

1. Introduction

Originally posted 2009-04-16 on Optyczne.pl



The series of duels on the occasion of 50-year anniversary of the Nikon-F mount will be started by a clash of Nikkor-S 5.8 cm f/1.4 and Nikkor AF-S 50 mm f/1.4 G. In this case we know, as a matter of fact very precisely, how many years apart these lenses are.

In March 1959 at IPEX (International Photo Exhibition) in Chicago Nikon F was presented, the first SLR camera Nippon Kogaku-born. Obviously the premiere wasn't just about the camera body, along with Nikon F, Nippon Kogaku has presented an entirely new line of optics. On the day of the debut (20th March) there were only 4 lenses presented. Those were: a wide-angle Nikkor 3.5 cm f/2.8, prime Nikkor-S 5.0 cm f/2 and short telephoto lenses Nikkor-P 10.5 cm f/2.5 and Nikkor-Q 13.5 cm f/3.5. As early as the same year an ultra wide-angle Nikkor-O 2.1 cm f/4, fast prime Nikkor-S 5.8 cm f/1.4, the first Zoom-Nikkor 8.5-25 cm f/4-4.5 and mirror Reflex-Nikkor 100 cm f/6.3 joined them.

The main character of our article appeared exactly in November 1959 and was produced until January 1962. Two months later it was replaced by Nikkor-S 50 mm f/1.4. Nikkor-S 5.8 cm f/1.4's serial numbers were expressed in the range between 140051 and 179051, and models produced in those nearly two and a half years differed by delicate nuance. The copy present in our test had a serial number of 149609, which means that it was manufactured somewhere between March and January 1960. It's different from the very first models by a slightly narrower and differently corrugated, aperture ring and the "LENS MADE IN JAPAN" sign.

Nikkor-S 5.8 cm f/1.4 is on the most mysterious Nikon's "glass". As we've already mentioned it was under production for a very short period of time, in a summary "edition" of 39 000 copies. We know for sure that it comprised of 7 lenses (the letter S in the name is an abbreviation of a Latin word septem meaning seven). However, different sources state a different number or groups – either 6 or 5. From what we've managed to establish, the first version's true. There are rumors in the Net that it's uncertain who actually manufactured this lens, and it's not obvious at all that it came from Nippon Kogaku factories.

Nikkor AF-S 50 mm f/1.4G was officially premiered on August 22nd, 2008. We don't think, then, that the copy used for comparison had been manufactured much before that date. All the more so, because we needed to wait a few months for this lens to be available in shops. In all likelihood we can state that the lens was manufactured at the turn of 2008 and 2009. So the compared lenses are almost 49 years apart.

What mark did almost half a century leave on Nikon's optics? What was changed? What was improved? Perhaps something worsened? Further chapters will tell!

We would like to thank [Nikon Poland](#) and Marcin Gorko for lending us the lenses.

Information about our review method can be read in our article [“How do we test lenses?”](#)

