

NEW NIKON F100

Nikon have often had a large gap between the flagship model and the next one down. Not just a matter of features, the cost difference has always been quite significant. The gap between the F4 and the F-801 was big and things got no better as time passed and the second place slot was filled by the F90. Despite changes in prices the F5 seems to stay about twice the price of the F90X.

So why have they chosen to fill the space? Good question and I think it is just a part of their overall plan to be more aggressive in the marketplace. Nikon have been quietly stepping up the pace since the introduction of the F90 in 1992. The update, the F90X, showed that we were entering a new era. Nikon have not abandoned their plan of orderly progress, merely upped the pace a bit. Whereas a sudden change in speed would draw attention to itself this gradual acceleration does not stand out. But close examination reveals its existence.

I know I have said on (quite) a few occasions that these are exciting times, Nikon-wise, but these surely are the best yet. We have the F5 performing strongly, the F90X dominating its area of



the market, the F60 walking in the footsteps of the successful F50 and Cinderella, the F70, is gaining ground. Add to this the F100, the new lenses and keen pricing; one could say we have never had it so good.

So what about the new F100? Well, what a camera. The job of filling the gap between the F5 and the F90X is not an easy one. Nikon are so awfully good at setting the spec of new models, enhancing some bits, adding others and their mastery is apparent here. Not a stripped down F5 and not merely a metal-bodied F90X; what we have is a brand new design drawing from the rest of the Nikon family as needed.

Clearly the looks are meant to suggest F5, that makes sense. But below the skin we have a clever

mix of features. The shutter speed range is the standard 30 seconds to 1/8000 with max flash speed at 1/250 (high-speed sync 1/4000). Exposure modes are manual, aperture priority, shutter priority and just the one (flexible) program. Aperture control is done via the body using the command wheel at the front.

Metering is a new ten zone 3D matrix system. Although not having the colour matrix of the F5 it has the advantage of being able to use the five focus sensors to make better decisions regarding the subject's location in the picture area. The flash system is the super multi-sensor system, meaning flash shots and fill-flash shots are taken in its stride.

The autofocus system is a five zone system similar to the one in

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the F5. Differences include an absence of the orange arrows the F5 uses to point out the focus area in use; the F100 makes the active bracket 'blink' in red. The five zone system assists with metering decisions as well as greatly improving the focus tracking capability. It uses a dynamic system to change from the initial focus zone if the subject should move into another area of the picture.

In a departure from the F5 system, the F100 can choose a focus area when shooting. In normal (not continuous) AF engaging dynamic AF activates this mode. The F100 will then choose which bracket to use for focusing. It scans the five brackets as you apply pressure to the shutter button. It then chooses a zone and focuses on what it finds in that bracket. I found this worked very well. It seems to be heading for the most close by object, unless there is something brighter a bit further away, when it will instead focus on that. As with other models it will follow a subject if one focuses on it when it is in motion.

The body of the F100 is constructed from magnesium alloy. This strong material makes it possible to hang the strap on 'd-rings' as on the F5, F4 and many earlier models. The control layout is great. The main command wheel is situated just where my thumb falls on the back of the camera. The toggle that selects the active focus zone is within reach on the camera back and is fitted with a lock below it to prevent accidental operation. The normal/dynamic AF switch is to the left of this.

The exposure mode button is close to the shutter button, as on the F5, as is the exposure compensation button. Another feature modelled on the F5 is the motordrive

control, a rotating ring on top of the rewind side. As it has no rewind knob Nikon have clustered three buttons here. Flash mode (slow and rear sync plus red-eye reduction), ISO/DX coding and bracketing are controlled by this trio.

The bracketing is worth a mention. Two or three frames and you choose the increment is pretty standard. I nearly missed the far from subtle additional functionality though. When you choose two frames you expect to have the opportunity to select whether the camera does correct and under or correct and over. Fine so far. But the F100 lets one choose how it does the three shot option. It can do correct and two 'overs', for example. This means an extra half dozen bracketing possibilities for the standard camera set-up.

A welcome feature is the custom option. In the F100 this consists of twenty-two different custom options many with just on or off choices but a few have three or four possible choices. One custom option that excited me is number twenty-one. This allows the exposure lock button to hold a reading; press and release the button and it holds the exposure value until the shot is taken. You can push the button and clear this if you make an error.

The custom options give the chance to make significant changes. One needs to keep a weather eye on the repercussions too. Perhaps you would prefer not to have the aperture and shutter speeds move in third-stop increments when the respective wheels are turned, then use custom function 2 to choose in half or whole stops. This will also change the increments for bracketing and exposure compensation. I also like option 8, which makes the film load when

you shut the back. The idea is not that we use all the options, more that Nikon provide features to suit as many photographers as possible.

The design team chose to bestow the F100 with an F5 style electronic depth of field preview. This means it works in program and shutter priority too. The F5 style meter changeover switch is useful but for my money the metering type being shown in the viewfinder is even more handy. I could also mention the built-in viewfinder correction allowing a range of plus one to minus three dioptres to keep most of us happy.

Having spent some time with the F100, both using it and studying the manual I realise that I have no hope of doing the camera justice in one article. I think the camera magazines will be faced with a similar problem. On many occasions I have felt that I had a good concept of what the F100 is only to find some feature that made it clear there were further uncharted waters, a bit like peeling layers off an onion.

Getting down to the nitty gritty, the F100 is just a touch larger than an F90X (without their respective grips). It weighs in at just under 800 grams, again without the MB-15 grip. The MB-15 does much to improve the handling and adds two batteries to the F100's complement, to extend life and also speed up the drive from about four and a half to around five frames per second. The camera costs £1099.00 with the MB-15 and will be £999.00 without. As usual we recommend going for the grip option. We should have our first shipment before the end of January and have been taking orders for a while now.

by Tony Munday

SPOILT FOR CHOICE

An imaginative manufacturer constantly introducing new products can make it seem like Christmas all the year around. Let's see if Nikon qualify....! I shall now start a completely unbiased review.

The first Nikon I ever came into contact with was an F3 and though I knew practically nothing about photography or cameras, picking it up and handling it just as an engineering product left me, well, enchanted. It was a present for someone and appeared on what you might call a short list of gift suggestions. Well you might call it that but actually the list of hints only contained one item! Based on the principle that if it looks right it's pretty likely to be right, I went ahead and bought an F3 for the person concerned and became in one instinctive move "flavour of the month" with this particular girl. The only thing she loved more than me was, well, the F3. So the plan misfired to that slight degree.

The start in my involvement in the camera business was coincident with the launch of the Nikon F4 (1988). They decided to keep two professional models in the range, choosing not to discontinue the F3. This perhaps started the "spoilt for choice" theme. Here were two cameras of pretty different character the F3 being traditional in its tough brass body as had always been format and the F4 breaking new ground

for the Nikon technophile with built in motor drive, matrix metering/spot metering and for me the most remarkable of all, the flash system. I very well remember the picture one of our customers took of a bathroom where each of five or so different whites was perfectly differentiated. One other chap had some very complex subject to photograph with flash and was running his slide rule white hot trying to calculate what was



required. Finally he gave up and phoned Nikon who simply gave two key instructions: 1. Point and 2. Shoot. The SB-24 / F4 setup took a perfect shot. The age of electronic miracles had arrived!

With that perspective it is clear that the Nikon enthusiast today is favoured with a far greater abundance of excellence than in 1988. The F5, F100 and F90X give three models that exceed the capabilities of the F4 in very many areas. And for the technophobe (perhaps?!), the F3 is available new. Or, if you

accept our very high nearly new standards, a pristine F2 is a delightful option. What fascinates me that new Nikon products are never viewed as replacing old ones but merely adding to the choice.

1988 gave us 80-200mm f/4 zoom or 180mm f/2.8 prime lenses; both completely valid choices today but now we can select an 80-200mm/f2.8 AF or AF-S as well if we wish. So the theme of wide choice with unerring excellence of design and quality of construction applies to lenses as well. Or how about as an accessory example the choice of 3 remote releases for the F5, F100 or F90X. Henry Ford would turn in his grave!

One last topic on choice bears mention. In the matter of technical specification the Nikon range does spoil you for choice. In the matter of quality of design and construction I am afraid no choice is offered: it's Nikon or others, many, many others.

By Nick Wynne

CHANGING GEAR - THE NIKON F5

by Simon Stafford

The honeymoon is over and I'm still in love!

About a year ago I had the opportunity to try out the Nikon F5 for the first time, (see Grays of Westminster Gazette, Issue 43, November 1997, 'Into the Wolves Lair'). If you saw the article you will know that my brief introduction to the camera left me awe struck as to its specification and handling. My appetite whetted I was convinced, (and I can be very persuasive with myself when it comes to acquiring a new piece of kit!) that an F5 had to join the F90X's in my camera bag.



Aware that new F5's have sold like the proverbial 'hot cakes' since the cameras' launch, it was with forlorn hope, or so I thought, that I asked Tony Munday if Grays ever saw second-hand examples of the F5. Ever the gentleman, and no doubt sensitive to my feelings, his reassuring reply was "yes, now and then", followed by an offer to place my name on a 'customer wants' list. My interest lodged I began the patient wait.

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A few weeks later the call came, and within a short

while I found myself leaving my favourite shop in Churton Street, with an absolutely mint F5 tucked under my arm.

Three months, and many rolls of film later I can safely say that those first impressions of the camera were in no way misplaced. The over riding sensation left with me after that earlier encounter was the speed with which the F5 accomplished its tasks compared to my F90X's. That's not to say the F90X is a slow machine, it's simply that through a combination of excellent design, and superb engineering, the F5 is incredibly quick.

My photography has changed gear. Three key features of the camera stand out for me, the metering, motordrive, and auto-focus. Given the fine tolerances of transparency film exposure latitude I was a habitual user of a separate hand-held meter, that is until the F5 arrived. I have found the matrix and spot metering facilities to be consistently accurate, with only the most demanding situations requiring any operator input to override the camera's suggestions. Fill-flash with the SB-26 or SB-28 connected has been a revelation, regardless of whether I have been shooting close ups with my macro lenses, or outdoor portraits on either wide angle, or short telephoto lenses.

The motordrive combined with auto-focus tracking has without doubt allowed me to capture pictures that previously I would have missed. Birds in flight to racing cars have all been recorded

effortlessly and accurately, giving me more time than I have ever enjoyed before to concentrate on composition. The flexibility of the system allows you, the photographer, to select frame rates from 2 frames per second (fps) up to 8 fps and combine this with conventional focus tracking, or the dynamic focus tracking that predicts the direction and rate of subject motion. Camera ergonomics permit rapid selection of lens aperture, shutter speed, and focus sensor all without having to remove your eye from the viewfinder.

Whether I have been stalking a butterfly in the field, trying to capture the fleeting facial expressions of a child, or the speed and grace of horse racing, my F5 has deliver the goods every time. So whatever you are 'into' in photography I would seriously commend the F5, and changing your gear.

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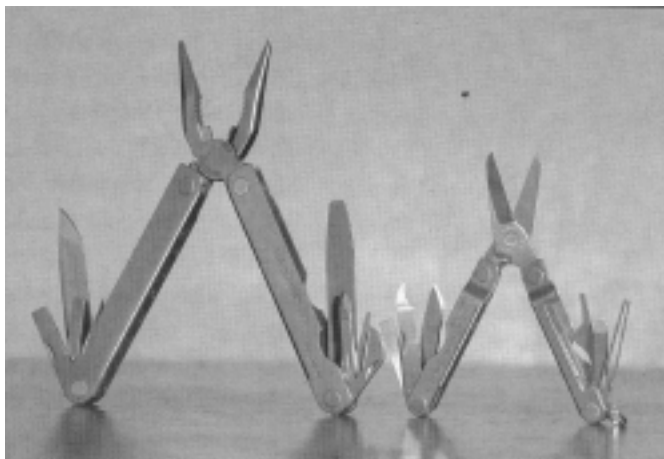
LEATHERMAN - Love at First Sight

A few weeks ago I purchased two of the Leatherman multi-purpose tools and since that time I have been extolling their virtues to anyone who would listen. Such has been my enthusiasm for these ingenious tools I have been politely banned from mentioning the name by my comrades in the shop. Tony (Munday) told me that I must feel like an actor appearing in a production of Macbeth who has to refer to it as 'the Scottish play'! For those of you who are unfamiliar with this thespian tradition, it is a widely held belief that bad luck will attend the mention of the name of Shakespeare's famous play. I should quickly point out here that no bad luck has followed my mentioning the name of Leatherman, it is merely that my much put upon colleagues rapidly understood just how good they are and don't need reminding of it by me on a daily basis!

What is a Leatherman and what are they doing at Grays of Westminster? According to his company's brochures, in 1975 Tim Leatherman (picky engineer) found himself travelling through Europe with a tight budget and a cranky car. Tim says; "A scout knife wasn't much help with the constant repairs on my old car, or most other fix-up tasks. What I really needed was a pair of "pocket pliers", but no such tool existed. I decided to put my engineering degree to use and design a new kind of tool that would replace the knife with something more useful. It took

seven years to perfect the original Leatherman tool because I refused to settle for anything but the best."

The Leatherman multi-purpose tools now join us in the form, firstly, of the Leatherman Micra. The Micra is a combination pocket knife and multi-purpose tool. Closing to 2.5 inches long (6.35 cm) and weighing 1.75 ounces (50.5 grammes) the Micra is so small you can carry it in your pocket or camera bag and not really notice it until you need it.



Then you have at your fingertips 10 useful tools packed into one tiny unit; spring action scissors, clip point knife, tweezers, nail file/cleaner, flat Phillips screwdriver, medium screwdriver, small screwdriver, bottle opener, ruler (imp./metric) and a special rotating lanyard attachment which comes with split ring for easy use with a key-chain or lanyard. The Micra costs £33.00.

Secondly, we have the original Leatherman Pocket Survival Tool (PST), which is built around full-size pliers. It weighs only 5 ounces (142 grams) yet packs in 12 essential tools in one. These are; needle-nose pliers, standard

pliers, wire cutters, hard wire cutters, clip point knife, metal/wood file, 8 inch/20cm ruler, can/bottle opener, small screwdriver, medium screwdriver, large screwdriver, Phillips screwdriver (to fit no.1 & no.2 screws) and bradawl/punch.

A few other features worth mentioning are the full size and full strength "Fan handle" pliers. All parts are interconnected so there are no separate parts to lose. A posi-stop safety feature prevents accidental blade closure. Finally it comes complete with a sturdy leather case which has a useful belt fitting. The PST costs £58.00.

Both the Micra and the PST are made in the USA of 100% stainless steel and come with a 25 year guarantee against defects in materials and workmanship. I carry these two extremely versatile tools around with me on all my photographic trips. Am I apologetic about spreading the word? Haven't I heard that love means never having to say you're sorry?

By Gray Levett

NIKON SALE

NEW LENSES

Amongst the lenses in this price update are a few you may not have seen before. New AF-S lenses include the AF-S 80-200/2.8D which we have had a couple of shipments of already, the new AF-S 28-70/2.8D which we hope to have at the end of February and the new lighter AF-S version of the 400/2.8D. In the AF range we have a newcomer, the AF 28-105/3.5-5.6D. This amazing lens will autofocus close enough to give half life-size reproduction at 105mm setting. The macro mode is engaged by a small switch and will work in the range 50-105mm. More on all these new lenses in a future edition.

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F5	£1,550.00
F100 + MB-15	£1,100.00
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F90X	£640.00
F70	£325.00
F70 + 35-80 AF-D	£370.00
F70 QD	£375.00
F60 + 35-80	£299.00
F60	£249.00
F50	£225.00
F50 QD	£275.00
F50 + 35-80 AF-D	£275.00
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FM2/T few left	£949.00
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AUTO FOCUS LENSES

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35-70mm f2.8 AF-D	£500.00
35-80mm f4-5.6 AF-D	£135.00
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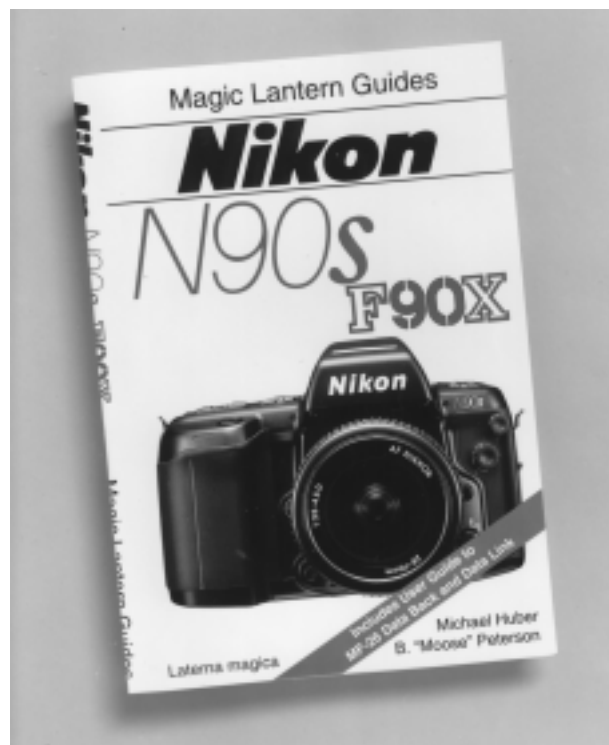
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The Nikon Legend - Part LIV

by Gray Levett

Today owners of the flagship Nikon models take for granted the mirror lock-up facility on their camera. However, prior to 1959 this was not a feature that was not available (at least as far as I know) on a 35mm single lens reflex camera.

The Nikon F of 1959 had the useful feature of being able to lock up the mirror to reduce vibrations when the shutter was fired. This is particularly desirable when taking high magnification photographs. Copying, astro-photography and other scientific work would show great improvements in sharpness by utilising this feature.

Mirror lock-up is also needed

when using the early Fisheye-Nikkor lens and the 2.1cm f/4 Nikkor, because of their deep-seated mounts. It is also important for continuous shooting with the Nikon F-36 Electric Motor Drive. To lock the mirror in the "up" position, you turn the knob situated on the side of the bayonet mount apron counter-clockwise until the black dot on the knob meets the red dot on the camera body. Cock the shutter and then depress the shutter release. The mirror will move up out of the way, and will not return after the shutter has fired. Alas, you lose a frame every time you do this!

If you are the owner of a Nikon F and examine the photograph on this page you will notice a small button to the right of the top of the self-timer lever. This is a factory conversion by Nikon and is a mirror-up button! You push in the button and the mirror flips up and remains there until the shutter is fired. The result - no more blank frames. Robert Rotoloni wrote an article in the Journal of the Nikon Historical Society in March of 1997 stating that he "had a chance to buy three brand new Nikon Fs with factory mirror-up buttons. These were supplied with waist-level finders only". He further notes that "there was a small insert in the manual explaining the use of the extra button on the face of the body".

Over the years I have seen three of these mirror-up Fs. I may have passed over other examples prior to seeing my first, as unless you are aware of its existence it is easy to miss. Then there were the Fs that were



modified for use with the Questar astronomical desk telescope. The photograph of the Questar modified example shows here a narrow black label with white lettering "Questar Modified - Questar Corp. New Hope, PA 18938". This is the only example I have come across with the Questar label. Other examples, such as the Nikon Fs Mr. Rotoloni mentions in his article had no such label.

A month or so ago Nikon collector Bob Warwick showed me another example, which has a metal plunger mounted to the side of the mirror box housing. Depress the plunger and it raises the mirror without losing a frame of film. At the time of this writing it is not known whether this was a factory conversion by Nikon (which I am inclined to doubt) or by the USA importers of Nikon, EPOI.

I am grateful to Hugh Donovan for supplying his photograph of the Questar modified F. Perhaps this article will whet your appetite to examine your Nikon F. Possibly you own a rare Nikon F and don't realise it!

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