

CAMERACHAT

Britain's brightest, liveliest photographic magazine – and it's free to Polysales customers!

Published by Polysales Photographic Ltd., Meadow, Godalming, Surrey, GU7 3JX

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CHRISTMAS 1976

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SMALL ISSUE - BIG NEWS!

First, an apology. This issue of Camerachat is very much smaller than usual. This was unavoidable because we spent so much time producing our new Pocketbook, but we thought it would be a pity to skip an issue completely. So here it is – with the main purpose of introducing our new Pocketbook.

You will see for yourself that this Pocketbook has been largely re-written, rearranged, and completely redesigned to make it easier to follow. The index at the end now tells you the complete reference, instead of merely the page number, of any item you want to find.

But what you may not have noticed is our complete and dramatic restructuring of prices. On most important things – and this includes such ranges as Praktica cameras, Photax lenses and Durst enlargers – we are selling at the so-called Minimum Advertised Price (usually the basic trade cost + VAT). This is the **LOWEST** price at which anyone is allowed to sell. **No longer do you have to pay extra to obtain the benefit of Polysales service – we now combine it with the lowest prices in Britain** on many products.

Our range has been greatly increased to include many exciting new introductions. **Praktica cameras**, for example. For years we have been aware of the tremendous sales of this brand, but we have hesitated from including them in our range because of reliability problems. The completely redesigned L series with its superb Swedish steel shutter unit has changed all that; our repairers have stripped down samples and are impressed. The automatic **Zenith EM** is here at last, and the amazingly inexpensive Minolta-fitting **Seagull DF** from China.

Among accessories, the well-known **Photax-Paragon interchangeable lenses** offer such sparkling performance for the price that we could ignore them no longer. The electronic home studio becomes a reality with the new **Courtenay Colorflash** units, with an inexpensive flash meter to make exposure problems a thing of the past. Tripods and cases receive more space, as we have some exciting new offers here.

Moving into the darkroom, our range of **Durst enlargers** (now at trade prices, as previously explained) has been increased, with additional illustrations and technical data. A new **darkroom ventilator** makes working conditions more bearable, and a new **Polysales Certified Mercury Thermometer** combines accuracy with low cost. And you'll find all of the new **Paterson RC** accessories for washing and drying RC paper, as well as a wide range of **Ilfospeed RC** paper.

Colour printing is no longer the preserve of the chosen few, and whether you choose to print from negatives or slides you'll find everything you need at realistic prices; and we've assembled our own **starter's outfit** to set you up at lowest cost.

Take advantage of our **FREE SLIDE VIEWER** offer and buy now before the Christmas rush. We need hardly add that the recent slide in the value of the pound means that price increases "in the pipeline" are pretty steep, and any restriction on imports could make these even more difficult. Buy while we still have excellent stocks at very low prices indeed!

£61 ZOOM ON TEST *(yes, £61)*

Amazing results from superb, easy-to-handle new model

It is no secret that many of the Photax-Paragon interchangeable lenses come from Sun Optical Co. in Japan, well known as one of the first manufacturers to develop the zoom lens for SLR use. Certainly the 85-210mm f/4.5 zoom originates from that factory, since the current batch received by Photax bear the Sun brand name!

We were therefore particularly anxious to test a lens which sounds so promising, since it covers what we have always considered to be the ideal zoom range, comes from a maker with an outstanding reputation and experience in this field, and is offered at a very low price.

As usual, we combined the usual static test with actual field use under less-than-ideal conditions, on the basis that features like smooth focusing, good balance and the right "feel" (how can you define that elusive quality?) are every bit as important as crisp edge-to-edge performance.

Deer-hunting with the zoom!

For the tricky subject, why not try stalking deer, we thought. No, not in Richmond Park, but on some nearby National Trust land where they are plentiful but far from tame. What a fine, challenging subject we figured, as the graceful creatures are one moment browsing the hedgerows and the next instant leaping into rapid retreat.

Well, not to mince words, the exercise proved a dismal failure if we were hoping for anything approaching head-and-shoulder shots. No matter how stealthily I stalked through the squelching mud (which didn't help matters) the little terrors showed nothing but their white retreating rumps whenever I came near to a reasonable shooting distance. No, deer in their natural habitat quite definitely call for a five-hundred-mill.



Having said that, the zoom within its limitations handled superbly. Most of the time I was shooting at its "full stretch" of 210mm at 1/250th sec, which is equivalent in steadiness to 1/60th sec with a standard lens, yet not one of the pictures suffers from evident camera shake. No question about my verdict on this score: top marks for "handability".

But could its optical quality match this? The static tests, of the well-known White Hart at Witley (the oldest pub in Surrey) proved that it could indeed. Which was just as well, since many of my deer shots had to be blown up quite enormously to produce the desired results.

Test performance

Anyway, you can judge its performance for yourself from the results printed here. Quite honestly, I was amazed that a zoom in this price bracket could produce results which, under practical shooting conditions, were every bit as sparkling as an equivalent

lens of fixed focal length. Certainly its easy zooming action which enabled the subject to be exactly framed (apart from my distant deer!) was a facility which was not paid for in lost performance, and its range (which enables you to zoom in to less than one-sixth of the negative area at the two extremes) was sensibly chosen.

Technical data

Aperture range f/4.5 to f/22.
Closest focusing distance 8ft (equivalent to 2ft with standard lens).
Filter size 67mm.
Fittings available: (A) Pentax/Praktica; (B) Nikon; (C) Olympus OM.
Other features comfortable diamond-pattern rubber finger grips; supplied complete with lens caps, metal telephoto hood, attractive hard case lined in red corduroy.
Prices for fittings listed above — (A) £61.33; (B) £67.83; (C) £67.83.



The complete field of the 85-210mm f/4.5 zoom at its 210mm setting.

The amazingly crisp performance of the zoom lens is demonstrated by this colossal enlargement which represents a tiny area from a 42 inch wide image — i.e. the area is magnified no less than 780x. In the original enlargement, which we will be displaying in our showroom, the wording is clearly readable. Photograph on Ilford Pan F, 1/125th sec at f/5.6; developed in Microphen for a reduced time of 3½ mins for maximum quality and enlarged using a Durst M301 and a Phago TL enlarging lens. Certified completely un-retouched.

Our Christmas gift to you- FREE ILLUMINATED SLIDE VIEWER



The new illuminated slide viewer – our free Christmas gift to you!

Here's an incredible free offer to celebrate the launch of our new Pocketbook: a high quality, 2 x 2in viewer for 35mm and superslides, yours free on request with every order for £10 received between now and Christmas. It's a superb gift – either for yourself or a friend! – individually sealed in polythene within a colourful presentation box. Just look at these advanced features:

The 85-210mm f/4.5 zoom lens on practical test under tricky conditions: a distant, quickly moving, backlit subject. This selective enlargement from a small area of the negative proves that it stood up well to the exacting test. 1/500th sec at f/5.6, Tri-X

- 2 x 2in plano-convex viewing lens for a large, bright image.
- Modern styled, grey high impact body.
- Retractable, plated wire stand – can be hand held or stood on a table.
- Complete with 2.5 volt lamp already fitted.
- White reflector plus opal diffuser for brilliant, even illumination.
- Light is switched on as slide is pressed down, or may be kept on if required.
- Full-size dimensions for full-size performance, measuring 4 1/4" x 3" x 3".
- Runs off two standard penlight batteries available from us at 10p each.

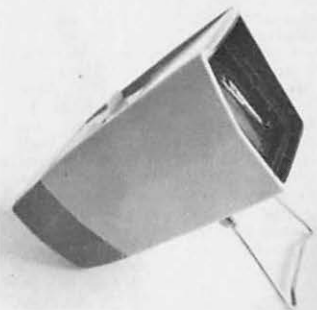
An unretouched photograph of the actual image produced by the viewer (reflections from the lens and all – sorry!). Shot under bright indoor daylight conditions to demonstrate the powerful, even illumination of the slide.



There are no hidden snags, no "small print" to this offer. Just enclose the coupon with any order for £10 or more and it's our Christmas gift to you!

Note: orders received after Friday 10th December 1976 will not qualify for this offer even if delayed by seasonal postal problems. The offer cannot be applied to previous orders, will not be sent without a coupon, and is limited to one viewer per customer. We have sufficient stocks to cover the predicted volume of orders, but if we should run out we reserve the right to substitute another gift of the same value.

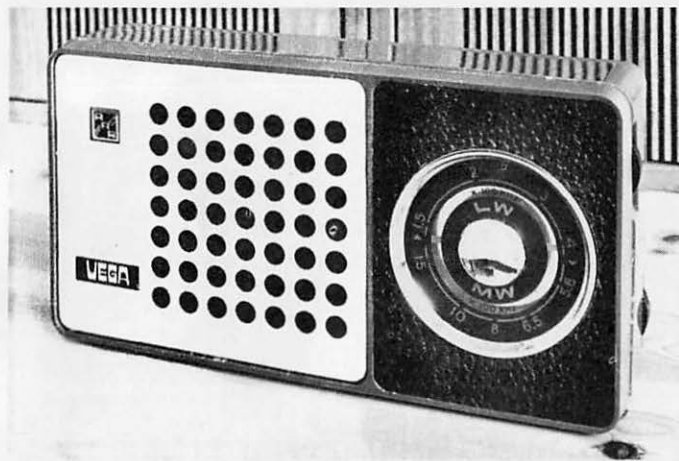
When claiming your free gift, please also mention it on your order form in case the coupon should become accidentally detached.



FREE ILLUMINATED SLIDE VIEWER
Our Christmas gift to you, to launch our brand new Pocketbook for 1977. To claim yours, simply return this coupon together with your order for £10 or more to reach us by Friday, 10th December 1976.

This year's Special Christmas Offer

RUSSIAN RADIO BARGAIN



When it comes to dealing with products outside of the normal photographic field, as has become our custom at this time of year, I like to take the advice of an expert. So this year's bargain has been chosen by our General Manager, Martin Lawrence, who has had considerable retail experience in radio and hi-fi. Here are his findings:—

"There is one aspect of radios that has always been a mystery to me although I have long been associated with the industry. One would think that working within the radio industry would answer all the questions about the relative qualities of radios compared with their cost. Well... I am sorry to say that because a radio costs £40 it does not necessarily mean that it is better than one costing say £25. 'What a load of rot' you will probably say; but have you ever given it much thought, or have you bought a radio on the basis that it looks good with lots of buttons and has a nice tone?

"Let me tell you what I have discovered after years of working with radio. Providing you have the wavebands you need, and a large enough speaker to give the required tone, you can have an acceptable product which may only cost £10. Then why have radios costing £30, £40, or even £50? Because the bigger they are, the better they look and although they provide wonderful-sounding extra facilities, nine times out of ten you will never use them.

"Sad to say, most radio manufacturers seem to have got their priorities all wrong. They give you small radios with a small performance at a small price, or vice versa. So when one comes along to break this convention, it's worth looking at.

"The picture with this article shows the VEGA SELGA 404. This radio is not elaborate but it struck me as a simple, modern and generally pleasing design, large enough to incorporate a speaker of a size able to produce a pleasant tone but not too large as to make it cumbersome for carrying about. I took the sample home and when relaxing in the evening I turned it on to listen to some folk music and I found the sound produced was clear, crisp and of good quality, and although not quite as good as say my Hi-Fi, I found it more than acceptable.

"What is more, it gave a good room-filling volume before distortion began to creep in. And since it brought in stations like Luxembourg and Capital Radio exceptionally well, it would also make a perfect present for a teenager.

"The fully guaranteed radio is powered by six penlight batteries, making it more economical to run than using the conventional PP3. Measuring 190 x 100 x 47mm (7½ x 4 x 2in) it weighs just 19ozs and has a real stretched leather carrying case and shoulder strap. It covers the usual medium (525-1605 kHz) and long (150-408 kHz) wavebands.

"In theory, you should be able to get one from any radio retailer. In practice, this Russian product makes such nonsense of the other prices in the shop that you may have difficulty finding one. We have limited stocks, so order quickly to avoid disappointment: there's a money-back guarantee in case you doubt that it could be so good at such a cheap price.

"But then I haven't told you how much to send — what a fool I am. Our price on these present stocks is just £7.80 + postage."

Order by reference 79015.

What do we do with your money?

Over a quarter of a million pounds — that's how much you, our customers, spent with Polysales over the past year. Where does it go? When we speak of running the company to serve our customers, is this just glib talk or is it backed by facts?

Let's take a frank look at where it ends up by analysing the average order you send us. It is valued at almost exactly £10 plus VAT (including postage).

- £7.71 goes on goods and expenses: buys equipment from the manufacturer or importer and covers overheads like rates, light, heating, telephone.
- £1.09 goes on staff costs — wages, national insurance etc.
- 83p goes on postage or carriage and packing materials.
- £9.63

Of the 37p that is left, 37p goes on customer services: printing and sending you our catalogue, four issues of Camerachat each year, and technical data like Poly-guides which we issue free.

However, there is an error in our calculations. Because our figures are only taken to one decimal place, they do not reveal a balance of 0.085p — one twelfth of a penny out of the £10 order. This, in theory, is divided between company tax and profit; in practice, it is swallowed up by the extra cost of buying in replacement stock at inflated prices.

Inflation

These are examples of how our overheads, and those of companies like us, have increased over twelve months:—

Staff wages and contributions (including extra staff)	up 40.3%
Rates	up 44.4%
Telephone	up 200.6%
Postage	up 52.6%

It would be all to easy to cope with the effects on inflation by reducing quality or increasing prices disproportionately. This we avoid, and not just for the customer's sake. If we were to reduce quality by buying more cheaply, the proportion of returns would increase, leaving us with extra costs and many dissatisfied customers. If we increase prices, we are no longer competitive and we receive fewer orders.

So we cope by selling more goods. This we hope to achieve in some cases by reducing prices to the point where nobody can claim to be any cheaper, as in the case of Praktika, Durst etc. We also aim to sell more by the improvements in our catalogue which give you a better idea of the quality of our goods.

But in the end it all depends upon the loyalty of you, our customers. We realise that it costs us money to reach just one new customer by advertising, and his first order invariably incurs a loss. So we try to cultivate the customers we already have, offering you a wider choice and better service. In return, we rely on and appreciate your regular and frequent custom, to help pay for our extra services like Camerachat which are in such demand.

PICTURE GALLERY

Customers' results on display

In each issue I will print a selection of pictures, taken by you with the aid of equipment, accessories or materials bought from Polysales. Payment of £2.50, by means of credit note, will be made for each picture published, and I will add my own comments on each. Send your entries (accompanied by full technical details) to "Readers' Picture Gallery" at Polysales, and enclose s.a.e. for return if unused.



Another close-up this time — and what a close-up! Mr. H. D. Pegler of Dursley, Glos., had to combine his bellows and extension tubes to produce a total extension of 170mm for this striking picture.

Since the exposure was 16 seconds at $f/22$ (by a single photofood) I assume the fly was dead! The camera was a Praktica LTL with $f/1.8$ Pancolar lens. Our picture is reproduced from Mr. Pegler's original

colour print on Ektacolor 37RC silk paper, and it is unfortunate that Mr. Pegler had a few problems with colour balance and stains; certainly such impressive negatives deserve another printing session.

LETTER BOX

Readers may say what they please in this column, so remember that any facts stated or views expressed are not necessarily endorsed by Polysales.



Young enthusiasm
Dear Mr. Fry,
Thank you for sending me your Camera-chat. I congratulate you on your very quick postal service. I read the bit about your average customer being 25-30 or 41-60; I do not come into this as I'm only 11! I do have my own darkroom (lucky me) but I don't belong to any camera clubs so that I don't get the responsibility of going to a meeting.

I spend around £20 a month on photography and own a Praktica camera; I am looking around at zoom and telephoto lenses as well. Now you may think that I'm a spoiled brat having all this money but in that you would be wrong. I live in a place called Abington, where there is an L.S.A. which is a place where they grow tomatoes and celery and lettuce and all that sort of thing. I can work and grow my own produce and make a lot of money.

My Dad has just finished my darkroom. The walls of my darkroom are lined with polystyrene, wood and fibreglass. It still lets in a very small amount of light; will it be enough for fogging a film?

Yours sincerely,
N.P.J. Ashley
Gt. Abington
Cambridge.

I was very interested indeed to receive your letter, as I started to be really interested in photography when I was just your age.

You are indeed fortunate to have your own darkroom, and I hope it is more comfortable than mine was at your age — it was a small area partitioned off from the garage at the end of the garden; I had to bring my solutions indoors during the winter to prevent them freezing!

However, you really should try getting along to your local camera club. I did — my father used to take me to start with — and I found that, although some of the older members rather used to look down on me at the time, many of them were very helpful indeed and I learned more from them than I ever did from any books.

Your idea to grow your own produce to help finance your photography is an excel-

Continued overleaf

lent one, and I hope it is working out well for you. You will probably find that you can make a bit more by taking pictures of school sports teams as I used to!

You must be very careful indeed to see that your darkroom is really dark; a very small amount of light leaking into it may not spoil your prints as printing paper is fairly slow, but it will certainly harm your films. If, after standing in your darkroom in complete darkness for about five minutes, you can begin to see your surroundings fairly clearly, it is quite definitely unsafe and you should take a bit more trouble to block out any gaps, or to add another lining of some sort to the entire darkroom.

Many thanks indeed for your kind remarks about Camerachat and our service; I hope you will remain a customer of ours for a long long time.

Slide File

Dear Sirs,
May I say how pleased I am with the Polysales Slide Storage Album, and you may like to know that my employers, a well-known bank, are now using the system to store the slides used by the Recruitment department, Schools Liaison section.

Yours faithfully,
F.A.H.O.
Liss, Hants.

Zenith strap lugs

Dear Sir,
Are you able to supply a camera strap that will fit a Zenith E body by using Araldite or a similar adhesive, or perhaps a pair of lugs so that any strap may be used?

Yours faithfully,
K. Matthews
(Grays, Essex).

Your query is unfortunately a common one, and cannot be solved unless the camera is sent to a repairer, stripped down, and the necessary lugs secured in position with a lock nut behind the body casing. The area of contact is so small that I would not advise attempting to attach any type of fixing with an epoxy adhesive. To be honest, I have never heard of lugs having been successfully fitted but I can see no reason in theory why it should not be possible. However, this is likely to be a rather expensive modification compared to the value of the body, and most people accept that they will have to continue using the Zenith camera in its ever-ready case, inconvenient though this may be!

Well glazed

Dear Sir,

Just received your latest Camerachat which contains some very useful tips and information. I must thank you for the Dryer-glazer you sent me; used in conjunction with M.H.S. enamel, it gives a wonderful finish. Further order enclosed.

Yours sincerely,
F. H. Hill
Hull HU3 2TG.

Colour Printing Filters

Dear Mr. Fry,

How do the various colour printing filters compare? Can I use, for example, Kodak filters with Agfa paper? Or — what is more to the point in my case — can I use my existing Kodak filter set with a Simma-dot calculator? You seem to have done so in Camerachat 33, but the Photoguide to Colour Printing advises against it.

Yours sincerely,
T. Timms.

As with most things which are made for the same purpose but by independent firms, there are differences. For instance, it is generally accepted that, say, a 20C in the Agfa range is equivalent to a 15C of Kodak and a 10C by Durst. However, this is only a rough-and-ready guideline; variations between colours, and in density as well as in colour strength, are bound to occur. I personally prefer to use Kodak filters with Ektacolor 37RC paper, as I then know I am starting off with the recommended basic pack, but as one is almost certain to vary that pack anyway there is little practical advantage in keeping rigidly to the same brand. Independent makes like Paterson and Simmard usually follow Kodak strengths fairly well, but as I have said there are bound to be minor differences that are of no practical importance.

As for your question about the Simmard calculator, I telephoned the importers and they weren't at all sure. They said that, since the calculator and filter set were designed to be used together, they didn't know if other filters would work. Which doesn't really help the many who must already have a set of Kodak filters and who want to know if a Simma-dot calculator is worth buying. So I carried out a practical test, checking visual colour saturation as well as density. I found that the yellow and magenta filters are identical to Kodak's, while the cyan are just .10 stronger throughout the range. Conclusion: yes, you can use the Simma-dot with Kodak CP filters, but you must add a CP.10C to any cyan correction recommended by the calculator. If it so happens that your pack contains only Y and M filters (as it often will, and did in my case) the two are completely compatible.

SPEAKING PERSONALLY



A hotchpotch of news, views and nonsense from the Inner Sanctum of the Editor's office.

I expect most of our readers are hi-fi enthusiasts to a greater or lesser extent, and you may therefore be interested to hear of a bonus use for one of our new products in this field. My own modest set-up includes a Connoisseur BD2 record deck, mainly because it was the cheapest belt-driven unit then available and offered an excellent performance/price ratio despite its rather crude, basic construction. I have always been troubled with occasional crackles on my records — nothing serious, but just enough to indicate that the music was coming from a record rather than a tape. I had grown to accept the situation as normal, putting the blame on the odd speck of dirt that my dust-bug arm missed. When our sample Zerostat pistol arrived, for including in our negative dusting accessories, I was impressed by the test reprints from various Hi-Fi magazines which the makers included, and so I thought I'd give it a try. I have an inherent disbelief in anything which claims to eliminate static, and so I was amazed to find that my crackles had completely gone. The trouble had been static, and the Zerostat had cured

it. Now at last I can sit back and relax to the music instead of listening to a record — there's a subtle difference there! I won't repeat the technical "gen" on the thing here because you'll find it under reference 4806 in our new catalogue.

I have just been asked by my wife what I want for Christmas, so I know what a difficult question this can be to answer. For the photographer who has everything (well, almost everything), here are some "hints" which you can drop her way. Books are one answer, and in my opinion there are two sure-fire hits. The first is the Focal Encyclopedia, which will not only solve every photographic problem you are ever likely to have, but will also provide you with hours of fascinating reading. The other is any book of your choice from the Photoguide series, as these are so down-to-earth and practical; I can particularly recommend the one on Colour Printing, as I am still learning from this myself.

Another seasonal idea is a flashgun. Yes, I know you already have one — but why not get one of the superb new computer-

ised designs which make exposure so simple, plus a slave unit so that you can combine it sometimes with your existing unit for multiple flash? A flash umbrella is another excellent gift idea — and if anything beyond straightforward flash-on-camera gives you exposure headaches, remember we now also list an inexpensive flash meter.

A gift which will give you hours of pleasure — and, I might add, guarantee success — is a Cibachrome colour printing kit. Cibachrome makes colour printing so very easy, and when I tell non-users that I keep the filter pack constant and guess the exposure they think I am exaggerating in order to sell it!

Reference numbers and prices of items suggested above are — Focal Encyclopedia 5701, £5.95; Photoguide books 5702-5802, prices around £1.95; computer flashguns as on page 31 from £16.85; flash brollies 3203-5, prices from £5.25; Courtenay Flashmeter 3201, £44.28; Cibachrome materials and equipment page 56.

One final thought on the subject of presents. Now could be the ideal time to treat yourself to a new enlarger. As previously explained, our prices now are rock-bottom; it has already been hinted that VAT will shoot up at the spring Budget if not before; and the current low prices on imported goods can only be held down until just after Christmas. Why not take advantage of our Access/Barclaycard facilities to buy now when prices are so low — and pay for it after they have risen!

than bought one (could you buy one?) and fixer came either in Johnsons tins that went rock-hard and rusty when half empty, or in sacks of virtually insoluble hypo crystals.

Shunning the cheap-and-nasty 35mm cameras then becoming available (in the shop where I was working we had 13 Paxettes back out of 14 sold!) I stuck to my trusty Ensign Selfix for years. I was so nearly tempted to the 35mm SLR by the arrival of the original Zenith 3M that started it all — nothing like current models, but having its mirror lifted by a hanging thread! I wonder where they all went to: I would love to handle one again for old time's sake. Zoom lenses then were poor quality gimmicks, but I remember the Twin Tamron with its choice of two focal lengths and excellent performance.

3-D went through a great boom in the fifties, of course, with a 3-D cinema in Battersea Pleasure Gardens for the Festival of Britain and the House of Wax on general release. Cameras like the Wray Stereo Graphic and numerous image-splitting converters supplied the demand.

In the 60's the general progress towards modern photography was viewed by me from the rather distorted angle of a photographic magazine editor, but the many press functions I had to attend frequently had their lighter side. My favourite memory is of a very impressive press party held by Leitz in their usual impeccable style to introduce a new and expensive slide projector. There was a reverent hush as the room lights were gently softened and the immaculately dressed demonstrator switched on the impressive equipment . . . followed by an almighty explosion and a cloud of smoke. The bulb — probably the only component not made by Leitz — had been faulty and had completely disintegrated! The first automatic cameras to arrive were notoriously unreliable and it was unusual for one to be still working after a week or two in editorial hands: we journalists worked in an atmosphere of friendly rivalry, and we used to compete with one another for the most tactful ways of saying in print that the product being tested was a heap of rubbish!

Here's a special offer with a difference. Although it is an established fact that many people find it extremely profitable to enrol in a course in freelance photography, the overheads involved in personal tuition and postage mean that they are not exactly cheap: even the least expensive way of buying a Mallinsons course for example (and they seem to offer best value) works out at around £50. So I figured that if we can find a way to offer such a course for £20, without losing any of the advantages of personal tuition, it might reach a wider audience and would certainly pay for itself.

So we made a very special deal with Mallinsons on your behalf. They have a limited number of the Louis Peek Freelance Photography courses, consisting of twelve very comprehensive lessons of around 20 closely typed and illustrated pages each. They will teach you how to take suitable pictures, and how to make money — real money — by having them published. In addition, you receive the full Mallinsons services, like their informative Newsletters and personal tuition and picture criticism for six months. But instead of the lessons being posted individually,

you receive them all at once in a really smart ring binder, yours to keep for permanent reference at any time. I must warn you it's no handy pocket book: it weighs exactly 2 kilograms! This method of dispatch has enabled us to negotiate a very special price of £20 all-in, post free. I have been studying one of the courses and I don't mind telling you I have learned quite a bit — certainly it is more practical and informative than any book I have ever read on the subject. To take advantage of this special offer, send your £20 fee to Poly-sales/Mallinsons Freelance Course Offer, Mallinsons School of Photography, Bembridge, Isle of Wight.

Talking of freelancing, isn't it annoying the way the Post Office are eliminating late collections of mail? Many a time I have had to make a twelve mile round trip from my home to the nearest main sorting office just before 5.30 p.m. on a Friday to avoid a batch of urgent pictures sitting in my local pillar box until Monday morning. Another thing that makes me furious is the great variation in sizes of pillar-box openings — the one in my road will accept neither a roll of Kodachrome nor any envelope larger than halfplate. So I have made a chart which hangs by my desk. It lists my five nearest pillar boxes, and states their last collection times and the diagonal size of the opening. Very useful indeed.

It's amazing what sometimes has to be done in the cause of photography. I recently visited Brands Hatch by courtesy of Mallinsons who were racing their own sponsored production sports Ginetta, and found that the self-same school of photography had somehow commandeered the use of a giant 80ft hydraulic lift platform lorry, and were offering photographers the dubious privilege of a shaky ascent to a hitherto unseen viewpoint of the track. There wasn't much of a queue (I wonder why) and, being game for anything, I boldly volunteered for a ride. After all, heights don't worry me all that much: in my mis-spent youth I qualified for a solo "B" glider licence, and I even paint my own guttering at home when it becomes in imminent danger of disintegration from

rust. Well, I won't elaborate on my shaky, swaying elevation to such dizzy heights above a windswept Brands, except to say that I'll give the matter more consideration before accepting next time. I got my pictures, although I was disappointed to find that my 28mm lens (the Telesar from a Camerachat offer) would only cover half of the circuit; how I wish I had taken with me one of the Semi-Fish-Eye attachments (ref. 1703) we now stock.

Do-it-yourself colour processing fans have never had it so good. They have an excellent choice of films — particularly the excellent Ferrania/3M CR100 with a very useful speed of 100ASA, and the new Afghachrome 50G, both of which we stock. And there is no shortage of clubs, facilities, materials and advice. Specialist clubs include the nationwide Colour Reversal Club (Hon. Treasurer G. V. Lee, 27 Elmstead Avenue, Wembley, Middx. HA9 8NS), and the Nottingham-based East Midlands Colour Reversal Club (Secretary J. King, 8 Barent Walk, Top Valley Estate, Nottingham NG5 5LQ), whose facilities include chemical supply.

I have often heard Kodachrome 25 criticised as being "greenish" when compared with the previous Kodachrome II, but I use this more than any other slide film, mainly because I find myself doing an increasing amount of Cibachrome printing for which it is ideal, and I never found the slightest tendency to this green. Not until now, that is; but I carelessly left a batch of slides in their transparent-top processing return box on a sunny window ledge for a couple of months and they really were green! Needless to say, my other slides, kept as usual safely inside a Slide Storage Album, were perfect, so maybe the hint of truth behind the rumour stems from careless storage. It's interesting that a Cibachrome print made from one of the slides upon its receipt from Kodak and left similarly exposed was completely unaffected, and served as a useful comparison!

The Japanese exhibit such skill and ingenuity in designing photographic equipment that their apparent stupidity in one respect surprises me. It concerns the ubiquitous bag of moisture-absorbing silica gel which accompanies every oriental camera or lens to ensure that it reaches you in factory-fresh condition. Or is it just for show, I wonder? If it is to work, the silica gel should be in a porous bag (the original cloth type), which shares a larger sealed bag with the equipment. Lately, I have seen examples where the silica gel is perfectly sealed in a tiny polythene bag, while the camera is in a loose, unsealed polythene bag. Is the world going crazy or is it me?

What a nice bunch of people you are! That was the impression gained by staff and trade alike at our Gala Day at Charterhouse School in September, but maybe that champagne mellowed us up somewhat. Two hundred of you turned up, replete with an impressive array of cameras, to sample our menu which consisted of some tasty models and tempting demonstrations of Durst enlargers, Contax and Zenith cameras, Phago accessories and Jobo processing equipment. Heather Angel was there to autograph her books and give some useful advice at the Brains Trust, and the place was littered with the most unusual



"props" for your glamour shots, ranging from an antique combine harvester to a racing car. But the greatest interest was shown in the film show and practical demonstration of Cibachrome printing. It was so nearly complete chaos — the water bath flooded the floor and my two hastily enrolled volunteer assistants emptied out the bleach a minute too soon — but as if to demonstrate its latitude the results were perfect. "Amateur Photographer" concluded their write-up of the day with the words "popular, welcome, beneficial and most of all enjoyable to all the participants, trade and public alike, and hopefully will become a trend. The more the better." We will certainly have another in '77; meanwhile, my thanks to all of you for being such an attentive audience and for your many kind remarks when it was over.

I heard of many friends last year who intended to make their own Christmas cards but left it too late: now is the time to act. My own card last year was a composite of the Greetings Negative (refs. 4909/4910) and a family scene, printed down on to Autone metallic paper (ref. 4403). The variety of colours supplied in a single packet ensured that relatives who were likely to see one another's card could each receive a different colour!

With Christmas just around the corner and orders building up to their usual seasonal peak, we'll be putting all hands to the task which we consider should have utmost priority — seeing that orders are dispatched with the greatest of speed. So it's only fair to point out that other office tasks like replying to queries can be expected to take rather longer than usual during this short but hectic period!

With so many exciting new introductions in our catalogue, it is inevitable that some of the present range has been squeezed out. In order to clear our shelves for fresh stock as quickly as possible, we will be selling off all remaining stocks of items we have dropped, at quite ludicrously cheap prices, during a giant Sale in January. If you would like to have "first refusal" before we advertise any of these offers, send us a stamped addressed envelope marked SALE in the top left hand corner. The list will be posted to you around the middle of January, and we promise you it will contain many sensational below-cost offers.

For your friends

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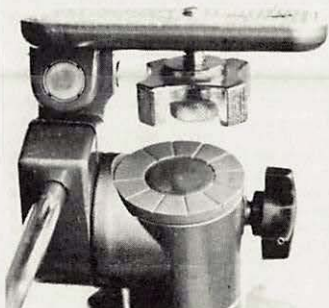
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There is one aspect of modern tripods which really infuriates me — the knob which screws into the camera's tripod bush, which now invariably has a separate adjuster to compensate for the depth of the hole in the camera. The inside knob — which is the one I should be screwing in to the camera initially — is so fiddly to reach that I end up locking the thing before it is right home. At last I've discovered the



secret. First unscrew the wider locking nut as far as it will go, tightening it against the other. Then I can screw the whole assembly into the camera in one go, and when completely home the locking nut will free itself, screw up the shaft and do its job! If that garbled description means nothing to you, try it out and you'll see what I mean.

I am assured the following story is perfectly true. A certain London photographic dealer has decided that he can no longer tolerate the frequent callers who engage his assistants in long hours of discussion without the slightest intention of making a purchase. His solution was to set up a special small counter for them in a corner of the shop where he offers short technical consultations for a fee of £1. To make the scheme appear more official, a large sign-written notice above the counter reads "Photographic Information Service — Office", but beyond customers' earshot it is referred to by its abbreviation, the "P.I.S.-Off. Dept."

Did you know that you could have bought a Pentax K over the counter about ten years ago? Also known as the Tower 29 in the States, it was an economy model featuring a 55mm f/1.8 pre-set standard lens and separate dials for slow and fast shutter speeds! No connection, of course, with the new bayonet-fitting models for which Asahi have reincarnated the name. Just one of the interesting bits of history which you can find, along with a lot more practical information, in the Focal Camera Guides.

Are you a Quadrimaniac? Users of the Quadrimask like myself get so fanatical about them that I have coined this description! People who think the Quadrimask (ref. 4407) is just a gadget for making two or four smaller prints on 8 x 10in paper overlook its great advantage — that you can actually switch on the room lights between exposures to sort out another negative, then focus and compose it, and repeat the procedure for each of the four. It's wonderful for colour printing! But I have discovered a further modification. Recently I had to make several dozen small colour

prints of a wedding portrait, for which half of a 5 x 4in size was adequate. So I cut an extra mask measuring 4 x 2½in, drew a black line midway across the 5 x 4in white mask for composing purposes, and it was no problem at all to get eight of these on the 8 x 10in paper. Not a single double exposure, either!

Most photographers take a special interest in Candid Camera on TV, but I think the new series is little improvement on the previous one and certainly not a patch on the original no-engine-in-the-car series. I always consider that real life is often far more amusing than any contrived situation. Last weekend one of my goats went on heat and had to be taken quickly to stud if we were to have any milk next summer. Not having a trailer available at the time, she sat on the back seat of the car beside my wife during the 90-minute journey. This particular goat with glorious curved horns is quite an impressive sight even under normal conditions, but I wish my camera had been on hand to record the expression on the face of the girl petrol pump attendant at the garage in Trotton where we refuelled the car!

VAT INCREASES

There has been much talk about the possibility of sharp increases in VAT rates to help the government cope with their financial crisis. If this happens, the following table will enable you to calculate how much to add to the prices in our list.

Standard rate

This applies to all reference numbers preceded by "V" in our price list, and is currently at 8%.

New rate	Amount in the £ to be added
10%	2p
12½%	4p
15%	6½p
20%	11p

Luxury rate

This applies to most equipment sold by us, but not materials; items at this rate have no special prefix in our price list. Currently 12½% (almost the lowest in Europe!).

New rate	Amount in the £ to be added
15%	2p
20%	7p
25%	11p
30%	15½p

The date on which we receive your order and pay the money into the bank, not the date we dispatch the goods, determines the VAT payable. So if an imminent rise in VAT results in a rush of orders and dispatch is delayed, you will still only pay the old rate providing your order arrives before the increase.

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