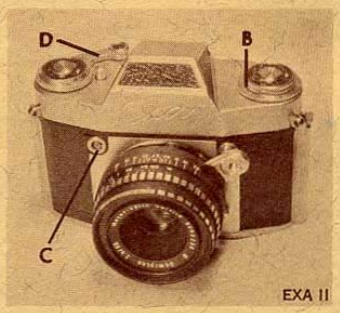
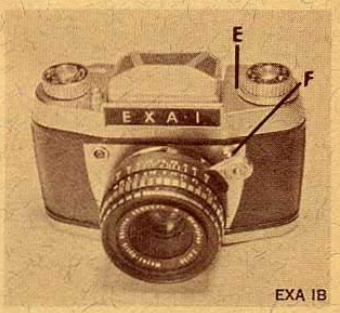
EXA IA



EXA II



EXA IB

EXA TRIO

With the introduction of the new Exa IB, we asked Cora Wright to evaluate it in terms of the two earlier models, IA and II, neither of which has been covered in detail by our Test Reports program.
—The Editors

Anyone who wants a small, relatively quiet SLR 35 with pentaprism viewing might do well to consider the trio of Exas shown here.

Running down the roster of these "under $100" interchangeable-lens cameras, we find the new Exa IB (right), officially introduced by Exakta at this year's MPDFA show; the Exa II (center), which appeared in 1960; and the Exa IA (left)—an improved version of an earlier Exa—which has been available since 1956.

These three offer a lot of features besides the ones already mentioned. Each comes with a four-element lens, the 50-mm Meyer Domiplan *f*/2.8 (shown, providing external diaphragm automation) or the preset 50-mm Zeiss Tessar *f*/2.8. Each accepts other Exakta-mount lenses. And each, too, in our opinion, is capable of taking fine pictures. (Mechanisms and standard lenses, for example, checked out well.) But one Exa or another may be more suitable for a particular photographer's needs.

Probably the easiest way to sort all this out is to describe the new Exa IB as a streamlined version of the Exa IA—as the Exa II is the only member of the trio that lets you use "longer" long lenses up to 1,000-mm (see later text)—and the older Exa IA seems to hold title to being the quietest and smallest full-frame SLR 35 around. Not that the other two Exas are loud. Both fit into the relatively quiet category for SLR 35 shutter operation—with the IB not far behind the ultra-quiet IA, and the II in third place when current Exas are compared. It's just that the Exa IA (like its 1954 predecessor) is slightly quieter than any full-frame SLR 35 we've seen.

Everything, in a basic sense, stems from the discontinued 1954 Exa. Here was an outstanding quiet SLR with interchangeable finder system, "stick shift" for speeds from 1/25 to 1/250 plus Bulb, and a rotary-type ("guillotine") shutter.

This less-usual construction includes the mirror on one surface of the shutter—and the shutter rotates to place the mirror out of the way and make the exposure with a guillotine-like action. (Only the direction of travel is up, instead of the conventional guillotine "down." And winding the film-advance knob after shooting brings the mechansim, with mirror, down into position for viewing and focusing.) As a result of shutter construction, Exakta advised limiting use of long-focus lenses to about 105-mm—in order to avoid vignetting. But true teles, to about 135-mm, seemed to work well, too.

This then, is the necessary background for talking about the Exa trio available today. The Exa IA of 1956 (left) is a near twin of the 1954 Exa, and the only significant difference between the pair is that the Exa IA has two PC synch outlets (for X and F), instead of four holes (for X and M synchronization). Otherwise, basic details are as before.

The Exa II (center), which came next, makes a strong break with this pattern, letting the photographer use lenses up to 1,000-mm. Old-model Exa users will note that there is no rotary shutter here, but a cloth focal-plane one that travels vertically. Gone, too, is the familiar "stick shift" **A** shown on the IA, above; speeds on the II are set by wheel **B** and have a wider range (½ to 1/250 plus Bulb). And the camera now has a fixed pentaprism.

Other variations include: plain groundglass focusing without the rangefinder spot or Fresnel lens; a single synch outlet **C**, with flash synch set by symbol around the speed wheel; and a rapid film-advance lever **D**.

Quite a few differences! But with the Exa IB (right) introduced just this year, we swing back full circle to the rotary shutter of the IA, and an interchangeable prism finder (complete with rangefinder spot and Fresnel lens). This is a modernized version of the IA however, with linear speeds of 1/30, 1/60, and 1/125, and a top speed of 1/175 (instead of 1/150). Borrowing from features on the II, as well, these speeds, plus Bulb, are all set by wheel **E**.

The streamlined look here is the result of using new castings, and recessing the interchangeable pentaprism. Though the camera body top is higher than on the IA, the entire Exa IB is only about 3/16-in. taller. You'll also find a new type of name plate; a one-piece back-and-bottom which is removed for loading (instead of opening a hinged back); and a safety lock that makes it exceedingly difficult to open the camera accidentally. Held over for the third time: the familiar left-handed shutter release **F** that has been on all Exas, to say nothing of Exaktas. Another standby: the shutter-button-locking lever, found on the back of the Exa IB and the Exa II. (On the IA, however, the lock itself is external, and out in front.)

Considerable testing and practical use confirmed the notion that the new Exa IB and the older IA are both suitable for most all-around shooting—despite limitations on lenses, or top camera speeds of 1/175 and 1/150, respectively. There are some shooting restrictions, of course. But you can catch quite a lot of action with these speeds. In bright sun we used a basic exposure of 1/175 or 1/150 at *f*/16 with film rated at 160—and there was room to spare, since standard lenses stop down to *f*/22.

Finders were unusually bright and provided good illumination from edge to edge. Film advance is by knob, which can slow you down if you like to shoot in rapid sequence. Yet, this is not a handicap for most pictures. Other tests showed that suggested limits of 105-mm for long-focus lenses, and 135-mm for true teles, were useful guides. But like all recommendations, these two should be verified by test with a particular lens.

Naturally, the Exa II (designed for lenses to 1,000-mm) provides greater lens freedom. The top speed of 1/250 also permits stopping faster action than with the IA or IB; while the Exa II's slower speeds, down to ½ sec, extend the photographer's scope in another direction.

We liked all this for general shooting, along with the convenience of a right-handed rapid film-advance lever. The plain groundglass focusing will, of course, appeal to some, and not to others. Brightness of the prism finder is generally good, but we found slight fall-off of illumination at the corners with some lenses—which posed slight problems in ordinary room light.

If you're flash-minded, the Exa II synchs at 1/30 for electronic flash and 1/15 for flashbulbs (which is slower than we like, even if the flashbulb "makes the picture" at a much faster speed). The Exa IA and IB, on the other hand, provide synch at 1/50 and 1/60, respectively, for electronic flash, and at 1/25 and 1/30 for flashbulbs.

Now to lenses, which as we mentioned earlier, checked out well. The 50-mm Meyer Domiplan *f*/2.8 gave acceptable central sharpness at *f*/2.8, was good at *f*/4, and "good plus" at *f*/5.6 and *f*/8 where it cleared edge to edge.

The 50-mm Zeiss Tessar *f*/2.8 also provided acceptable central sharpness wide open, turning to good at *f*/4. But at *f*/5.6 it could be called "good plus," and the image had cleared from edge to edge, while at *f*/8 and *f*/11 performance was very good. Both lenses, however, showed slight fall-off in sharpness at the two smallest apertures—but results were still good with the Meyer Domiplan, and "good plus" and good respectively at *f*/16 and *f*/22 with the Zeiss Tessar.

General conclusions about the Exa trio—good performers every one: the ultra-quiet Exa IA; the Exa II for photographers who like to use really long lenses; and the new Exa IB, a more modern version of the IA. The "under $100" price tags, mentioned earlier, apply to any of the three Exas, with either the fully automatic 50-mm Meyer Domiplan *f*/2.8, or the preset 50-mm Zeiss Tessar *f*/2.8—and they include an interchangeable pentaprism (with split-image rangefinder spot) for the IA and IB. Price of the Exa IB, $89.95; Exa II, $99.50, Exa IA, $79.95.

Camera bodies, without lenses, are also available; The Exa IB (with pentaprism viewfinder), $79.95; the Exa II, $69.50; and the Exa IA (with waist-level viewfinder), $49.95.

Distributor for the Exa line is Exakta Camera Co., 705 Bronx River Rd., Bronxville, N.Y.—*Cora Wright*