

# HOW MUCH DO THEY COST?

A Type 1 Rolleiflex 2.8F with 80mm Planar and exposure meter, showing 'moderate/heavy use with obvious wear to the body covering' sold for £432.02 on eBay on 16 July. A dealer in Frankfurt sold a near-mint 2.8F with Planar and meter for £1,261 on 11 July.

The 3.5F realises similar prices, with similar differences for condition. A mint example of the last 'white face' 3.5F with meter and ERC (ever-ready case) sold on eBay for £1,874 on 16 July. A well-used but sound 3.5F with Planar and accessories sold for £436.20 on 14 July. A 3.5F with f/3.5 Xenotar and needing a shutter service (which could be pricey) sold for £171 on 11 July. These examples show that prices of 2.8F and 3.5F Rolleiflexes vary dramatically with condition. Cameras with a Xenotar lens typically sell for far less than those with a Planar lens.

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# Amateur Photographer's... ICONS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

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## Rolleiflex 3.5E

A Type 1 version of the late 1950s, with 75mm f/3.5 Planar and built-in uncoupled exposure meter. This one is in as-bought condition and has not yet been cleaned for display



## Rolleiflex 2.8F

The classic Type 1 of the 1960s, with 80mm f/2.8 Planar and built-in selenium-cell exposure meter

the optical quality of the 80mm f/2.8 Carl Zeiss Planar and the ultimate mechanical leaf shutter of the time, the Synchro Compur. As a creative tool, particularly for pictures of people, it was unsurpassed.

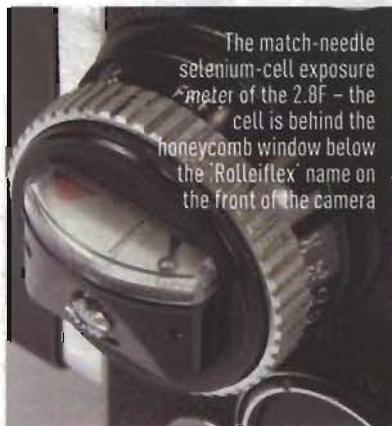
The companion to the 2.8F, the Rolleiflex 3.5F, had been launched in 1958 with either an f/3.5 Zeiss Planar or an f/3.5 Schneider Xenotar of similar specification. The 3.5F was lighter, less expensive and every bit as good, particularly for the increasingly common studio flash systems, whose power virtually guaranteed that shots were always taken with small apertures. Cameras that were never used for available light reportage did not need the f/2.8 lens.

# Rolleiflex 2.8F

When the Rolleiflex 2.8F was created, a star was born.

**Ivor Matanle** traces the history of this TLR from the 1960s

**THE ROLLEIFLEX 2.8F** was the ultimate Franke and Heidecke Rolleiflex twin-lens reflex, with coupled selenium-cell exposure meter. In successive versions, it was an important camera in the professional market for 20 years. Launched in 1960, it established itself with great names of news, feature, fashion and magazine photography, despite the impact of the Hasselblad 500C two years earlier. Using a Rolleiflex was already second nature to huge numbers of photographers. The 2.8F provided Helmut Newton, Richard Avedon, Irving Penn, David Bailey and Robert Doisneau, to name but a few, not only with the quality and reliability that Rollei was renowned for but also with



## IMPROVING ON NEAR PERFECTION

The advent of 220 film in the early 1960s, giving 24 exposures approximately 6x6cm instead of the 12 shots of 120 film, brought about Type 2 of the 2.8F, announced in 1965, which had a switchable 12-exp/24-exp counter and a pressure plate that could be set for 120 or 220 film. As 220 film had no backing paper between the initial leader used for loading and the trailer used for winding off, greater pressure was needed to keep the film flat in the plane of exposure. Early examples of the Type 2 2.8F continued to have the f/2.8 Planar lens, while later ones, particularly after 1973, had an 80mm f/2.8 Schneider Xenotar. The 3.5F had the 220 facility from Type 2 in 1960.

From the outset, the coupled selenium-cell exposure meter was

# WATCH OUT FOR

## Wear and tear

Most 2.8F and 3.5F models saw professional use, which imposed much wear and tear. Any near-mint examples have probably been in amateur use and were used much less. Repairs easily cost £150-£200.

## Film wind

If you can see the camera before you buy, wind and fire a film through it, checking speeds and the aperture settings. If the wind feels rough, avoid the camera. If the shutter button is sluggish, or the slow speeds irregular, the camera needs a service.

## Lens

Repairer Ed Trzoska (tel: 0116 267 4247) says that Rolleiflex T problems include balsam faults (silvery patches) at the back of the f/3.5 Tessar and breakage of the plastic aperture and shutter speed tapes visible in windows above the viewing lens.

## YOU MAY ALSO LIKE...

A Yashica 124G, but you'd better keep it quiet from Rolleiflex fanatics.



## Tele Rolleiflex

This model is of E2 specification and with no exposure meter. It is fitted with Rolleinar 0.35 hinged close-up lenses for close portraiture or other close-up work, here shown open and ready to be swung into place. The 135mm f/4 Sonnar lens and matched viewing lens have Size III filter bayonets

## Wide angle Rolleiflex

One of the scarcest of all the postwar Rolleiflex models, with 55mm f/4 Carl Zeiss Distagon in Synchro Compur shutter. This example is to Rolleiflex E2 specification



not standard on either the 2.8F or the 3.5F, but was an optional extra that most purchasers decided to have. Cameras originally sold without a meter could have the meter factory-fitted later.

## ANCESTRY

The 2.8F and 3.5F followed earlier post-Second World War professional-market Rolleiflexes with broadly similar characteristics, but gradually improving performance and developing sophistication. Rolleiflexes with f/3.5 lenses were known as Rolleiflex Automats before 1956 and went through many variations well documented in collectors' books and websites. The final Automat – known as the Automat MX-EVS because its Synchro Compur shutter had both M (bulb) and X (electronic) flash synchronisation and exposure value setting – was a fine camera, fitted with a 75mm f/3.5 Tessar.

The advent of the Rolleiflex 3.5E for the professional market in 1956 and the Rolleiflex T for the amateur market in 1958 clearly separated the target markets for Rolleiflex in a way that had not happened before. Franke and Heidecke had previously taken the view that those who could not

afford a Rolleiflex should buy a Rolleicord.

The f/2.8 models defined by letters of the alphabet started in 1949, with the 2.8A, which had an f/2.8 Tessar of less than ideal optical performance. The 2.8A was replaced by the rare 2.8B of 1952, which had an 80mm f/2.8 Biometar. The Type 1 2.8B had a Compur Rapid shutter, the Type 2, also of 1952, a Synchro Compur. If you ever acquire an f/2.8 Rolleiflex with a Biometar lens, hang on to it as they are much sought-after. All 6x6 f/2.8 Rolleiflexes from the 2.8B onwards had new Size III bayonet filter and lens hood mounts. The 2.8A was the only f/2.8 6x6 Rolleiflex to have Size II filter and hood mounts, later used by all 3.5E and 3.5F cameras.

The Rolleiflex 2.8C Type 1 was made in 1953 and 1954, and was the first with an f/2.8 Schneider Xenotar. The 2.8C Type 2 of 1954 and 1955, recognisable because of a larger focusing knob, was usually fitted with the 80mm f/2.8 Planar and was the first Rolleiflex so equipped, although some had the f/2.8 Xenotar. The 2.8D of 1955 and 1956 was essentially a 2.8C Type 2, but with an EVS Synchro Compur shutter with linked aperture and shutter settings conforming to exposure values.

The 2.8E and 3.5E of 1956 were

improved in many minor ways over their predecessors, were usually fitted with built-in selenium-cell exposure meters that were not coupled to the shutter and aperture settings – that came with the 2.8F and 3.5F – and were/are essentially similar in use (other than the meter coupling) to the F models. Each was available with either a Planar or a Xenotar lens, but note that 3.5E cameras sold without a meter always had Xenotar lenses.

It is broadly true that, given similar condition, cameras fitted with Planar lenses fetch better prices than cameras fitted with Xenotars, but this is no more than fashion and/or prejudice. I have used both and prefer the Xenotar.

## WIDE ANGLE ROLLEIFLEX AND TELE ROLLEIFLEX

The advent of the Japanese Mamiyaflex twin-lens reflexes with interchangeable lenses in 1956 had a major impact upon Rolleiflex sales, particularly to wedding photographers. Being able to fit a twin-lens reflex with a high-quality wideangle lens enabled wedding photographers using a Mamiyaflex to work closer to wedding groups and therefore in front of troublesome amateur photographers who at

**Rolleiflex T**  
Grey, with 75mm  
f/3.5 Tessar



**Rolleiflex MX-EVS**

Described by Barry Toogood, the owner of these cameras, as a Rolleiflex MX-EVS, this camera has an f/3.5 Xenar lens rather than a Tessar, and the Xenar has the red triangle, indicating factory coating, of the early 1950s. I wonder if, in fact, it is a Rolleiflex 3.5B, since I believe that all MX-EVS cameras had Tessar lenses

that time were mainly equipped with fixed-lens cameras without wideangle capability. Getting in front protected professionals' sales and profits, and many Rolleiflex users switched to Mamiyaflex simply for the wideangle capability. Rolleiflex sales to portrait photographers were similarly hit by the Hasselblads, which could be fitted with 135mm lenses (Hasselblad 1000F) or a 150mm lens (Hasselblad 500C).

Between 1959 and 1975 (Tele) and 1961 and 1967 (Wide Angle), Franke and Heidecke made what Reinhold Heidecke regarded as Rollei's answers to the Mamiyaflex and the Hasselblad – the Wide Angle Rolleiflex and the Tele Rolleiflex. These were E2 or F-specification cameras, optionally with or without a built-in exposure meter, and with non-interchangeable lenses of focal lengths shorter and longer than those of the standard cameras.

The Wide Angle was equipped with a magnificent 55mm f/4 Zeiss Distagon, a version of the Distagon peculiar to this camera. The Tele had a 135mm f/4 Carl Zeiss Sonnar. In each case, the viewing lens was of a similar matched specification. The Wide Angle is probably the most valuable of all production Rolleiflex cameras, with only 4,000 ever made and, in decent condition,

can fetch more than £3,000 on the collectors' market.

### BUDGET OPTION

One of the less fortunate aspects of the increasing complexity and sophistication



### Accessories

Rolleiflex accessories (back row l-r): Size III lens hood, prismatic viewing lens half of Size I Rolleinar 1 and the scarce Rolleiflex Size I hood with hinged exposure meter. Middle row (l-r): Hinged mirror lens caps, Size III, taking lens Rolleinar 1, Size III orange filter. Bottom (l-r): Hinged Size I mirror lens caps

of the Rolleiflex cameras during the 1950s and '60s was the escalating price that all the features made necessary. In the late '50s, Franke and Heidecke launched a compromise – the Rolleiflex T.

The Rolleiflex T lacked the automatic film sensing of the more expensive Rolleiflexes and had to be loaded using the 'red dot' system common to the Rolleicord and most Japanese TLRs. It effectively replaced the MX-EVS Automat that preceded the E series, and retained the 75mm f/3.5 Tessar of the Automat in an improved version with lanthanum glass, which improved its resolution and flare characteristics. The overall build quality was somewhat more utilitarian than that of the top-of-the-line Rolleis, but it did have that key Rolleiflex feature – the fast-wind crank.

Early Rolleiflex T cameras had a grey finish, while from about 1971 they were black. The camera had provision for an uncoupled light-value selenium exposure meter, and a few were sold with a meter installed while some had it factory-fitted later. Most examples today have no meter. The T was on sale from 1958–1976 and is a very effective camera in use.

### FINANCIAL TROUBLES

Increasing financial difficulties caused more by the development costs of innovative 6x6 Rollei SLRs and lack of sales for Rollei 35mm SLRs than by the decline of the TLR market in the face of Japanese competition brought Franke and Heidecke to bankruptcy in 1981. The new company that emerged from the chaos, Rollei Fototechnik GmbH, largely financed by a British company, sought market share during the 1980s with what they identified as Rollei's most innovative SLR products, and with developed versions of the twin-lens reflex.

They resumed production of an improved Rollei SL2000 F 35mm SLR and the Rollei SL66, and then used existing 2.8F parts to produce a new Rollei 2.8F Gold Arium Special Edition. In 1987, the final Rollei TLR, the 2.8GX, appeared. **AP**

**1949**  
Rolleiflex 2.8A  
with f/2.8 Tessar

**1951**  
First flash-synchronised Rolleiflex Automat with Synchro Compur shutter

**1952**  
Rolleiflex 2.8B  
with Carl Zeiss Biometar

**1953**  
Rolleiflex 2.8C  
appears with f/2.8 Xenotar

**1954**  
Rolleiflex 2.8C  
offered with f/2.8 Planar and Rolleiflex MX-EVS appears

**1955**  
Rolleiflex 2.8D  
with Planar or Xenotar appears

**1956**  
Rolleiflex 3.5E  
with f/3.5 Planar or Xenotar announced

**1958**  
Rolleiflex 3.5F and coupled exposure meter announced, with Planar or Xenotar lens

**1959**  
Tele Rolleiflex appears, along with Rolleiflex 3.5E2 and 2.8E2 with removable hood for prism

**1960**  
Rolleiflex 2.8F  
announced

**1962**  
Wide Angle Rolleiflex appears

**1966**  
Rolleiflex 2.8F  
Type 2 for 120 or 220 film

**1970**  
Tele Rolleiflex  
Type 2 with 120/220 feature