

# Grays of Westminster®

Exclusively... **Nikon**

THE PERIODICAL FOR THE NIKON DEVOTEE FOUNDED 1992 • ISSUE NO. 69

## **Nikon D850 Overview**

## **One Hundred Reasons to Celebrate**

by Gillian Greenwood

Nikon <sup>(th)</sup>  
**100**  
anniversary

## **The Resurgence of Film**

by Becky Danese

## **News from Gray Levett**

## **Latest Lens Releases**

and much, much more...





# Welcome

## Why Nikon?...

I am often asked why I chose the Nikon brand both personally and professionally. This is best answered by telling you about an interview I gave to Nikon Japan for their 100th Anniversary website. The interviewer began by asking me to name the first Nikon I had ever held.

I remembered the moment very clearly. It was in the late 1960s; I was working as a young sales assistant in a camera shop called N Hartle Photographic on the south coast of England. One day a customer walked in and asked me to help him with his camera. It was a brand new black Nikon F Photomic FTn fitted with an F-36 motor-drive unit and he did not know how to load the batteries into the motor drive. I thought it was the most beautiful piece of camera engineering I had ever seen or handled. It oozed class and I knew then and there I had to own a Nikon one day! I could not remotely afford one and over the years I made my way via various roads and trails through a range of different 35mm SLR cameras until at last, one day, I finally acquired a Nikon and never looked back. I also own my own black Nikon F which sits opposite me in my office.

## Why an 'Exclusively Nikon' store?

The other question I have been asked many times is why Grays of Westminster became an exclusively Nikon shop. During the early 1990s the UK was facing a looming recession, high interest rates and rising unemployment, which was beginning to affect many of the consumer markets. It seemed to me that within the photographic trade, the mood was apprehensive and there were

many dealers offering the same type of precision photographic equipment as Grays of Westminster. There was nothing to distinguish us from dozens of other camera stores. I considered that a change of course might well avoid the company being caught up in the decline and financial loss that was decimating many of the businesses at the time.



The solution to my problem came from an improbable area. On a very hot day in July 1991, I was walking through London's newly renovated Docklands seeking shelter from the heat. I ducked into one of the many large warehouses converted to house shops and restaurants for a chilled beer and spotted a store called the Christmas Shop which, even in the heat-wave, was packed with customers buying Christmas tree trinkets. In spite of its unlikely merchandising for the time of year, this highly specialist enterprise had somehow caught the imagination of a market in recession and was flourishing.

## A Century of Nikon

A very warm welcome to this edition of the Grays of Westminster Gazette.

# Nikon 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary

On July 25th 2017 Nikon reached its 100th anniversary. One hundred years of continuous invention, evolution and constant re-invention. It is a cauldron of ambition, an ambition to provide quite simply the best optical designs, make the best cameras and merge the best technologies to give you the perfect vehicle for capturing your images.



N Hartle Photographic late 1960s

## Unmistakably... Nikon

I began to think that if you could run a successful business selling products that are only in use for about three weeks of the year, it might be possible for Grays of Westminster to offer a specialist service just selling one brand and be equally successful. I had long admired Nikon for their superb engineering and for the quality of their lenses. After a full analysis I concluded that periods which had been particularly successful for us over the previous few years were coincident with the times that we sold more Nikon equipment than any other brand. Furthermore, to my knowledge at the time, there was not another exclusively Nikon store anywhere else in the world.

So I made the decision to re-create Grays of Westminster as a specialist outlet for Nikon enthusiasts and professionals alike. We would sell the latest Nikon cameras, lenses and accessories, in addition to second-hand equipment, and we would also become an exclusive purveyor of vintage classic Nikon, in other words a focal point for Nikon users everywhere. There have been many adventures over the past 32 years since I entered the world of Nikon. Some of these adventures have appeared in the pages of this publication, while others still wait to be summoned from the memories at the back of my mind...

## Why I Love Nikon...

I love the fact that Nikon have retained the original F-mount virtually unchanged since its release in 1959. Over the years there must have been a number of persuasive arguments to change the F-mount but Nikon have remained loyal to their original

design. The F-mount is noted for its rugged construction and outstanding reliability; Nikon has maintained the basic structure of the mount for the last fifty-eight years of its use, and currently some 400 different Nikkor lenses are compatible with the system. The fact that you can fit a pre-AI Nikkor lens onto a Nikon Df and shoot straightaway is extraordinary. In fact, not only is the F-mount unique for its degree of compatibility with a whole range of present and past Nikkor lenses but its singular design would also be able to accommodate future system advances. Furthermore, the DSLR cameras are always so well-made, and the superb optics of the Nikon lenses is one of the core achievements of Nikon's remarkable skill in innovative engineering. We still sell a lot of second-hand manual focus Nikon lenses to the movie industry where they are mounted on high-definition movie cameras.

As I end this introduction, I raise a glass of something sparkling and congratulate Nikon on their remarkable achievement. A centennial is a very significant moment in the history of an individual and no less so for a company. Nikon have created products that have been used to photograph some of the most astonishing moments in the history of this planet and beyond. There has always been a passion and commitment to excellence which is a part of the DNA of this most illustrious company and one which I am proud and honoured to have been a small part of.

## At Your Service...

In an increasingly impersonal world, we're proud to have a dedicated team of people to assist you with your Nikon needs both in the shop and on the end of the phone. Whatever you need, whenever you need it, we are entirely at your service as we have been for the past 32 years. ■

Gray Levett  
Founder



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# Nikon D850

## OVERVIEW

By Becky Danese



**The D850 was announced on the 6th September 2017 creating a frenzy of excitement for the newest addition to Nikon's professional FX line up.**

Although a replacement for the D810 had been anticipated, as it stands Nikon intend to keep both cameras running simultaneously, for obvious reasons.

The D810 is still a capable camera in its own right and perfect for those who need large files for studio or landscape work.

The D850 is altogether bigger. Bigger in terms of sensor resolution, slightly bigger in terms of physical size, and definitely bigger in terms of all-round shooting thanks to a variety of features.

### **The Sensor: 45.7 Megapixels**

The full-frame sensor is the first of Nikon's cameras to feature backside illumination. What this effectively means is that the sensor is lit from behind the sensor, rather than from a layer within it, meaning that those pixels tend to be brighter and therefore better at capturing light.

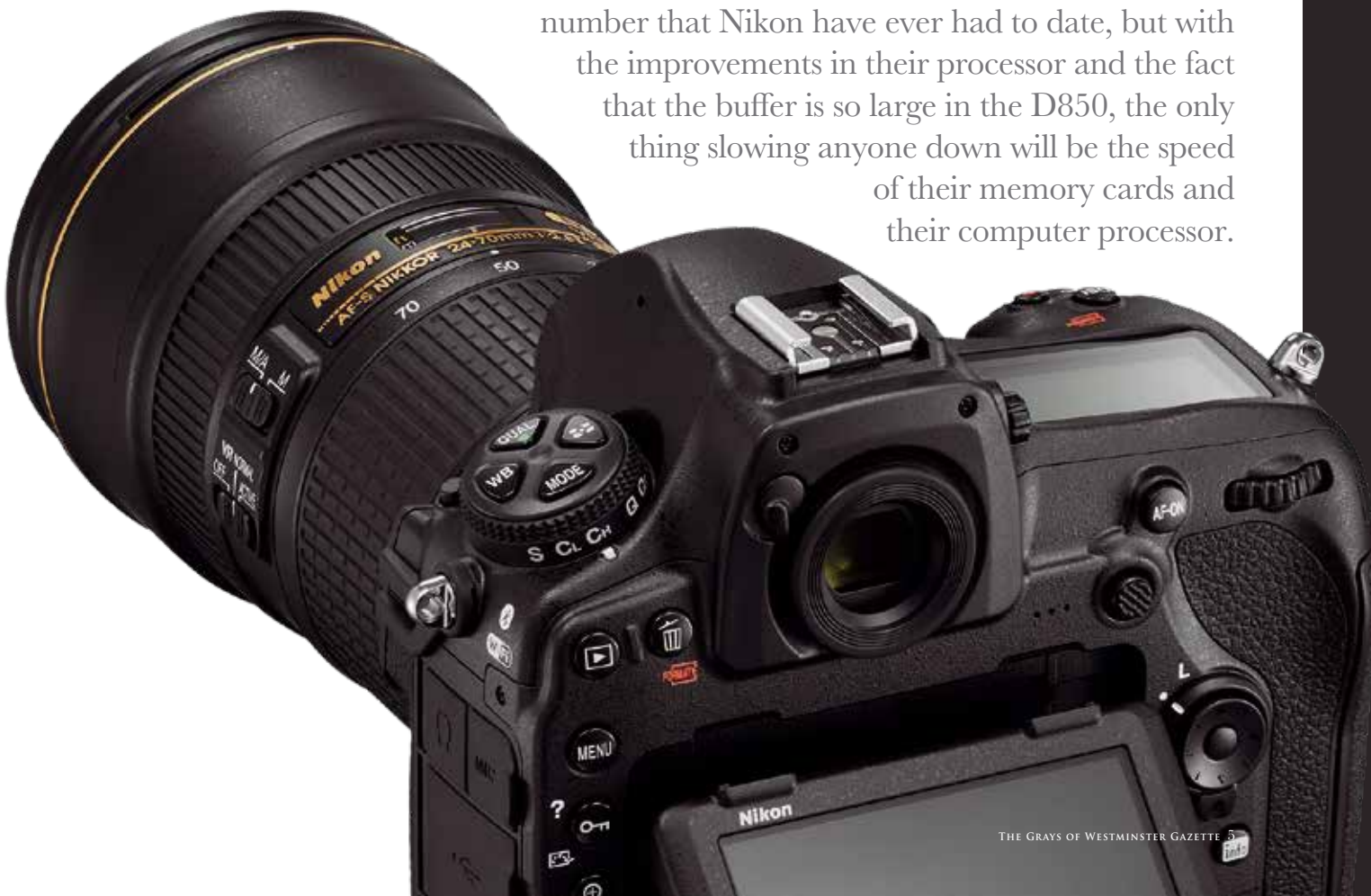
The resolution could be considered daunting – 45.7 megapixels is certainly the highest number that Nikon have ever had to date, but with the improvements in their processor and the fact that the buffer is so large in the D850, the only thing slowing one down will be the speed of their memory cards and their computer processor.

### **The Processor: EXPEED 5**

Not just a number, the EXPEED 5 processor is the same as that in the flagship D5, which means that the images that come out of the



“ The resolution could be considered daunting – 45.7 megapixels is certainly the highest number that Nikon have ever had to date, but with the improvements in their processor and the fact that the buffer is so large in the D850, the only thing slowing anyone down will be the speed of their memory cards and their computer processor.



D850 are very clean and low on noise or 'digital grain'. It is to be expected that a sensor with that number of pixels would mean that light absorption is difficult to say the least. But the processor handles those images remarkably well and allows the D850 to also shoot at previously unachievable speeds, tackling RAW files of 80-100mb per picture.

### The AF System: 153-point Autofocus

Another feature taken from the popular D5 and D500 cameras is the speedy autofocus system, which means that shooting action and wildlife is not a problem. This includes 99 cross-type sensors and 15 sensors that support f/8. Nikon proudly suggest that you can also shoot at -3EV, meaning that even in darker situations, which would be up to 3 stops underexposed, the D850 doesn't hunt around. It no longer has an AF-assist illuminator (the small light at the front of the body that is supposed to help the camera to focus in low-light) so the improved focusing system will certainly help. The central focus point can even perform at -4EV if required.



### The Video: 4K Ultra-High Definition

The D850 is not the first of Nikon's cameras to feature 4k video, but it is the first to be able to record 4k in full-frame, with no cropping at all. It can shoot at full-HD 1080p at all the usual frame rates (24, 25, 30, 50 and 60p) as well as 4k Ultra-High Definition at 24, 25 and 30p.

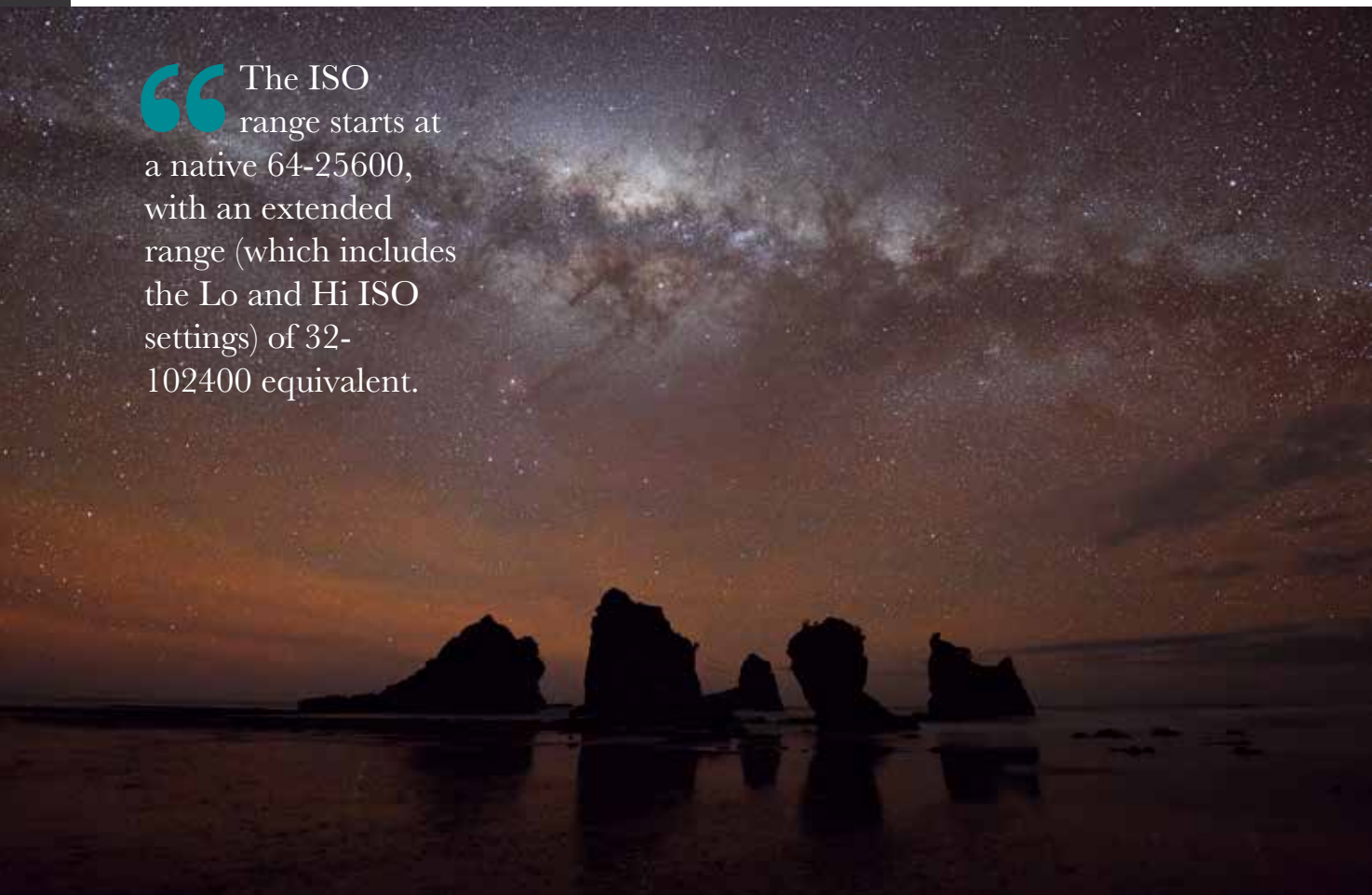
It also includes useful features such as focus peaking (which highlights the areas of the frame which are in focus in your video), highlight display (or 'zebra' mode which shows you the areas of your video that are over-exposed) and electronic VR (in-camera video stabilisation).

For those that have been hearing about 8k, this too is possible with in-camera silent interval timer shooting sessions from which time-lapse movies can be created in post-processing.

### The ISO Range: 64-25600

The ISO range starts at a native 64-25600, with an extended range (which includes the Lo and Hi ISO settings)

“ The ISO range starts at a native 64-25600, with an extended range (which includes the Lo and Hi ISO settings) of 32-102400 equivalent.





of 32-102400 equivalent. With the fastest shutter speed of 1/8000 this means that capturing the tiniest of movement in lowlight is now possible at extraordinary resolution.

### The Frame Rate: up to 9fps

Inherently the camera can shoot 7 frames per second whilst running on EN-EL15a batteries. (The EN-EL15 is also compatible with lower energy efficiency.) You can also shoot up to 9fps if you add the optional battery grip – the MB-D18 – plus the D4 and D5 battery, the EN-EL18a or EN-EL18b.

### Infinite Depth of Field

The in-camera Focus Shift mode enables focus stacking of up to 300 shots taken at fixed intervals, or continuous shooting at up to 5 frames per second for full-resolution images. By setting the parameters for your focus-stacking sequence the D850 gradually shifts focus from the starting point to infinity. You can determine the distance of each focus step from 10 selectable levels. Combine the pictures

in post and you can create images in which every detail, from the foreground to the background, is superbly defined.

### The Storage: XQD + SD

Due to the recent development in XQD cards, Nikon have made this their card of choice for the D850, alongside a UHS-II SD card slot. The current range of XQD cards are four times faster than the fastest Compact Flash, more robust and considerably better for shooting 4k video or continuous stills bursts, so it makes sense that Nikon have decided to take this route with the D850. ■

*“The most balanced and capable camera in its class, as a photographic tool is currently peerless!”*

– Simon Stafford, technical editor *Nikon Owner* magazine



**ORDER YOUR D850 TODAY**  
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# NEW **Nikon** LENSES



## **AF-S 8-15mm f/3.5-4.5E ED Fisheye-Nikkor**

### *Creative freedom in a fisheye zoom*

Nikon's first fisheye zoom provides two fisheye effects in one lens, giving a true circular perspective at the widest end and a creative fisheye effect at the longer end. A full-frame lens that will fit both FX and DX camera bodies\*.

With a close focusing distance of just 16cm, one can produce interesting and creative images no matter the subject.

**Angle of view: 175°-180°**  
**Closest focusing distance: 16cm**  
**Filter thread: rear filter**  
**Weight: 485g**



## **AF-P 10-20mm f/4.5-5.6G VR DX**

### *The perfect wide-angle travel lens*

A new wide-angle zoom for the DX range, this small and lightweight lens is perfect for coupling with DX cameras\*\* for a portable landscape and travel lens.

Coupled with a D3400 or D5600 one has an extremely portable set-up for when the standard kit lens will not suit. Coupled with the D7200, D7500 or D500 bodies there's no reason not to take this small lens for those occasions where something a little wider is required.

**Angle of view: 109°-70°**  
**Effective focal length (in FX): 15-35mm**  
**Closest focusing distance: 22cm**  
**Filter thread: 77mm**  
**Weight: 230g**



“ Need just one lens for a shoot? No problem. The 28mm f/1.4E can handle landscapes, portraits, group shots and fine detail with ease and is designed with Nikon’s latest cameras in mind including the D850, D810 and D5.



### **AF-S 28mm f/1.4E**

*Nikon’s newest addition to their professional primes*

The 28mm focal length has been loved by street and photojournalist photographers for decades. Now Nikon have surpassed themselves with the exceptionally sharp AF-S 28mm f/1.4E which produces wide images with minimal distortion and incredible close focus distance of 16cm.

Need just one lens for a shoot? No problem. The 28mm f/1.4E can handle landscapes, portraits, group shots and fine detail with ease and is designed with Nikon’s latest cameras in mind including the D850, D810 and D5.

**Angle of view: 75°**  
**Closest focusing distance: 16cm**  
**Filter thread: 77mm**  
**Weight: 645g**



### **AF-P 70-300mm f/4.5-5.6E VR IF-ED**

*The update of a versatile classic, designed for high-speed and high resolution*

The 70-300mm has been a much-used focal length for those who need the extra distance without wanting the extra weight or expense. But the new AF-P 70-300mm f/4.5-5.6E VR IF-ED gives even the higher end zooms a run for their money.

The new AF-P (pulse) stepping motor makes this lens very fast to focus, whilst the latest developments in lens technology and advancements in this production of ED (extra-low dispersion) glass mean that it is an excellent choice for those who only occasionally desire the longer telephoto lens or wish to take their first steps into long-distance photography.

**Angle of view: 34°20' - 8°10'**  
**Closest focusing distance: 120cm**  
**Filter thread: 67mm**  
**Weight: 680g**

# NEW **Nikon** LENSES



## **AF-S NIKKOR 180-400mm f/4E TC1.4 FL ED VR**

**January 2018 brought with it the announcement of Nikon's latest telephoto super zoom, made with the working photographer in mind.**

The newest lens to feature a built-in 1.4x teleconverter, the AF-S Nikkor 180-400mm f/4E TC1.4 was designed to be used in every situation, from fast-paced action to the challenges of the great outdoors, as well as long-distance landscape. Due to its size it is portable enough to use on long treks to capture hard-to-find wildlife as well as images from the side of the stadium or racecourse.

Thanks to the built-in converter, photographers can easily convert their focal length from 400mm to a 560mm f/5.6 lens without even moving the camera or removing their eye from the viewfinder with the sturdy, well-positioned lever.

Nikon's Vibration Reduction (VR) in both normal and SPORT modes now gives a four-stop advantage for shooting at slower shutter speeds, even with the teleconverter engaged. The SPORT VR also aids fast subject tracking, assisting the camera to lock onto the correct target.

And for those travelling photographers, all moving parts are weather-sealed and the lens is built with a fluorite lens element to keep weight to a minimum, as well as a fluorine lens coating to repel dust and moisture.

**Angle of view: 13°40' to 6°10' (with built-in teleconverter 9°50' to 4°30')**  
**Closest focusing distance: 2.0m**  
**Filter attachment size (rear filter): 40.5mm**  
**Weight: 3500g**

\*Cameras that pre-date 2010 will not work with Electromagnetic diaphragm lenses (E-type).

\*\*Cameras that pre-date 2013 will not work with AF-P type lenses.

To see the full lens compatibility chart visit: <http://bit.ly/2AHezzf>



## 19mm f/4E ED PC (tilt/shift perspective-control)

*The newest perspective control lens giving a powerful combination of picture angle and image quality*

For those who pride themselves on the best interior, architectural and landscape photography, the 19mm f/4E ED PC is the obvious choice.

Thanks to its unique optical construction, the distortion common in wide-angle lenses is minimised, even at the edges of the frame. Two aspherical lens elements greatly reduce coma and other types of aberration. Three extra-low-dispersion glass elements minimise axial chromatic aberration. Nikon's Nano Crystal Coat virtually eliminates ghosting and flare throughout the frame, even in backlit situations.

**Angle of view:** 97°

**Closest focusing distance:** 25cm

**Filter thread:** none (domed front element)

**Weight:** 885g



AF-P 10-20mm f/4.5-5.6G VR DX shot



AF-S 8-15mm f/3.5-4.5E ED Fisheye-Nikkor shot



AF-P 10-20mm f/4.5-5.6G VR DX shot



AF-S 28mm f/1.4E shot



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*A Shop Selling Only Nikon?  
It'll Never Work!  
Thirty Years in the Making...*

**GRAYS OF  
WESTMINSTER  
THE LEGEND  
AND THE LEGACY**  
by Gillian Greenwood

Grays of Westminster is not simply a famous Nikon camera shop; for many photographers around the world it is an institution and its name has become a byword for excellence. It has won numerous awards and distinctions and is the first camera shop in the world to be granted its own Coat of Arms by Her Majesty's College of Arms.

*The Legend and The Legacy* is a celebration of the last 32 years of the history of Grays of Westminster and tells the extraordinary story of its development from a tiny mail order business with modest beginnings to its present incarnation as a unique company that looks after more than 49,000 customers worldwide.

Gillian Greenwood's superb illustrated account offers a fascinating view of the singular Nikon-only camera shop and her anecdotal style provides an in-depth understanding of just what makes Grays of Westminster tick. She vividly describes the building, the man who founded the company, the people who run the shop and some of its famous visitors.

The Foreword is by the President of the Nikon Corporation of Japan.

208 pages, 183 colour & black & white photographs  
and illustrations, 274 x 194mm, hardcover £30.00

★★★★★ **amazon.co.uk**

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# BACK TO THE FUTURE

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## THE RESURGENCE OF 35MM FILM BY BECKY DANESE

*Becky Danese* looks at the rising popularity of Nikon film cameras and provides an overview of some of the most popular models.

**My first real memory of shooting film was on an old Kodak compact camera. I had asked for a ‘proper’ camera for Christmas just before my 11th birthday, and was delighted to find that the one I was kindly supplied with by my grandmother had a zoom of about 30-60mm.**

I would sneak it into classes at school and take it on holidays, hating the wait of two hours or more for my film to be developed by the local D&P shop, which was luckily only a ten-minute walk from my house (and is now, incidentally, a barber shop).

I entered the wonderful world of Nikon not long afterwards but mostly in a digital capacity. It wasn't until someone put an FM2n in my hands about ten years ago that I realised shooting film was still a bug that I would not be cured of. Apparently I am not alone.

It has become increasingly apparent that film is on the up and up. From the professional portrait and landscape photographers who would choose film over digital for their commercial work to a wonderful developing shop in East London, whose owner confessed to a friend of mine that a year ago they were developing 20 rolls a day and are now at a staggering 200 per day on average, the signs are all around us. As many will know even Kodak have promised the return of Ektachrome slide film, which should be seen back in distribution towards the end of 2017.

Although what it is about film that still draws us in is more personal and completely subjective from person to person, I think we can all agree that there is a depth and aesthetic to the grain, colours and tones produced by various films and papers they are subsequently printed on than one can get from a digital photograph.

There is also the taking of the photo itself. In many ways shooting with a film camera is a more considered and time-consuming activity. One has a limited number of shots and wants to make sure that each shot really counts. On a recent foray into central London equipped only with my FM3A and a 28mm lens I realised that 36 shots of things that I really wanted photos of was much harder to achieve than when I am with my digital camera. Although I am very much a ‘get it right first time’ sort of person and don't idealise sitting behind a computer for hours after a shoot, I will still end up with more photos than I need at the end of the day.

With a roll of film one maybe has a handful of ‘keepers’ and they are all the more cherished.

But the question I am often asked by students and those returning to the craft after years away is: what film camera is the best?

Well, unlike digital cameras (by which, I think, we are spoiled by the way), one's photographs don't dramatically change from one camera to the next.

“ Although I am very much a ‘get it right first time’ sort of person and don't idealise sitting behind a computer for hours after a shoot, I will still end up with more photos than I need at the end of the day.



## STARTING OUT – WHAT TO KNOW

### Film

The film you choose has as much to do with the resulting photograph as it does the lens. 200 ASA on a grey day is going to end up with a lot of under-exposed shots, so in the UK I personally find 400 ASA film the best. Who doesn't like a bit of grain anyway?

Fuji, Kodak and Ilford are often the easiest film brands to get your hands on, but most film stockists will have a wide selection of lesser-known brands which are worth trying.

### Metering

Now for a word on metering. I've had my own successes and failures with built-in meters versus hand-held meters and I've finally learned my lesson the hard way that, if you are very precious about how many really great shots you end up with, a hand-held meter will serve you better. However, as I will expand on shortly, the later the camera, generally the better the metering system is.

If you really want to get it as right as possible then you can always bracket – one shot intentionally under-exposed, one shot perfect (according to your meter) and one shot over-exposed. If your film is not very forgiving then you may find that the over-exposed shot comes out better than the 'correctly' exposed one.



## D&P (Developing & Printing)

As to processing film, there are still some excellent labs about, and if you don't want mountains of prints and negatives lying around you can always ask them to scan them onto disk for you. This may seem counter-intuitive, but I think you'll agree that unless you have your own darkroom and print lab, sometimes one needs to have the convenience of digital storage even when it comes to film.

## THE CAMERA

The Nikon range of film cameras can appear a bit of a minefield to those starting, or restarting, with film and I thought it may be useful to lay out some of the key differences in the most popular models. This is by no means a complete explanation of the entire Nikon range of cameras, but may act as a guide for those who want to take a step back in time, load a roll of 200 or 400 ASA and watch the magic happen.

### Professional Nikon Film SLRs

This may seem obvious, but the Nikon F, F2, F3, F4, F5 and F6 are all considered professional cameras. From the F4 on up we were given auto-focus, although it is only the F5 and F6 which will use the modern G-type lenses with no aperture ring.

The F and F2 Photomatics had meters in the heads, and the heads were interchangeable with unmetred heads

which would save a little bit of weight if needed. All of these bodies were extremely robust and provided a gargantuan range of accessories, from focusing screens to alternative motor drives and backs. I'd suggest that if one already has a large range of Nikon glass, both manual and auto, and might intend to do a few expeditions or rough journeys with a film camera, then perhaps a professional model isn't a bad way to go.

### Consumer Nikon Film SLRs

Starting all the way back with the Nikkormats and progressing through to the FM series of cameras, Nikon's last-ever mechanical film body was the FM3A. It featured their best centre-weighted metering system, shutter mechanism and construction for a camera of this level in a lightweight chassis that money could buy. But any of these models, whether it is the Nikkormat FTn or the earlier FM, will suit both pros and amateurs if something simple is desired. Motor drives, a small selection of screens and correction eyepieces are often still available for these models.

Although by no means the only difference, it is worth knowing that one of the key advantages to a 'consumer' camera is the fact that it is very light and easy to use in comparison with the pro bodies, which were always robust, had a plethora of additional accessories (such as 22 focusing screens for the Nikon F3 alone!) and could quite literally withstand bullets, as in the famous case of Don McCullin's Nikon F\*.



“ Although this is by no means a complete guide on starting out in film photography, the chances are that if you’ve been thinking of taking the hobby back up this might help to steer you in the right direction.



### Other Nikon Film SLRs

Although you will find reviews and dissertations on most of these models all on their own, as they are sometimes lesser-known, I am briefly mentioning them here.

The Nikkormat EL – The first Electronic (EL) camera that had aperture priority and centre-weighted metering

as well as a then-revolutionary electronically controlled shutter. Updates included the ELW, which took an AW-1 auto-winder and the Nikon EL2 for AI lenses.

The Nikon FE and FE2 – These were considered the slightly expensive alternative to FM bodies, but were excellent little cameras.

35Ti & 28Ti – These compact cameras were made of titanium with fixed lenses (35mm and 28mm respectively). Their design is both simple and iconic, and with very clever metering systems they are now some of the more desirable compact cameras if you can obtain one.

### Nikon Rangefinder Cameras

There is no doubt about it; there is something very special about shooting film with a rangefinder. Whether it’s the fact that you are using an optical viewfinder and not looking through the lens itself, or the pure simplicity of going completely manual, these are beautiful cameras to use.

There are disadvantages in that they take their own range of lenses, have no meter and, if you think that not looking through the lens is a burden, there’s that too, but if you want something truly unique to shoot with and really want to go back in time, Nikon made some truly marvellous rangefinder cameras and lenses.

Although this is by no means a complete guide on starting out in film photography, the chances are that if you’ve been thinking of taking the hobby back up this might help to steer you in the right direction. And for any other quandaries, such as what coloured filter to use for that dramatic landscape with large, fluffy clouds (I’d say a deep yellow, by the way), I know an excellent Nikon-only shop that can help with that. ■

\*Don McCullin is an English photojournalist, made famous in part for his wartime photography. His prized Nikon F stopped a Vietcong AK-47 bullet whilst the camera hung around his neck, literally saving his life.

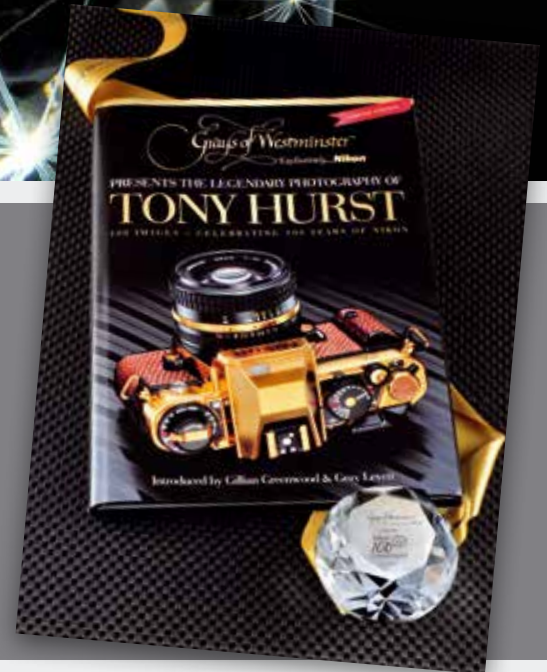


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– Terence Donovan, photographer & film director

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"Nikon Owner sets itself apart from the normal run-of-the-mill photo magazines with articles such as this one (Michael Putland: A Life in Music).

Many thanks for an always entertaining and often very surprising magazine. In closing I have to say I have a full set of Nikon Owner issues in my book case."

- Jennifer Duke



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*One Hundred Reasons to*  
**CELEBRATE**

---

By Gillian Greenwood

# Nikon 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary



## IN CELEBRATION OF THEIR 100TH ANNIVERSARY GILLIAN GREENWOOD EXPLORES NIKON'S EVOLUTION FROM A LEADING OPTICAL MANUFACTURER TO A GLOBAL BRAND

**A century. There is no other period in recorded history where mankind has lived through as many technological revolutions or social transformations as we have over the last ten decades.**

In 1917 there was no internet, no television, no space travel. World-wide communication and aerial transportation were both still taking formative, tentative steps: the first transcontinental phone-call had only just occurred and the historic non-stop flight across the Atlantic in 1919<sup>1</sup> was yet to happen. There were less than 2 billion people inhabiting our planet in 1917 and now there are over 7.5 billion. The quiet, orderly structure of the Edwardian age has given way to the blur and energy of modern life, and the unbridled pace of invention and re-invention means we no longer need to spend our lives in the slow lane.

We have experienced a metamorphosis of life, of global consciousness, of scientific advancement so unexpected and so remarkable, that this past one hundred years is not just the story of the ticking, beating chronology of time, but a continuous reconfiguring of the narrative of the world we inhabit, the life we live and the technology we use to enhance our lives. A few might feel that it is all too fast and too furious, that the volume is too high, too vocal, too clamorous, yet, for all that, paradoxically, we live in a world where better lives are led, where all is fresh and exciting, and where anything is possible. There is indeed much to celebrate. The evolution of photography as both an art-form and as a powerful, evocative tool to 'tell a story' and change mass opinion with a simple image is an example of what we have inherited from this new brave world.

In this extraordinary, ever-changing evolution, Nikon has played a major part. Their motivation has been aspirational, driven by unfailing dedication and a determination to create and design quite simply the best cameras and lenses they could produce. Being at the forefront of photographic innovation meant that Nikon equipment was used time and time again to

chronicle a visual record of some of the most defining moments of the last century, both mankind's spectacular achievements and its grisly antithesis, the devastation caused by war. Nikon supplied NASA and the Apollo missions from the 1960s onwards and it was the Nikon F, their first 35mm SLR, that was selected by NASA to go into space. The legendary photographer David Douglas Duncan likewise used Nikon equipment; his monumental book *This Is War!* (1951), captured the courage, grimness and ordeal of soldiers during the Korean War, told through a series of photographs. Duncan's two additional books, *I Protest!* (1968) and *War Without Heroes* (1970) had a massive impact on the political climate of the time, challenging the US government's handling of the Vietnam War.

More recently, Nikon was used in David Attenborough's award-winning series *Life* to create one of the most complex time-lapse sequences ever filmed, and Nikon's manual focus lenses have been consistently chosen to produce many of the exquisitely crafted, animated motion films of the last two decades, from Tim Burton's *Corpse Bride*, Wes Anderson's *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, *Wallace & Gromit - The Curse Of The Were-Rabbit*, *Chicken Run*, *ParaNorman*, *The Box Trolls*, *Shaun the Sheep The Movie* to *Kubo and the Two Strings*<sup>2</sup>.

“ There is indeed much to celebrate. The evolution of photography as both an art-form and as a powerful, evocative tool to 'tell a story' and change mass opinion with a simple image is an example of what we have inherited from this new brave world.

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Nikon's own story began on 20th July 1917 when Nippon Kogaku (Kogyo Kaisha) was formed by the merger of three of Japan's leading optical manufacturers. Nippon Kogaku means Japan Optical Company. The name Nikon apparently comes from the first letters of Nippon KOGaku to which the letter 'N' was added.

Their beginnings mirror that of Leitz and Zeiss who also started life as optical manufacturers. Nikon produced high-quality optical products, such as microscopes, telescopes and surveying instruments.

By 1932 they were producing photographic lenses and it was then that the name 'Nikkor' was first used to identify their lenses. This name derived from 'Nikko', which was used on their early microscopes. The term 'nikko' also means 'resplendent light' or 'the sun', which gives an almost metaphysical imagery to the brand. The word Nikkor first appeared on a 10.5cm f/4.5 lens mounted on the Lily Hand camera. It is a little-known fact that until 1947, Nikon produced all of Canon's lenses for their Hansa Canon cameras. Nikon continued in this fashion, producing lenses but had yet to manufacture a camera of their own.

The first camera put into commercial production was the Nikon Model I in March 1948. This first-ever Nikon 35mm camera featured a focal plane shutter with rangefinder focusing and a format size of 24mm x 32mm. It was fitted with the 5cm f/2 Nikkor lens, the first Nikkor lens to have a Nikon bayonet mount.

However, the Nikon Model One only had a brief production run. Its 24 x 32mm format proved unpopular with the GHQ of the Occupation Forces under General MacArthur, who would not allow the camera to be exported to the U.S.A. because the 24 x 32mm format was not compatible with Kodachrome slide mounts. It was replaced in 1950 by the Nikon M (the M standing for mutation, Latin for change or alteration). The M used a 24 x 34mm format, but it was still smaller than the 24 x 36mm employed by Leica. Nippon Kogaku replaced the Nikon M in January 1951 with the Nikon S camera. The Nikon S retained all the features of the M including the film

“ The first camera put into commercial production was the Nikon Model I in March 1948. This first-ever Nikon 35mm camera featured a focal plane shutter with rangefinder focusing and a format size of 24mm x 32mm.

format. It also offered flash synchronization. The S continued in production for three years.

In the spring of 1950, David Douglas Duncan, working as a *LIFE* magazine photographer at the time, visited Japan to take pictures of traditional Japanese fine arts. While he was there, Duncan made a fortuitous discovery when his assistant, a young Japanese photographer, Mr. Jun Miki, took his photograph. Duncan was so impressed by the results he asked to be taken to the manufacturer Nippon Kogaku KK (Nikon) to examine the Nikkor lenses and compare them with his favourite Leicas. He started testing a 35mm f/3.5 on his Leica camera, spending about a week doing the tests.

As a result of this, Duncan bought a complete set of Nikkor lenses. Two days later on Sunday, June 25th, war broke out in Korea. He was sent with General MacArthur to fly down to Fukuoka. *LIFE* magazine cabled Duncan after receiving his first photographs in New York, asking, “*Why are you using a plate camera?*” The photographs were so sharp that within a matter of weeks every ‘staff man’ passing through Tokyo bought himself a set of Nikkor lenses.

When Karl Midans and Hank Walker, two photo-journalists additionally covering the Korean War, arrived in Tokyo, they also purchased Nikkors. (Walker took the Nikon S body as well.) Carrying their new equipment, the two men flew to the Korean peninsula. It was a cold winter that year, with temperatures around -30°C. The photojournalists had a hard time; cameras were freezing and ceasing to function, except for Hank Walker's new Nikon S. Not only did it work perfectly even in those harsh conditions, it also produced the magnificent photographs that won him the U.S. Camera Prize in 1950. Midan's Nikkor lens also stood him in equally good stead, for he too won the same prize for his outstanding pictures. On December 10th 1950 the *New York Times* featured a full article on the emergence of Nikon's use in the ranks of professional photojournalists.

A subsequent article by Jacob Deschin had much to say in praise of Nikon:

*“The first post-war Japanese camera to attract serious attention in America has created a sensation among magazine and press photographers following the report by LIFE photographers in Korea that a Japanese 35mm camera and its lenses had proved superior to the German cameras they had been using. ... The lenses, which include a full range of focal lengths, are the Nikkor, to which American experts give a higher accuracy rating than the lenses available from the German miniatures.”*

Zeiss quickly responded to this extraordinary accolade given to a Japanese camera and lens manufacturer.

*“The lenses tested up against the Nikkors were not genuine Zeiss lenses!”* retorted Doctor Karl Bauer President of Carl Zeiss in the U.S.A. furiously. The debate continued. Michael James in a special report from Tokyo for the *New York Times* on the 9th February 1951 wrote: *“The Japanese are making*

Nikon <sup>th</sup>  
100  
anniversary



Nikon <sup>(th)</sup>  
100  
anniversary



*a bid to take over a large portion of the international precision market. ... [The] success of one company, Nippon Kogaku [Japan Optical], indicates that the Japanese are already giving stiff competition to the Germans, who once had a virtual monopoly on the field."*

The first account in a photographic magazine came in Bruce Downes' article in *Popular Photography* of February 1951 and was entitled *Assignment Korea, the inside story of David Douglas Duncan and his dramatic coverage of the Korean War*. It occupied a full ten pages. This was because Duncan's photographs were of such superb quality and were taken on the previously unknown Nikon and Nikkor equipment, not the almost universally used German equivalents. This further favourable publicity was an ideal catalyst for Nikon's growth, which was shortly to become very rapid. Indeed, as a *History of Japanese Cameras* comments, "[It] came together as an explosive combination that set in train the sudden, dramatic development of the Japanese photographic industry."

David Douglas Duncan's book *This is War!* featuring these unique photographs was published in June of that year.

In order to be a serious contestant in the world market, Nikon had to make a number of changes to compete with

the German cameras, which were again emerging as top brands. These changes manifested themselves in the shape of the Nikon S2 in December 1954.

The S2 was the first Japanese camera to incorporate a film advance lever and a film rewind crank instead of knobs. It also included a life-size viewfinder, which projected a bright line frame to cover the standard 50mm lens. It was the first rangefinder camera offering a 1000 sec. shutter speed and the first Nikon camera offering full-frame 35mm 24x36mm format. The S2 was a much easier and quicker camera to operate. It became very popular amongst photojournalists. In fact the three largest photographic magazines in the U.S.A., *Modern Photography*, *U.S. Camera* and *Photography*, stated that many photojournalists had taken to using the Nikon S2 camera.

The zenith of Nikon's achievement in the Nikon rangefinder system was the Nikon SP. It was introduced in September 1957.

Due to the success of the S2 model, Nippon Kogaku found themselves competing with the other three major 35mm camera manufacturers, Canon, Leica and Zeiss.



---

Nikon had recognised that, with the introduction of the Leica M3 in 1954, they needed to pull out all the stops to improve on the S2. This they did magnificently with the Nikon SP.

The P stood for Professional and with this model Nikon had created their finest and most innovative rangefinder camera. The SP was unique and was a complete change from all the models that had gone before. The viewfinder of the SP was the most comprehensive ever made; covering nearly half the width of the camera, it gives the SP its distinctive appearance. The viewfinder has projected parallax corrected frame lines for 50, 85, 105 and 135mm lenses, each one being introduced by a lens field selector dial. To the left of the viewfinder there are field frames for 28mm and 35mm lenses that are fixed in position. The SP offered shutter speed settings of 1 to 1/1000 sec., 'B' and 'T' on a rotating shutter speed dial. The SP was the first camera to have a self-timer, an automatic resetting frame counter and a motor-drive lug to allow the camera to be motorized.

The SP helped create Nikon's dominance in the field of motorized photography that it continues to enjoy today. The S36 motor drive was electrically powered and offered a fixed speed of 3fps (frames per second). From the long-discontinued electric motor drive on the rare Leica 250 from World War II, only spring-wound motors such as the Leica Mooly and the Bell & Howell Foton were available. The SP was the only camera that had been designed from the ground up to use a motor drive. The SP was a truly unique camera and fully deserves its high placing amongst the most collectable of all Nikon rangefinder cameras.

In March 1958, following on the heels of the SP, Nikon released the S3. The S3 was designed for those wanting to enter the Nikon system without paying as much as the cost of the SP. The S3 also made an ideal second body for those who already owned an SP. Instead of using projected, parallax-corrected frame lines for lenses, it used a standard viewfinder with etched lines. This was followed by the Nikon S4, which was a simplified version of the S3. It was announced in March 1959 and immediately ran into problems. The U.S. distributor Joseph Ehrenreich refused to bring it into the U.S.A.. He was awaiting the release of the Nikon F single lens reflex and already had the SP and S3. From his point of view, the S4 would only detract from sales of the S3. It is for this reason that the S4 was sold only to the home-market.

In April 1960 the last rangefinder camera made by Nikon was released: the Nikon S3M. It was unique in being the first half-frame Nikon camera. What made the S3M different was that the 'M' stood for motorized. Because of its 17x24mm half-frame format, it allowed 72mm frames from a 36-exposure film and was supplied with a Nikon S72 motor drive, which gave framing rates of up to twelve frames per second. What makes this model even more unique is that it

is also the rarest as only one hundred and ninety-five were ever manufactured.

There is no doubt that the Nikon F, designed to meet the demands of the hard-working professional photographer, was very possibly the most successful and well-known 35mm single lens reflex camera of the 1960s, and the first high-quality SLR to challenge the 35mm rangefinder systems which were used at the time by photo-journalists throughout the world. It is still considered to be one of the most famous cameras produced by Nikon.

There are some products that get everything right for the time such as a Zippo lighter, a Maglite or a Jaguar XK150. So it was with the Nikon F. Introduced to the world in June 1959, Nikon got the design of the camera and the system so right that they sold a million of them between 1959 and 1974. It was the first Japanese SLR to have interchangeable focusing screens, depth-of-field preview, mirror lock-up, one hundred percent exact field coverage in the viewfinder, provision for a motor drive and dual-coupled metering. It was a 35mm SLR of outstanding quality, precision, versatility and durability and these components became the standard features expected for any self-respecting 35mm SLR, maintained through subsequent 35mm flagship models up to and including the Nikon F6.

With the advent of digital and the internet, the nature of photography itself began to change. Nikon instinctively grasped the mood, and with insight and skill have continued, throughout the decades leading up to their 100th Anniversary earlier this year, to produce some of the best cameras and lenses ever manufactured. ■

*I would like to thank Gray Levett for providing invaluable photographic information for this article.*

“ There are some products that get everything right for the time such as a Zippo lighter, a Maglite or a Jaguar XK150. So it was with the Nikon F. Introduced to the world in June 1959...

1 John Alcock and Arthur Brown made the first non-stop transatlantic flight in June 1919. They flew a modified First World War Vickers Vimy bomber from St. John's, Newfoundland, to Clifden, Connemara, County Galway, Ireland.

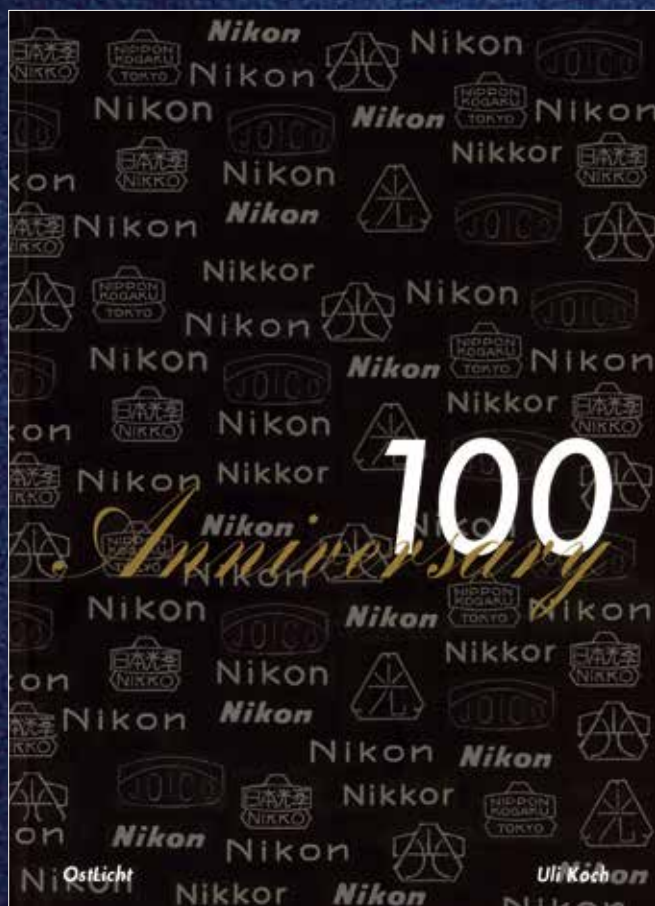
2 Tim Burton's *Corpse Bride*, Wes Anderson's *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, *Wallace & Gromit - The Curse Of The Were-Rabbit*, *Chicken Run*, *ParaNorman*, *The Box Trolls*, *Shaun the Sheep The Movie* to *Kubo and the Two Strings*: The manual lenses for all of these films were supplied by Grays of Westminster.

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by Uli Koch



In celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the Nikon Corporation in 2017, author Uli Koch, one of the world's most prominent Nikon collectors, has completed the mammoth task of writing the book **Nikon – 100th Anniversary**. This fully comprehensive volume covers the history of Nikon equipment over a period of 100 years.

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The text is in English. Author Uli Koch travelled all over the world to meet collectors in order to archive and create this significant history of one of the world's most-loved camera brands. The book contains a number of exceptionally rare items that, apart from a handful of Nikon collectors, have never been seen before.

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