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using S.E.I. Photometer with the Zone System

Greg Kriss , Feb 06, 2001; 10:24 a.m.

Hace a SEI exposure Photometer which I'd like to use with the Zone System. Many years ago Fred Picker sold the SEI meter (from his ZONE VI Studio in Vermont) with his own adaption of the meter for use with the Zone System. I have obtained a copy of those instructions and read them but it seems to me that there must be a simpler way to use the SEI meter. I do not have a copy of the instruction booklet for the SEI, possibly it might contain some info.

Is there anyone out there who uses the SEI Photometer with the Zone System that might give me some hints or at least a starting point?

thanks

Responses

Keith Nichols , Feb 07, 2001; 07:03 a.m.

You're not alone regarding Fred Picker. The eminent Dr. Paucke mentions that he couldn't even understand what Picker was saying about the SEI, for whatever consolation that is. Dr. Paucke's comment is among the stuff you get by entering "SEI photometer" into the Google search engine. It appears that the SEI is used to meter the darkest and lightest spots in the scene rather than picking out intermediate tones. You might try Craiggcamera.com for a manual (I believe that's John Craig's address).

Rich Seiling , Feb 08, 2001; 04:49 p.m.

I seem to recall a written comment from Ansel that the S.E.I. was very accurate, but a pain to use.

I don't think you'll find any advantages to using it for most work over the Zone VI modified Pentax spot available from Calumet. It is the standard for Zone System work.

Paul Hoyt , Nov 02, 2002; 02:56 a.m.

The SEI meter does NOT work like a usual exposure meter. It assumes when you set the black dot opposite the ASA of your film that you will be measuring the darkest part of the image where you want to retain detail. In Zone system mechanics, this is about Zone II 1/2. Most Zone system photographers evaluate the scene by measuring the luminance of the various objects, determine the basic exposure to exposure for the shadows and develop for the highlights. To use the SEI Meter for Zone System photography you need to be able to evaluate the scene and determine the luminance in Candles per square-foot. To translate the brightness of the object being viewed in Candles per square foot (c/f2), set the black dot to 6 on the ASA scale, match the brightness of the object viewed through the telescope, and read the shutter speed opposite F8. The c/f2 is the reciprocal of the shutter speed, 1/125sec @ F8 means the object is reflecting 125 Candles per Square-foot of light. At this setting, some people place a red dot on the setting-ring of the SEI opposite ASA 64 and that will turn the meter into an 18% reflectance meter. You can then set the red dot to the ASA of your film and use it as you would any 18% reflectance spot meter. A word of caution, many modern meters, spot or wide angle, do NOT evaluate the scene to produce a middle gray (18% reflectance) exposure. Adams found that most of his exposures needed to be increased by 1 f-stop over average meter readings. The manufacturers of exposure meters started to increase the exposure by 1/2 to 1 f-stop to provide more printable negatives. If you try to calibrate the SEI against a meter that has been standardized to give a zone V1/2 or zone VI exposure, it will seem to be off more than you would expect from the above instructions. Have fun and enjoy a great precision instrument. In addition, I have the address of a company that will work on SEI Meters that need repair.

huw finney , Feb 15, 2003; 06:27 a.m.

I have done a bit on my website for the SEI, includes the manual. See www.huws.org.uk

Huw

Tim page , Dec 10, 2004; 10:25 a.m.

I have just rebuilt this meter and I have alot of info on calibrating, fixing and using the SEI meter. Including exactiy how to remove the risitor and replace it with a pot to reset standard brightness. Someting all old SEI photometers need. If there is anyway you could send me a colpy of the Zone System manual I would be forever grateful. These meters can be a real pain to restore use and understand but once you do you have a better understanding of photography. You also have an instrument that even today has no replacment.



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