

Mamiya/Sekor 1000DTL

In pre-TTL-metering days we used to judge an SLR by its 'classic feel'. Classic feel meant an uncluttered camera that handled smoothly, with focusing, film advance lever and shutter release in just the right positions. The Pentax has this classic feel. So has the Nikon F without Photomic head. With the advent of TTL-metering systems the uncluttered look took a dive—more important simplicity and speed of operation regressed. Most professional SLR users today keep right on using those 'old' SV Pentaxes and Nikon F's, preferring a separate light meter and an occasional glance at the sky. Certainly the non-TTL-SLR won't compute, but it obeys orders faster than its more complicated brothers.

Pro's and amateurs are different breeds—for that matter, so are pro's and pro's. Some want camera-based meters, others dislike 'em. The problem for the TTL-SLR manufacturer is to provide an efficient tool with as little excess of complication as possible. People don't want to think about the camera, they want to think about the picture in the viewfinder—not including the marginal decorations of follow-pointers, f numbers, stop-and-go signals, and meter-field markings.

Those who like TTL-metering are going to be very interested in the new Mamiya/Sekor 1000DTL, which has two separate metering systems, one for spot readings, the other for average view readings. As this is the big difference between this and other cameras, let's deal with it first.

Two meter systems

There's lots of argument about the respective merits of various TTL systems. Some employ one or two scanning cells to read the amount of light falling across the entire screen. Others 'improve' on this by placing a third cell to 'compensate' for light-leak through the viewfinder eyepiece. Other manufacturers narrow the meter-reading angle to coincide with the field outlined by the central focusing spot. Narrower angle, more reading accuracy. Mamiya have gone one better, by giving the operator the choice of wide and narrow systems. Fig. 1 shows the location of the three cells used, one on either side of the eyepiece to give full-screen average readings, the other reading just a small rectangle covering 6% of the total frame.

Before using either spot or averaging method, the automatic/manual selector lever situated on the underside of the lens barrel must be set to 'A', so that the automatic diaphragm is activated. Figs. 2 and 3.

Spot readings

Most useful when the subject is either much lighter or darker than the general view, or in some landscape work, where a bright sky would register far higher than trees or buildings at ground level. One value of the spot system is that you can measure the darkest shadow and the brightest highlight

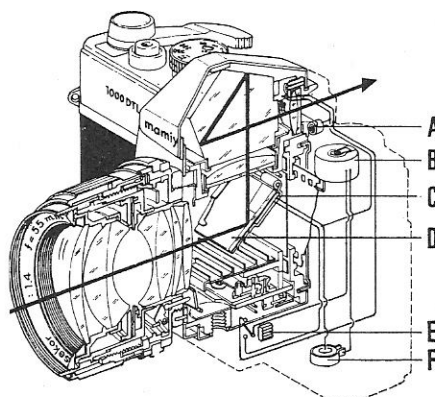


Fig. 1: A: Location of one of the two CdS cells for Averaging System. B: Exposure meter. C: CdS cell for Spot System. D: Mirror. E: Spot/Average meter system selector switch. F: Silver oxide battery

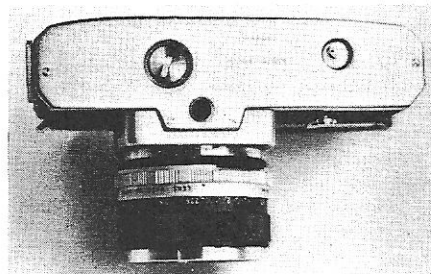


Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

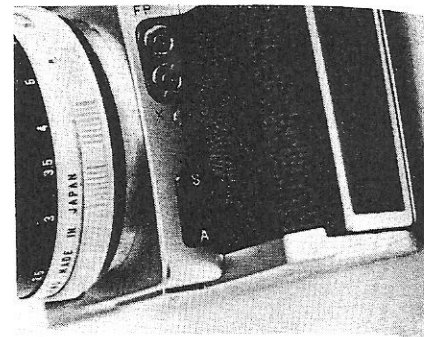


Fig. 5

in which detail is required, then average the two. Another useful method is to place adjacent dark and light tones (such as a section of dark branch against the sky) equally within the spot reading area of the screen, and thus let the meter do the averaging for you. In Fig. 4 you can see the 6% measuring area outlined on the inclined mirror.

Having remembered to switch the automatic/manual selector lever on the lens to 'A', a further action is required. Move the spot/average selector switch to 'S'. Fig. 5. You have a reminder in the viewfinder. An arrow points to 'S' within brackets outlining the 6% area.

Now for a third action. Wind on film, which will also switch on the meter circuit. Note that the film advance lever, formerly in the parked position shown in Fig. 6, now rests protruded as shown in Fig. 7. Focus the subject sharply and arrange the area to be read within the 6% area, press in the film-advance lever against its spring, holding it there while rotating the aperture ring until the needle at the right of the viewfinder is centred on the reversed letter 'C'. You are ready to shoot.

Average readings

The spot/average switch, Fig. 5, is moved to 'A'. In the viewfinder the indicator arrow

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Our Technical Editor Ron Spillman has been in Cologne for the 'big show' which ended on October 6, and will be reporting fully in our next issue on the many interesting items displayed there.

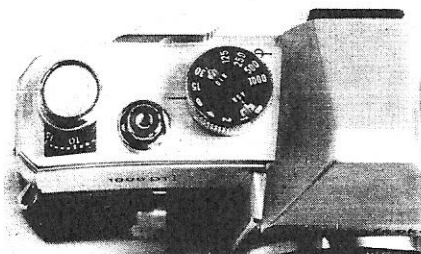


Fig. 6

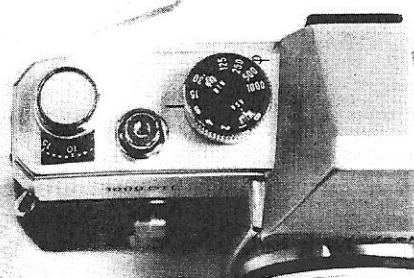


Fig. 7

will move to 'A', outside the 6% area. Focus, compose the picture, press in the film-advance lever and rotate the aperture ring as before, until the needle is centred on the reversed 'C'. There seems a lot to remember, but having taken the camera out for the day I found the routine as automatic as the camera.

- (i) The auto/manual lever on the lens has only to be switched on once, when you commence shooting. Unless, for some special purpose you switch to manual, the switch stays there.
- (ii) The fact that the meter is on only when the film has been advanced is a good thing. That's when it's required, just before shooting, and it is an excellent reminder to wind on.
- (iii) The spot/average switch will normally stay in one position, depending on your personal metering preference. In hurried situations you'll be on 'A' anyway, and in situations calling for more analytical use of the 'S' system you'll be working slowly enough not to curse the need to alter the switch.

If the film is still wound on after the last shot of the session, the film advance lever will still be in the projecting position. Press the button at the pivotal centre of the lever. The lever will snap back to the parked position and the meter circuit cut out. The lever is a smooth-working ratchet-type and can be advanced in a single long stroke, or several short ones.

Microgrid

I like the Mamiya/Sekor 1000DTL's viewing screen. The micro/diaphragm grid is large and snappy. It leaves little room for doubt, even with beginners. For subjects difficult to focus, such as wooded hillsides, the outer fresnel area can be used. I tried this to focus on straight skin-tones by ordinary room lighting, and found it easy.

Lens

There are two 'standard' Mamiya/Sekor lenses for this camera, an f/1.4 and an f/1.8, both of 55mm focal length. The former, which we have not tested, consists of seven elements arranged in five groups and the latter six elements in four groups. This latter was the one I put through its paces. Personally, I can go out, take a few shots with a lens, process the film, and make up my mind whether I'm satisfied or not. Most repairmen would agree with me that merely observing the lens-image at various apertures on the viewing screen provides a fair preliminary indication of likely performance. I choose some sharply delineated object, focus, then rotate the lens so that the test object shifts around from centre to edge, then right round the margins and corners. I did all this and took some test shots, too. I liked what I saw. Then I went along to Vanguard Instruments at Brentford and we really put the lens through its paces.

f/1.8 55mm Mamiya/Sekor, No. 77859

	centre	edge
f/1.8	good	fair
f/2	good	fair
f/2.8	good	good
f/4	good	good
f/5.6	v.good	v.good
f/8	v.good	v.good
f/11	excellent	v.good
f/16		
contrast factor:	high	
flare factor:	low	
general corrections:	good	
mechanically:	excellent. Smooth finish, precision threading, precise clicks at half-stops between f/2 and f/11.	

Having seen the bench performance, I'd say that this is a good specimen of the type. The tendency nowadays is to build in a fair amount of contrast and, as long as resolving power is not sacrificed, this sharpens up images in a satisfying way. Using FP4 and Resofine 2-B during my practical tests, I found that from f/1.8 to f/2.8 I had all the quality necessary for situations calling for such apertures (so-called available light shots), and from there on down the lens coped well with pictorial situations.

General construction

The camera is constructed to a fairly high specification, and perhaps a little better than most Japanese cameras below the Nikon class (and price). Styling is neat and the various switches sensibly placed. The release button is at the front of the top-plate, well-spaced between the shutter speed setting knob and the film-wind lever. I find this forward placing just right—it is where the index finger naturally settles.

The take-up spool is conventional and the back hinged. In Fig. 5, you see the broad locking catch, which can be operated with one hand and has a good positive click. The self re-setting film counter is large and easy to read. Rewind button is self-locking, conveniently situated on the baseplate.

Shutter

Settings for the cloth-blind focal plane shutter are from 1 second to 1/1000th. The

shutter speed setting knob is sensibly sized and can be turned without the fingers fouling the shutter release or prism housing. Easy-to-read figures are white on black, with the 1/60th (top speed for, electronic flash) in red. ASA or DIN settings are altered by lifting and rotating the knurled ring around the shutter speed dial. Very good functional action.

On the model tested speeds were as follows:

Marked	Actual
1/1000th	1/769th
1/500th	1/416th
1/250th	1/212th
1/125th	1/101th
1/60th	1/50th
1/30th	1/23rd
1/15th	1/12th
1/8th	1/8th
1/4	1/4
1/2	1/2
1	1

Apart from that marked top speed which would give half a stop over-exposure (important with colour), all others were well within expected tolerances. We tested the meter on a calibrator at 100ASA, checking response against four opal windows at different light levels. The meter gave dead accurate readings over the whole range, on both spot and averaging systems. A silver oxide battery (Eveready S-76E, Mallory MS-76, or Ray-O-Vac RS-76) fits into the battery compartment on the baseplate, Fig. 2, and lasts about a year depending on use.

The flash contacts are well placed at the side of the mirror housing, so that flash cords will not dangle before the lens. On the FP socket, focal-plane bulbs can be used between 1/60th and 1/1000th, while M-class bulbs will synchronise up to 1/30th. Using the FP socket, M-class bulbs synchronise up to 1/15th and electronic flash up to 1/60th.

One thing the Mamiya people don't use in their advertising, though it fails me why, is the fact that the mirror-lift is the quietest and most vibration-free I've encountered on any SLR this side of the Leicaflex—which adds up to more sharpness at slower speeds.

The dimensions of the Mamiya/Sekor 1000DTL are:

Width	5.8in
Height	3.7in
Thickness	2.0in to lens throat, less lens
Weight	25.5oz less lens

As I stated earlier, with this camera you have things to remember. For instance, before changing or removing an automatic lens the meter must be switched off and the auto/manual selector on the lens itself switched to 'A'. If you don't do this, there'll be strong resistance when attempting to unscrew the lens, and ignoring this will cause serious damage. True, only the most inept would ignore such resistance, and if you feel intellectually above making such errors, you could justifiably consider the 1000DTL just your job.

Price: with f/1.4 lens:	£170
with f/1.8 lens:	£145
e.r.case:	£6 10s.