The Long March Towards Revolution: AFS 70-200 mm f/2.8 G ED IF VR Nikkor Reviewed

by Bjørn Rørslett

6. Flare and ghosting

A zoom lens with 21 elements would, despite sophisticated multi-coating treatment, be prone to unwanted internal reflections. The 70-200 VR tries its very best to live up to or rather exceed expectations in this area.

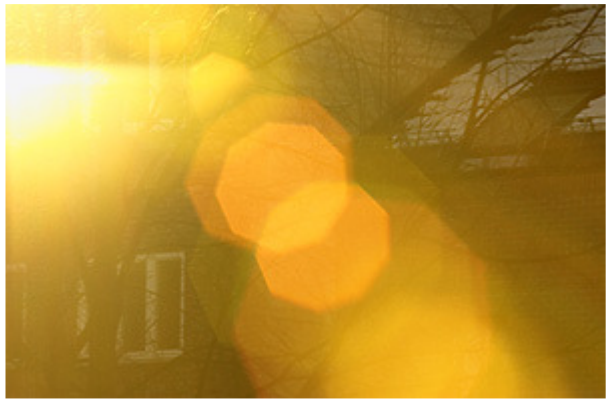
As shown by the test pictures (below), grazing light striking across the front element give rise to huge amounts of ghosting. A long row of hot spots march across the image. Strong flare lowers image contrast to wash out details especially towards the long end of the zoom range.

The poor performance exhibited by the 70-200 VR lens came as a surprise and underpins my suspicion that flare control is not a primary parameter for contemporary lens designs. I like to add that the glass surfaces of my review sample were in a pristine shape without even the tiniest speck of dust on them and of course the big sunshade was used all the time, but evidently to no avail. Direct backlighting is a major problem area for this zoom lens.

Amazing Grace - grazing light hits the lens

70 mm f/22

At least 15 hot-spot ghosts (from each lens group?) together with a plethora of larger secondary ghosts make an ugly impression.



200 mm f/22

Huge amounts of flare add to the prominent ghost reflections of the aperture, and effectively destroys image content

When however direct light is kept off the front of the lens, flare was under better control and ghosting occurred less frequently. Every user has to decide whether or not this issue is of concern for the intended applications of the 70-200. Some people may be severely troubled, while others manage to get off by less devastating results. I guess it all depends on the way you tend to shoot your assignments.

A question often asked is whether flare and ghosting depend on the aperture setting. The answer to this is that flare tends to diminish when the lens is stopped down, while ghosting becomes more predominant visually. However, at the minimum aperture used in the test above, the image area impacted by ghosting should be as small as possible. At wider apertures the ghosts themselves may be less apparent and simply add to the generel level of flare.

Zoom lenses have always been susceptible to excessive ghosting, often combined with a moderate resistance to flare as well. Still, there is food for thought that even my venerable old-timer 50-300 mm f/4.5 ED Nikkor manages significantly better than the 70-200 VR.

The Long March Towards Revolution: AFS 70-200 mm f/2.8 G ED IF VR Nikkor Reviewed

| To Top | Far Side | Gallery | UV | IR |Lenses | Links | Personal | Professional | *Reviews | Start |

Last update 29 July, 2004