FLEXARET AUTOMAT VIIa

The Flexaret twin lens reflex cameras are a product of the Czechoslovakian company Meopta (manufacturers of enlarging equipment). The last in their great line of TLRs was the Flexaret Automat VIIa, in production from 1966-1971. This camera was a multiformat camera, 6x6, 6x4.5, 35 mm and 24 x 24 mm.

The picture shows the masks and inserts required to accomplish the multiformating. The upper mask is the 6x4.5 mask. This mask goes into the film chamber with the notch holding the 10 frame release lever down (see picture below). The 10 frame release lever is the small lever in the film chamber that when held down by the inserts, causes the camera to reset automatically to 1 after the 10th exposure.

The 10 exposure release (small black lever below upper film rail) is located just below

the film counter reset lever (chrome lever in the center of the upper film rail).

Picture of the 6x4.5 insert installed. Note the film chamber is baffled for control of internal flare. Also note that the film back opens similar to the Minolta Autocord cameras, film changing on a tripod is very easy.

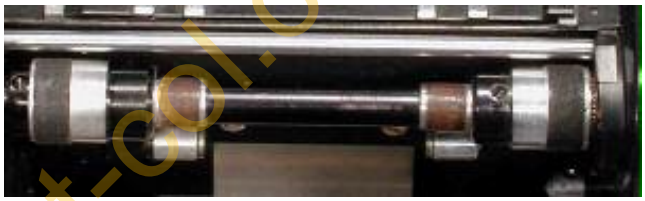
In order for the camera counter to recognize the 6x4.5 format, the bar on the lower left hand corner (marked 60 and 45) needs to be rotated around to where the number 45 is right side up.

Note the frame counter in the center of the camera with an index counter (black dial with an arrow and number window) next to it. When the camera 10 exposure lever is held down by an insert, the counter resets to 1 after every 10th exposure. The index counter can manually be turned to where the number window is above a 0, 1, 2, 3, 4. This allows you to keep track of the number of pictures that you have taken. For example, on a 36 exposure roll of 35mm film, if you remember to turn the index lever to the next number after every 10th exposure, you would have a 3 index and a 6 film

counter number for the 36th exposure.

The 35mm insert installed. Notice that the picture on the left shows the 24 x 24 mm insert installed into the film chamber of the 35 mm insert.

The 35mm film goes under the shiny small rollers and over the small brown rollers on the frame spacing control roller. This is how the camera knows that the spacing needs to be for 35mm film vs. 120 film.



The other inserts in the picture above are the 35mm insert, the 35mm take up spool and the 35mm cartridge holder. When the end of the 35mm cartridge is reached, a button on the end of the film wind knob is depressed and the film spool knob on the lower left of the camera is turned clockwise to rewind the film back into the 35mm cartridge.

When the 35mm film insert is installed, the number 35 shows in a window at the back of the camera to indicate 35mm film is installed. The number 60 shows when 120 film is used.

The camera also has double exposure capability. The round button on the lens panel (just behind the taking lens) can be slid up to cock the camera and to reset the double exposure prevention mechanism.

The button above the shutter release is a shutter release locking switch, red indicates the shutter is not locked.

The camera has the EVS system of exposure control on the shutter speed dial with the ability to easily override the EVS system by manually operating the aperture control lever (silver arrow above the red 8). Shutter is a Pentacon-Prestor: B, 1-500 speed with self timer and M, X flash synch.

The focus lever has a depth of field indicator built into it. Also, the focus has zone focus stops at 7, 12 and 45 feet. The zone focus stops can be disabled by sliding the switch in front of the flash mount down.

The back side of the camera has a filter compensation guide. Filters are a Meopta special bayonet 30 size, the bayonets have only two lugs as opposed to the more common Rollei and Yashica bayonets with 3 lugs.

The lens is a Belar 80/3.5f to f22, single coated, four element, three group tessar design. The coating is very soft and can be easily removed with ammonia based lens cleaners.

Right side view of the camera.

Left side view of the camera.

On the upper left side of the camera is the camera back release button. The button unscrews several turns and then pushes in to release the camera back. To prevent accidental door opening, it is recommended that the button be screwed all of the way in.