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DOUBLE REVIEW: MAMIYA PRESS SUPER 23 AND MAMIYA UNIVERSAL PRESS

Written by [Kikie Wilkins](#) and published on June 9, 2017.

I'm here today to provide you with my review / comparative overview of the Mamiya Press Super 23 and the Mamiya Universal Press cameras. There's quite a lot to cover, so let me quickly cover the points discussed in this article:

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MY ROAD TO THE MAMIYA PRESS SYSTEM



Mamiya Press Super 23 and Mamiya Universal Press nameplates

Several years ago, a coworker friend of mine bought an original Mamiya Press camera and brought it in to work so others and myself could take a look at it. I'd never seen a camera like it before, only recently having developed an interest in 35mm rangefinder cameras.

My only experience in medium format photography up to that point had been shooting a few rolls of 120 film through a Rolleiflex TLR. I enjoyed medium format photography but was still getting back into the film habit after having used digital cameras for a number of years, personally and professionally.

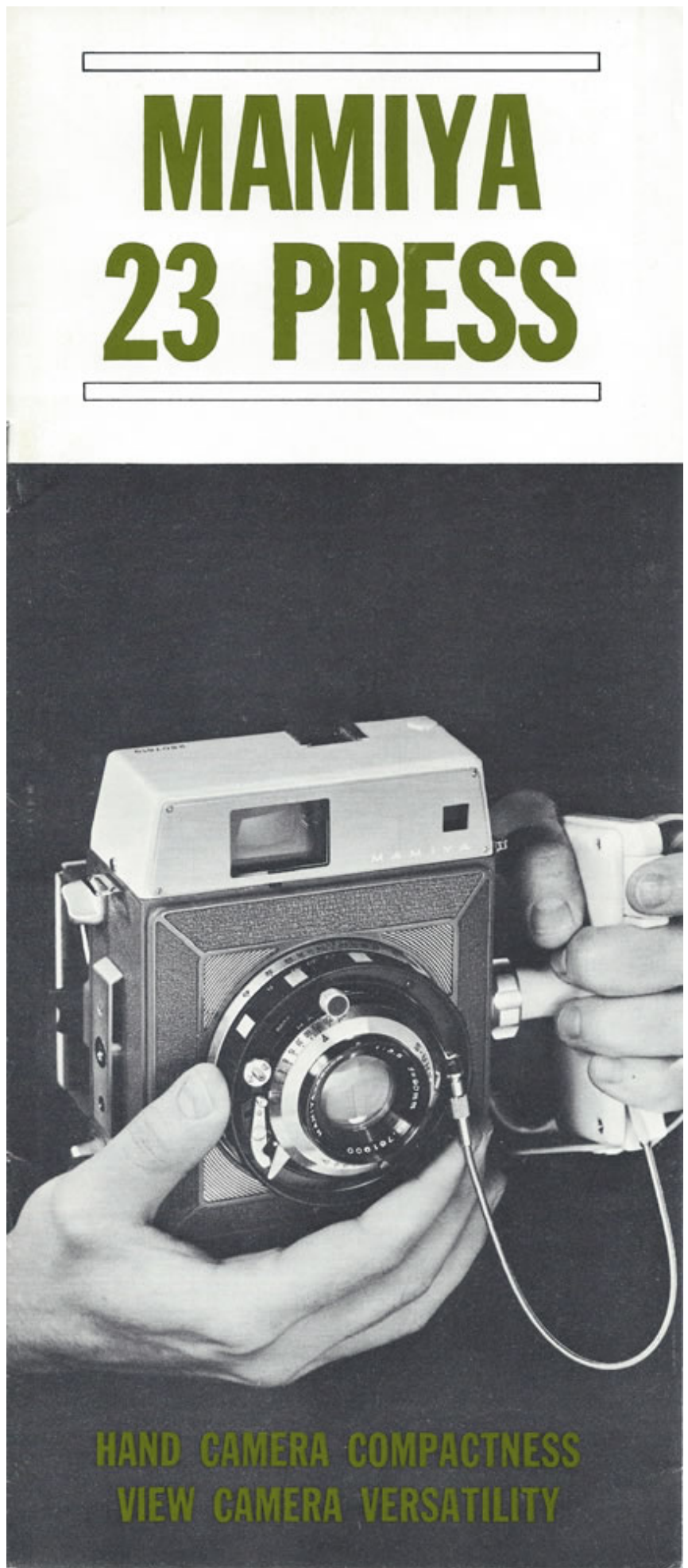
The Mamiya Press that my friend had purchased seemed very utilitarian in its appearance. It sat sort of squat and boxy, with a green-gray toned leather covering that almost made me think it was designed to be used in a jungle by some nation's army. Hers was complete and solidly built. She explained that she had used one while she was attending university and

wanted a camera of her own that that could take 6×9 images.

Not too long after that, I purchased my first medium-format camera, a [Mamiya RB67](#). I loved using it, and still do, but like my friend, something appealed to me about using a camera that could capture an image larger than the 6×7 format of the RB.

In the middle of 2016, I had the opportunity to purchase a Mamiya Press Super 23 camera from the estate of a photographer who was the original owner of the camera. It was in great condition and came complete in its original packaging, with a 6×7 film back, 100mm f/3.5 lens, handle, and lens hood.

Unfortunately, after using the camera for a few test shots, I began to have shutter issues with the lens. I debated whether to send it out for repair but ultimately decided to replace it with an updated version of the same lens – one of the many great things about film photography is what was once expensive to acquire and own can now in many cases be had quite cheaply.

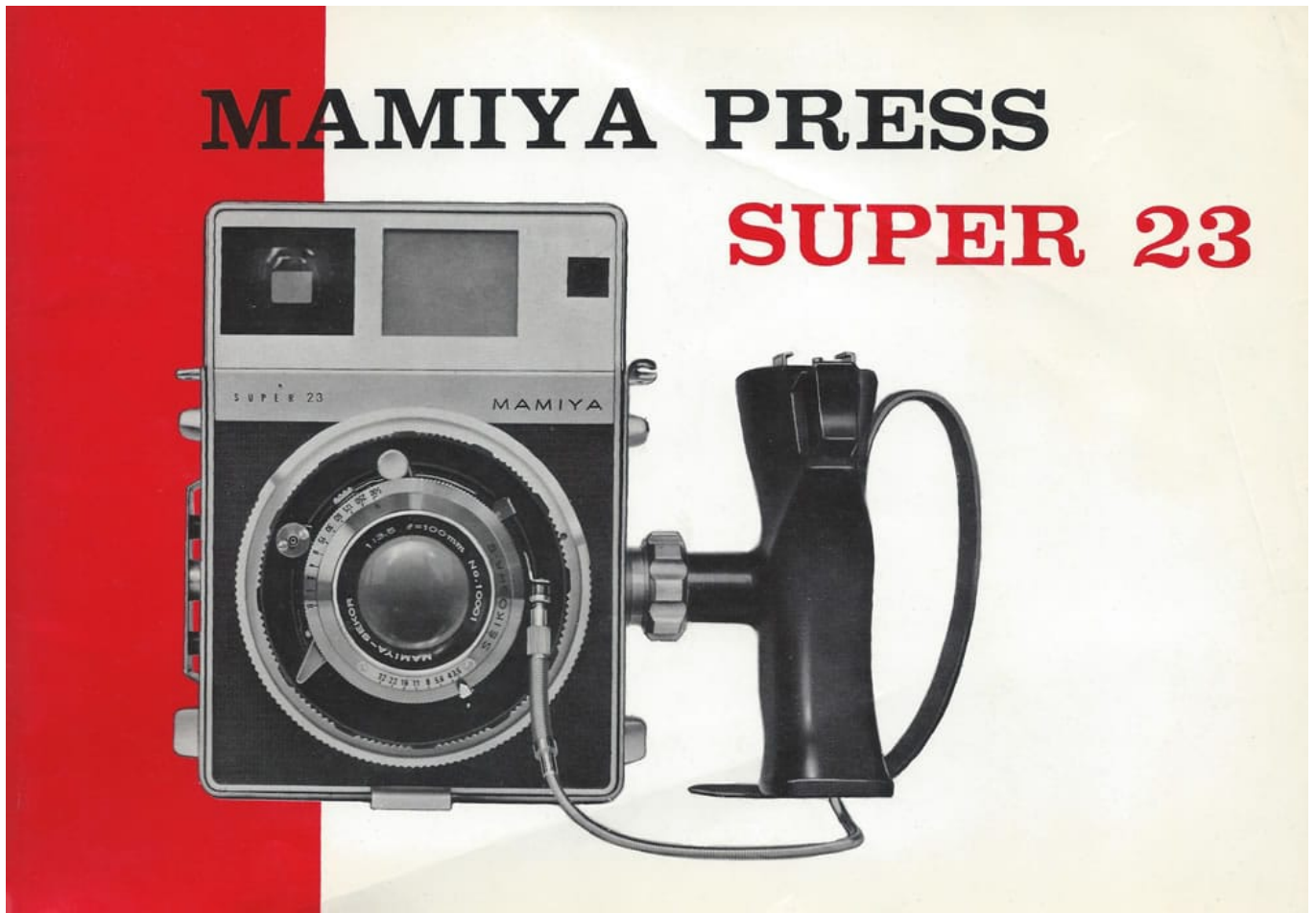


Mamiya 23 Press Sales Brochure

At the end of 2016, I purchased a Mamiya Universal Press body for the purpose of using an instant film back on it in order to make a "*high end*" instant camera. The Super 23 and Universal are more alike than they are different, yet both were designed to fulfil specific roles.

In the time that I've owned both, I've shot quite a few rolls (and packs of instant film) through them and am impressed by the quality of the lenses and size of the film negative; and find them easy to use for cameras from their era.

I will share with you the reasons I enjoy using this camera and perhaps you also might be inspired to pick one up and see for yourself how incredible these cameras are.



Mamiya Super 23 Manual Front Cover



Mamiya Super 23 from all sides

The images above are of my Super 23 with several attached components. With the exception of the lens and the carrying straps, the camera you see pictured is how it came new in the box. As mentioned previously, the original lens had some shutter issues. The pictured lens is an improved version of the original, chrome-faced 100mm f/3.5.

The Super 23 is a more refined version of the original Mamiya Press. The Mamiya Press has a more industrial and functional appearance than the Super 23, which I believe has a

greater emphasis on aesthetics and appearance.



Front and back of Super 23 and Universal Press

If you look closely at the leatherette on the Super 23's body and film backs, instead of having a generic, pebbled finish there are actually tiny Mamiya "M's" all over as the texture. It is a small detail when considering the entire camera, but speaks loudly to me of how the designers decided to devote resources to both form and function.

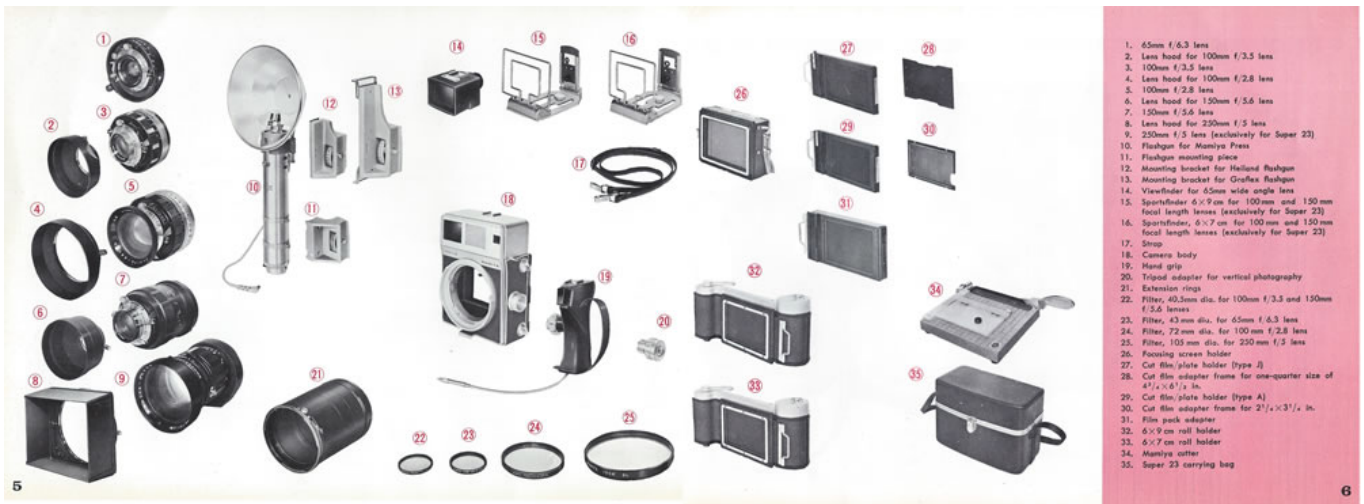
A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MAMIYA SUPER 23

First manufactured in 1967, the Super 23, like its predecessors, was marketed as a rangefinder system camera (a camera with a "core" body that can accept interchangeable lenses and accessories).

It was designed and promoted with professional press photographers in mind. As it arrived packaged, the following components included:

- Camera body with front body cap
- 100mm f/3.5 lens with lens hood
- Grip/handle
- 120/220 film back (6x7cm)

As seen from this page in the user manual, other components available for this camera include:

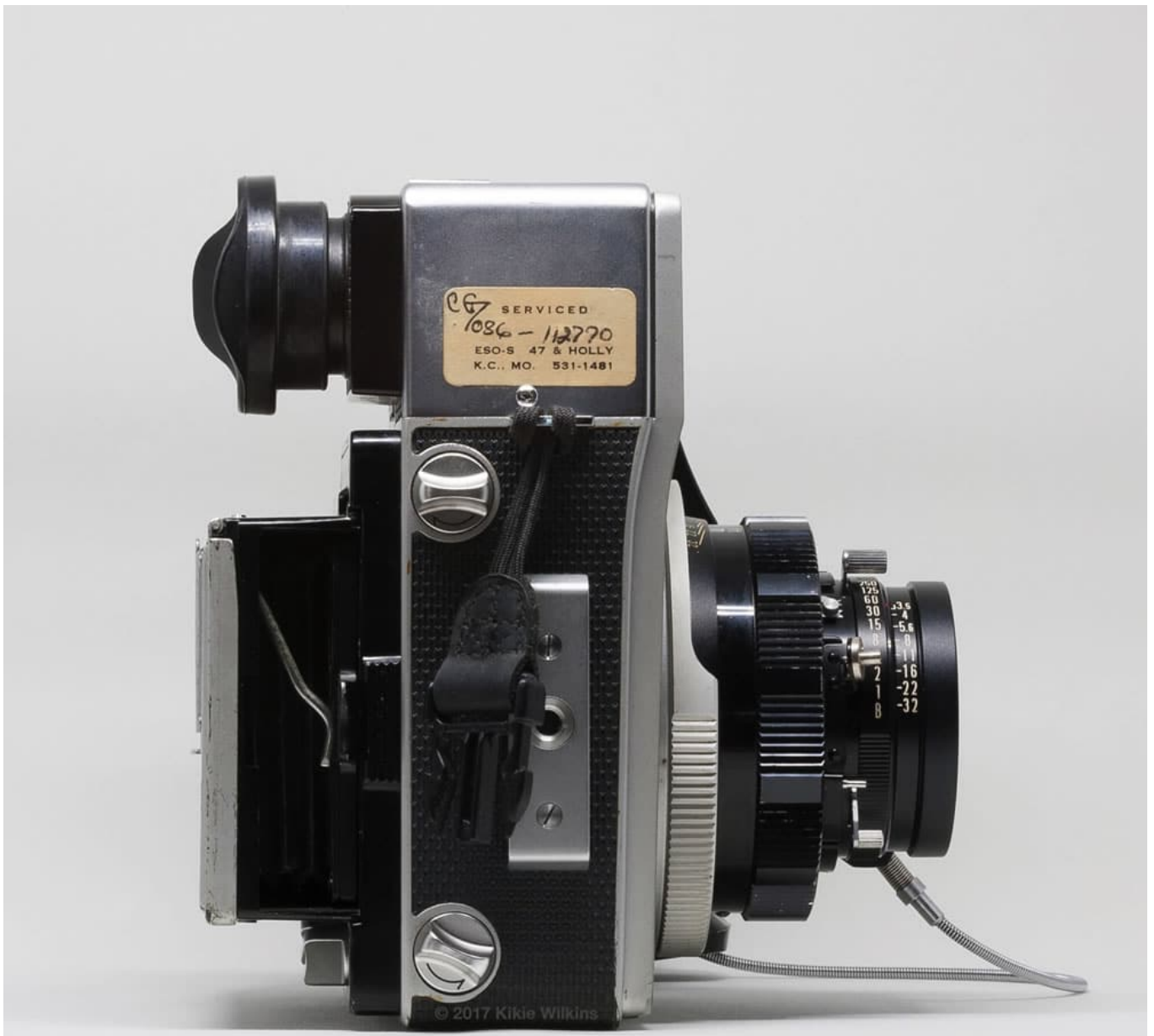


Mamiya Super 23 Manual Accessory List

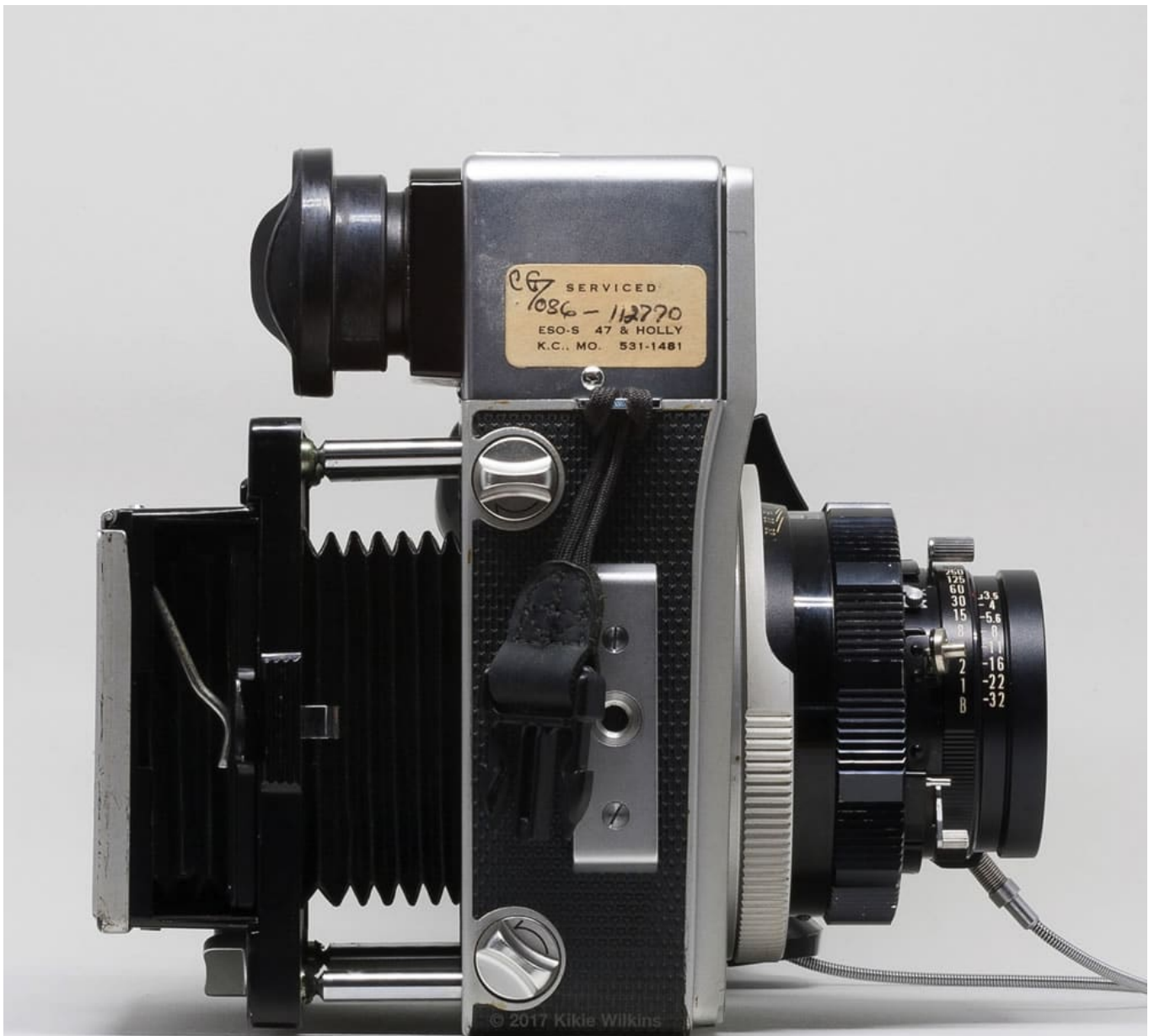
One of the great things about the Press line of cameras is that most of the lenses, film backs, and accessories are interchangeable with each camera body. In fact, this is touted as a key strength of the Mamiya Press Universal, hence the name “universal”.

COMPONENT COMPARISONS: FOCUSING SCREENS

Mamiya produced a focusing screen holder attachment that can fit on to both the Super 23 and the Universal. Of course, to get full use out of this screen, using the bellows on the Super 23 would be most advantageous, although it can also be used on the Universal with the M-Adapter.



Mamiya Super 23 bellows with focusing screen holder (bellows closed)



Mamiya Super 23 bellows with focusing screen holder (bellows extended)

Film pack adaptors and cut film holders can be inserted into the focusing screen holder....which is where the "23" in the name of the Mamiya Super 23 (and its predecessors) comes from: the cut film holders were designed to hold 2-inch by 3-inch sheets of film.

Trying to focus with the focusing screen is not the easiest as it's a bit dim (depending on the maximum aperture of the lens being used), so its recommended to have a lot of available light when focusing with this back.

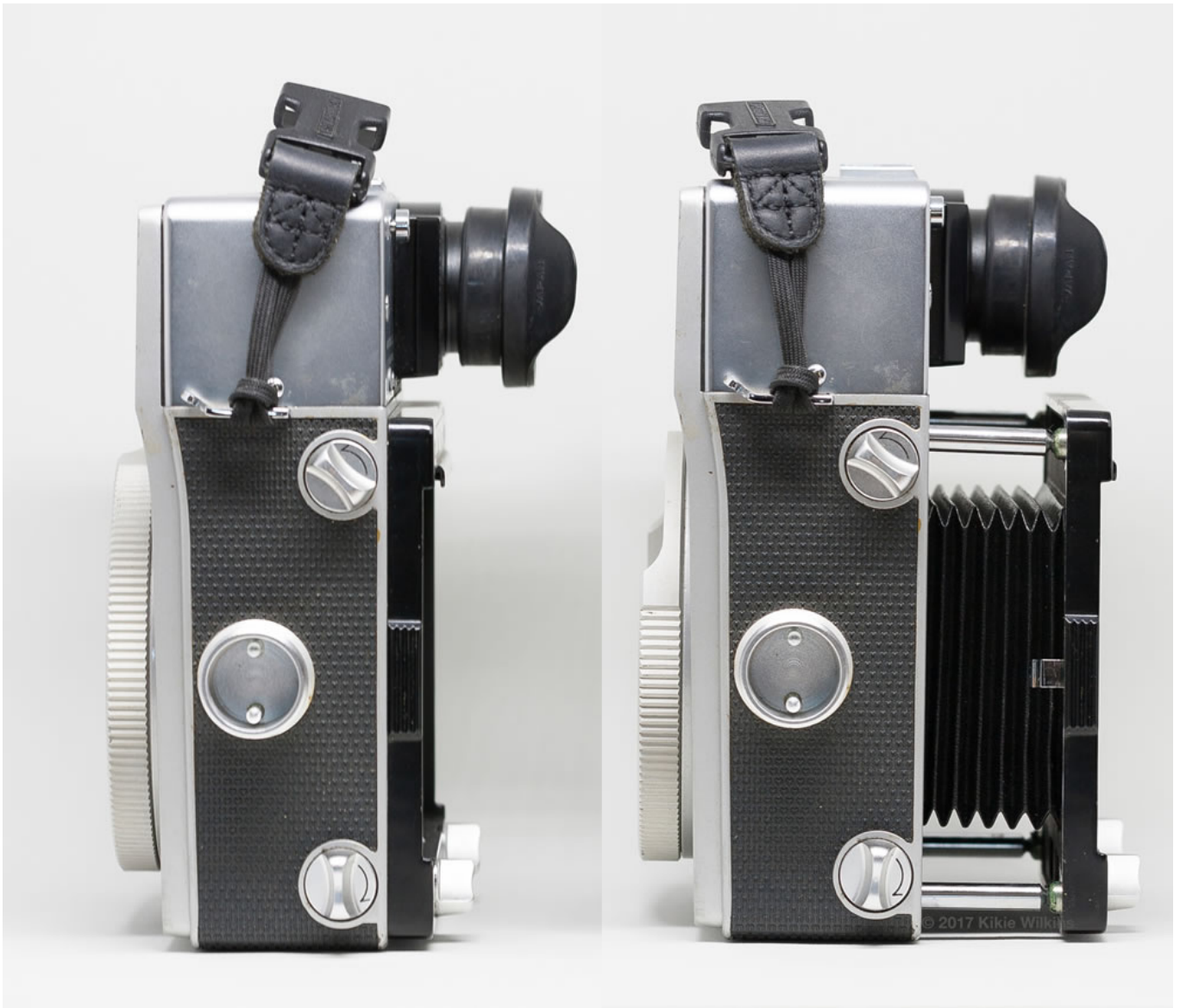


Mamiya Super 23 with focusing screen holder closed, locked half open, and fully open

COMPONENT COMPARISONS: FILM MOUNTS

Probably the key difference between the Super 23 and the Universal is how the different film backs are mounted and used on these cameras.

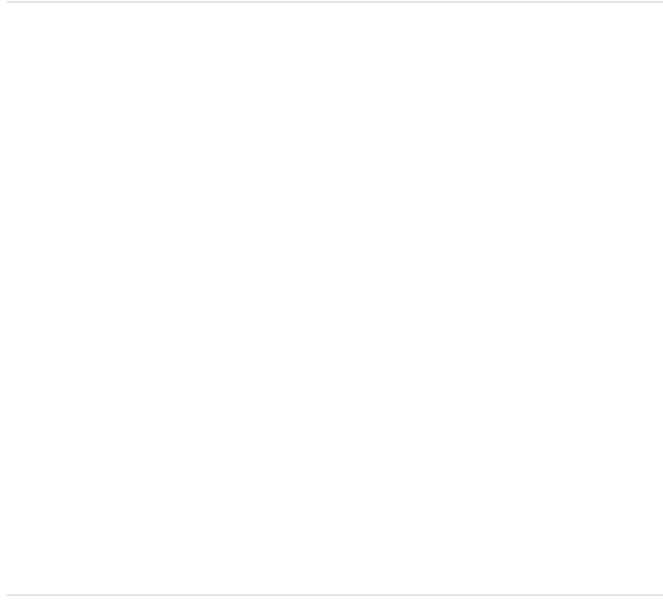
The Super 23 has a built-in rear bellows that can be adjusted in all directions. This allows the photographer to employ tilt-shift and selective focus techniques. The Universal does not have the rear-mounted bellows and it is necessary to use adapter plates to mount Mamiya-style film backs ("M-Adapter") or Graflok backs ("G-Adapter").



Mamiya Super 23 bellows retracted and extended

Additionally, the Polaroid instant film back can be mounted directly onto the Universal without the use of an adapter. Mamiya did not make an instant film back for the Super 23, so this is an area where the Universal has a clear advantage.

In fact, because I purchased my Universal for the specific purpose of using the Polaroid back, I do not currently own either of the adapter plates.



COMPONENT COMPARISONS: FILM BACKS

There are multiple versions and variations of the Mamiya roll film back (see above). I have the 6×9 and 6×7 early models. A 6×4.5 version also exists, which uses a mask that goes over the film and a separate mask for the viewfinder. An Internet search can easily show all of the different varieties of film backs for these cameras.

Mamiya produced these film backs with the capability of using either 120 or 220 format films without having to use any special adapters or accessories. Using 220 film simply requires the user to flip over the pressure plate inside of the film back and turn the knob next to the film counter window to the 220 setting.

When using the 6×9 back, a roll of 120 film will give you 8 exposures. When using the 6×7 back, you will get 10 exposures per roll of 120 film.



Front and back of 6x9 film back



Top and bottom of 6x9 film back



Interior of 6×9 film back

The Polaroid instant film back (type-2 model is shown) uses the 4.25×3.25-inch pack film as produced by Polaroid, but is also compatible with the Fujifilm produced varieties.

As a side note, I've owned this instant film back for a number of years and used it on my Mamiya RB67 with an adapter, never realizing that it was originally designed for the Universal. This is the reason why I purchased my Universal, for the purpose of being able to take high-quality instant photos.



Type-2 Polaroid Instant Film Back, back, front, and side views



Mamiya Universal Press with Type-2 Polaroid instant film back and 50mm f/6.3 lens with accessory viewfinder

The table below sums up the options of using different film backs between the Super 23 and the Universal:

Show entries Search:

	◆ Mamiya Super 23	◆ Mamiya Universal	◆
Instant Film Back	No	Yes	
Mamiya Press Backs	Yes	Yes w/ M-adapter	
Graflok Backs	No	Yes w/ G-adapter	
Adjustable Rear Bellows	Yes	No	

Showing 1 to 4 of 4 entries

◀ Previous Next ▶

COMPONENT COMPARISONS: LENSES

Mamiya produced a variety of lenses for their Press line of cameras. A major distinction between the earlier and later models was the use of Seikosha-S shutters on the earlier models and Seiko #0 shutters on the later models.

Regardless of the iteration, all Mamiya Press lenses featured leaf shutters. For those not familiar with the difference in shutters, leaf shutters are built into camera lenses as opposed to focal-plane shutters which are built into the camera body itself. Leaf shutters also have an advantage over focal-plane shutters by being able to synchronize at any speed with flash units.

The disadvantage to leaf shutters is they typically cannot achieve the higher shutter speeds that focal plane shutters can. The lenses mount to the camera body through a breech-locking system.

The two functioning Mamiya Press lenses that I own are the 100mm f/3.5 lens and the 50mm f/6.3 lens.



Mamiya Sekor 100mm f/3.5 (updated model) and 50mm f/6.3 lenses



Mamiya Sekor 100mm f/3.5 (updated model), 50mm accessory viewfinder, and 50mm f/6.3 lenses

I love how both of these lenses perform. While not perfect, they have a *lot* of character. These lenses allow both “X” (electronic) and “M” (flashbulb) flash synchronization, all that is required is to set the switch to either setting. Additionally, almost all of the Press lenses are rangefinder coupled, meaning they allow the photographer to use the rangefinder mechanism built into the camera body to properly focus on the subject.

The rangefinder/viewfinder mechanism in the camera also automatically adjusts for parallax, moving the framelines to match up with what the lens is “seeing”. Personally, I don’t find the rangefinder patch in the viewfinder to be particularly bright or easy to see in dim light. I think this is an area that Mamiya could have definitely improved upon. If you are composing your shot in a well-illuminated area, the rangefinder patch works well.

The Super 23 and Universal bodies have built-in, illuminated framelines for 100mm, 150mm, and 250mm focal length lenses. Switching between these requires the photographer to move a slider on the back of the camera located next to the eyepiece to match which lens is mounted. Any lenses with a focal length smaller than 100mm require the use of an accessory viewfinder that mounts on the accessory shoe on the top of the camera body. The accessory viewfinders are adjustable for parallax but must be done manually via a small dial. It does not automatically adjust as with the built-in viewfinder. For reference, the “standard” 100mm lens, when using the 6×9 film back is roughly equivalent to a 43mm lens

in 35mm “full-frame” film format. Likewise, the 50mm lens is roughly equivalent to a 20mm lens in 35mm “full-frame” film format.

A word about the 50mm accessory viewfinder: it is quite large compared to the 35mm format accessory viewfinders that I am most accustomed to using. The next image shows a Pentax Auto110 compact camera, the 28mm accessory viewfinder for a 35mm format Canon rangefinder lens, the Mamiya 50mm accessory viewfinder, and a 120 film spool (a 120 spool is approximately 6.5cm tall).



Mamiya 50mm accessory viewfinder comparison (L-R): Pentax Auto110, Canon 28mm (35mm format) accessory viewfinder, Mamiya 50mm accessory viewfinder, 120 spool

Special care must be taken when using the 50mm lens to avoid lens flare. The front element of the lens is large and protrudes a bit, making it very susceptible to stray light hitting it from odd angles. Even when using the clamp-on lens hood, flare can still be an issue. I don't know if the lens elements do not feature or have inferior anti-reflective coatings or if it is more of a design consideration of the lens itself (semi-Biogon type, for those familiar with lens design) but it can seem as if you have a light leak in the camera when looking at your developed film.

My advice is to not shoot into the sun or strong light source with this wide-angle lens. Alternatively, use the flare-prone design to your creative advantage.

CONCERNING FLASH

As mentioned previously, the lenses are capable of utilizing both X-sync and M-sync flashes. I've used different electronic flash units with these cameras with excellent results. The lenses have PC ports to connect to your flash unit (or remote) of your choice. Because these cameras are completely manual, be prepared to understand flash unit guide numbers and calculate what flash power/aperture settings to use based on what you want to photograph (or use a flash unit with a thyristor to automatically adjust the flash duration). But honestly, if one is going to use a vintage, 1960's era camera, why not do as the old press photographers did and use flashbulbs?

For those unfamiliar with the difference between electronic flash and flashbulbs, an Internet search can easily provide you with a detailed explanation on both. In general, modern electronic flash units use a small tube filled with a gas. When a high voltage current is passed through the tube, the gas ionizes and produces a bright flash of light. The total light output is variable and the flash unit is reusable, meaning it can be flashed over and over again.

Flashbulbs, by comparison, only have one output, full. They produce their light by burning foil or thin wire crammed inside of a glass bulb. They can be used only once before needing to be replaced by a new bulb. They burn quite brightly for their size and being on the receiving end of an ignited flashbulb up close is kind of like looking at the sun. You will be seeing a spot in your vision for a while afterwards.



Mamiya Super 23 with Graflite #2773 flashgun and General Electric 22B flashbulb

There is much more that can be written about electronic flash and flashbulbs, but what I want to highlight here is Mamiya produced three different brackets to be used on the Press

system which allow a photographer to mount different flashguns to the camera. Depending on the bracket employed, Mamiya, Heiland, and Graflex produced flashguns can be mounted to the camera. I use the Mamiya-produced Graflex flashgun mount, which allows me to mount the Graflite #2773 3-cell flashgun. In its original configuration, this flashgun utilizes flashbulbs with an Edison-type screw base. An Internet search on Graflex flashguns can explain this system more thoroughly than I will cover in this article.

When the Graflite is mounted to the Super 23 or Universal, the entire camera becomes fairly heavy and kind of unwieldy. For tasks which many current-day photographers would use a camera with flash to accomplish, an electronic flash unit is more versatile and cost-effective than using one-time-use flashbulbs that can be difficult and expensive to source. However, if you want to dump a ton (scientific measurements here) of light at something, a flashbulb is the way to go.

SLOWMO FLASH POP (VIDEO)

Mamiya Super 23 - Slowmo flashbulb



For those who have used flashbulbs, there is also the iconic “pop” and “hiss” that accompanies the firing of a flashbulb. Most of these flashbulbs are safety-coated so they tend not to have as much potential to explode and throw out broken glass in front of the camera.

It is very important to use flashbulbs in good shape, not damaged, and for those that come with it, the “blue dot” indicator still intact on the flashbulb.

MAMIYA PRESS SUPER 23 AND MAMIYA UNIVERSAL PRESS – PHYSICAL COMPARISONS

I've been fairly quiet on actual physical measurements of the Super 23 and Universal. I'm the kind of person where I can have physical dimensions and weight measurements of things and they don't mean a lot to me unless I have something to compare them with. So, for comparative reference, I've photographed my Super 23 with another popular Mamiya camera, the RB67.





Front view of Mamiya RB67 and Super 23



Side view of Mamiya RB67 and Super 23

Also for your consideration, the Super 23 with a 35mm film cassette, a 35mm format Canon rangefinder (Canon P with 28mm lens and accessory viewfinder), and a 120 spool

(remember, approximately 6.5cm in height).



Canon P and Super 23 comparison

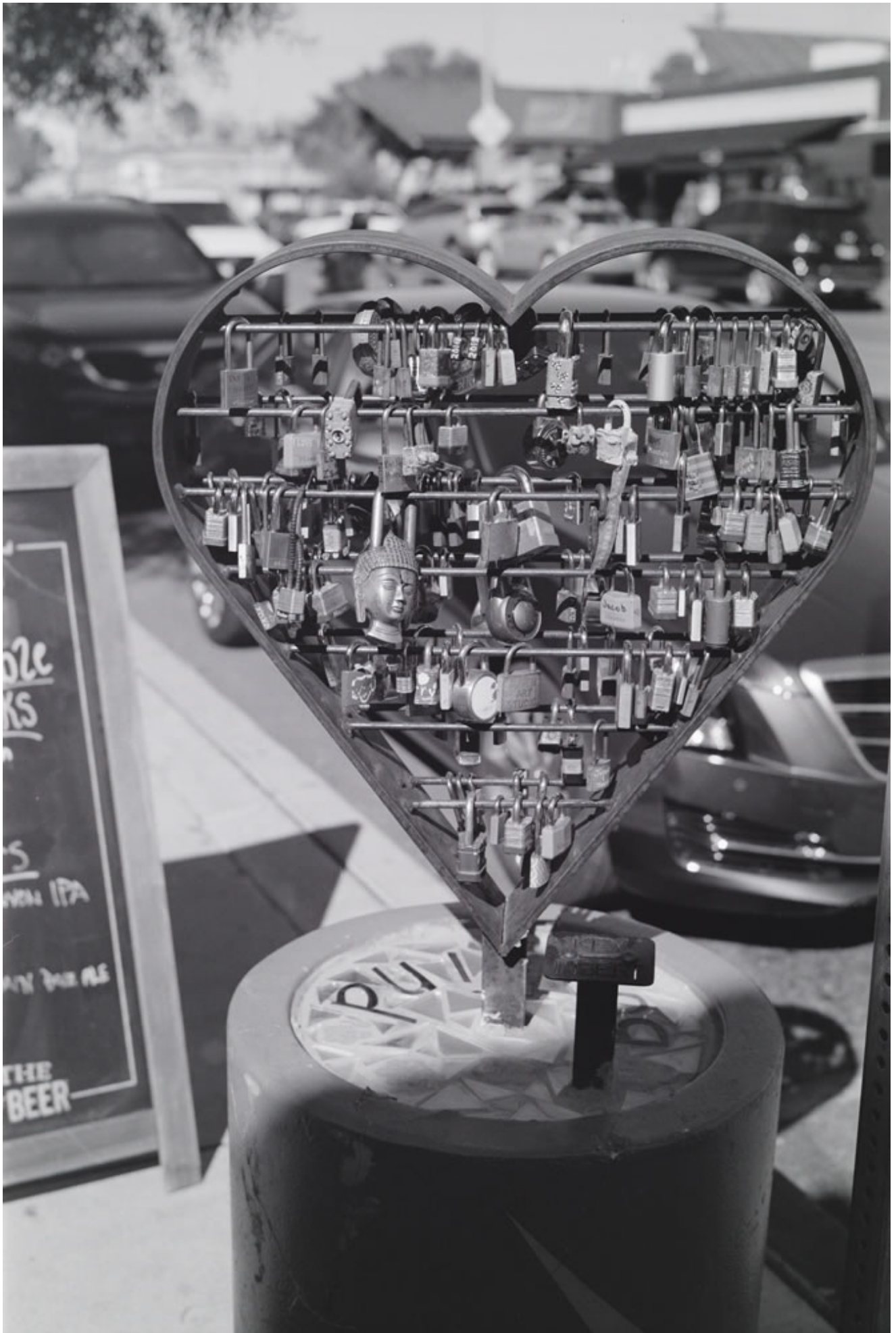
THE SUPER 23 AND UNIVERSAL IN PRACTICAL USE

Mamiya's Press line of cameras was intended, as the name implies, for use by professional press photographers and other photographers who needed a high-quality medium format camera.

In late 1965, the original Mamiya Press Deluxe kit with 100mm lens sold in the USA for an MSRP of \$299.50. Adjusted for inflation, the same camera would have sold today for about \$2,312. I am without pricing data on the years they were released, but the Super 23, released in 1967, and the Universal, released in 1969, were evolutions and refinements of the original Press. They most likely would have sold for even more. These days, quality cameras in the Press line can be purchased for considerably less than \$2,312.



Painted and Swinging in the Breeze, Mamiya Super 23, 100mm f/3.5, Fomapan 100



Mamiya Super23, 100mm f/3.5, Fuji Neopan Acros 100



869 for N. 4th, Mamiya Super 23, 100mm f3.5, Fuji Reala 100 (Exp. 7/2014)

If you look at the images I've posted on my **Twitter** and **Instagram** accounts, you will see I enjoy going out into my city and documenting public art, murals, and people going about their everyday lives.

Many of those times I had my Super 23 with me. It has the benefits of a rangefinder camera combined with the versatility of medium format film. Using the 6×9 film back provides an image ratio of 2:3, a ratio that works well with both portraiture and scenic applications.

I try to photograph my subjects with the intent of doing minimal or no cropping at all when it comes time to edit the final image. One of the benefits of shooting with a 6×7 or 6×9 film back is if extensive cropping is necessary, the corresponding enlargement of your negative keeps excessive film grain to reasonable levels. On a similar note, if you push film to a higher exposure index, a larger negative also helps to keep excessive film grain under control.



Route 58, Mamiya Super 23, 100mm f3.5, Fuji Reala 100 (Exp. 7/2014)



Vergis, Mamiya Super 23, 100mm f/3.5, Kodak Portra 400 (EI 100)



A Wild Jackalope, Mamiya Super 23, 100mm f/3.5, Kodak Portra 400

If you intend to take one of these Press cameras out for street photography or a task that would require you to do a lot of walking, I would highly recommend purchasing a quality carrying strap, preferably a wide one to distribute the weight evenly around your neck or across a shoulder. I prefer to use the **"Pro Strap" produced by Op/Tech USA** on all of my medium format cameras, including my RB67, Super 23, and Universal, among others.

One of the great things about this system is that it is modular. You only need to purchase one strap, which can be used on several cameras using interchangeable quick-release buckles. I know using one of these straps on a period camera doesn't really present an "authentic" look to the camera system, but when it comes to comfort of use over a long period of time I'm willing to make that concession.



Sacred Heart of Tucson, Mamiya Super 23. 100mm f/3.5, Fuji Provia 100F



Sandwiches, Fries, and Smokes, Mamiya Super 23, 50mm f/6.3, Fuji Neopan Acros 100

The grip/handle on the Super 23 and the Universal also help when carrying the camera. Because of the way the grip screws down on to the camera body, I have a lot of confidence that it won't just fall off or come unscrewed causing the camera to go crashing down to the ground.

I consider the Super 23 and Universal to be far more portable than the RB67 or similar camera. Once, I tried to take my RB67 out for a long photowalk and it became very uncomfortable quickly because of the weight of the camera. The joke is often made in medium format camera circles that if you wish to become a muscle-bound weightlifting champion, just carry around an RB67 for a while. Because of how the Press cameras are designed, they're much more comfortable to carry around. That being said, it is still a heavy camera. If you are a small-framed person or have issues that make it difficult for you to carry weighty things for longer lengths of time, you may wish to pass on the Press cameras in favor of a more compact medium format or 35mm camera. Being a larger guy, I've taken the Super 23 out for the better part of the day, carrying it by hand and occasionally by the strap without being any more fatigued than with a 35mm camera and several lenses and accessories.



Tucson Skyline, Mamiya Super 23, 50mm f/6.3, Fuji Velvia 100 (Exp. 4/2005)



Warehouse Lunch, Mamiya Super 23, 100mm f/3.5, Kodak 400TX (EI 3200)



Greetings from Tucson, Mamiya Super 23, 100mm f/3.5, Fuji Velvia 50

Since the Press cameras are completely manually operated, it is a wise idea to invest in a light meter. Do you need a light meter to enjoy using a press camera? Absolutely not! There's been plenty of times that I've gone out and used the "Sunny 16" rule to meter my exposures. However, in consideration of the fact you will only get 8 exposures from a roll of film when using the 6×9 back, if you want to maximize the potential for getting the most out of your (sometimes rare or expensive) film without having to "waste" a lot through bracketing exposures, a light meter comes in very handy.

Be prepared to become very conspicuous when using one of these cameras in public. Unlike a smaller 6×4.5 or 6×6 medium format camera like a Bronica or Hasselblad, or a smaller 35mm SLR or rangefinder, it will be very obvious to the people around you that you are taking a photograph of something. In a way, this can be a benefit. While walking around, strangers have approached me making positive comments about my Super 23 or Universal, some even allowing me to take their photograph on the virtue of having a "cool old camera".

Conversely, you may discover you've become an unwanted presence when people see you with such a noticeable camera, or at the very least, people may begin to behave less

naturally. Likewise, if you are photographing in an area that could be considered sensitive or restricted from photography, you may wish to consider a smaller, more inconspicuous camera.

SHOULD YOU PURCHASE A SUPER 23 OR UNIVERSAL?

If you are in the market for a medium format rangefinder system camera for portraiture and landscape/architectural use in the sub-\$1,000 dollar range and don't mind it being a heavier camera, then yes, go for it.

While the size and weight of the camera can be a disadvantage, I feel this is made up for through versatility; the Press cameras can easily tackle a variety of tasks and situations depending on how you have the camera configured. If you are on the fence, I highly recommend finding someone who owns one of these cameras or a similar system from another manufacturer and trying it out.

As with any camera, the more you use it, the more familiar you become with it and hopefully your creative output will rise to a higher quality.



A camera is only a tool to help you achieve the vision that you have created in your mind. If you are photographing for yourself, an inexpensive camera is just as capable as the most expensive, limited edition, gold plated, jewel-encrusted, famously-branded one when it comes to producing images which you find satisfying, pleasing, or fulfilling.

Regardless of which camera you decide to use, go out and shoot!

I've included a few more sample images below but for now, thanks for reading!

~ Kikie

MAMIYA PRESS SUPER 23 AND MAMIYA UNIVERSAL PRESS SAMPLE IMAGES



WhataBurro, Mamiya Super 23, 50mm f/6.3, Kodak 400TX



Taking the Turn, Mamiya Super 23, 50mm f/6.3, Fuji Provia 100F



Old Federal Courthouse, Mamiya Super 23, f/6.3, Fuji Provia 100F



For Sale, Everybody, Mamiya Super 23, 50mm f/6.3, Fuji Provia 100F



Pac-Man Dumpster, Mamiya Super 23, 50mm f/6.3, Kodak TMax 100



Guys on 4th, Mamiya Super 23, 50mm f/6.3, Ilford FP4+

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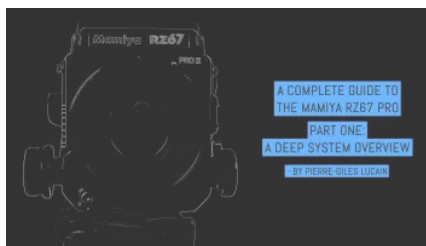
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🕒 August 8, 2020

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DIARIO DI VIAGGIO: VIAGGIO D'INVERNO IN FINLANDIA

**KIKIE WILKINS**

I am primarily a film photographer living in the Sonoran Desert city of Tucson, Arizona. I am a self-taught photographer who has been fortunate to be able to work and collaborate with accomplished professional photographers. I'm a believer in using the camera or photographic process that brings you the most enjoyment and allows you to express your creativity. My work combines the elements of street photography with an engrained reverie for cultural and architectural monuments.

[Visit Kikie's full bio ►](#)

35 THOUGHTS ON "DOUBLE REVIEW: MAMIYA PRESS SUPER 23 AND MAMIYA UNIVERSAL PRESS"

**Russell Young F.R.P.S.**

January 2, 2021 at 4:59 am

One of the best written reviews on Emulsive. Thorough, well-illustrated and by someone who clearly has in-depth experience, not a newbie. Kudos.

[Reply](#)

**Robert**

August 1, 2020 at 3:34 am

Absolutely the best article written for anyone thinking about purchasing and using the Mamiya Press cameras.

Great job Kikie. Trying to make a purchase ASAP on ebay. Lots of sellers, and lots to choose from.

Glad to know the prices are still relatively low for such a great camera. For 6 x 9, Fuji is the only other camera that is available, but those start at around 700.00 and have a fixed lens and have been labeled as the Texas Leica for their increased size.

Can't wait to get my hands on one.

[Reply](#)



Bruce

March 17, 2020 at 7:48 pm

I purchased the Super 23 because of the bellows on the back. That, with extension tubes, allows some really good close-ups. I have 50mm, 100mm and 200mm lenses, and this pretty well covers what I want to do. I find the camera easy to use hand held, although, I often use a tripod. So rugged! I love it.

[Reply](#)



Michael Przewrocki

March 28, 2019 at 5:31 pm

Just bought light-seals. through the mentioned site:

<http://www.aki-asahi.com/store/html/Mamiya-press/6x9/index.php>

The seller of one of two DIY-vacuum backs 67/120/220 Model 3 (220-setting only) had sent me uncut seal-material...

Filmflatness -MP-guru Anthony (Tony)Sansone is saying:he is referring to my Artpanorama 612-complaints(has MP-lens-mount): "If you make a 6x12-back from two Model II film holders you will not have a flatness problem. The whole issue of filmflatness does not apply to the 6x7 and 6x9 Model II Mamiya Press film holders(120/220) because of their construction.He also mentioned Model K (120 only) 6x9(66,645) for highquality. I cannot compare since i only have now Model 3-backs. Whats the difference which makes film-flatness a problem on model 3(67 and 69 models both 120/220? i see a roller on left side. Model 3 and 2 are both S-shape with Model 3 having the cable-release-mount. Needs

grip 3 if one wants to attach cable to holder(cable removable)=double-exposure prevention. I also have two Mamiya RB67/70-vacuum backs, one altered by vermeer cameras(pinhole) for 120/220(61.5mm) film use on donor-side BESIDE 70mm. I have mentioned more details in Rangefinderforum. Will open new thread when i will use it and add informations on FB Large Format and MF-cameras(or similar). I have workaround-informations.Left-donor-side only NOT right side. Mercury-works can make 70-120-spool. Have other ideas using 61.5mm whatever size on 70mm spools. With or without 70mm-cartridge. Its working.or cut down 70mm (e.g. on one side only) to use in M RB67/70-120-specialback. It needs instructions. counter of back i received seems to need overhaul. but this defect enables to use of overlong film without counter-reset. working back needs certain steps during shooting to make counter work properly. I am still in learn-phase. will not continue here but in Rangefinderforum when time is right. could dig out instructions how to alter the back. or vermeer cameras cezary barczak will give. he made me 40mm pinhole cam with this back integrated. But one can exchange winding-untit with counter.

[Reply](#)



Wolfgang

January 20, 2020 at 5:41 am

As light seal for the Universal magazines I use black shoe laces made of cotton. This sort of light seal is cheap and will survive more than 100 years.

[Reply](#)



BenHeijermans

March 18, 2019 at 10:11 am

thoroughly enjoyed reading this thorough review. Just one question: is there any set-up with either Universal or Super 23 for macro work? I am looking for options for medium format macro , preferably on instant film yet if the Super 23 is the one for macro work, I would happily drop the instant film preference 😊

[Reply](#)

**Kikie Wilkins**

March 18, 2019 at 5:44 pm

Thank you for reading my review! To answer your question, Mamiya never made an "official" macro lens for any of their press cameras. However, you can obtain extension tubes that will work on either camera, with any of the lenses. I think a set came in with 5 different size tubes. If you have the Super 23, the bellows on the rear can also be extended. If you use the Mamiya Universal, you can also get back spacers which should allow you to also attach the polaroid back. So the short answer is yes, accessories exist to do macro work with either camera.

[Reply](#)**Jarryd Watson**

February 4, 2019 at 7:17 am

Great article! I have a question regarding instant film. Is it possible to use the new polaroid 600 film packs with this camera? I'd love to purchase this camera but I'm worried about the price and lack of FP 100C and the likes.

[Reply](#)**Kikie Wilkins**

February 4, 2019 at 3:04 pm

Hello Jarryd! Thank you for taking the time to read my review! Unfortunately, there is no way to use 600-type film on a Mamiya Universal unless you make your own custom or modified 600-type back. I'm sure someone has done it somewhere!

[Reply](#)

**zara**

February 1, 2019 at 2:56 pm

how can i view the photos in this post? it is all blank now.

[Reply](#)**Kikie Wilkins**

February 2, 2019 at 9:38 am

They should be working now!

[Reply](#)**Jan**

January 6, 2019 at 2:24 am

How you focus this monster? You need to use the focusing screen? Sounds really inconvenient! Or you sort of estimate the distance and set the lens accordingly? Or is there a Leica type rangefinder focusing?

And OT in this context, how you scan the film to get them digital?

[Reply](#)**Kikie Wilkins**

January 6, 2019 at 9:32 am

Hello Jan, thank you for reading my article. These cameras focus using a rangefinder mechanism, similar to a Leica camera. You turn the focusing ring on the lens to focus while looking through the

viewfinder. The focusing screen on the back of the camera is if you want to make perspective corrections use 2×3 sheet film.

I scan my film using a flatbed film scanner. There are different ways to scan the film, an internet search can provide you with many options.

[Reply](#)



Michael Przewrocki

March 28, 2019 at 4:31 pm

or using film-magazines.

[Reply](#)



Darek Dziadek

January 21, 2019 at 2:09 am

Using ground glass isn't as difficult as it looks like, and helps you carefully build your composition. And gives you additional time to think if it's worth to take this photo 😊

When there's not so much light I'm using ground glass to compose and renefinder to set the focus.

[Reply](#)



Robert Warren

December 28, 2018 at 6:37 pm

This is a complete and comprehensive article. Very very good!

[Reply](#)

**Kikie Wilkins**

December 28, 2018 at 9:51 pm

Thank you for reading! I appreciate it!

[Reply](#)

**Kikie Wilkins**

April 3, 2018 at 4:03 pm

Hello Yalcin! Thank you for reading my review and for your positive comments! If you want to read more about the RB67, Scott McClarin wrote an excellent review on his camera, the URL is <https://emulsive.org/reviews/camera-reviews/mamiya-camera-reviews/camera-review-mamiya-rb67-pro-s-by-scott-mcclarin>

My personal feeling is if you desire to do landscape work, the RB67 may be a better choice than the Super 23 or Universal. First, it is a newer design than the Mamiya Press cameras and the lenses are higher quality. Second, they are SLR cameras, meaning the image you see in the finder is the same one that will be on the film. Third, it is easier to find parts and lenses for the RB67 than for the Mamiya Press cameras.

That being said, the RB67 is a heavier camera than the Universal or Super 23. You will probably want to use it on a tripod. The lenses are also heavier than the ones for the Universal or Super 23.

If I could only have one lens for the Mamiya Universal for general purpose use, it would be the 100mm 3.5 (type 2) lens. If I could only have one lens for the RB67 for general purpose use, it would be the 127mm 3.5 KL lens. Both are sharp, but the 127mm one is sharper when you compare the two.

I hope this was helpful for you! Please let me know if you have additional questions.

[Reply](#)

**Yalcin Savas**

April 3, 2018 at 1:25 pm

Thank you for all the information shared. This is the best article I could find on these cameras. I plan to have a medium format camera for landscape work mainly. Available budget options for me in here are RB67 Pro SD and Universal. Number of RB67s and only one Universal with 100/3,5 and 150/5,6 lenses, by the way. Which one you may suggest? Considering you already experienced on both of these models, I'd like to learn your opinion on which one's lenses are better in image quality. Thank you in advance.

[Reply](#)

Anonymous

December 14, 2017 at 2:15 pm

4.5

[Reply](#)



Kikie Wilkins

August 5, 2017 at 2:58 pm

Thanks for reading the article, I'm glad you found it enjoyable. The Press series of cameras really are more versatile than a lot of people give them credit for. It sounds like you have a really nice kit that you've been building out, please share some of your photographs taken with the Universal when you get everything up and running!

[Reply](#)



Larry J. Clark

October 9, 2017 at 6:35 pm

I've moved forward a bit...I found a so-so Universal body on eBay. A tiny bit rough on the outside and a little gummy on the inside with un-crisp back releases. And the RF patch was not aligned. So it made a

trip to S.K. Grimes for a top-chop and the addition of two cold shoes. I also found a very smooth grip/release on eBay (Germany). With the lighter Graflex 6×9 roll film magazines and less metal and glass topside, this trims things down in weight and bulk. I intend to use the 65mm and 50mm lenses on this body. I'm getting ready to move coast-to-coast in a little over a month, but will try to make some time for photos of my RF Universal and the "sport" model. Some weights too.

[Reply](#)



Kikie Wilkins

October 9, 2017 at 6:54 pm

Sounds like a fantastic project you've undertaken! Please share photos when you have the chance!

[Reply](#)



Larry Clark

August 5, 2017 at 1:27 pm

I enjoyed reading your article. I'm building out a kit with a very nice, recently purchased Universal; 100mm, 65mm, and 50mm lenses; a few 6×9 backs; and the Glaflok adapter back. That allows me to use Graflex roll film backs (I have 6x7s and 6x9s for my Century Graphic) and the Graflex ground glass — though I won't be able to fiddle with things like I could with a Super 23.

A Century Graphic was the first "real" camera I ever used — way back in high school. While looking around at information and items for that camera I came across articles on the Mamiya Press series and realized that was a logical step forward from the Century in MF.

[Reply](#)



James Thorpe

July 29, 2017 at 5:33 pm

Great article... very helpful advice. One question: when you change lenses, do you need to recalibrate the rangefinder, like I have to on my Speed Graphic?

[Reply](#)



Kikie Wilkins

July 29, 2017 at 5:38 pm

Thanks for the compliment! The good news is that you do not need to re-calibrate anything when changing lenses. The lenses (with one or two exceptions) automatically couple with the rangefinder mechanism and as long as your rangefinder is accurate, no need to make adjustments. I switch between my 100mm and 50mm lenses all the time without having to mess with the rangefinder mechanism.

[Reply](#)



Kevin H.

July 6, 2017 at 10:23 pm

Crazy timing finding this great article. I've been shooting with a Super 23 rig for about a year and a half now. It's been a love-hate relationship with some of the used equipment, but it is probably the best system I have used once the issues have been worked out. Every now and then I look up reviews for occasional tips and tricks, when I just stumbled upon this article. Couple of tips I have learned: This is the best source for light seals I have found, and there are several types online.

<http://www.aki-asahi.com/store/html/Mamiya-press/6x9/index.php>

If the film back being used is not using the black yarn/rope light seals, replace them if they haven't been already!

Test the film back with a test roll and make sure it not only starts at frame 1, but ends where it's supposed to. I've had two faulty film backs, and one was fixable with a loose gearing screw, but the other was not.

I added pull strings to my darkslides that did not come with the little red circles most do. You do not want to forget it's in there while shooting.

Use a uv filter instead of a lens cap. It will still protect the lens and you don't have to worry about forgetting to remove it.

The movements on the back are really fun to use, but takes a bit of extra time to shoot, and you need a tripod of course to lock the focus. Take your time, as it's really easy to forget the darkslide here.

Keep track of exposures in your head. I've double exposed a handful of shots and you waste two potentially great images in the process.

And lastly, my 65mm finder is a bit inaccurate, and the image view is much wider than what it shows despite being properly marked. I use it for framing, but add about 20% more for the real image.

Sounds like a lot, but every camera has their issues. This setup, to me, is just perfect once the bugs are worked out, and has already paid for itself in such a short time with prints sold. Have a happy!

[Reply](#)



Kikie Wilkins

July 29, 2017 at 5:42 pm

Thanks for the compliments on the article! You make good points in your comments. I had to replace the light seals on my film backs when I first purchased them. It really is a great system camera!

[Reply](#)



Larry Clark

August 5, 2017 at 1:30 pm

Thanks for the tips on Mamiya Press film backs. I ordered some of the light seal kits since two of my three recently purchased backs need the seals replaced.

[Reply](#)

**erik**

June 10, 2017 at 8:27 pm

@KikieWilkins I love those things. I have a good friend who is mad for them. Keeps trying to convert me.

[Reply](#)**محمد أحمد محمود**

June 10, 2017 at 3:39 pm

حبيب قلبي

[Reply](#)**Marcus didius falco (@falcos2012)**

June 10, 2017 at 10:28 am

Canny article:) And the pictures are stunning!

[Reply](#)**Kikie Wilkins**

June 10, 2017 at 11:48 am

Thank you!

[Reply](#)



Tom Rayfield

June 10, 2017 at 2:24 am

Great article, really enjoyed this one!

[Reply](#)



Kikie Wilkins

June 10, 2017 at 11:48 am

Thank you!

[Reply](#)

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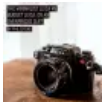
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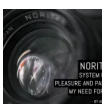
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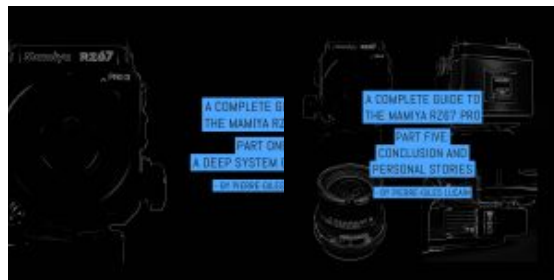


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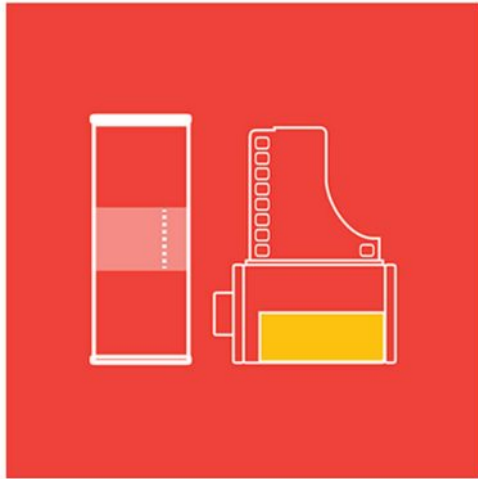
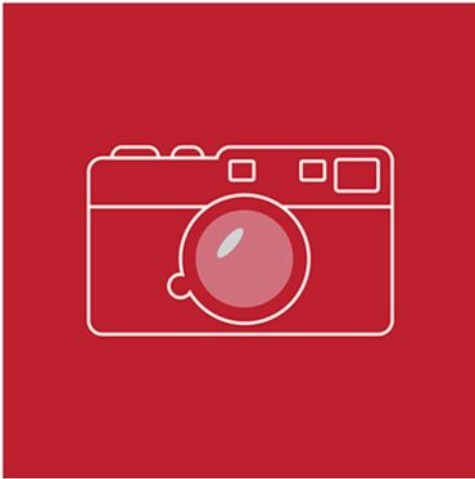


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