

Introduction



Asahi Takumar 200mm, f/3.5 is an older lens with some weight behind it. It has made its way to my little collection of Asahi's and I think that it is the Grand Old Man here. The production of lens stopped in 1961...

*Blænde = Adaptor ring
Hurtig blænde = preset
Fokus = focus ring
Adapter = Adaptor ring*



Asahi Takumar 200mm f/3.5 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's a contrast sensor letting the camera give the characteristic beep sound when focus is 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 camera's viewer darkens when you step down the aperture.

The 200mm is heavy; weighing in at 750 gr. and if you have the tripod ring adding an extra 100 gr. It uses 67mm filter and mounted on your camera it does stick out between 16.2 and 18.2 cm. It is big. It is a relatively fast lens; wide open is f/3.5.

But weight and size does not come out badly here. The two parameters come together, so to speak. It is a very pleasant lens to operate and the balance is very good. The sensation of the building quality is somehow: Do what you want, use the lens as a hammer, as it will not only deliver results, it will survive.

The focus ring runs softly but has a little "crunch" to it. Maybe the lens has been really heavily used or maybe it has been one too many times to the beach. It doesn't really matter, the crunchiness, but the movement is just not as soft as my other Asahi Takumar lenses. The aperture ring moves in nice clicks and the preset ring runs soft as any other Asahi Takumar. With 50 years in the bag, this is amazing.

The focus ring is made of metal. That means it gets cold. But you have a good grip. When you focus, you have almost 360 degrees turn on the focus ring. That is a lot of turn. Focussing between 2.7 meters and 5 meters takes the first 180 degrees. That means you have very easy focussing; but shifting from a close focus to a distance focussed images does really require a lot of turning. The end of the lens does not turn when focussing.

The aperture goes from $f/3.5$ to $f/22$. The ring is quite thin; men it is still easy to operate.

The lens has an preset ring too. This operates the aperture without any click or stops. The purpose is to let you first set the aperture ring and when turn the preset ring to wide open, opening the aperture so that your viewfinder brightens up for focussing. When focus is found you just turn down the preset ring to max. and the blades will slide into the position you already had chosen at the aperture ring.

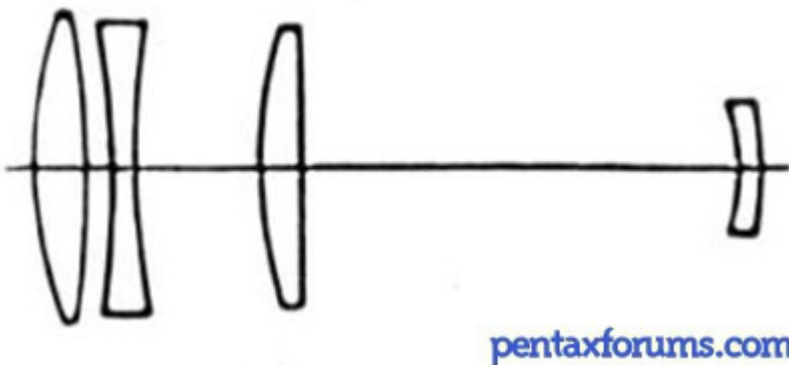
The lens has 16 blades and they are shaped to create a perfect circle regardless of the chosen aperture. It is fantastic to see the blades work and bearing in mind that this has been doing so for more than 50 years.

Nearlimit is 2.7 meters.

Data

The lens was introduced in 1959 and discontinued in 1961. More than 50 years has gone by and the lens is still not only functioning but always very much in use.

There are four elements in four groups. A very very simple construction:



Weight	Diam x Length	Filter Size	Min. Focus	Max. Magnification
850 g		67 mm	270 cm	0.09x (calculated)
Diagonal FOV (APS-C)	Horizontal FOV (APS-C)	Min. Aperture	Max. Aperture	
8.2 degrees	6.9 degrees	$f/22$	$f/3.5$	
Diagonal FOV (24x36)	Horizontal FOV (24x36)	Diaphragm	Optical Construction	
12 degrees	10 degrees	Preset	4 elements in 4 groups	

Weight 750g without tripod collar

Price

Asahi Takumar 200mm $f/3.5$ is old. I guess that the age might explain why the lens is quite rare on eBay (if not it is the simple fact that owners doesn't want to sell their lens). At the present moment (april 2011) there are 3 lenses up for sale at eBay.com. One has a buy-now price at \$89, one has \$124.88 and the last is priced at \$522 (but the seller here will also look at best offers). The price range is large. Taken over a periode of more than a year the prices are running around the \$120 mark; but at eBay.uk and eBay.de the prices normally will run around the 220 Euro mark.

It is, in general, not a cheap lens.

The question is, however, if the lens is worth the cost – does it deliver?

The pictures

All picture are taken using Olympus E-520, providing a double crop. The lens now “acts” like a 400mm on Full Frame.



The dow above is caught at about 10 meters using f/4.8. The weather was not good; a little rain and all clouded. In my eyes the lens does still provide a good sharpness, very very soft and smooth bokeh, nice colours and a good handling of the little light present.

For a better view turn the page:



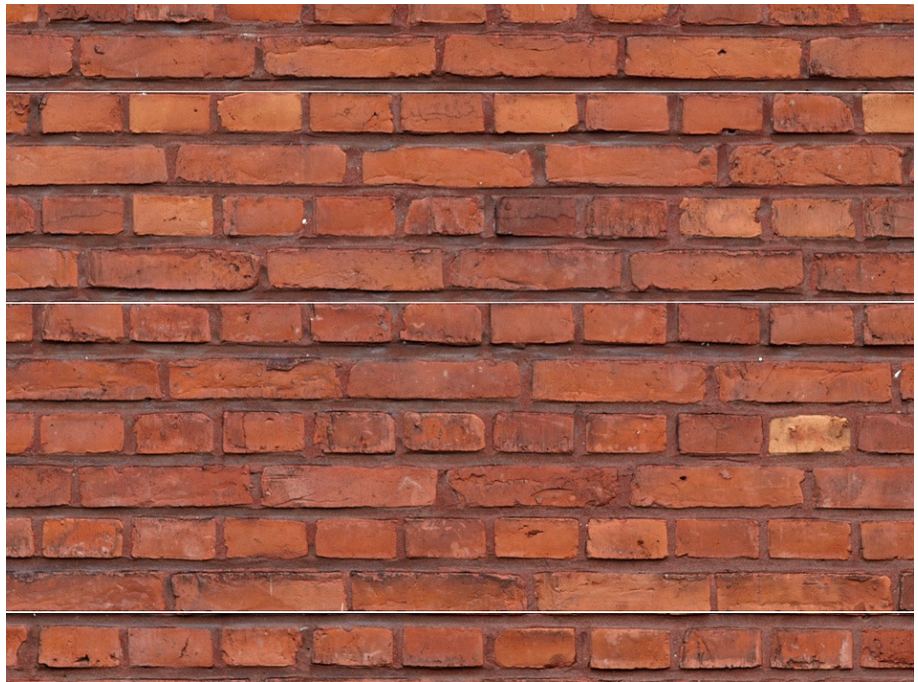
Right: The beach has just broken and the freshness in the green colour is clear. Aperture is f/5.6.



Right: The sign "Åbakkevej" has been taken at about 30 meters and it does stand out from the building behind very nicely. Aperture is f/5.6.



With aperture at f/5.6 the brick wall does reveal that no tunnel effect or distortion is present.





Grey herons at about 10 meter. Aperture is f/5.6. The bird above was standing in hide under a tree and the light was not the best. But again I find sharpness, bokeh, colour and light handling very good.



Right: At 15 meters the gray heron was enjoying the summer and the mild wind. The red square indicate how much of the picture a 1000x750 pixel crop is.



Left: The crop. Here the sharpness is not fantastic, but it is acceptable. The contrasts could have been better but again the bokeh does stand out as very nice, smooth and soft.

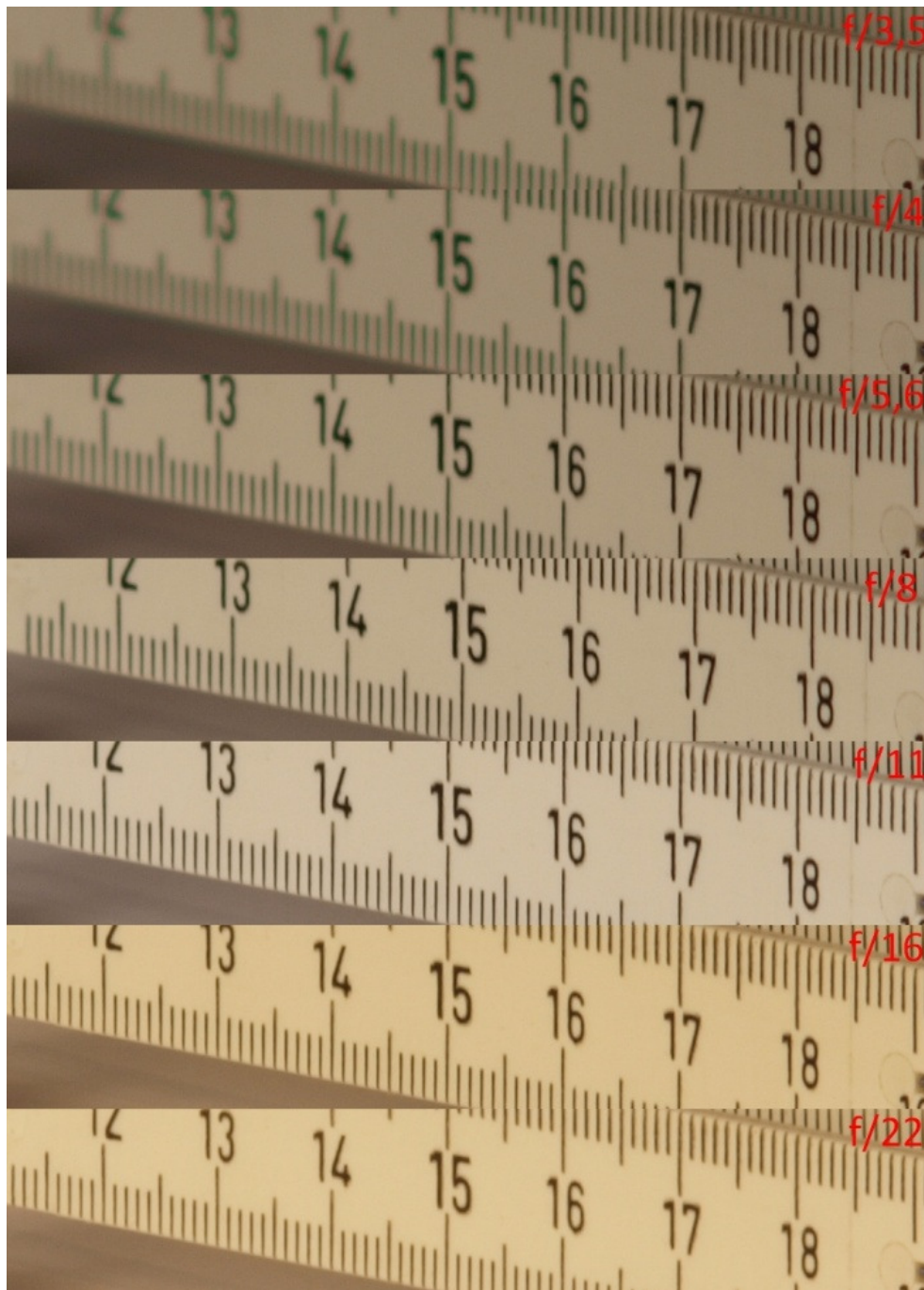
Sharpness

A picture is beginning to show itself, I think. The sharpness tend to be more like “okay” and “good” rather than “razor”. And two small tests will reveal more insight. I have done two tests. One at 2.7 meters (near limit) and one at 3.5 meters. Just to make sure that near limit is not a problem in itself. The setup looked like this (red squares indicating crops at 1000x200 pixels):





It is clear that sharpness of the lens is best between $f/5.6$ and $f/16$. Wide open that lens is a little blurry.



A third test looking at about 10 meters give us this:



Right: Taking it to about 100 meters and using f/5.6, the red square indicates the size of a 1000x750 pixels crop.



The sharpness at the distance must be said to be quite good. Very good maybe. The details are fine; but also the CA. Normally I don't find significant CA-problems with the lens; but it might give us some sometimes...



And a little deer, aperture is f/4.5:



And even HDR merged from 5 individual images one EV-step apart (aperture is f/4.5):

The modern HDR-programmes have very good “remove ghostliness” features and this open a whole new range of motives for the passionate HDR-photographer – as me.



Conclusion

Let us for once keep it short:

I really like the lens. At a distance and stopped down, I find the sharpness to be very good, the colours to be excellent, the light handling to very very good and the bokeh to be somewhat fantastic.

The lens is big and heavy. But it is easy and pleasant to operate. The balance is good.

The price might be high; but you might also be very lucky and find a very cheap one – like I did.

The lens has been in use for more than 50 years. My lens does show that with chips in the paint etc. But no problems at all inside: The glass is clear, clean and without any faults.

Adding it all together I end up with:

On a scale from 0 to 5; 5 being the very very best, I give the lens a solid: 3.5