

SLR TEST

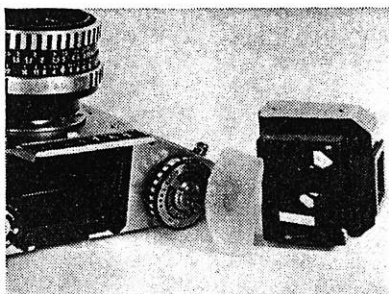
VX1000

The new Exakta has long been awaited by Exakta enthusiasts throughout the world. The old Exakta Varex has been left behind by the German and Japanese SLR equipment manufacturers in both design and specification. The new model does not bring the Exakta into direct line with other equipment as regards design although it does come much closer with its specification. The main differences between the VX1000 and the Varex are the addition of an instant return mirror mechanism and a much improved film advance lever plus various improvements in the layout and handling of the camera. The Exakta camera has the distinctive position of being the first ever full system camera. The range of equipment is one of the most comprehensive available, and is designed to fit all Exakta equipment old and new. The new camera takes the position of top of the range superseding the Varex.

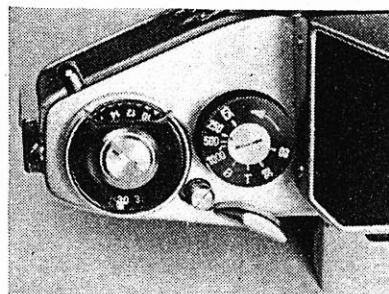
Slight improvements have been made to the basic camera body shape and the camera now fits more comfortably in the hand. The layout of the controls may be alien to photographers familiar with Japanese equipment as the shutter speed dial and leverwind are both situated on the left of the top plate. The leverwind has been streamlined and the travel to wind on one frame reduced. The old Varex needed a travel of nearly 300° whereas the VX1000 needs only 200°. The reshaped finger grip is a considerable improvement and is much easier to use. Frame counting is semi-automatic in that the scale must be reset to 36 when the film is loaded. After this has been done the counter registers the number of exposures left.

The rewind button is directly alongside the leverwind. Also on this side of the top plate is the shutter speed selector dial which is marked from 1/30 sec to 1/1000 and B & T. The Exakta has always offered one of the most comprehensive range of shutter speeds available. The range extends from 12 seconds to 1/1000—17 speeds. The long exposures are not incorporated on the shutter speed dial but instead on a second dial on the top plate. Speeds from 1/2 sec to 12 seconds are marked. To operate this mechanism the shutter speed dial is first set to 'Time' and the long exposure dial turned. This winds up the clockwork mechanism which operates the time exposure. Firing the shutter release triggers the mechanism.

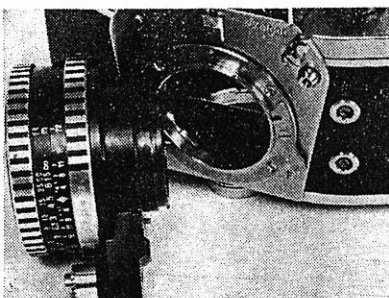
When using the delayed action the range of possible exposures is reduced to 6 seconds. To some photographers the Exakta's wide range of exposures may not be a great appeal to others it will be of particular interest especially if they do a lot of macro photography where long exposures are the rule rather than exception. Anyone who has had to use time exposures will appreciate the full range of speeds. The shutter is a focal plane type with cloth blinds travelling from left to right. The long exposure dial has a film speed reminder scale marked on it from 9 ASA to 3200 ASA. To the right of this dial, cut into the top plate there is a small window with a disc in it. This revolves when the film is wound and shows the film is being taken from the feed cassette. The Exakta is fed from left to right which, again, is different from other cameras. The feed/take-up system also has another unusual feature and this is that you can either feed from cassette to take-up spool and rewind in the normal way or you can feed from cassette to cassette which is very useful at times. The take-up spool is removable and can easily be replaced by an empty cassette into which the exposed film is fed. If needed the exposed portion of film can be taken from the camera half-way through by cutting it with the built-in blade. The cutter is located between the feed cassette and the film plane and is operated by pulling the spring loaded catch on the camera base plate. This feature combined with cassette to cassette loading gives the photographer the advantage of a camera featuring interchangeable backs. Even though it is not quite so convenient, film can still be interchanged very quickly. Black and white can be swapped with



Interchangeable pentaprism housing.



Time exposure and delayed action mechanism.



FP (long peak) flash contact.

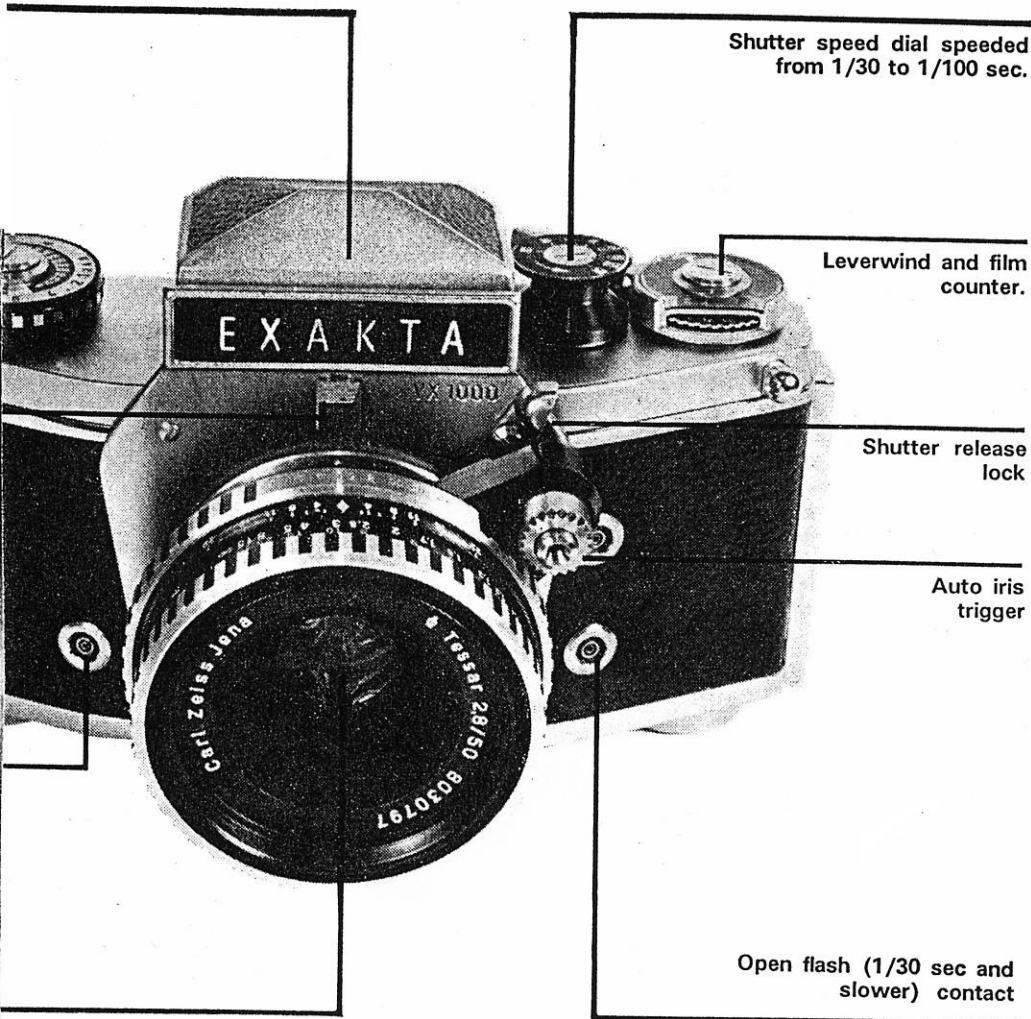
f/2.8/50mm Carl Zeiss Jena Tessar Lens.

colour and vice versa and exposed material can be processed without wasting half a roll of film. Again this is a big advantage to a photographer concerned with close-up photography where only a few exposures are made at a time. The advantages of this system will also be appreciated by the photographer who must use one camera for black and white and colour. Some people may consider a built-in blade as rather outmoded, we could not agree with this as it serves a very useful purpose and extends the versatility of the camera. Rewinding is conventional except that the handle is on the base plate instead of the top plate.

Before leaving the film transport and shutter mechanism it is worthwhile mentioning the fact that you can produce double exposures by winding the shutter manually. This is done by twisting the shutter speed down until it locks. The second exposure is made in the normal way. This feature is virtually unique among SLR's.

The Exakta's interchangeable viewing system has always been an appealing feature of this camera. As well as having different hoods and prisms there is a comprehensive range of focusing screens, some for general use others for specialist applications. A new addition is a TTL metering (through the lens) prism. This is not manufactured by Exakta but by Schacht. This unit takes the place of the conventional prism and converts the VX1000 to a TTL model. This is a particu-

EXAKTA WX 1000



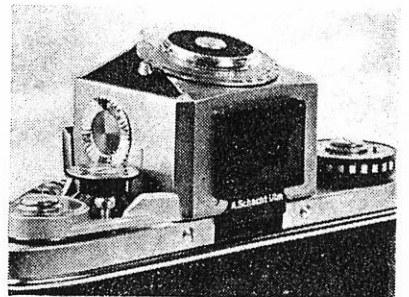
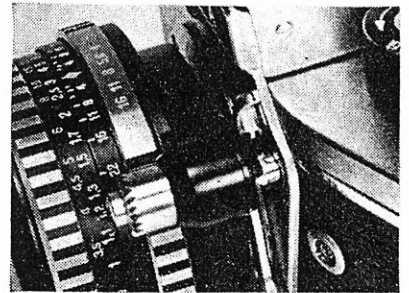
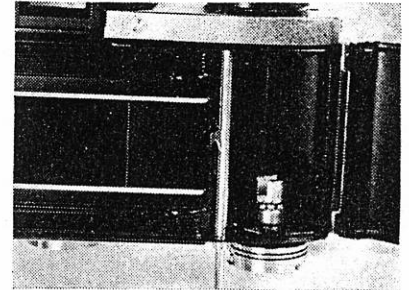
Shutter speed dial speeded from 1/30 to 1/100 sec.

Leverwind and film counter.

Shutter release lock

Auto iris trigger

Open flash (1/30 sec and slower) contact



larly useful accessory and one which will appeal to owners of this Exakta and older models.

Film speeds from 6 to 400 ASA are covered. Being quite independent of the shutter and aperture mechanism of the camera, the user cannot expect the same degree of convenience as is afforded by a completely integrated camera/exposure system. The readings must be taken first with the meter and then transferred to the camera. This takes a little longer but it is still comparatively quick to take a reading. We do not intend to review this piece of equipment fully in this report, but it is well worth mentioning as it greatly extends the versatility and appeal of the Exakta.

To remove the viewfinder assembly, whichever one is in use, the catch on the front of the camera is depressed and the viewfinder lifted out of the camera.

There is a comprehensive range of lenses, extending from extreme wide angle to extreme telephoto, all fitted with quick release bayonet mounts. To remove the lens the locking lever on the right hand of the mount is pushed and the lens twisted from the mount. Fitting lenses is just a matter of aligning two red dots and then twisting the lens home.

Although the Exakta lenses have fully automatic iris mechanisms they differ from the conventional auto iris. Most automatic lenses have a small pin protruding at the rear of the lens which is pushed by a plate or lever from inside the camera

this then stops the lens down to the predetermined aperture.

The Exakta system is built in to the shutter release button. When the button is depressed the first pressure stops the lens down and the secondary pressure fires the shutter.

The lens supplied for testing was a f/2.8 50mm Carl Zeiss Jena Tessar. This is the same lens as the one tested on the Prakticamat some time ago. The quality of this optic is very hard to beat and even though the aperture of f/2.8 is not all that fast we still recommend it heartily. At f/2.8 the sharpness at the centre was very good with no evidence of any flare. Stopping down to f/4 brought edge performance in line with the centre. Optimum performance at f/5.6. The Tessar focuses from 18in to infinity and the aperture scale is marked from f/2.8 to f/22.

All in all, a good lens with excellent performance and one which satisfied all our demands.

Conclusions

On the whole we liked the Exakta: it is extremely versatile and is backed by a comprehensive range of accessories, which will enable the photographer to tackle any kind of assignment. The layout of the camera takes a little getting used to, but once you have, it is a nice camera to use. It is extremely well made and very robust. If you are particularly interested in close-up photography this is the ideal camera. Recommended as good value.