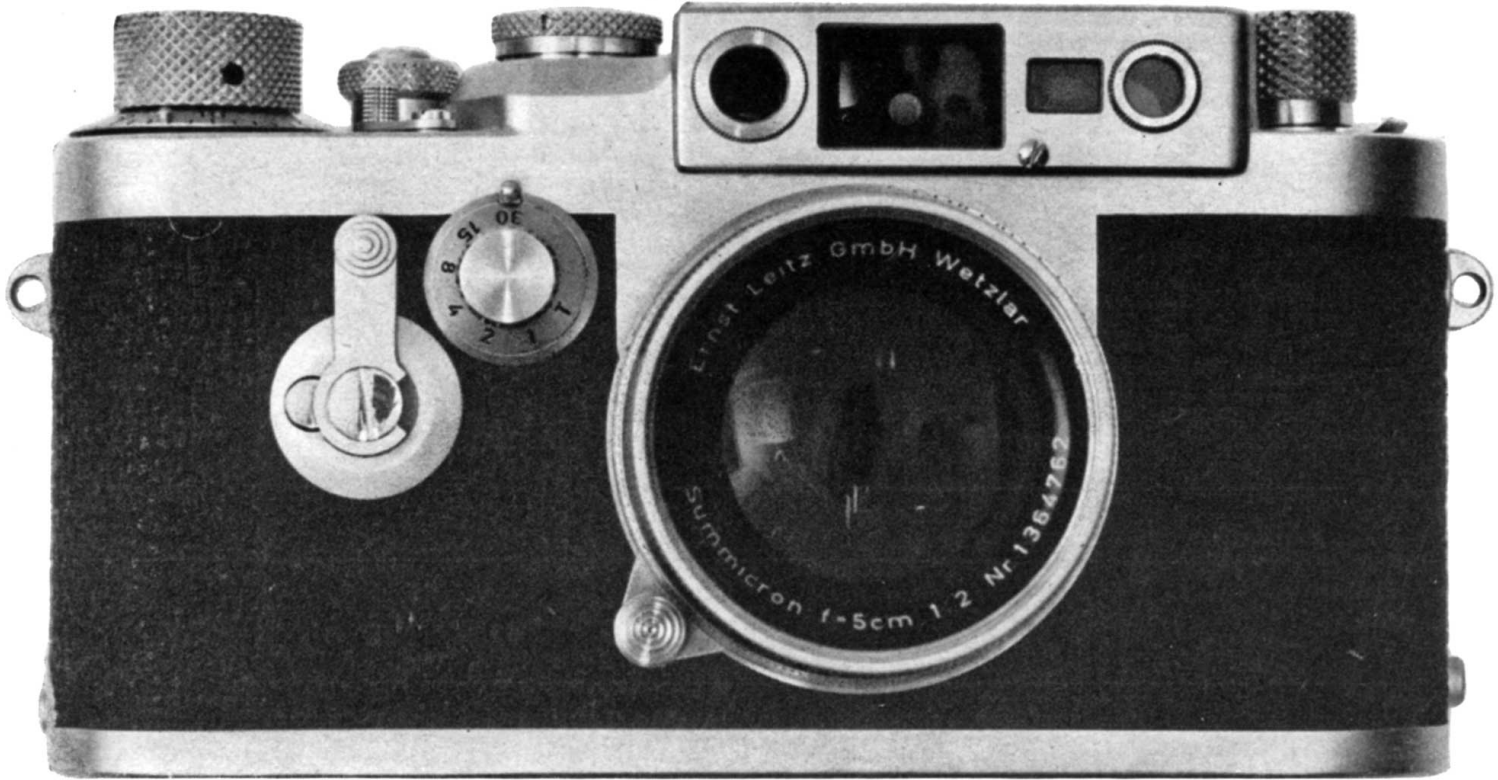


# LEICA IIIg

By BOB SCHWALBERG



New Leica IIIg (above) uses smaller window near finder to illuminate bright line image. Compared to present IIIf model (below), the new camera is just slightly higher but it accepts all standard accessories.

*Latest version of the "classic"*

*Leica offers larger finder,*

*automatic parallax correction,*

*while keeping traditional shape*



The introduction of the Leica M-3 in 1954 evoked a considerable amount of continuing speculation about the possible future, or lack of future, of the traditional Leica camera design. In constructing the M-3 the wizards of Wetzlar apparently broke very abruptly with a basic pattern of camera evolution dating back to 1924, if you count production models only, and to 1914, or maybe earlier, if you allow experimental pilot models.

Despite the admitted advantages of the M-3 (which cost over \$100 more than the then-current Model IIIf) a sizable body of Leicamen felt very strongly that

the further development of the original camera design which first pioneered 35-mm still photography should not be permitted to die out.

All kinds of reasons were given, and the continuing popularity of the IIIf camera was not the least of these. The Leica was always the smallest and most compact of all the top-drawer miniatures, and many photographers so loved the comfortable feel of the traditional Leicas that they completely rejected the larger, somewhat heavier M-camera. Scientists technicians, and other highly specialized users frequently did not need all of the M-camera's much vaunted versatility.

Moreover, many people had assembled large investments in accessories for the III-series Leicas which were not compatible with the M-3 body.

For these, and doubtless other reasons, Leitz has finally reaffirmed the future of the traditional Leica design by announcing a new camera, the Model IIIg, which replaces the simultaneously discontinued Model IIIf, which had been manufactured continuously since 1950. The new Leica IIIg was unveiled for the first time at the International Photographic Exposition in Washington, D. C., last March.

The IIIg is the seventh in a line of

(Continued on page 127)

Popular PHOTOGRAPHY

cameras stemming from the original Model III of 1933 which was, in turn, derived from five basic models, and numerous modifications which date back to 1924. As a seventh son, the IIIg bears marked resemblance to its III-series progenitors in basic appearance, construction, and features. But it has also borrowed a few ideas from another Leica which preceded it, an uncle of sorts, the doubtable M-3.

Before we go too far, however, it might be useful to briefly examine a few of the more important members of the IIIg's immediate ancestry.

### **Ancestors of the IIIg— 1933 to 1950**

The real beginning dates back to 1933 and the Model III, which was also called the Leica F. This camera laid down the basic design that was later to be modified and improved. A selector dial for high shutter speeds mounted on the top of the camera housing gave speeds from 1/20 to 1/500 sec, and bulb. A dial for slow speeds was located in the camera front and gave speeds from 1/20 to one full second and Time. A 1.5X magnifier and a focusing control were incorporated in the coupled rangefinder, which was separate from the camera's built-in optical viewfinder. Focusing, shooting, film winding and rewinding, and other operational features were basically the same as they are today. In 1935, the Model IIIa, or Leica G, upped the maximum shutter speed from 1/500 to 1/1,000 sec, but was otherwise the same as the III.

In 1938 the Model IIIb, which was also known as the Model G-1938, appeared upon the scene. A historically interesting camera, the IIIb was the first Leica to close up the inch-and-a-half gap between the rangefinder and viewfinder eyepieces, and the last Leica to retain the original body length of 5¼ inches. A minor IIIb innovation was the location of the rangefinder focusing lever underneath the rewind knob instead of being a part of the finder-eyepiece flange.

Two years later, in 1940, when the Model IIIc (apparently the first Leica model not to be known by two or more different names) was introduced, the camera body grew ⅛ inch longer. This meant that a number of accessories which fastened onto, or replaced, the camera baseplates of earlier models became obsolete, and a new series of baseplate accessories had to be introduced.

In the IIIc the shutter was altered so that the slowest speed on the high-speed dial, and the fastest on the slow-speed dial was 1/30 sec, instead of the previous 1/20 sec. The frame-counting dial at the base of the winding knob was modified so that it now moved only one frame number with each winding instead of following the winding knob all the way around. The last IIIc also included a locking stud at the 1/30-sec position on the slow-speed selector dial and click stops at all the other settings.

In its seven-year existence the Model IIIf was modified at least four times so

that some had black synchro dials and one set of shutter speeds while others had red synchro dials and a different set of shutter speeds. Some had self-timers, and some didn't. And most had film-type and speed indicators built into the winding knob, but a few didn't.

### **The Leica IIIf—1950 to 1957**

The most important innovation of the Model IIIf was the introduction of internal flash synchronization to the Leica camera. A single socket at the rear of the camera, about a half inch away from the viewfinder window, served as the contact point for a special locking cord tip supplied by Leitz. Synchro dials located at the base of the high-shutter-speed selector dial provided variable timing control. Printed tables gave the proper synchro settings for various flashbulb and shutter-speed combinations. The early black-dial IIIf cameras permitted the synching of electronic flash and certain types of short-duration flashbulbs at 1/30 sec. Later, red-dial IIIfs permitted this X-synchronization at either 1/25 or 1/50 sec, with different synchro dial settings.

Aside from this internal synchronization, the appearance of delayed-action timers on the front of the camera body, and the film-speed-and-type reminder dial built into the hollowed-out winding knob, the rest of the IIIf design was either identical, or very similar, to the earlier IIIc and IIIb cameras.

### **The New Leica Model IIIg**

The IIIg differs from the IIIf and its other III-series ancestors in three major and two minor respects.

The three major changes are (1) an enlarged viewfinder with illuminated frame lines and automatic parallax correction, (2) a somewhat improved rangefinder, with rangefinder and viewfinder eyepieces brought closer together than heretofore, and (3) automatic internal synchronization which eliminates the synchro dial system used in the IIIf.

The two minor changes are the recalibration of the shutter-speed settings and the relocation of the film-type-and-speed indicator.

Let's take these in order:

### **Bigger, Brighter Viewfinder**

The very much enlarged and improved viewfinder is by far the most valuable innovation introduced in the Model IIIg. Without being unduly invidious, it may with reasonable accuracy be described as a scaled-down version of the M-3 viewfinder design. Both image size and brightness have greatly surpassed the IIIf finder. The magnification employed is somewhat less than one-to-one, and my estimate is that the image scale is probably very close to 80 percent of full life size.

Well within the finder's full field an illuminated bright-line frame, somewhat similar to the M3's, marks off the field of view covered by a standard 50-mm lens. In the center of this frame appear four illuminated triangular corner markers which show the field encompassed by a 90-mm medium-long-focus lens. These markings can also be used in perfect

safety with the 85-mm focal length which actually covers a field angle one degree wider than that of the 90-mm lens.

The illumination for these frame lines and corner markers is obtained from a special frame-line illuminator window. Looking at the IIIg from the front, this is the small rectangular window located between the large viewfinder glass and the right-hand rangefinder lens.

### **Built-In Automatic Parallax Correction**

The 50-mm brightline frame and the 90-mm corner markers are coupled directly with the camera's focusing mechanism to provide automatic parallax correction at all distances. The system is similar to the one provided in the M-3 camera, with one very important difference.

Because the center of the M-3 camera's viewfinder is displaced approximately 1½ inches to the left of the center of the lens it was necessary to construct the parallax-correction mechanism so that the frame lines always move diagonally. When the M-3 is focused upon nearby objects its frame line therefore moves both down, and to the right. If focused upon more distant subjects, the same frame lines reverse both their directions and slide up, and to the left. In this way the finder corrects simultaneously for up-and-down, as well as left-and-right parallax errors.

The problem of parallax correction for the Leica IIIg was greatly simplified by virtue of the fact that its viewfinder displacement is only approximately ¼ of an inch (again to the left) of the lens center. Inasmuch as this amount of viewfinder displacement is small enough to be considered negligible at normal shooting distances, it was not felt necessary to incorporate any diagonal or sidewise motion in the parallax correction setup. Therefore, when the IIIg is focused on nearby objects the frame lines drop straight down, while focusing upon distant objects will cause them to rise straight up.

Incidentally, the only 35-mm cameras with built-in viewfinders providing automatic parallax correction today are the Leica M-3 and IIIg.

### **Improvements in the IIIg Rangefinder**

Optical improvements have apparently been made in the IIIg rangefinder, which seems to produce a brighter and somewhat more contrasty set of coincident focusing images than the IIIf rangefinder. The 1½-power magnification, and the adjustable focusing lever which accommodates eyesight variations, further increase this rangefinder's accuracy and the speed with which it can be employed.

The separation between the rangefinder and viewfinder windows on the Model IIIg has shrunk to a mere 1/16 inch. This close positioning of the two eyepieces makes it a lot easier for the eye to hop back and forth, alternately focusing and framing.

### **Automatic "No Dial" Flash Synchronization**

In abandoning the adjustable synchro-

dial system of the IIIf in favor of fully automatic synchronization, the IIIg has again borrowed an idea from the M-3. The only real advantage of the complicated synchro-dial system was its ability to permit synchronizing medium-peak flashbulbs at materially higher shutter speeds than are possible with the automatic setup.

Two shutter speeds may be used for synchronizing electronic-flash units and short-duration bulbs like the M-2, SM, or SF. These are indicated by tiny lightning bolts engraved on the camera's high-shutter-speed selector dial, the red bolt representing 1/25 and the black 1/50 sec.

No synchronization data was available for flashbulbs at the time this article was prepared, but it appears probable that the IIIg will duplicate the shutter speed recommendations given for the M-camera.

### **Recalibrated Shutter Speeds**

The recalibration of the IIIg shutter follows a logical progression in which each speed gives exactly twice as much exposure as the next faster speed, and exactly half as much as the next slower speed, with only two hair-splitting exceptions.

Starting with the slow-speed dial the calibrations are: 1, ½, ¼, ⅛, 1/15, and 1/30 sec, while the high-speed dial gives 1/30, 1/60, 1/125, 1/250, 1/500, and 1/1,000 sec. As in previous III-series cameras, a Time setting is located on the slow-speed dial, Bulb on the high-speed dial.

### **Relocation of Film Type-and-Speed Indicator**

The film type-and-speed indicator, or reminder dial, has been built into the back of the IIIg instead of being incor-



Film reminder dial on back of Leica IIIg

porated in the film-winding knob as in the IIIf. The dial provided is identical to the one supplied on the M-3.

### **Other Features Follow III-Series Tradition**

All operational features such as shutter release, film advance, film rewind, lever-actuated delayed-action timer, etc., are pure heredity and follow III-series tradition in toto. The body length of the IIIg remains an unchanged 5⅜ inches, and all IIIc and IIIf attachments can be used with the IIIg. This most certainly includes the Leicavit rapid-action film-advance device which replaces the camera's base plate. The only body change is the slightly higher top section which was necessitated by the enlarged, parallax-corrected viewfinder.

### **IIIg priced only \$6 more than IIIf**

The fact that the new Leica IIIg lists for only \$6 more than the discontinued Model

III<sub>f</sub> is an innovation in itself. This puts a III<sub>g</sub> body without lens at \$186, with *f*/3.5 Elmar lens \$244.50, and with *f*/2 Summicron lens \$342.

### **New *f*/2.8 Elmar 50-mm Lens**

A new version of the 50-mm Elmar with a maximum aperture of *f*/2.8 instead of *f*/3.5 is scheduled to be released in the near future. Like the old *f*/3.5 Elmar, the new lens contains four elements. However, a new formula is alleged to give superior performance, even at the *f*/2.8 full opening. The new 50-mm Elmar *f*/2.8 lens will be released first in screw-mount for the III<sub>g</sub> camera, and only much later in bayonet mount for the M-3 camera. The front diameter of the mount is 42 mm and it will accept all standard lens accessories. The price is \$87.00.—