

Voigtlander R4M

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The Wide Angle Shooter

Voigtlander R4M

Voigtlander R4 R4A

Voigtlander R4M with Zeiss 15mm finder, ZM 28/2.8 mounted, and ZM 15/2.8, 21/2.8.

The Voigtlander R4M is the latest addition to my range finder camera system, got it in 2008. Actually I would prefer a R4A for shutter speed readout in the finder but this used R4M with good price came along first. The idea of getting a R4 came about because I much prefer build in frame lines than external finder, especially for close up fast shots.

The build of the body has much improvements over the Rollei 35RF. The mechanical movements are much refined. The shutter noise is remarkably quieter than the 35RF. In fact on the internet it is commented that the shutter noise of the R4M is lower than that of the R4A. The view finder to me is as bright as the 35RF one, not brighter. The R4M offers framelines of 21/35, 28 and 25/50. The range finder patch is bigger than the 35RF. Due to the lower finder magnification to cater for the 21mm field of view I find immediately focusing is easier with the 35RF finder.

Inside the R4M finder the 21mm framelines are quite close to the edge. The additional metering information of +/- 0.5, 1, 1.5 and 2 stops is very useful. However with the Voigtlander design the lens mount is quite close to the finder window, the use of fast 21mm wide angle lenses will block the R4M finder quite a fair bit. For my case my favourite ZM 21/2.8 Biogon will block the lower right of the finder almost 25% with close up correction. As for the ZM 28/2.8 it is much better and this body is really ideal for 28mm rangefinder photography as the 28mm framelines is on its own, although for my case the use of ZM 28/2.8 Biogon with the Zeiss 25/28 hood does block the finder frame lines a little on the lower right corner.

Voigtlander R4M with a ZM 28/2.8 and Zeiss 25/28 hood.

The next question will be the usability of 50mm on R4M. In practice I have taken shots with my ZM 50/2 at f2 with the R4M and I am quite please with the results up to 8R enlargements. Bigger enlargements I cannot comment as I do not normally print size bigger than 8R or super 8R.

R4M, UC100, f2 1/125 ZM 50/2 T* Planar.

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In conclusion, R4M (or R4A) is a very nice and compact body for rangefinder lovers who like to shoot with 28mm. It will work well with compact and slower 21mm. From personal experiences, it works fine for me with 50mm at f2. However, for those who are very particular about viewfinder blockage and would like to work with fast 21mm and 28mm, this body may not be your choice. For me, the advantages of not using a 21mm external finder outweigh the view finder blockage.

R4M with trigger winder.