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EXAKTA VX-IIb GETS BROUGHT UP TO DATE



MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATIONS: Exakta VX-IIb single-lens reflex camera. **LENS:** 50mm f/2 Carl Zeiss Jena Pancolar with stops to f/22, focusing to 20 in. **SHUTTER:** Cloth focal-plane with speeds from 12 sec. to 1/1000 sec. plus B & T, FPX sync. **VIEWING:** Interchangeable eye-level prism with full focusing screen, central split-image rangefinder with ground-glass collar. **OTHER FEATURES:** Depth-of-field preview collar, depth-of-field indicators, built-in film knife, film wind signal, shutter lock. **PRICE: \$269.50.**

The Ihagee factory in Dresden, Germany, maker of the Exakta camera, does not take design changes lightly. The creators of the first 35mm SLR (in 1936) have been very chary of camera innovations. In fact a quick visual comparison between the Model 1 (1936 version) and today's VX-IIb would reveal a striking resemblance, outwardly at least. It certainly is a credit to the original camera that the design has been able to accommodate so many of today's necessary SLR features, such as interchangeable pentaprism and waist-level finders and automatic diaphragm, while retaining special Exakta features not duplicated on other SLRs, such as the fantastic number of shutter speeds from 12 sec. upwards and the built-in film knife to cut off exposed lengths of film.

A careful examination of the Exakta VX-IIb indicates that the basic mechanics of the IIa and its quality of construction have been retained—the fast shutter speed dial, set by lifting upward and turning to the proper marking, revolves during exposure, slow speeds are

set on a separate dial which must be wound separately before each exposure, the mirror remains upwards until the shutter is wound, both the 300° single-stroke, non-g geared rapid wind lever and front shutter release are located on the left side of the trapezoidal camera body.

The IIb, however, differs from other previous Exaktas in having a folding rewind crank on the bottom of the camera, shutter speed markings in modern mathematical sequence (1/8, 1/15, 1/30, 1/125 instead of 1/25, 1/50, 1/100, etc.), an interchangeable prism which can be lifted off without depressing a catch. The faceplate, shape of the prism housing and markings of the slow speed dial have also been modernized and all control knobs are now heavily knurled for better handling.

The Exakta has always taken some getting use to. Those accustomed to right hand operating cameras will require time to limber up their left shutter release and wind fingers and learn to focus with the right hand. Natural left handers may find the Exakta a joyous revelation.

The view through the finder, now aided by a Fresnel lens, is bright with a large positive split-image rangefinder plus a fine ground-glass collar as an additional welcome focusing aid. The heavily lined Fresnel exterior area also can be used for focusing. Eye-glass wearers can almost see the entire frame which is evenly bright to the edges. Old time Exakta users who were annoyed that focus in the center area didn't agree with focus at the edges will be happy to learn that the focus is now equal over the entire finder area.

The IIb is not so much a fast operating sequence camera as a careful workman's instrument. The rapid wind lever must be pushed home with authority or it will not return to the rest position. Slow shutter speeds do require additional time to set since the dial must be wound for each exposure. (Mysteriously there is still a gap between 1/8 and 1/30 sec.)

The absence of a rapid-return mirror will delight those who feel that a rapid-return mirror adds to camera vibration and will disappoint those who feel a rapid mirror is a necessary convenience.

The Zeiss Pancolar lens with its built-into-the-lens-mount automatic dia-

phragm mechanism, has been put in a re-designed mount. Two automatic moving depth-of-field indicators keep constant control of what's in focus and out. The enlarged aperture control ring is easier to set and has unmarked half stop settings. The focusing ring has dispensed with the smooth and not too grippable leather surface and now sports a unique series of protruding dimples. The aperture closes down swiftly when you press the front shutter release on the lens mount, but the time lag between close down and release can be further adjusted if desired using the small screw at the back of the lens's shutter release plunger. By pressing in the collar around the release you can close the lens down to preview your depth of field or to use the diaphragm manually. Aperture and distance scales are heavily marked in black on a chrome surface. In use we found it most practical to grasp the camera in the left hand with forefinger on the protruding front shutter release and the camera resting on the palm of our right hand. We could then grip the focusing ring between right thumb and forefinger (the focusing mount swings in a 290° arc from close focusing to infinity).

50mm F/2 Carl Zeiss Jena Pancolar No. 6683729		
Aperture	Center Sharpness	Edge Sharpness
2	Good	Excellent
2.8	Excellent	Very Good
4	Very Good	Acceptable
5.6	Very Good	Acceptable
8	Very Good	Acceptable
11	Very Good	Very Good
16	Acceptable	Very Good
22	Acceptable	Very Good

35mm F/2.8 Carl Zeiss Jena Flektogen No. 6369474		
Aperture	Center Sharpness	Edge Sharpness
2.8	Excellent	Acceptable
4	Excellent	Good
5.6	Excellent	Excellent
8	Excellent	Excellent
11	Very Good	Excellent
16	Very Good	Excellent
22	Good	Excellent

180mm F/2.8 Carl Zeiss Jena Sonnar No. 6620245		
Aperture	Center Sharpness	Edge Sharpness
2.8	Good	Acceptable
4	Good	Acceptable
5.6	Good	Excellent
8	Very Good	Excellent
11	Excellent	Excellent
16	Good	Excellent
22	Good	Excellent

The 35mm f/2.8 Flektogon wide-angle lens focuses as close as 7 in. and is only 2 in. long.

Perhaps the most impressive piece of glass ever devised is the giant 5½ in. long, 3¼ in. diameter 180mm f/2.8 Sonnar. This is its first appearance with an automatic diaphragm. In addition to the regular preview collar, it has a quick preview lever. The mount incorporates a tripod socket and there's a leather covered focusing ring.

While the 50mm f/2 and 35mm f/2.8 lenses are handy to use and hold, and take the same size filters and accessories, the 180mm is in another class. It weighs in at 3 lb. 2 oz. and works best on a tripod. He-men (and some he-women) can do a fair job of hand holding the lens but it will take guts and practice. The monster focuses down to less than 7 ft. and is another splendid portrait lens if you won't frighten subjects away by poking it in their direction.

All lenses, finished in the usual Carl Zeiss Jena black with chrome, focused smoothly.

The Exakta IIb with its virtually endless lists of lenses and accessories remains a formidable SLR contender for the photographer who values long time proven ability and reputation over modern gadgetry and conveniences.