
Picked up a Vivitar XV-3 last week...

Posted by tbn - 2007/04/10 15:20

This is a Cosina-built camera (aren't all Vivitar SLR cameras?) that seems quite nice to me. Nice mix of features.

It is a black metal body, like the earlier 400/SL and lesser models:

http://mattdentonphoto.com/cameras/vivitar_400sl.html

But it is considerably smaller, roughly the same size (but heavier) as the new Bessaflex TM:

http://www.butkus.org/chinon/ebay/vivitar_xv-3.jpg

It is, however, much heavier and better-built than the later Vivitar V models (V2000, V3800, V4000, etc). It lacks the sculptured plastic gripping surfaces and soft rubber that the later models offered, and it does not have the film cartridge-viewing window on the back that some models have.

It is Pentax P/K mount, and it offers aperture-priority AE as well as manual shutter speeds to 1/1000. It has the usual metal Copal-Square style shutter.

It also has a very bright viewfinder, with split-image and micro-focus collar focusing aids. Mine had just had the foam redone by the previous owner - otherwise, I do suspect it would have had the same foam rot that is to be expected with cameras of this vintage.

The manual for this camera listed at Butkus (http://www.butkus.org/chinon/vivitar_cameras/vivitar_cameras.htm) indicates a printing date of 1979, and that sounds about right. It has an LED meter indicator, which is unusual in that it displays the full range of shutter speeds and highlights the one you selected (as well as the one it *thinks* you should select) instead of the usual + 0 and - signs. Very nice.

It also takes modern silver oxide batteries. Again, very nice.

My copy came with a Vivitar-branded 50mm f/1.4 P/K mount lens. The serial number, located on the barrel instead of the beauty ring, indicates that it was made by Cosina as well, no surprise there. But f/1.4 is a bit fast for most of the P/K mount Cosina-made Pentax clones - most were f/1.7 or f/1.9 or even f/2.

Another nice touch - a shutter release lock on the shutter collar, not unlike the older Konica and Canon F series cameras (OK, it is made of plastic instead of steel, but it works fine). Oh yes, and it has an optical viewfinder that displays the selected f-stop in the top of the viewfinder so you can see what aperture you've selected or change it without taking the camera from your eye.

So far, I am quite pleased with the camera. I actually bought it for the lens, as I have noticed that Pentax-M 50mm f/1.4 lenses are getting much more expensive lately. But I now suspect that this lens will stay right on this camera most of the time; the camera itself is worthy and I like it.

My only complaints so far - the shutter release is so sensitive, it goes off before I'm quite ready sometimes, and I find the smaller frame is a bit small for my large hands (by example, I find the Bessaflex TM to be just fine in terms of size, so I guess this must be a bit smaller).

So, if you're looking for a Cosina-built, metal-bodied, P/K-mount AE (Aperture preferred, not Shutter preferred) camera that has modern features such as non-mercury batteries, a nice useful viewfinder and shutter speed indicator, as well as an (optical, not electronic) aperture display, with the option of even installing a motor drive (if you can find one), then this might be a good camera to look for.

NOTE: I have been informed that the Vivitar XV-3 is actually a Cosina CT-4. So there you go.

Re: Picked up a Vivitar XV-3 last week...

Posted by Brian - 2007/04/10 20:25

A *very* good write-up and thanks! Would you mind if I put this in the "Reviews" section of the website?

Re: Picked up a Vivitar XV-3 last week...

Posted by tbm - 2007/04/10 20:56

A *very* good write-up and thanks! Would you mind if I put this in the "Reviews" section of the website?

Feel free!

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Re: Picked up a Vivitar XV-3 last week...

Posted by Brian - 2007/04/11 20:13

I've moved this into the main articles/reviews so this thread is locked.

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Re:Picked up a Vivitar XV-3 last week...

Posted by holmes21 - 2007/10/07 22:42

Trying a little further... I found my Vivitar XV-1 body recently and compared the base plate shape with the Bessaflex. Looked very close in shape except for the drive cog on the Bessaflex. So, off the with the base plates. There is an obvious family resemblance, to say the least. Similar mechanical shutter, too. However the Bessaflex is clearly further developed around the drive cog side, so not it's not compatible.

Followng on from Brian's post below:

" So, if you're looking for a Cosina-built, _meta_I-bodied, P/K-mount AE (Aperture preferred, not Shutter preferred) camera that has modern features such as non-mercury batteries, a nice useful viewfinder and shutter speed indicator, as well as an (optical, not electronic) aperture display, with the option of even installing a motor drive (if you can find one), then this might be a good camera to look for."

If the XV-3 is in fact the winder-capable version of the XV-1, then maybe this would take the Cosina trigger wind ... that would be quite cool.

Craig

http://www.cosina-voigtlander.com/images/fbfiles/images/CV_bases.jpg

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Re:Picked up a Vivitar XV-3 last week...

Posted by Brian - 2007/10/08 03:29

holmes21 wrote:

Followng on from Brian's post below:

" So, if you're looking for a Cosina-built, _meta_I-bodied, P/K-mount AE (Aperture preferred, not Shutter preferred) camera that has modern features such as non-mercury batteries, a nice useful viewfinder and shutter speed indicator, as well as an (optical, not electronic) aperture display, with the option of even installing a motor drive (if you can find one), then this might be a good camera to look for."

Wasn't my review but contributed by a member (Wigwam Jones). You can find the article in our reviews area under "Modern SLR Bodies" at: <http://www.cosina-voigtlander.com/content/view/41/28/>

(I'm always looking for people to help with content, even if it is a review I've done because different people have different perspectives) ;)

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