

Introduction to High Performance Cameras For Ordinary People by Jim Mathis

I got my first camera when I was in the fourth grade and I immediately began photographing everything I saw. I graduated from the simple box camera to an adjustable 35mm when I was in high school.

In college, I bought a 35mm SLR and when I looked through that lens, I immediately knew this was my calling. For the next twenty or so years I read every magazine and every book on photography that I could find. I visited art galleries, talked with every photographer I knew, and looked at every picture I could possibly see.

I worked in a camera store for awhile which gave me an opportunity to attend trade shows and met some of the super stars of photography. I began collecting photographic items and opened a photography museum. I owned a custom black and white photo lab for 23 years and received a special commendation from the Eastman Kodak Company.

Through it all my interest in photography has never waned. I have owned and used just about every make and style of camera. I can look back at my life and think in terms of my "Rolleiflex Era," my "Mamiya Era," or my "Canon Period," or now the "Digital Age."

I also love guitars, cars, travel, and good friends. I am now to the point where one of the best things I can do with my life is pass on some of my passion and some of the things that I have learned. People are constantly asking me questions about photography, cameras, how to get good pictures, and so forth. With that in mind, I have begun teaching, coaching, and speaking to various groups.

This book is designed to answer some of the questions you may have as you move from a simple camera to a more complex camera. I made the move from a box camera to an adjustable camera when I was sixteen. In this book I want to use the terms "point and shoot" and "high performance" to distinguish between two broad categories of cameras and photographers. Of course, the line is not clear cut and where the line is drawn is not precise. There are many high performance cameras under \$1,000 and a few point and shoot types that are very close to that amount.

In the end, what you paid for your camera is not near as important as the way you see. Forty years ago when I was selling cameras, I realized that there were people with extremely expensive cameras that consistently got lousy pictures, and others with modest equipment that constantly came home with gorgeous photos. The difference is not in the camera and lens, but in the eye of the photographer.

I hope this book helps you learn to use your equipment better, but I mainly hope that it helps you see better.