

## Introduction



I was tempted by a small add on a Danish website for photography: Fotostart.dk. I have "always" wanted a f/1.4 lens and I had read the user reviews at pentaxforums. All put together, I just had to buy the lens and I did. The lens is the Asahi Super Takumar with a white dot on the aperture ring, produced from 1965. In 1971 the next version of the came: Asahi Super Multi Coated Takumar.

It is a M42 lens. That means you need an adaptor ring before you can mount the lens on your DSRL. It is possible to get adaptor rings with focus assistance. That is a little electronic device enabling your camera to make the biiip sound when focus id found. That is a great help, if you haven't got superman skills in the art of focus. And it is a very useful help since your cameras viewfinder darkens when you step down the aperture.

Asahi Super Takumar 50mm, f/1.4 is a very nice lens. It is a small lens and first impressions to me was: Quality, durability, silky movement of the focus ring. In other words: First impressions were very good and they made nice promises for the future.

The lens is small – using 49mm filters and it just sticks between 40 and 48 mm out when mounted on your camera . It weighs in at 240 gr. The weight is nicely balanced and it really fits inside my hand.

The focus ring moves like oil in silk and warm butter. Nicely and smooth. Very smooth. The front element does not turn when focusing. That is good when using POL-filtre. The focus ring offer about 190 degrees movement. Focusing between 45 cm and 1 meter is just about 90 degrees. It is not a generous turn, but on the other you do not have to turn and turn and turn when shifting focus from near to infinity. The focus ring will give you a good grip due to large ribs which are rippled too.

The aperture ring is thin but has the same kind of ribs and the focus ring. The grip is fine and the movement is precise and easy. It is a very fast lens. Wide open is f/1.4. Aperture is from the f/1.4 to f/16.

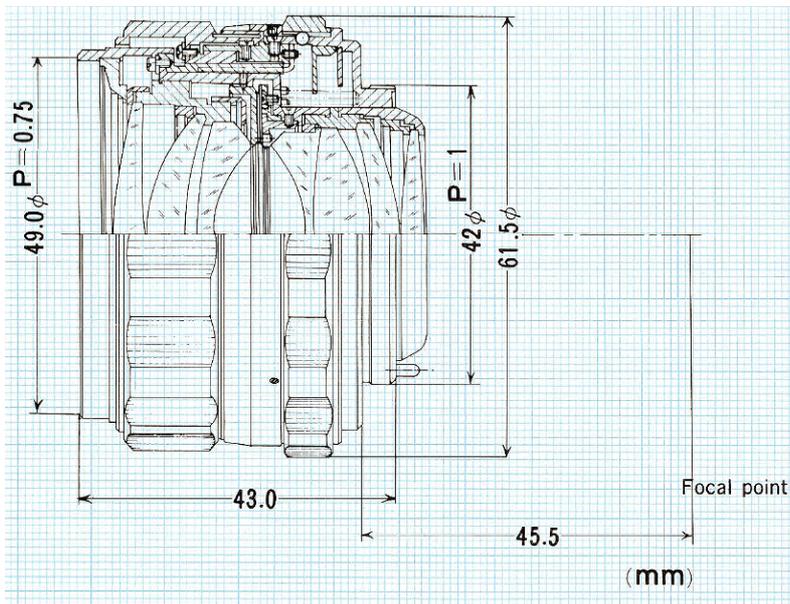
The lens has six blades.

The lens has a speciality. The elements of the lens turns yellow after some time in darkness. And some time is not just a day or two. It takes longer. The yellowness does, if not treated, influence the images taken with the lens. But the treatment is very simple and free. You have to let sunlight burn of the yellowness. So once or twice a year I have my lens laying in direct sunshine.

## Data

Focal length	50mm
Minimum aperture	F16
Maximum aperture	F 1.4
Lens elements	7 in 6 groups
Maximum diameter	61.5mm
Diaphragm	Fully automatic
Length	38.5mm
Angle of view	46°
Weight	240gr
Minimum focusing distance	45cm
Filter size	49mm

Inside is like this:



## Price

The different versions of the 50mm f/1.4 are often seen at ebay. This version has at the moment buy-now-prices from \$ 115 to \$ 269 on ebay.com. The UK-version of ebay has at the moment just one lens up for sale and the buy-now-price here is £ 121.

The low prices with some remarks of marks in the coating and yellowness. The top prices are for "as good as new" lenses.

Remember to calculate what you might have to pay for a lens hood. A lens hood does do next to wonders for the contrast.

It will be fair to say that Asahi Super Takumar 50mm f/1.4 is not a cheap lens. But whether it is an expensive lens or not must depend on the images produced with the lens.

## The images

All images have been taken using Olympus E-520.

### Sharpness

I like that my lenses are sharp. I like them to be razor sharp. I know that my images not necessarily have to be razor sharp at all times and/or all over; but I really like the possibility to make them so. Sharpness is a key issue for my evaluation of a lens.

I have conducted two small tests to show the capacity of the Takumar Super 50 1.4. Mind you that the tests are not scientific – just passionately carried out.

First test is shooting at a bottle of Bowmore Islay Single Malt ☺ - uhmm. The test images are like this one (resized only):



The red square is the indicator of how much a 1000 x 750 pixel crop is of the total image.

I have then cut out the center of the square and is looking (very closely) at sharpness (next page). My opinion is that the test show very sharp images between  $f/2.8$  and  $f/8$ ; but softness at  $f/1.4$  and when the lens is stopped further down than  $f/8$ . This is a result as expected; most lenses peak around  $f/8$ . But the key point is here, if  $f/1.4$  is sharp enough to offer a true use – or of the lens more suitable should be seen as a  $f/2.8$  lens.



In my opinion the f/1.4 is too soft for cropping the images – unless to speak of portraits where too much sharpness easily can be obtained.

Bokeh (and sharpness)

The next test is looking at the bokeh offered from the lens. But you might also look at sharpness here.

My setup is this (resized only):

The red square indicate the crop used.

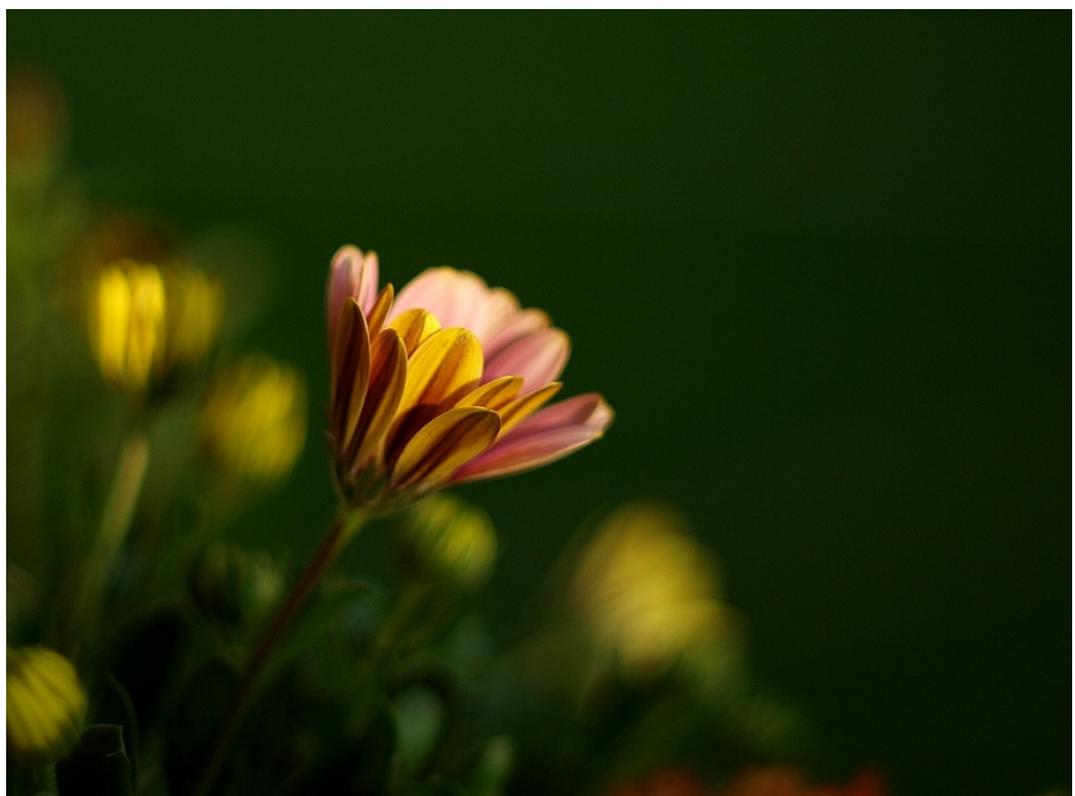
The bottles are standing just behind each other and the distance to the focus point is about 1.5 meters.





In my opinion the test show a fine and delicate bokeh running from the center bottle and to both sides. Clearly the bokeh stand out the most when using f/1.4; but the lines are softly dissolved and the bokeh has a nice smooth expression.

Right: A Spanish Marguritte using f/1.4. The image is resized. The bokeh is smooth and soft; and the sharpness looks quite fine at this resized picture.

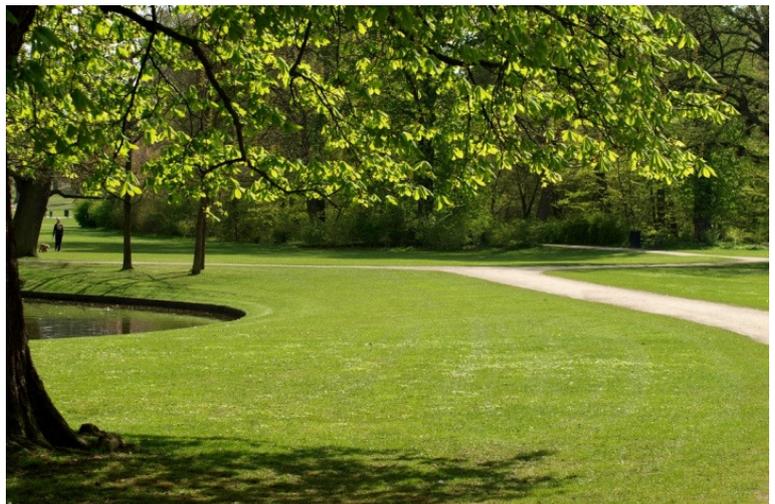


This page: Some images to show the performance at f/4



This page: Some images to show the performance at f/4

*A very special tradition many places in Denmark: When the children are giving up their using pacifiers, they are hung in a tree – colourful, but nice in my opinion.*



This page: Some images to show the performance at f/5.6



This page: Some images to show the performance at f/5.6





In my opinion: All the images are very nicely reproducing colours and contrast from the sceneries. The colouring might be a little on the warm side, but then again, I find that many old lenses are. The sharpness is very good. Once stopped down, the lens will give you sharp images – and once you stay away from 100% crops, even large apertures will appear sharp.

### **Conclusion**

I really like using old lenses. Ofte they give a very special feeling. I know that lens makers have learned much and improved much since 1965; but I really think that the old Asahi Super Takumar 50mm f/1.4 has the qualities to assert itself even in a 2011 context.

The lens is fast, very fast. It is not razor sharp wide open, but once stopped down to f/2.8 it is very sharp.

The colours are nicely reproduced. A bit warm, but no real issue.

The operation of the lens is very pleasant. The focus ring is just a knife in warm butter. Super soft and smooth.

It is not a cheap lens; but the prices are – in my opinion – not too high compared to the quality of both the build and the images.

On a scale from 0 to 5, 5 being the very best, I give the lens: 4