

## Mamiya RB67

The RB67 is a medium format SLR that was first produced in the 1970s. Since this time there have been many different versions and actually there are still models being produced under the model RZ67. The Mamiya RB67 is a fully modular camera system that is also fully mechanical. You can choose from a variety of different viewfinders, film backs, lenses, and bodies with this system. This allows for a tremendous amount of customization for the photographer. I have used this camera throughout college, and as a result I have become quite comfortable with it, but it can be fairly intimidating especially if you have never used a medium format camera before.



### Models

The Mamiya RB67 has 3 different models that are all completely interchangeable. The earliest model was the Professional series; later

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orientation. In 1990 Mamiya produced the last version of the RB67, and this model was the Pro SD. This model supported K/L and L series lenses and 6x8 film backs. The SD had a slightly large mount which would allow you to use a new series of lenses that could expose a 6x8 negative adequately. If you do purchase a Pro SD model you will have to use an adapter when using older original Mamiya RB67 and C lenses. The other difference between the Pro SD and Pro S models is the build quality. The Mamiya Pro SD use a lot more plastic compared to its predecessor, and this allows for the SD to be much lighter as a result. Unfortunately, this does mean that it is sacrificing some durability, but another benefit is that it no longer uses the old light seal method that disintegrates within a few years. This means you will never have to worry about a light leak unless your camera is physically





substantially, but framing with a waist-level meter can be quite difficult if you aren't used to it. I almost always use this camera on a tripod, so the inverted image is easier to manage, but if you are handholding this camera it is sometimes really difficult to keep the horizon straight. With practice you can eventually get used to it, but having a prism finder on makes things a lot easier sometimes.

## Film Backs

The Mamiya RB67 camera system have a variety of different film backs, and they are all interchangeable, with the exception of the 6X8 film backs made for the Pro SD body. There are film backs made for 220 film, 120 film, and even 35mm film. Many photographers purchase multiple film backs to quickly switch rolls, or to have a back loaded with color film and one loaded with black and white. You could also have them loaded with faster or slower speed films for certain situations. This really opens up a lot of possibilities when shooting and I could imagine this was a really popular camera for professional.





## Lenses

There are a huge variety of lenses in the Mamiya RB67 system that range from a 37mm  $f/4.5$  Fisheye to a 500mm  $f/6$ , and there is also a 100-200mm  $f/5.2$  zoom lens. All of these lenses carry the same 77mm filter size making purchasing filters a lot easier. The fastest lens in the Mamiya RB67 system are the 90mm  $f/3.5$  lenses, which are similar to something like a standard field of view. The other unique thing about Mamiya RB67 lenses is that they all have built in leaf shutters; this means that you control both the shutter speed and aperture on the lens itself. Leaf shutter cameras have some benefits such as having unlimited flash sync speed, but unfortunately the fastest shutter speed available on any of these lenses is  $1/400$ . The other benefit of having shutters built into the lens itself, is if you ever have an issue with your shutter not firing properly you can simply switch lenses. In a normal camera system you would have to repair your entire camera body before using it again. This really goes for the entire system as well. As these cameras become older there are less people available to repair them, and as a result you must either repair yourself or replace. The benefit of this system is that if anything goes wrong you can fairly affordably replace it with no camera repair knowledge.



The Mamiya lenses are quite good, especially the 140mm Macro lenses which is revered for its sharpness. There are few different versions of the Mamiya lenses; there are what are referred to as original RB67 lenses which were designed for the Professional body system. These are the oldest and will have the most simplistic optical designs and coatings. There is also the C version lenses that are represented with a green C on the front of the lens, and this also means that these lenses are multicoated. You can also tell the difference between these models as they are the first lenses Mamiya made with a floating element focus ring. This looks very similar to a focus ring, but it actually controls a floating element inside of the lens that will help to improve corner sharpness. You will not notice the difference in the viewfinder, but the image itself will have better sharpness when setting this floating element accordingly with your camera's focus. There are also K/L lenses that have slightly better coatings than C lenses. The K/L means that these are compatible with all RB67 models, but you will have to remove the back adapter ring in order to attach them to the earlier Pro and Pro S models. There are only 2 L lenses made only for the Mamiya RB67 Pro SD models and that is the 75mm shift lens, and the 500mm f/6 lens, these are the only lenses not adaptable for the Pro and Pro S systems. I use the Mamiya 65mm F/4.5 C lens on my RB67; this provides me with something like a 28-35mm field of view which works great for my purposes. I typically use this for landscapes and some macro work, but I have no complaints about sharpness. I am able to print these images very large thanks to the massive resolution of 6x7 negatives.



## Build Quality/Ergonomics



These camera models are certainly built to last, especially the Pro and Pro S models, and the only thing that may need to be replaced on these cameras are the light seals. The Pro SD versions don't require light seals, but they do have a more plastic build quality as a result. This is not to say they feel cheap; Mamiya used high quality plastics when producing this model and it still feels great. The lenses for these cameras are all metal and glass, and the only plastic parts on the Pro and Pro S models are the knobs and advance levers. These cameras are quite heavy, my Mamiya with a lens weighs around 6lb 1oz, and is about 9 ¼ inches long from the rear of the film back to the front of lens, and 5 ½ inches tall from bottom to the top of the closed viewfinder. You can see in the comparison of this camera next to my Nikon FM, that this is a very large camera. This camera is by far the largest and heaviest camera I own. As a result you most likely won't want to be hand holding this camera very often. My Mamiya RB67 is always on a tripod when I am using it. This makes using the waist-level viewfinder a lot easier to use and allows me to shoot without straining myself. This

camera was in no way made to be ergonomic, and actually there is no really easy way to shoot this camera without a tripod unless you purchase a

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porting the bottom with your left hand, and recommend considering the RB67 Pro if you are handheld, you still have to worry

about the large mirror slap that you get from this camera. This is a SLR meaning there is a mirror projecting the image from the lens into your viewfinder, but when you expose the film the mirror will flip up for an instant, and due to the size of this mirror there is significant vibration that occurs. Also to add to the difficulty the depth of field of a 6x7 negative is extremely thin so you have to be very careful of your focus. This all adds up to a camera you really need to take your time shooting. I enjoy this camera for that specific reason, and when I am using it I make all 10 shots count. I always take a few minutes each shot triple checking focus, composition, exposure, and ensuring my horizon is level.

## More on the way...

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