



GRAYS OF WESTMINSTER

WITH AN INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION FOR EXCELLENCE, GRAYS OF WESTMINSTER ENDEAVOURS TO SERVICE ALL YOUR NIKON NEEDS – NO MATTER HOW UNUSUAL OR EXCEPTIONAL. READ ON TO FIND OUT WHAT MAKES THIS UNIQUE DEALERSHIP OUTSTANDING



GRAYS OF WESTMINSTER, founded by photographer and entrepreneur Gray Levett, started as a mail-order business more than a quarter of a century ago with no more than £100 and a lot of hope. Dealing solely with secondhand equipment of high-end brands, such as Hasselblad, Nikon and Canon, the now iconic company has come a long way in 25 years and since its decision to deal exclusively with Nikon. Based in Pimlico, London, Grays of Westminster is considered an institution in the photographic industry; its highly trained staff frequently work with high-profile image makers, and pride themselves on delivering a personalised service to amateurs and professionals alike. No challenge is too big or product too rare for Grays of Westminster.

"Nikon was and still is the best brand in photography," claims founder Gray Levett, as he explains why he chose Nikon. But it's not only brand specialism that has led Grays of Westminster to being acknowledged for its contribution to photography; it's the exceptional service. "What really matters is good manners, looking after people and delivering what you promise. I like to call our approach 'exchange in abundance'," says Levett. While you can get key Nikon parts from any good dealer, and most chains stock the top four or five cameras and a selection of lenses, Grays of Westminster promises this and much more. "If you wanted a lens hood for a lens made in 1948, we might say: How many would you like? If you wear spectacles but your camera is from 1969 with the wrong dioptre prescription, again we'd like to say: How many do you need?"

"We love a challenge. For instance, we had a customer who bought a newly released digital SLR as a gift and the delivery was supposed to come on a Wednesday; he needed it the Thursday and it was delayed by a day. The moment it arrived, a Grays of Westminster director jumped on a train from

London to get him the camera in the north of England. We did it because we made a promise. Customers know they can rely on us and that we'll do anything we can to deliver the best service," says Levett.

Grays of Westminster not only has a Japanese buyer but Japanese-speaking staff make regular trips to Japan in search of rare and contemporary secondhand products. "Last year, we discovered a NIKKOR 6mm f/2.8 fisheye lens that had been made to special order with a 220° field-of-view: if you weren't careful you'd include the tips of your toes in the shot! It went for £100,000," he adds. Among these really rare items, Grays sells a lot of re-emerging vintage cameras and discontinued manual focus lenses, especially to production companies for



Above: The NIKKOR 6mm f/2.8 fisheye lens is one of many rare items sold by Grays. Top & Left: The store in Pimlico, London, and its extensive collection of Nikon products.

animations like Tim Burton's *Corpse Bride*. "Not a day goes by without someone from the film industry contacting us, whether it is a modest production team or a major motion picture company; they want Nikon manual lenses for the inertia of the focusing as it offers slightly more control." When it comes to working with the stars, Grays of Westminster's long-standing relationship with icon Stanley Kubrick is well-known – often being the source of advice and equipment for his films like *Eyes Wide Shut* starring Tom Cruise, but ultimately Grays is the epitome of discretion.

"Large or small, every customer is important and we're private about everyone's requests and, over the years, as a result, we've been fortunate enough to attract some high-profile people who even today we don't talk about," explains Levett. It's the company's relationship with the Nikon Corporation that's truly exceptional; over the years and daily contact, they've built a symbiotic relationship with Grays of Westminster from which both parties are able to benefit.

Grays of Westminster provides its customers with an unwavering service and in return has received accolades for its contribution to both Nikon and Nikon users. www.graysofwestminster.co.uk



Q&A with Gray Levett

● **What is your proudest moment?**
It's always nice to get acknowledged and when we passed our 25th Anniversary we were presented with a beautiful trophy and rare hand-painted Japanese porcelain dish from the President of the Nikon Corporation, who described us as an institution in the photographic industry.

● **Have you had any strange requests?**
We once had a call from a photographer shooting in the Arctic Circle. His eyepiece dioptre correction lens had fallen off his camera and got lost down an icy crevasse, so he couldn't see what he was photographing. Somehow he sent out a message that was eventually picked up by a ranger, who then called us via the Explorers Club and we got a replacement to him with only his latitude and longitude to go by. We also often get requests for obscure products, like period Nikon cameras for feature films.

● **What are your current top-sellers?**
The Nikon D800 is an extraordinary camera and is selling very well, as is the D600. Nikon has just brought out the new NIKKOR AF-S 80-400mm f/4.5-5.6 and the take-up on that is very strong.

● **What five compelling reasons can you offer to shop at Grays of Westminster?**
1) We have the widest range of new and secondhand Nikon in the world. We're very fussy about what we sell and our grading descriptions are accurate, and all secondhand equipment carries a one-year warranty as well as a 14-day money-back guarantee.

2) We strive to offer the highest prices for secondhand Nikon kit outside of the private market.
3) We believe our service is second to none. It has been said that the service we offer is paramount and unparalleled in the British Isles. That means a lot to us.

4) We offer an extended warranty on new Nikon kit, which is a free additional year on top of Nikon's own warranty.

5) We have an excellent wants-list service that's absolutely free with no obligation to buy. Whether you're looking for a very rare Nikon S3M half-frame rangefinder or something more contemporary – we'll do everything we can to source it for you and contact you when we do.