EXAKTA VAREX IIa & EXA TEST

Advanced single-lens 35-mm reflex and its simple cousin

DESCENDANT of the Kine Exakta, first 35-mm single-lens reflex, the Varex IIa is not only a versatile camera in itself but the nucleus of a very comprehensive range of photographic equipment.

Perhaps the most unusual feature is its wide selection of shutter speeds—from a nominal 1/1000 to 12 seconds. The shutter is of the fabric blind focal-plane type and speeds are selected on two dials, 1/1000 to 1/25, T and B on one and $\frac{1}{2}$ to 12 seconds on the other. There is provision for a 13-second delay on all speeds.

Three types of flash synchronization are provided, X for open and electronic, M for bulbs with a 15 millisecond delay (allowing for flash exposures down to 1/1000 with long-peak bulbs, e.g., PF45) and F where the contacts close approximately 11 milliseconds before the gate is fully open, suitable for short-burning bulbs, e.g., PF1, PF5, with the shutter set at 1/25. Connexions are made via three clearly marked standard 3-mm co-axial sockets.

Another useful feature, probably exclusive to the Exakta, is a built-in knife by which the film may be cut, a provision primarily made for those who use take-up cassettes, but also useful when only a few exposures are required to be made and processed immediately.

Alternative viewing sytems are available. In addition to the original ground-glass screen and collapsible hood, there are pentaprism heads with or without prismatic critical-focusing prism device. They are, of course, interchangeable.

On the model submitted was fitted the standard 50-mm lens, an f/2 Biotar. Examination on the optical bench showed its performance to be above average. All corrections were very satisfactory and the off-axis image of a high order. Centrations were extremely good and the slight focus shift on stopping down was well within usual tolerances. Its focal length agreed with its marked focus. Micrometer checks on the body showed that the focal plane and focusing screen registered accurately with reference to the lens flange.

Bayonet mounts make for rapid lens interchange and the insertion of extension tubes, of which there is a selection which can, if necessary, be combined. Coupling tubes for photomicrography are also supplied.

SHUTTER SPEEDS

Nominal sec.	m/s	Measured m/s (average)	Travel
		EXAKTA VAREX IIa	
1	1000	1000	uniform
$\frac{1}{2}$	500	666	uniform
1/5	200	190	uniform
1/25	40	37	retard, 33–40
1/50	20	23	retard, 21.2–25
1/100	10	13	uniform
1/250	4	6	acceleration, 5.5–6.1
1/500	2	3.5	acceleration, 3.2–5
1/1000	1	2.2	retard 2.5–2
		EXA	
1/25	40	33	uniform
1/50	20	24	retard, 18–26
1/100	10	17	retard, 16–18
1/150	6.6	10	uniform

Optical and mechanical tests at Dumar Optics Ltd.

The Exa

The Exa may be regarded as a simplified version of Exakta. It is considerably smaller and has only four shutter speeds. Its lens flange, however, accepts the range of lenses and extension tubes designed for the more elaborate model, whose focusing/viewing systems can also be interchanged.

The shutter is of unorthodox design and consists of a curved plate which travels in a curved frame riveted to the forward edge of the mirror. When the release is pressed, first the mirror swings upwards to uncover the gate and then the capping blade rises to cut off the light. X and F synchronization are provided, each with its own co-axial socket. Speeds are slected on a simple lever which protrudes through a slot in the top plate.

On the model submitted was the standard 50-mm Meritar f/2.9. Examination on the optical bench disclosed that the particular specimen was a trifle long on focal length. Slight inward flare at the edges was exhibited. as was a trace of curvature of field. Correction of astigmatism was fair; there was slight focus shift on stopping down. In short, its performance was average for optics in its class. Mechanically, there was a trace of rotary play in the focusing movement. Alignment of focusing screen and focal plane was accurate.

Manufactured in the Eastern zone of Germany, the cameras are not readily available over here. Prices are Varex IIa with standard reflex finder, £80 10s 5d; with the f/2 Biotar, £152. Exa, £31 9s 10d. For details and prices application should be made to the importers, K. G. Corfield Ltd, 33 Newman Street, London W1.

Below: The Exa, simple miniature reflex with interchangeable lenses and four-speed shutter. Right: The Exakta Varex, possibly the most versatile 35-mm reflex made today