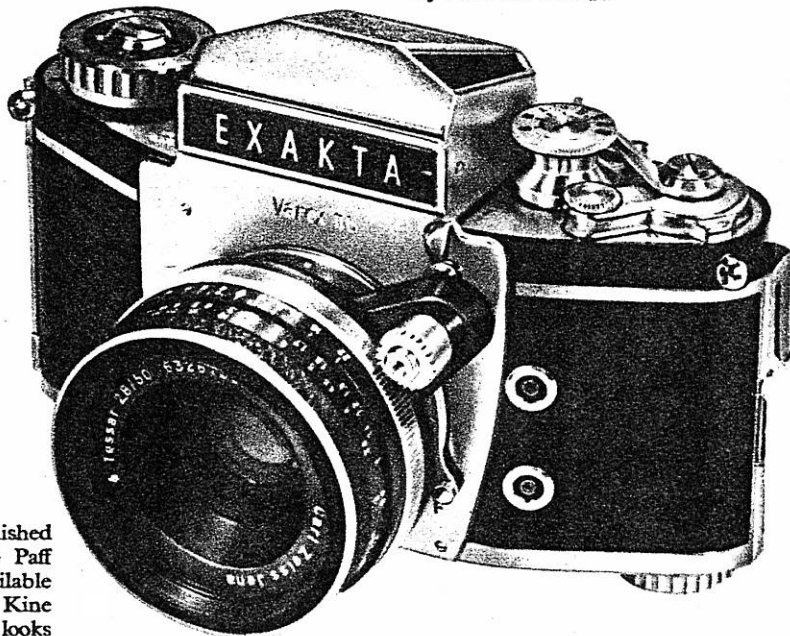


# "Amateur Photographer" Camera Test

by Neville Maude

## Exakta Varex IIb



The Exakta is easy to hold and has a practical, functional appearance without false streamlining. Metal parts are chrome, bright and satin while the body has a black leather-finish.

**E**XAKTA single-lens reflex cameras have been established for a long time. Perhaps they started with the Paff Reflex in 1920, certainly the Ihagee Reflex was available in 1926 and the standard V.P. Exakta in 1931. The Kine Exakta model I appeared in 1936, and the latest model looks much the same—a sincere tribute to the soundness of the original conception. However, this does not mean the Exakta is old-fashioned since there has been steady development right up to the present day.

In one way the camera has suffered from its long history. Since the old models last so well, and even 20-year-old ones are still desirable cameras, some have been "repaired" by itinerant mechanics who are not properly trained. This is bad for any camera and particularly for the precision Exakta. Properly serviced by reliable people, or even left completely untouched, the camera goes on indefinitely through the years. There are no weak points or teething troubles; these were eliminated a long time ago. Some people have remarked

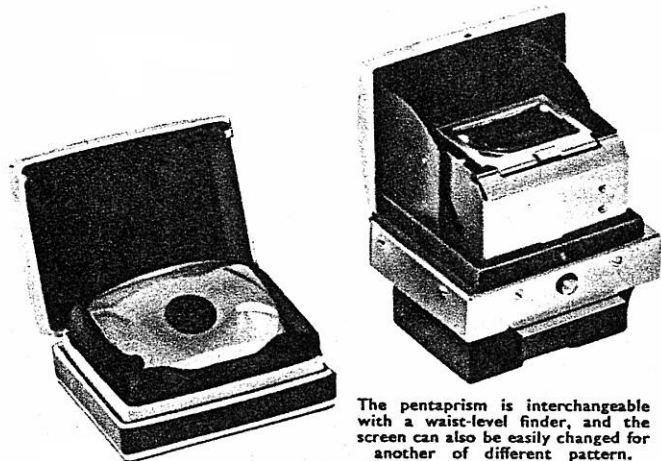
have failed to notice that even the top model is within their reach by today's standards.

An important feature of the camera is versatility. There is the choice of waist or eye-level finders and a range of focussing screens, the most popular incorporating a split-image rangefinder. The lens mount takes the well-known bayonet fitting and a wide range of lenses can be used (normal range 20 to 400mm) and there is a huge system of accessories for close-up, stereo, microscopic, scientific, medical, and industrial use.

Perhaps the most unique feature of the Varex is the shutter, with speeds from 1/1000th to 12 seconds. On test this proved remarkably accurate all over this extended range and the negatives were evenly exposed. Two knobs are used, one for 1/1000th to 1/30 with B & T, the other 1/4th to 12 seconds. The gap between is no great drawback and the long automatic time exposures can prove useful. Delayed action (about 13sec) is provided for speeds between 1/4 and 6 seconds. Long exposures and delayed action need to be tensioned in addition to the usual shutter wind, and lenses with automatic diaphragms should be set in the "normal" or non-automatic position since otherwise the diaphragm will open too early.

The lens tested was the six element Pancolar f/2 from Jena, a relative of the Biogon, and results were excellent. Central sharpness was acceptable on 20in prints even at full aperture while the trace of flare at the edge cleared up considerably at f/2.8 and completely at f/4 (this kind of blur would be less noticeable in night pictures, which is when one wants f/2). Central sharpness reached its top level between f/4 and f/5.6, remaining constant thereafter.

This is a very compact lens, as light and small (with mount) as some f/2.8 types. There are click stops at each half aperture and it is worth mentioning that on the model tested the iris changed down all the way—on some automatic irises the last half, or even full, stop is fictitious though this is seldom realized. There was rather less distortion than with



The pentaprism is interchangeable with a waist-level finder, and the screen can also be easily changed for another of different pattern.

that the design looks untidy, with moving parts exposed. An answer to this is that Ihagee are not ashamed of those parts and do not need to hide them! There are some cameras with tidy top-plates which look very shoddy underneath the curtain of chrome. Another point is that the Exakta has been a prestige and luxury camera for so long that people

