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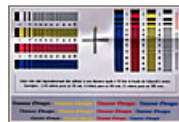
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## AF Nikkor 85mm 1:1,4 D



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- + excellent optics
- + breathtaking build quality
- + balances nicely on pro bodies
- no AF-S
- screw-in type lens hood



The first lens I mated with my brand-new F5 in 1996 was the AF Nikkor 85mm 1:1.4. Why not the much more popular AF Zoom Nikkor 80-200mm 1:2.8? Or the less expensive AF Nikkor 85mm 1:1.8? If you ever happen to judge the slides you produced with an AF 85/1.4 under a first-class loupe, you will understand why!

Resolution and contrast at f/2.8 and slower are simply unrivalled! Compare these exposures with those made with an excellent 80-200/2.8 at f/2.8 and you will still state an enormous difference. But even wide open the results reveal a richness of details that surpasses my highly commended Canon FD 85/1.2 L with its grinded aspherical element. At the same time ghosts and flare are very well controlled for such a lens. This is a rather important issue because I feature many stage shows (concerts, theatre, ballet) where they make excessive use of spotlights (especially contre-jour) and thus I depend on lenses that cope very well with those problematic conditions. Simply due to their high number of elements zoom lenses can never oust primes in that respect. And what about ultra-high speed? Is it really necessary? Well, every now and then I still have to work in small, poorly illuminated gymnasias. There I desperately need f/1.4 in order to keep shutter speeds as fast as possible to avoid blurs. Moreover the combination of maximum speed and slight telephoto focal length allows for perfect concentration on essentials. You can perfectly make sure your background does not mar the picture, as if you worked with a 400/2.8. And at last you will understand what makes Nikon call the finder of your camera "brilliant"...

Of course f/1.4 requires a dead fast and very responsive autofocus. Even the slightest movement of your subject may blur the whole picture if your AF does not react instantaneously. Unfortunately Nikon had not developed their AF-S line of lenses yet when they introduced the AF 85/1.4 in 1995. This leaves the AF job to the traditional body-controlled motor drive which now and then seems to be irritatingly noisy and hunting. On the other hand the lens remained surprisingly compact and lightweight without such an AF-S drive. I doubt whether I would use the heavy and voluminous Canon EF 85/1.2 L as often as the Nikkor.

Being one of the finest jewels both optically and mechanically there is still reason for complaint. Once again it is the lens hood: Why does Nikon supply a screw-in type of the hood when most of the competitors have realized that bayonet hoods are much more practical? You can mount and unmount them very quickly and you can easily fix them in a reverse position! It is those details that give good reason to doubt Nikon engineers' customer orientation...

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