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It will happen this way. You may be walking. Maybe the first sunny day of the spring. And a car will slow beside you, and a door will open, and someone you know, maybe even trust, will get out of the car. And he will smile, a becoming smile. But he will leave open the door of the car and offer to give you a lift.

Nikkor AF 24mm f/2.8D



This is one of two lenses that I bought new in the last year. I was heading out on a trip and needed to fit a Fuji GA645zi and a D2x into a Crumpler Tall-E bag. That meant that my choices were (a) a 50mm lens or (b) finding a compact wide-angle lens that I could live with. Taking a zoom was out of the question, and the mighty 300mm f/4.5 ED-IF Ais (with monopod) was taking up a lot of the space/weight allowance in my 56cm roll-on suitcase. So I took a 30 mile drive on a Saturday morning (the day before I was leaving), paid a huge amount of money, and of course forgot to send in the 5-year warranty card before my trip. Oh well.

After a couple of weeks with the 24mm f/2.8D, I figured out that it was one of the best lenses I have ever used. Giving an equivalent FOV and DOF to a 35mm f/2.8, it provided a natural perspective (52-54° horizontally). And incredible sharpness (comparable to the AF-s 17-35mm f/2.8D, the benchmark in Nikon wides).^{1/} And this is in a package several inches shorter than the 18-70. What little focal range length I lost, I was able to make up (for most purposes) with the high resolution of the camera. The long shots I simply did with the 300mm. As on every trip.

The Nikkor 24mm is a completely valid alternative to one of the digital kit lenses; it's small, it's very dust-tight, it focuses quickly, and it's very light. Add to that Nikon's superb CRC (close range correction), and it's a sharper close-range lens than the

35mm f/2D that everyone loves so much.^{2/} The bottom line is a nice, compact lens that works superbly on film as a wide-angle and translates well to a wide-normal on a digital body. Bravo, Nikon.

Notes:

1. The 17-35mm still wins in linear distortion at 24mm. In fact, it wins at everything - which explains why it costs five times as much money new. The 24mm AF lens has a tiny amount of visible distortion with rectilinear subjects that are 3m or closer. It's worth pointing out that all Nikon DX zooms have significantly more linear distortion at the 24mm focal length.

2. Someone explain to me why the Nikkor 35mm f/2D is the object of lust among the digerati? It's not as sharp as the 24mm (lacks CRC, too), generates a fairly narrow 50mm field of view on a field camera (it bears reminding that people weren't using 50mm lenses much for film), it gets oil on the blades, and it costs a lot more used.

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