

<p>AFS 50 mm f/1.4 G Nikkor</p>	<p>5 (DX: D2X)</p> <p>5 (FX: D3, D3X)</p> <p>IR: 3 (DX: D200 modified, Fuji S3 Pro UVIR)</p>	<p>An update of the older "screwdriver" 50/1.4 Nikkor was long overdue. The new model, largely finished in lightweight material of an organic nature, sports an improved 8/7 optical design and at last, AFS operation. But unlike other recent new Nikkors, there is no nano-coating and no ED glass inside. While the lens barrel does not extend during focusing, there is no internal focusing (IF) to work its magic (and sometimes, adding colour aberrations) - the inner unit moves back and forth as an entity. Thus, the autofocus operational speed won't set a world record, but for most purposes it suffices well enough. A side effect is that the outer casing needs to be pretty big, thus a 58 mm filter thread is used. This breaks the earlier pattern of normal lenses (by Nikon) being served by 52 mm filters. However, in a predominantly digital era in which filters see much less use than before, this disruption of old habits might be easier to accept. One gets a better fitting lens hood and since it flares just a little, the front element is deeply shaded. Towards the rear there is a rubber gasket to provide weather sealing.</p> <p>Corner fall-off is visible when the lens is set to the widest apertures, but less annoying than seen with the earlier AF-D model. Fall-off will of course be most visible on the FX cameras. From f/2.8 onwards vignetting is negligible on DX and FX alike. The barrel distortion, typical for this class of lens, is kept under good control. Field flatness also is better than shown by most fast lenses. Image quality is quite good in fact at f/1.4 although some blue fringing can occur at high-contrast transitions, increases to f/2.8 accompanied by a rise in contrast and reduction of fringing, and really gets into its stride in the range f/4 to f/9 or so. The smallest apertures see more softening of the image and a reduction in contrast, so only stop down to f/16 if you desperately need the increased depth of field, or like to shoot into the sun. The aperture opening is nicely rounded and the out-of-focus rendition (bokeh) is softer and less harsh than seen with the older 50/1.4 AFD model. However, the 50 mm lenses are too short to really throw the background way out of focus unless you shoot fairly close and have the lens nearly wide open. So don't expect the image to "pop" like it often does with a telephoto lens.</p> <p>Colours are rendered vividly saturated and come across crisp and clear. On some subjects, however, one can detect a slight longitudinal colour aberration leading to reddish fringes to the foreground and greenish fringes towards the background. Even in this respect the new lens does better than the predecessor so this behaviour should be interpreted in its proper context, and many shots will not show this problem at all.</p> <p>Although nano-coating is missing, the new lens handles awkward backlighting and point light sources better than the model it replaces. Ghosting is usually minimal, but when shooting straight into the sun, you tend to be rewarded by a big blur rather weak blue ghost spot. Flare is well controlled, though, and I did not encounter situations in which flare was an issue for my shooting with the AFS 50 G.</p> <p>The new model is an evolution of the older lens, so you don't need to rush out to purchase it unless you can only work with AFS. Anyone looking for an excellently performing normal lens should consider the "G" carefully. It complements the high resolving power of the D3X in a nice fashion too.</p> <p>IR: Not a good candidate for IR use since there is a central hot spot when the lens is stopped down.</p>
---	--	--