

A BODY OF CAMERAS

Choosing a lens can be a relatively straightforward affair. Granted, it is simplest with the prime lenses and a bit more taxing with the zooms but conclusions can be quickly reached. Experience has shown that selecting a camera body can be a more difficult decision. We thought it was time to look at the camera body range to help with this task.

We find that some areas of the range are easy to sort out. Entry-level AF is the Nikon F60. This has replaced the successful F50 and builds on the strong points of the out-going model. First-time buyers still have their work cut out; Nikon UK have decided to bring in the black version as well as the silver one. Decisions, decisions...

Moving over to the more manual approach to learning photography, the FM2n has that area sewn up. The last of the all-manual models it is as popular as ever. We have a strong market for new and pre-owned examples. Staying largely in control but adding a touch of automation leads us to the ever-present F3. The flagship model of the eighties just will not go away. Strong



Japanese market sales help to keep the model in the range.

The F70 quietly plods away. This is a gem of a camera with great spec, including a very capable built-in flash. Sometimes, rather like great artists, camera models enjoy greater success after their demise. Odds-on favourite for such a response is the F70, representing undiscovered treasure in the AF range.

This brings me to the three models which, judging by the enquiries we receive, seem to need the most clarification. The Nikon F90X has been with us since late 1994. The F90 gently evolved into the F90X but the newer version experienced far greater acclaim. The F90X represents great value, as the

spec is as good as it has always been but the price is about 30% lower. It has the depth of field preview, 1/250th flash sync and changeable focus screen that the marks it out as a more serious model. It enjoys greater build quality but Nikon delete built-in flash this far up the range.

So, what about the F100?

Well a good way of looking at it is Nikon have replaced the F90X with the F100 and re-introduced the F90X lower down the range. The restructuring of body prices, largely obscured by the overall reduction in Nikon pricing, helped bring this about. This way Nikon can carry on making the F90X for a few more years (as they have announced

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they will) and still make progress below the flagship F5.

The F90X continues to offer a good specification and at the same time offers great value for money. For many types of photography the F90X is a super tool. We have seen photographers from many diverse disciplines taking up the F90X with a good degree of success. Needless to say some are taking another F90X as a second body. Others are looking further up the range, to the F100 and flagship F5.

Despite the arrival of the F100 the F5 remains the pro AF SLR (Single Lens Reflex) in the range. The F100 certainly has professional aspirations but it lacks the pointers that normally distinguish Nikon's pro SLR models. The F100

shares the principle of a metal body but in this case magnesium alloy instead of aluminium and titanium. Like the F5, it carries some of its mechanical components on rubber mounts, to reduce noise.

Whilst the F5 retains its exclusivity with 3D colour matrix metering, the F100 has its own ten zone matrix system. They do, however, share the same AF sensor (the multi-CAM 1300 if you are interested). Both cameras have a similar, grippy finish and are an ergonomic delight. The F100 answers the prayers of those desiring the F5 but wishing for less bulk and weight. The F5 is about 1200 grams against the F100's just less than 800 grams (only 30 grams more than an F90X!). The MB-15 grip will improve the F100's handling for very little extra weight.

Both cameras have a series of about two dozen so called custom options. These are for functions that are in the grey area; some are needed for just a few applications and are therefore not normally active, whilst others represent an alternative way to set up a camera. They both have a slightly different set of options and prospective buyers should study both lists. They also offer the chance to link to a personal computer to set further options or download shooting data using the appropriate Nikon Photo



Secretary.

The F100 arguably scores a point or two for its illuminated AF brackets in the viewfinder. Needless to say the F5 hits back, in this case with 100% finder coverage (F100 = 96%), optional viewfinders (like a waist level) and more choice of focusing screens. It also has the ADR window (Aperture Direct Readout) to allow manual lens users to see the aperture setting.

With AF lenses this is not an issue as both bodies have a front command wheel for aperture control.

Other fully professional SLR features on the F5 are the mirror lock-up, ultra-fast motor drive and multi-function back option with between frames data recording. These have been standard for Nikon's pro cameras. That said the cameras share a very accurate flash system, adjustable viewfinders (-3 to +1 dioptres) and built-in exposure bracketing. Here the slightly different implementation favours the F100 but the MF-29 swings the balance back to the serious bracketing options of the F5.

I think it is fair enough that Nikon wish to call the F100 a pro SLR. In doing so they have moved the goalposts a touch. Perhaps the F100 should have the subtitle Professional Performance Redefined?

So there is a quick tour of the current Nikon bodies. All are masters at particular things and there are no disappointments in there. It is possible to wade through the spec and find the camera that will be fine for the applications you need. Feel free to cast that aside and go for

something better if the urge takes you. We are human after all. Was it Oscar Wilde who could resist anything, except temptation?

by Tony Munday

IN FURTHER PRAISE OF YOU

Never has the truism that “the customer is always right” been better exemplified by a particular one of that merry throng. Did you know that you form a body 15,000 strong?

So my article of a couple of Gazettes ago “In Praise of You” could have been entitled, “In Praise of the 15,000”.

That customer is unique as you each are. His particular talent of

keen observation is what has come to light recently. If he were a painter it would be worthwhile for sure braving the strong smell of turpentine in his studio to get a glimpse of his portraits; in this case three in number. As it happens he is a writer not a painter, but an artist for sure.

When his response to our portrayal of the customer body turned up, the first reader quickly circulated it to all about the shop

and swiftly the telltale shrieks of laughter revealed a man who has a gift of communication beyond the norm.

So thanks Howard for your permission to unleash this priceless prose on our public. Fare thee well, blithe spirit.

Best wishes,

Nick Wynne

ET IBIDEM TIBI*

by Howard Spencer

“Or, in plain English, “And the Same to You!”)

He’s right, of course. Nick Wynne shows himself a shrewd judge of character when he describes Grays clients as courteous, witty and generally the salt of the earth. He could also have mentioned our towering intelligence and remarkable good looks, but we shall let it pass: one doesn’t want to over-egg the pudding. This admirably unbiased and objective assessment of the Grays clientele naturally begs the question, “What sort of establishment is this, that commands such an awesome following?”

All who are familiar with Grays’ own publicity know that this peaceful corner of Pimlico fairly hums with mahogany-panelled, glass-fronted assistants, ticking quietly in the corners as they rest



upon their leather upholstery. So we move swiftly on to look beyond appearances, at the personalities and the standards that make the enterprise what it is. Who, exactly, are the Three Wise Men: and what is the secret of the legendary Grays magic?

Frequently observed in his natural habitat of the desk by the door is Tony Munday, technical guru *sans pareil*. If you want to know just how many grommets there are in an F5 body, he’s your man. It was Tony who gave us our first taste of Grays standards, on our initial visit, seven years ago. Thinking I was stretching my luck, I tentatively asked if I could have my new FM2 with a plain focusing screen in place of the standard one, at no extra cost. (Try that at your local chainstore and see what you get!) “At Grays”, I was informed, “We do things differently. Of course it’s not a problem.” And the remarkable database that passes for the Munday brain works on humans, as well as cameras. I don’t know whether I was more worried or impressed when he recognised my voice over the phone, a good while after our meeting, remembering

accurately both surname *and* initials. Thinking I had somehow acquired the status of Most Troublesome Client, I was quickly reassured that he tries to remember *all* his customers. Mind you, I still wonder...

Lurking in his preferred territory at the back of the room is Nicholas Wynne, Esq. His brief as second-hand specialist at once evokes a Dodgy Geezer with a bulging wallet. Someone with the descriptive powers of an estate agent, and the scruples of a gangland lawyer. Some of us have had dealings with the like, and lived to regret it. Am I the *only* person who has ever been sent a lens on its last legs, whose alleged rating of "near mint" can only charitably be attributed to the close proximity of a packet of Polos? And then dealt with shirtily when arranging to send it back? I think not! But Grays is a different sort of establishment, and Mr. Wynne a different sort of operator. Perhaps you have played the diverting

parlour game involving an item of EXC+ Grays' second-hand, where you try to spot the difference from the new article. Aficionados will, after a few minutes, discern a suspicion of a rub on a baseplate, or the faintest signs of use on a lens mount; but that is generally about the measure of it. Suffice it to say we no longer shop around for our needs, but come straight to Grays, even if it means a little wait for an item to appear.



day on the ground floor, you may become aware of a slightly distracted figure, blinking in the full light of day as he emerges from his subterranean lair. You have caught sight of the eponymous Gray Levett, briefly forsaking his substantial collection of steam-powered and horse-drawn Nikons in the room with the funny name. (Something to do with insecticide and martial arts, I think, but I'm not much of an orientalist.) To



readers of Wodehouse the descent into Gray's underworld retreat recalls nothing so much as a visit to the butler's pantry at Blandings Castle. Ensconced like the worthy Beach in his natural element, he dispenses gossip and information (of a Nikon variety)

in grave and confidential tones, over not, alas, a glass of port, but a more-than-passable cup of coffee, nonetheless. And, like that good butler, there is a whiff of a bygone age about this connoisseur of vintage machinery. One can only hope that when he shortly discovers the twenty-first century going on around him, the shock will not prove too grievous.

Here, then, we have the Three Wise Men of Churton Street, plying their wares with their

accustomed and unsurpassed knowledge, courtesy and efficiency. Never mind the scenery, pleasant though it is; it is the service delivered by these sterling fellows that truly sets Grays apart. A shop as shops used to be, perhaps? Certainly a shop as shops *ought* to be. Thoroughly worthy, in fact, of such outstanding customers as ourselves.

STOP PRESS

Two new Magic Lantern Guides are now available.

The guide to the SB-28 Speedlight by M. Huber, and the guide to the F60 camera by Artur Landt are now available priced at £10.95 each.

Postage and packing is priced at £2.00 for one book plus £1.00 for each additional book ordered.

To order by mail please call **020 7828 4925**.



AN EVENING WITH... GRAHAM HANCOCK

with photographs by Santha Faiia

In the last issue I mentioned that we were planning the next in our series of **An Evening with...Graham Hancock**. This evening will be produced in association with Celebrity Centre London and will take place in the Great Hall of the Castle at Saint Hill Manor, East Grinstead on Saturday 11th September 1999.

Graham's books have become international best sellers. As a direct result of his work, we now have a far greater understanding of our past and our place in the world today. His books have re-written ancient history, and many of his claims are now widely accepted. **The Sign & The Seal** was his first major international best-seller and it was announced in *The Guardian* that 'Hancock has invented a new genre: an intellectual whodunit'.

Graham Hancock's work is meticulously researched and has taken him to all corners of the



earth. His claim that civilised man has been around far longer than has traditionally been given credit is gathering momentum and is now accepted by many leading academics. That these earlier civilisations have left enough fingerprints to provide us today with serious warnings about our future is also now widely accepted by many across

the world, and as such makes him one of the most important writers working today.

Heaven's Mirror: Quest for the Lost Civilisation (1998) was his fourth number one best seller. It was released to tie-in with his highly acclaimed and hugely successful Channel Four television series, **Quest for the Lost Civilisation**.

Anyone who has seen Graham's fascinating television series or read any of his books will appreciate what a fascinating evening we can expect. Graham's wife, Santha Faiia has provided superb photographs to illustrate Graham's books and there will be an opportunity to view a number of her photographs on the night. Contact Gray Levett on **020 7828 4925** to register your interest.

WELCOME TO THE GRAYS OF WESTMINSTER WEBSITE

A feature we recently added to our website is a few e-mailing lists. One can register an interest in say, early Nikon and receive notification each time that we update the Nippon Kogaku Room listing. This means seeing the stock available long before it reached any of our advertisements.

There are lists relating to Nippon Kogaku Room, new equipment and special offers, second hand, *Grays of Westminster Gazette* (our acclaimed monthly Nikon

publication) and our catalogue. All one needs to do is send us an e-mail. The instructions are on our website. Just send us a note asking to be put on the list in which you are interested.

Our website address is:
www.graysofwestminster.co.uk

WANTED FOR CASH

We urgently require F5, F100, F90X, F90, F70, F-601, F3HP, FM2n and FE2 camera bodies as well as AF-D and AIS Nikkor lenses. Most of the range of Nikon accessories are constantly needed also. Please contact Nick Wynne on 020 7828 4925.

TELEPHONE CODES

The telephone code for London changed on June 1st of this year to 020 7 for the 0171 code area.

From June 1999 until August 2000 the 0171 code may still be used, but we are changing over to the new codes now to allow plenty of time for the adjustment.

Please note our new numbers are as follows:

Tel: 020 7828 4925
Fax: 020 7976 5873

MADAGASCAR TO DISABILITY IN ONE EASY LESSON

by Steven Bloch

What has Madagascar to do with disability you might ask? If you link it up with Nikon or, more particularly, Grays of Westminster, it might make a little more sense as to why I have been asked to write this article. Nikon, in fact, partnered my film long before Madagascar, from the days when I first toured Iceland, ten years previously. But in 1992 it was Grays who helped me realise the full potential of 'Nikonability' and gave me the tools, ultimately, to succeed as a photographer of disability. For the last six years Tony Munday has been a particular friend to my photography and has helped to bolster the development my images with the personal service Grays are noted for.

As a fledgling, photographic pursuits engendered some interest in me with my first 'real live' camera, a Rollei 35B which 'developed' quickly into a Praktika SLR, grew into a Pentax and finally metamorphosed and came of age in the form of a Nikon. It was this transition to Nikon that put some fire into my photography. It was with the FM2 that I started to take pictures of people. (Before that I had actually tried my hardest to avoid people in pictures!) I soon, however, gave up my photography, as fate would have it – fortunately, though, only temporarily.

The basis of my uncharacteristic pursuit of the photography of disability and the elderly stems from two very serious accidents I had and their

disabling effects. This was followed by an extensive period of voluntary work. So, when I rediscovered photography after I went back to Iceland and also Greenland, it was natural for me to photograph the field that I had been so deeply involved with both as a patient and as an enabler. Having chosen my field of photography I then needed the equipment that would best allow me to photograph this change in



subject matter. In two easy lessons I found the answer to that photography. The first is Nikon and the second, Grays. (It was another client, Nick Garbutt, the leader of my trip to Madagascar, who introduced me to Grays).

Tony Munday, who represents Grays in their inimitable way, shows me how to get the best out of Nikon and how Nikon products can help me. I would like to point out that never has Tony tried to 'sell' Nikon to me and has not pressured me, which would make me run a mile out of Churton Street! Having seen my portfolio a few times he knows where I'm at, what I am looking to do with my photography and where I'm going. He has helped me reason

the process that has ultimately lead me to the equipment best able to improve my photography. But less of this testimonial to Tony and Grays otherwise it might be mistaken for sycophancy!

In photographing people, whether in action or portraiture I prefer to be as inconspicuous as possible. I like to take my photographs as quickly as I can and move on to the next. Actually, I think it is my general dislike of mechanical equipment that makes me want to spend as little time as possible with the mechanics of it and as much time with the composition and creativity. Most of my time is spent just observing. Then I pick the moment.

The first rule is to not interfere with what your subjects are doing. You have to gel totally with your environment and with what is going on. Expression and your physiognomy (the cast or form of a person's features, expression, body, etc.) are very important in making your potential subjects feel comfortable with you as a photographer. I find the less you say the better! I find I am less obtrusive the lower I am and with disabled people especially I try to get as low as I can. Looking down on someone gives an impression of inferiority. Disabled people may be particularly sensitive to this. The quietness of the camera is naturally very important in terms of not being noticed. I also make sure the soles of my shoes are reasonably spongy so I can

move around without too much noise. In this respect also wear clothes that are likely to blend with the atmosphere, whilst being of a professional nature.

However, the two elements of paramount importance in my photography are quietness and speed of operation and this is why I find Nikon the best! The techniques I use in my photography with disabled people and the elderly constitutes a sensitivity to their needs, their enjoyment of their activity and their environment – I see no reason why this should not apply to photography of any other person.

My first big step was when I realised that an autofocus set-up was a key element in improving my photography. It took a long time persuading me of its ethics. Due to one of my odder quirks, I had this old-fashioned feeling that I shouldn't make it too easy; until I realised, with Tony's help, that it was the creativity that was most important. In fact, I find focusing very difficult so the autofocus helps me pay much more attention to the aesthetic qualities of the photograph. Consequently, as fate would have it, or should I say inevitably, I purchased an F4, and 35-70mm, 80-200mm and 20-35mm lenses all at f/2.8. This helped me also because I try my hardest not to use flash – firstly because I don't like it and secondly in photographing disabled people, I am always concerned about the effects of flash on them, e.g. possibly in terms of epilepsy or the like. Nevertheless, I have to admit – though don't tell anyone else – I do own an SB-25 Speedlight (and it is very easy to use, even if I never use it!).

Some people complain that Nikon is so heavy but, personally, I find it very easy to hold and stable in my hands, and its weight in this respect is an asset. I have found that I have immensely quick speed of reaction to events, which is



helped further still by the speed of autofocus. I am able to find new perspectives, new angles and extraordinary positions with having to worry about the sturdiness, or the ability of the camera to shoot the image.

Having just purchased an F5, I am absolutely bowled over by it! – the England cricket team ought to learn a few lessons from Nikon!! Its handling and balance are wonderful, its operation simple, quick and efficient to use and its noise of operation, virtually inaudible. This inaudibility is of paramount importance in my work in disability and the elderly, particularly reportage, whilst my work as an artist in this field demands a versatility of approach that the F5 fulfils formidably as a successor to the F4. I used it properly for the first time yesterday in preparation for a big commission for a brochure in disability in higher education. I haven't yet got the film back from processing, but if the F5 makes as much difference to my photography as the F4 did then I'm looking forward to the results.

HOW TO ORDER

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Fax your order at any time on: **020 7976 5783**

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Alternatively, **email** your order to **info@graysofwestminster.co.uk**

Methods of payment

Orders may be paid by card, postal order or cheque. Please make cheques payable to **Grays of Westminster.**



The Nikon Legend - Part LVIII

by Gray Levett

A few issues ago I wrote an article about the NASA F3 camera and the special dummy version that we had on display for a limited time at the shop. After these articles of mine appear, it is not an uncommon occurrence that they generate a certain amount of correspondence from our readers. These take the form of not only asking further questions but also of providing me with more detailed information. It was this later form that would improve my scant knowledge of this area, as I did not have much information on Nikon's involvement in the NASA space program. A letter appeared from the former head of the PR Division at Kodak Limited,

H. J. P. (Douglas) Arnold.

Enclosed with the letter were a number of his articles on photography in space, which originally appeared in *The British Journal of Photography*. These articles contain a treasure trove of information on this fascinating subject.

Witness the photograph of astronaut Marsha Ivins – surrounded by camera equipment in Columbia's aft flight deck during the record-setting 11-day STS-32 mission in January 1990. Marsha Ivins played a prominent part in an experiment conducted to compare a battery of different films and photographic equipment. In all, 16 Kodak and Fuji film types were taken into orbit – including colour negative materials as well as a few black-and-white films.

In her left hand she is holding a Hasselblad fitted with a 70mm-film back and long lens (focal length unknown) while floating above her right hand is a Nikon F3HP. The rest of the equipment is generally kept in place with the aid of Velcro patches. In Douglas Arnold's letter he points out that "The picture of Marsha Ivins aboard the shuttle shows how easy it is to handle heavy gear in micro-gravity – finger tip control!"

As I mentioned in my original article Nikon provided a 250-exposure back. What I did not know was that it was loaded with



0.025 millimetres thick film. A dark slide permitted removal and installation of the magazine at any time. Fortunately, it is reloadable in flight. The magazine was also equipped with an automatic counter, which keeps record of exposures and stops the camera at zero. Electrical power was provided by an external 12V DC source or by a self contained battery pack (approximately 2000 exposures per pack). On the base is a data annotation module that digitally records days, hours, minutes, seconds, and tenths on each frame of film.

I would like to thank Douglas Arnold for supplying us with these articles together with the NASA photograph reproduced here.

H.J.P. (Douglas) Arnold now runs his own company, Space Frontiers Ltd. He was in BBC TV's studio team for the later Apollo Moon landings. He is the author of several books and many articles on astronomy and on photography and its history. *Eclipse '99 – Capture it on Film* is published by The Institute of Physics (ISBN: 0 7503 0619 X).

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