

Article about KMZ Zenit camera line by Alfred Klomp, reformatted for easier reading. All rights to the writer. No other changes made. Images not included.

Prague, August 1968. As Soviet tanks drive through the long, broad streets of the Czechoslovakian capital, cameras capture all. Amidst the outrage of Prague's population, who vehemently protest against the impending curbing of their freedoms, Zenit-E's do their work, like they did many times before and many times since. With more than seventeen million Zenit-E clones produced over several decades, the universal E easily ranks in the top ten of Europe's most popular amateur SLRs. Its popularity is not hard to explain. Couple a reasonable reliability to a fair level of technology and an extremely low price, and success guaranteed.

These days, Zenit-E's show up all over the place on Europe's scrap heaps, junk yards and flea markets. Photo stores haven't burnt their hands on second-hand M42 stuff since the 1980's, but it's not uncommon to come across one or two of these one-kilo molochs at flea markets or garden sales or other attic clean-out fairs. With manual photography as good as dead – which, for that matter, goes for the whole of analogue photography, as far as the amateur market is concerned – it's no wonder people are trying to make a buck out of their oldtimers, that served them in Odessa, Rimini, Benidorm, Mallorca and the other palm tree hot spots of the seventies. Picture taking, that's what the E's did. They did their job, without frills. With their edgy and somewhat awkward Soviet design, slightly reminiscent of the first Leicaflex, they weren't as esthetic or as technically ahead as Japanese models, but this was the camera the common man used. Pity to let a workhorse like that die out without a tribute. So therefore, this website, as a requiem to a camera that has waited long enough to be put in the spotlight.

Prelude

Before the Zenit-E arrived to make the name famous, the line of Zenit cameras had already quite some history behind it, and had made a name for itself in the no-

nonsense realm of manual photography. Things all started off when KMZ, the Krasnogorsk-based Soviet camera annex defense plant, started fitting their Zorki rangefinder cameras with reflex cages in the very early 1950's. The first Zenit prototype, plainly named the "Zenit", saw the light in 1951–1952. Serial production began in 1953. These "Zenits", the name referring to the point in the heavens directly above the ground, were produced till 1956 in a production run of almost 40.000. They looked a lot like the early Zorkis, the only difference being their fairly bulky reflex cage, which housed the mirror and the necessary springs, levers, et cetera, that were needed for the mirror. Most of the technical features were shared with the Zorki range in a parallel fashion, so when the [Zorki-S](#) came to be in 1955, featuring flash synchronisation, the corresponding Zenit-S soon followed in 1956. By 1960 though, the camera line had finally matured, because KMZ gave it a long due makeover. From then on all Zenit cameras had a thumb wind and a proper rewind wheel, which both took the place of the Zorki's unpractical thumb wheels. It's certainly not unlikely that KMZ listened to positive feedback about the Zorki-5 and -6, which were released in 1958 and 1959 respectively. Another possibility is, that KMZ decided to incorporate some of the [Start](#)'s technical novelties into their standard consumer cameras, or at least to close the gap between the old-fashioned consumer cameras and their mature pro reflex. Since there doesn't seem to be a Zenit-2, the Zenit-3 was the camera featuring the restyled elements. Oddly enough, it was still a bottom loader; a feature probably inherited from the [Start](#).

The next camera in the Zenit series started off under a different name. The Kristall appeared in 1961 and was produced till 1962 in a total of just over 65.000. For this camera, KMZ engineers had clearly taken a close look at what made the Zorki-5 and -6 such pleasant cameras. So, the Kristall had the Zorki-5 style exposure counter-annex-shutter release, the Zorki-6's hinged back, and the Zorki-5's rewind wheel, along with a number of smaller changes. Unfortunately its esthetical "kiddy dump truck" design was unanimously booed, so in 1962 the camera got an altered, smoother top and was renamed the [Zenit-3M](#). It stayed in production till 1970, but god knows why it lasted that long.

The Zenits 4/5/6

All of the Zenit cameras described above were relatively simple cameras, based on Zorki technology, which in turn was based on pre-WWII German technology. All in all not very state-of-the-art in the mid-1960's. Japanese competition was beginning to get stronger, which the Soviets probably found out the hard way when trying to sell their cameras abroad. It was time for a Revolution.

According to Princelle, what shook KMZ was the introduction of the Zeiss Contaflex in 1953, and the Kodak Retina and Voigtlander Bessamatic in 1959, which had interchangeable lenses and leaf shutters. That was where the future lay; not in backward M39 cameras. So they designed a new series of camera from scratch – the Zorki-4/5/6 series. Though only produced in very small amounts, they were an interestingly eccentric line-up of cameras and lenses.

The three cameras appeared in the same year, 1964. The Zenit-4 was the allrounder of the series. The Zenit-5 had the exclusive privilege of being (one of) the first motorized SLR(s) ever, and the Zenit-6 was the Zenit-4, but then specially suited for the colossal, totally wicked, RUBIN 37-80mm f/2.8 zoom. In what way suited, history does not tell.

All three cameras shared the same group characteristics. The esthetic design could well have been based on the first Leicaflex, which happens to bear quite some resemblance to the handsome threesome. The cameras were angular, bulky (especially the 5 with its winder) and heavy. They had a Bessamatic lens bayonet, the Bessamatic way of aperture-lightmeter coupling (a system unclear to me), a rewind crank that was placed on the side under a straight angle, and a wind lever that was not on top of the camera like usual, but recessed into the cover. The motorized Zenit-5 lacked the wind lever, but did have an emergency wind knob where the two other cameras had a memo dial. Also noteworthy is, that the cameras had leaf shutters, in keeping with the fashion. All three were exported to Europe, where they currently fetch very handsome prices indeed; especially the motorized Zenit-5 or the Zenit-6 with Rubinar cannon do several

hundreds of dollars. The three cameras stayed in production until 1968, though never broke through.

([Brochure](#))

Zenit-L?

Like the time when they had incorporated technology from avant-garde cameras like the Start and the Zorki-5/6 into their consumer cameras, KMZ again chose to fit their budget Zenit line with tested and perfected technology - in this case technology from the Zenit-4/5/6 series. Interesting in this regard is the series of pictures sent to me by Dmitry Kopp, a systems engineer for [ZENIT R&D](#). They show a Zenit prototype, which we've dubbed the Zenit-L(ight meter) for ease of conversation. What you see is a Zorki-like camera, or older Zenit, with a rewind knob annex exposure calculator reminiscent of the [Zenit-3M](#)'s, and a frontside external light meter with a large serial-produced protection lid which reads "ZENIT", and which most likely came from a Kiev rangefinder camera. What on earth is this? Is this a little plaything, put together by engineers in their spare time to satisfy their technological spirits, or is it a serious prototype of some sort? Apart from its appearance – although it does have the Zenit-E's characteristic broad prism – and some other details, it could pass for a Zenit-E in terms of technology. Early E prototype? Perhaps. We most likely will never be sure.

Arrival of the E

In any case, the first Zenit-E left the plant in 1965, looking like the cross-over between a stripped-down Zenit-4 and a Zenit-3M that it essentially was. There is no official explanation for the type name "E", though unofficially it was most likely derived from the initials of KMZ's director at the time, H. M. Egorov.

Until 1968, KMZ produced about 50.000 Zenit-E's without a flash mirror. The most remarkable of those are the ones that were delivered with M39 mount for portability reasons. ([Photo](#)) The rest was fitted with M42 mount, which was big then.

From the end of 1967 onward, the Zenit-E got itself a flash mirror. Apparently flash mirror E's exist in M39 mount (or so says Princelle), but by far the most common are

the E's with M42 mount. The Classic. Truly classic are the ones in chrome and silver with cyrillic or latin silk screened print, a black Helios-44 or Helios-44-2 lens, and the E's characteristic leather eveready case. Soviet cameras don't get more archetypic.

Many versions of the Zenit-E were produced over the years. Sometimes they were engraved or imprinted to commemorate a certain event like the [1980 Moscow olympics](#), or they were sold under a different name entirely, like a Revueflex-E I own. After producing three million plus E's, KMZ eventually pulled the plug in 1982. After seventeen years, it was time for yet another new generation of cameras – though based on the E's heritage.

Zenit-Vilejka

But KMZ wasn't the E's only manufacturer. Zenit-Vilejka in the town of Vilejka, Belorussia, a part of the BelOMO corporation, franchised the camera and sold it under the same name, but with a different factory logo, from 1973 right up to 1986. The Vilejka Zenit-E was known under photographers to be inferior to the Krasnogorsk model. The two can be told apart by looking at the [factory logo](#) on the rear of the camera. The KMZ models have the characteristic [Dove prism logo](#), where the Minsk ones have a stylized image of a bird. There are some other cosmetic differences as well, that come to light when you compare a Vilejka model to a KMZ one. One of them is that the Vilejka's top plate has slightly mitered corners, where the KMZ's ones are smoothly curved.

Though it might look like a homogenic group of over eight million Zenit-E's (spread out over KMZ and Vilejka), there are lots of internal differences between an early model and a late one. Like in the West, Soviet engineers frequently adapted their product to make it more reliable or cheaper to produce. Parts were added or altered, or the lay-out changed a little bit. For instance, engravings or prints changed place, the logo was printed instead of etched, the shutter speed dial changed from blank metal to black plastic, or a different kind of calibratable light meter was later used.

The camera

Now let's take a look at the camera itself. Let's start with its case and work closer from there.

The case

The eveready case is made of black lacquered leather. It stands quite high and has an over-dimensioned top flap, to make it easier to manoeuvre the camera out from underneath. The top flap can be removed by twisting it over 180 degrees, thus unlocking it from the hinge on the back. The top flap has a lip with a press button that keeps the case shut. It has a slanted lens bulge to house and protect the lens, which is made of some sort of leather-covered plastic. The front of the protrusion is printed "ЗЕНИТ ZENIT" in circular script. The top and bottom plates of the casing are made of metal covered with a thin layer of leather. Though the camera itself does not have carrying eyes, the case has two hooks for a carrying strap, one on each side. The inside of the case is covered with black velvet. The bottom half of the case (the part that surrounds and protects the body) is attached to the body by a screw that fits the camera's tripod mount. I think the casing was designed to be used most of the time without the top flap, which is quite big and gets in the way a lot. With that removed, you're left with a small, compact leather protector which, importantly, has the carrying strap the camera doesn't. The leather that engulfs the camera has cut-outs for the viewfinder, the lens, and the self-timer.

Dimensions

If you remove the case, the camera exposes itself. Normally I would advise to leave the case on at all time for protection and convenience, so the only time you would typically remove the case, is when you need to reach the film compartment.

The Zenit-E is about as big as comparable cameras. Since I happened to have them handy, I compared sizes with a Pentax Spotmatic-F and a Praktica SuperTL-3. The Spotmatic and the E are about the same size. The Spotmatic is slightly longer and the E slightly fatter. The Praktica has the E's width, but is a little bit longer than its commie tovarish. The E, in all, is quite about average. SLRs have been known to be thinner, less

broad and lower, but the E is nothing out of the ordinary. Measured up, the camera is 135mm long, 50mm across from the back to the mount, and roughly 90mm high.

Handling

In my opinion, the E handles better in its leather 'shoe' than it does without. The case is supple and forms to your hands, and the cut-outs provide a natural grip. A disadvantage is that there can sometimes be a lot of play between the case and the camera, causing shaking or an insecure grip.

The bare camera has a more awkward feel, because it's not very ergonomically designed. On the angular body, there is no grip zone, and its angles don't grip well. Though it doesn't form an extension of your hand like certain modern cameras, it's by all means a fairly easy camera to handle. Especially when in its case, the Zenit-E's shutter release button is in exactly the right place under your right index finger. The thumb wind is easily picked up, and the left hand can fairly instinctively twiddle with the calculator dial.

Control overview

Globally, the Zenit-E has the following controls, knobs, and other elements. There's the self-timer lever on the front, with just above it the self-timer release button. On the facade there's an X contact. Above the lens is the selenium light meter. To the side of the camera is the lock for the back door. On the top there are the following elements, from left to right, as seen from behind: the calculator dial, that doubles as the film memo dial. The light meter's read-out window. The prism, with the ocular to the back of the camera. Then on the other side of the prism, the shutter speed button with underneath it like a collar, the flash synchronisation button. Then, the sprocket release button. And rightmost, the large circular element that is a wind lever, exposure counter and sunken shutter release in one.

The self-timer

The self-timer, on the front of the camera, consists of two elements. There is the lever and there is the trigger. By turning the lever to six o'clock, you cock a clockwork mechanism inside the camera. By pressing the smaller button above the lever, you set the clockwork in motion. Slowly the lever creeps upward until, after no less than seven seconds according to the manual, it triggers the shutter when in ten 'o clock position. For the self-timer to work properly, it's ofcourse necessary that the shutter is cocked beforehand, or nothing will happen. Unlike the Start, the self-timer release doesn't act as a mirror lock-up.

The flash functions

Like most other manual cameras from the 1960's on to the 1980's, the Zenit-E had a couple of basic flash functions, though lacking one important one: the hot shoe. What it did have, were an X contact for synchronisation, an X speed (1/30s), and a variable flash synch interval á la Zorki.

The problem of the missing hot shoe was solved by retailing a loose hot shoe, that could be slid into the rails surrounding the ocular. Though not "hot", it allowed the photographer to mount a flash directly onto the camera, where he would otherwise have had to use a flash arm.

The X contact is on the front of the body, in the corner near the shutter speed button.

The X speed of 1/30s was the fastest speed at which the Zenit-E could flash-synch. Using faster speeds would cause banding to occur. To eliminate that (the phenomenon that certain parts of the image receive light from the flash while others don't), cameras fire their flashes only when the film gate is fully opened. That means, that one of the shutter curtains is to the left of the gate, while the other one is to the right, leaving the gate open and uncovered. On this camera, 1/30s is the fastest speed at which that is the case. At 1/125s for example, the negative is never completely exposed at one single time, but rather exposed by a rapidly moving slit.

I don't know if it's possible to flash in "B" mode, but although I think it is, the [Zenit-EM manual](#) explicitly warns against it, because of the danger that stray light might enter the body.

The variable flash sync ring surrounding the shutter speeds button can be set to X and to M, and to every value inbetween. X is for an electronic flash, and M for flash bulbs. What the flash sync ring does, is govern the delay that the camera uses before triggering the flash. Since electronic flashes operate faster than bulb flashes, they need a longer delay than the latter to flash at the same time. The ring allows the user to set that delay.

The light meter

Before taking a picture, it's handy if you put some thought into things. Thinking about how you want the picture to look and what you want it to communicate is useful, but addressing some technical issues comes in handy too. With manual cameras like the E, the user has full control over exposure times, apertures, and the like. Unfortunately, while the amateur can sometimes weigh situations better than modern electronics can, most of the time he makes mistakes. That's why the clever people at KMZ decided to incorporate a light meter in the Zenit-E, to make life easier for normal amateurs.

The Zenit-E has a selenium light meter affixed to its prism, that measures the light non-TTL. That means that it doesn't compensate for any filters that you might have screwed onto the lens. At the same time, it means that the read-outs are lens-independent, and you can, for example, choose to keep the lens stopped down at all time without interfering with the readout. Who needs TTL metering anyway when you're not taking pictures through evidently TTL-needy equipment like bellows or microscopes? The E kept things simple.

The light meter is a simple creature. Point it to a light source and its light-sensitive selenium cell will produce a tiny, measurable current, courtesy of the photo-electric effect. That current is translated to a movement of a read-out needle, which, through a calculator dial, can be translated again into a combination of shutter/aperture speeds.

Simple, elegant technology. Age-sensitive technology also. Selenium doesn't have eternal life. It doesn't even have a human lifespan. After twenty to thirty years of life in the light, the material will lose its sensitivity and its readouts will turn out wrong, which will show in the form of overexposed pictures.

The light meter catches light coming from the subject and somehow translates that to movement of a small needle behind the needle viewing window. To translate the position of the needle to useable shutter speeds and aperture values, you use the calculator dial. The first step is, to set the film sensitivity on the dial by turning the inner ring by the little button on top to the correct ASA value (GOST and DIN are also marked, but hardly in use nowadays). Set intermediate values if you don't agree with the alternative 65–130–250–500 scale. Then, turn the outer ring of the calculator until the thick needle with the circular head is exactly aligned with the light meter needle. Then, depending on what you prefer, pick either an aperture or a shutter speed. Pick aperture numbers if you want depth of field, and pick shutter speed numbers if it's speed you want to trap. Take that number and read out the corresponding shutter speed or aperture number. If those numbers are off the scale, start again with a more realistic estimate, and continue doing so until you have a workable combination.

Taking pictures

After having resolved the shutter speed and the aperture, and after eventually having applied corrections to account for extreme contrasts or nonstandard lighting conditions, you're ready to take the shot. Set the desired aperture on the lens in whatever way the lens may require (and there are a lot of different ways).

Then, set the desired shutter speed on the camera. The [Zenit-E's manual](#) says that shutter speeds can be changed both when the shutter is cocked and when it's uncocked. So while it's theoretically kosher to adjust shutter speeds with an uncocked shutter, I would advise to always do it with a cocked one, just in case. Zenits and Zorkis have a long history of malfunctioning after doing things to an uncocked shutter.

To set the shutter speed, simply lift up the shutter speed dial in its totality, turn it to the desired value (don't attempt to turn it between B and 500 though) and drop it when there. Make sure it clicks in by twisting it around a little bit until it falls. Also, make sure that you've actually set the correct shutter speed. Many speeds are close to each other, in particular the 1/125s, 1/250s and 1/500s speeds, and with an imprecisely fitted shutter speed dial, the distinction between the three can be a bit difficult.

After having set the shutter speed and having checked that the shutter is cocked, that there is film in the camera, that the lens shade is removed, that the object is in focus, and all the other things you check before taking a picture, you can press the button. The shutter release button is located in the center of the image counter annex wind lever button. Press it to trip the shutter. Listen amusedly as the old E makes its distinct metal clapping sound. Laugh at the shriek the speed dial makes as it quickly rotates. Laugh, but be careful not to impair it, because when you do, the shutter will stick and the image will be spoilt. I wonder how many million times that happened to amateurs worldwide over the past thirty years.

Winding film back and forth

After taking the picture, you have to wind on the film (multiple exposures are unfortunately not an option on this camera). Nothing could be easier. You simply yank the wind button with your right thumb. If all goes well, the shutter speed button makes a 330 degree turn and the image counter a 349.5 degree one, resulting in the image counter moving to exactly the next frame number. But wait- is that the film jamming? Damn, at 36 already. Time to rewind.

To rewind, do the following. Cover the lens or place the camera downwards on its lens on a plain surface, so that the lens is well covered. Then, press the sprocket release button. Most of the time pressing that button will more or less trip the shutter, so it's wise to cover the lens up front. Just a tip worth knowing. Then, with the sprocket disengaged, pop out the rewind spindle from its bay in the center of the calculator dial by twisting it rightward, and commence rewinding film by turning it in the direction of

the arrow engraved on top. When done, which is when the film suddenly jams and only shoots loose after some force (when you reach the start of the film that was stuck inside the take-up spool), you open up the back by pulling up the lock, and you take out the film.

Inserting film

To insert film, follow the opposite procedure. Start by opening the camera back. Then lift up the rewind key inside the body to make room for the cartridge. Pull out the film lip, place the cartridge in the bay, and lock it into place by letting the key down again. Pull the film lip to the take-up spool to the right of the camera. It helps if you release the sprocket at this point. Place the lip into the take-up spool. A tiny notch locks the first sprocket into place, or you can shove the entire lip behind the metal plate. Then, importantly, set the exposure counter to -2 by rotating it by the small notch. Close the back, and shoot two or three times. By then, the camera is ready for real picture taking. Congratulations, loaded a Zenit.

The viewfinder

It seems I've saved the best for last. The viewfinder is an idiosyncrasy of the E that I have never gotten used to. I don't know why it is the way that it is, but I don't know, it adds to the charm of the thing. When looking through the viewfinder, what you immediately notice is the green-brownish tint, and the unheard-of barrel distortion, that resembles that of old-fashioned bulged TV screens. The TV connotations continue when you regard the edge of the viewfinder. Rounded off corners and edges that slightly bulge in the middle – what did you mean, soviet technology? This is the worst viewfinder I've ever seen in a camera. For serious work, it's absolutely atrocious.

KMZ most likely couldn't afford Fresnel lenses, so what they did, was fit their consumer cheapie with an all-matte, Lubitel-like matte glass that was thinner on the edges and thicker in the middle. That way, they achieved a Fresnel lens' breaking, without actually having to use one.

Focusing is made difficult by the absence of microprisms or a split image system, and even more so by the fact that due to the bulging matte glass, the focusing plain is not equal. What appears to be sharp at the edges, is not sharp in both the center of the image and/or in the photo. On the other hand, to look at things positively, the all-matte viewfinder is pleasantly unspoilt by things that clutter, like LEDs, autofocus fields and LCD grids...

The greenish-brownish tint of the viewfinder can't be ascribed to the lenses (I cross-checked that by fitting the Helios-44-2 to the Praktica and the Spotmatic and seeing what that did) but to the inherently green-brownish low-quality optical glass used for the E's viewfinder. Hey, who cares? It's only the viewfinder...

Production and quality

Quantity is certainly appropriate when talking about Zenit-E's. More than eight million units pushed out the door in seventeen years, that's something. When discussing quality, there are several things to keep in mind.

First of all, is your particular camera an export model or not? You can easily tell the difference between a model meant for the Soviet Union and an export model, by looking at the silk-screened print. Cyrillic script is a dead giveaway. There are lots of myths about quality control at KMZ and other plants. Some people say that quality control simply meant seeing if no screws fell out if you held the camera upside-down, while others maintain that the control was thorough. I don't know what's true and what's not. I can only imagine that in a communist country, where quantity prevails above quality, quality managers could more easily turn a blind eye on faulty products than in the west, without fear of repercussions. Since making profit was not the most important objective for any Soviet factory, but meeting GOSPLAN's plans was, it makes sense to assume that more often than not, Monday morning models passed through control, just to meet the set production quantity. That assumption is backed by many. According to many people, the best cameras were allotted for export to generate trade

dollars; what came next went to the nomenklatura and the press, and the leftovers were divided among the own population.

An export E is usually a safe bet, especially if you've bought one in Great Britain. [Technical and Optical Agencies](#), the infamous London importer of Soviet camera gear, made it clear that they personally checked every camera first with their own experts, before redistributing them. True or not, I can't say I've been let down by my E's. Not that I've ever used them (I'd be mad), but nevertheless I've not had the dubious privilege of seeing one break down in my hands.

The one-piece body

One truly remarkable facet of the Zenit-E, is the fact that it has a one-piece aluminium body. Yes, cast in one piece. Even Leica or Nikon never dared do that, since not only was the technique very tricky, but also was it very hard to achieve sufficient precision. Amazingly though, the Soviets chose to persevere despite the odds, and produced with the Zenit-E a technically remarkable camera. Its inner body is a solid cast aluminium monolith, which not only made for greater ease of assembly, but also for added strength and reliability. Somebody I spoke to recalled having seen tremendous piles of discarded Zenit-E cascoes on a Krasnogorskean waste pile, which were all miscasts. The only reasons for the Soviets to maintain such a precarious and wasteful method of production was the cheapness of skilled labour, the fact that products did not need to be profitable, and the fact that ore like aluminium was very cheap, and was supplied for by the state. Under those conditions, workmanship could thrive. See what happened after the demise of the USSR: KMZ began manufacturing plastic cameras. Plastic!

Variations and sub-models

The classic Zenit-E with latin or cyrillic print and Helios-44(-2) lens is by far the best known camera in the Zenit-E family, but it wasn't its only manifestation. Many sister models and sub-versions saw the light. Essentially Zenit-E's with a different print were:

- The Zenit-E commemorating the [1980 Moscow olympics](#).

- The Revueflex-E, a custom-named E commissioned by Foto Quelle of Germany for in their post-order catalogues. Revueflex was a catch-all name for all kinds of cameras they imported from the East. I've seen Japanese SLRs named Revueflex, and to this day you can buy Revue colour film in Germany and Holland. The camera is otherwise identical to the Zenit-E
- Various other sub-models that I haven't had time to look up.

Various spin-off models also appeared on the market. The closest related and most notable:

- The Zenit-B: a Zenit-E without the light meter. The cheapest of the cheapest. The 'B' is a cyrillic 'В', but conveniently left untranslated (just like the [LOMO 135BC](#) is actually the -VS).
- The Zenit-ET: a Zenit-E with a hot shoe, calculator up to 500 ASA, and lacking bulb flash support. Could be called a non-TTL [Zenit-TTL](#) (as far as that makes sense), because the controls are in [TTL](#) style.
- The [Zenit-EM](#): a Zenit-E with carrying eyes, automatic aperture (throw out the Helios-44-2!), different controls and things, and a much improved fresnel viewfinder.
- The [Zenit-TTL](#): a Zenit-B with a TTL meter and a somewhat different arrangement of the controls.

To this very day, most of the SLRs produced in Krasnogorsk can be directly or indirectly derived to the Zenit-E. The [Zenit-122](#) is a brushed-up Zenit-12, which is a brushed up [Zenit-TTL](#), which is a brushed-up Zenit-B, which is a simplified Zenit-E. No real innovations seem to have taken place, and why change a winning team when you drive a domestic monopoly and nobody complains?

Who knows how many Zenit-E's are still operational today? The number must be in the millions. But as time goes by, more and more of these cameras are sold, discarded, thrown away with the rest of the old M42 stuff, or simply hidden away in boxes somewhere. What a pity for a camera that was never popular, but which was a household name for many...

This removable flash shoe was one of the accessories available for the Zenit-E. Others include extension rings, flashes, bellows, et cetera.

A filled or non-filled serial number is one of the many variations between Zenit-E's.

Here is some interesting reader-submitted material: pictures of a 1978 Zenit-E with a commemorative [Moscow Olympics 1980](#) engraving. Note that this late model has a fixed hot shoe and a more modern thumb wind. These modifications were introduced on all Zenit models in the late 1970's.

I own three Zenit-E's, of which two are stickered. One has a sticker from Mashpriborintorg (MPI) quality control, the other a sticker from *Foto-TV René* in Haarlem, the store that brought this camera to the world in 1972.

Prompted by boredom and the possession of a student public transport card, I decided to see what was left of Foto-TV René. After less than an hour by public transport, and about half an hour by foot, I arrived at the Zijlweg 124. Why they included the Zijlweg in the Dutch version of Monopoly I don't know, because it isn't very spectacular. Zijlweg 124 is two storeys high, probably built in the 1930's, and is now a residential home. The outside is panelled in art-deco style with oakwood and black-brownish tiles, and apart from the large shop window, there's nothing to tell it used to have a store function. A thin tabby smiled at me from through the luxaflex; in the back was a white leather sofa.

An eBay picture from 2000 that I found on an old floppy shows a rebadged Zenit-B.

Specifications

Name: Zenit-E; also Revueflex-E (Foto Quelle; Germany); Kalimar SR-200; Kalimar SR-300; Spiraflex; Phokina; Phokina XE

Manufacturer: KMZ; Zenit Vilejka

Production span: KMZ: 1965–1982
Vilejka: 1973–1986

Production number: KMZ: 3.334.540
Vilejka: "more than five million" (Princelle)

Film: Standard 35mm; 24×36mm

Lens fitting: 1965 till late 1967: M39. Then non-automatic M42.

Shutter speeds: 1/30 – 1/500s; B. Mechanically controlled of course.

Weight: 1.0kg