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- + excellent optics at f/4 - f/16
- + very compact and lightweight
- lack of contrast wide open
- low-budget plastic feel
- AF hunting, MF not precise



50mm are a boring focal length! Statements like these are widespread – and true! Their 46° angle of view is so close to natural perception that photos made with these lenses are not striking just because of their focal length. After all that's why they are called "standard" lenses. Anyway, whenever possible I carry the AF Nikkor 50mm 1:1.4 D around. Why?

Well, first of all it is very compact and lightweight. But above all it so fast. And I didn't spend a fortune on this high speed lens, either. Actually I use the 50mm as a bridge between my 17-35/2.8 and my 80-200/2.8. As a bonus I gain 2 full stops (whenever 17mm and 1/15sec are not an ideal alternative).

O.k., performance at 1.4 is not a hit. A lack of contrast is clearly visible from 1.4 to 2.5. But think of it: Whenever I have to use 1.4 my photographic subjects are very contrasty anyway, for example spot-lighted rock concerts or ballet performances. This is more than a compensation for the 50/1.4's weak contrast wide open. And if you shoot interiors with fine details (in churches for example) you should use smaller apertures and a tripod anyway. What really bothers sometimes is coma. Spot-shaped sources of light develop visible halos, a characteristic which was much better corrected on my former Canon FD 50/1.2 L. From 2.8 upwards performance of the AF Nikkor improves dramatically, in fact it surpasses my AF-S 28-70/2.8 significantly. So if you are a very quality-oriented photographer you will enjoy this lens' performance in the medium apertures.

On the other hand you will be less enthusiastic about its build quality. Extensive use of plastic is the price you have to pay for compactness and reduced weight. MF is not very precise, AF is fast but hunting. Just as with the AF Nikkor 85/1.4 the small depth-of-field seems to make it difficult for AF to find focus. Nevertheless this lens has served me well in Arizona's slot canyons where two of my precision MF lenses failed completely due to very fine-grain sand and mud.

It would not be a Nikkor if you did not get a fuzzy screw-in type lens hood, but you can also order a more convenient rubber hood.

As a conclusion the AF Nikkor 50/1.4 is not a spectacular but nonetheless a very important completion of my equipment. I keep trying to compensate its missing originality with increasing diligence on composition of my photos. And by the way, if you own a D1 you gain a very interesting AF 75/1.4...

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