy, whose management fully supports this personal initiative, in which Durst is otherwise not involved.

The Exakta 66 design preserves the focal-plane shutter (with speeds from 1 to 1/1,000 sec) of the Pentacon Six, from which it is derived. Special attention has been paid to achieving a flatter film plane than is usually found in roll-film cameras, and a more uniform film transport than that of the Pentacon Six, which has been criticized for uneven spacing of consecutive 6x6-cm frames. This is now said to have been eliminated by a positive gearing system. Film flatness in the Exakta 66 is said /continued on page 141

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to be the result of a genuine film channel, similar to that of modern 35-mm cameras. Almost all paper-backed roll-film cameras press the film against a format aperture plate, relying upon this pressure for image-plane flatness (and picture sharpness!).

In the Exakta 66, however, the pressure plate pushes against two rails machined into the camera housing, thereby creating an open channel through which film and backing-paper can slither with relative freedom. The camera will make 12 exposures on paper-backed 120 roll film, and 24 on professional 220 rolls (which have paper only at the ends of the roll). Like its Pentacon predecessor, the new Exakta 66 will not feature interchangeable film magazines.

A Munich-made TTL prism finder (using East German optics) will permit eye-level shooting with manual metering, and there will also be a completely new waist-level finder. The TTL meter head provides LCD indication of the metered f-stop that can be seen through the finder eyepiece and in an external window. Indicator arrows are provided to show the direction of change needed to align correct exposure, and there are plus and minus half-stop markings. Film speeds are set directly on the TTL head, and preselected shutter speeds are fed to the system electrically. A new and still-secret mechanism cross-couples the meter with the camera shutter and the aperture scales of the various interchangeable Schneider lenses.

The Exakta 66 has an unusual charcoal-black finish made of the same sort of thick plastic covering that is now applied to rugged "all-weather" military and hunting binoculars. Munich Exakta 66 designers Schlagheck and Schultes refer to it as a macho "rancher"-style camera that doesn't need to be treated too politely.

The introductory Schneider Kreuznach lens lineup for the Exakta 66 comprises an 80-mm Symmar-M f/2.8, 53-degree standard optic; a 60-mm Curtagon f/3.5, 67-degree wide-angle; a 150-mm Tele-Xenar f/4, 30-degree tele lens; a 55-mm Super-Angulon-PCS f/4.5 perspective-control lens; plus two Schneider Variogon-M zoom lenses, 75→150-mm f/4.5 and 140→280-mm f/5.6.

Initial January, 1985 production is planned to start at 200 cameras per month. The German list price with 80-mm Symmar-M f/2.8 lens is slated to be below DM 2,000, or about \$700 at the current rate of exchange. ●