Introduction

Lenses from Asahi Takumar has begun to be a bit of a challange for me. A challange because I find it increasingly more difficult not to buy them when I find them at eBay etc. Sometimes I even get so excited that I don't read the add properly – as it happened for me with the Asahi Takumar 55mm f/2. I simply misread the read the add. It read: "Asahi Takumar 55mm f1:2". In my head that turned into: "Asahi Takumar 55mm f/1,2" – the mistake is obvious and further more: There are no 55mm f/1,2 from Takuamar at all.

But never the less: I got the lens – and despite it can't fulfill my expectations about aperture, t is a fine little lens. It isn't a young lens – my version of the lens was introduced in 1965 – but a very fine building quality and, I guess, some caring owners has preserved the lens beautifully. First hand impressions are covered with words like: quality, solid, soft movement, metal, glas, nice etc. Those are all words that are familiar to anyone buying and using old Takumar lenses.

The lens is a good as identical with the 55mm f1,8. The difference is thatf/2 has a build in limiter for the aperture. The lens uses filters at 49mm and therefore share lens hoods with many old M42 lenses. With the adaptor the lens is between 46 and 56mm long and weighs in at just 215 gr. It really is a very handy lens. Nearlimit is just about 45cm.

The focus ring has the ”oily” sensation as Takumars are famous to have. There is a slight drag which I have found out many of the 55mm’s have. The front element does not turn when focusing – nice when using POL-filters. Turning the focus ring from near limit to infinity will take you about 270 degress. That’s a lot. From 45cm to 1 meter will need a turn of 180 degress. In other words: You are going to make a lot of turns when using the lens. This will make it easy to find focus, but might make it hard on your hand. The focus ring is in metal. It has nice big groves to provide a firm grip.

The aperture ring is narrow. But also with nice groves. The movement is light and precise. The stops are clear to feel.

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 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 cameras viewfinder darkens when you step down the aperture.

It is a quite fast lens. Aperture is from f/2 to f/16. There are six blades.

Data

Here from Pentaxforums.com: My version is the first. Produced between 1965 and 1974.

1965: Super Takumar 1:2/55 - second model - coarse knurls on aperture ring; came in three almost identical versions over time

Weight	Diam x Length	Filter Size	Min. Focus	Max. Magnification
215 g		49 mm	45 cm	0.17x
Diagonal FOV (APS-C)	**Horizontal FOV (APS-C)**		**Min. Aperture**	**Max. Aperture**
29 degrees	25 degrees		f/16	f/2
Diagonal FOV (24x36)	**Horizontal FOV (24x36)**		**Diaphragm**	**Optical Construction**
43 degrees	36 degrees		Automatic	6 elements in 5 groups

Inside it looks like this:

Price

Ypu can find a lot of Takumar lenses on eBay. And quite a few of the mare 55mm’s. The 55mm was standard lens for several cameras. The prices have some substantial variations. I have seen lenses offered from a few £ to several hundreds.

At the moment the buy-now prices on the English eBay are between £19 and £39,95. But if you have the patience and luck you might even them one cheaper. It is not a costly lens – you can afford it.

Images

The pictures here are taken using f/4. The distance from the lens to the focusing point is 50cm for the picture above to the left; 1 meter for the picture above to the right and 3 meters for the picture below.

In My Opinion (IMO): nice sharp pictures with good color rendering and a smooth bokeh.

The pictures on this page has been taken using f/5.6.

(I apologies for the burned out petal. The lens is not to be blamed; only me)

IMO: Again nice pictures with both fine sharpness and colors. The bokeh is a little turbulent on the bottom picture. Might be due to the distance from the focus point to the background (several meters).

Barbed wire is always exciting to photograph, I think. You need a precise and perfect combination between your focus, aperture and shuttertime to get the whole “knot” sharp and with no blur. I have used f/5.6 for the pictures above.

Above is again with f/5.6. The distance is about 2 meters.

IMO: Some very nice samples of the possibilities in this lens. Sharpness is very fine, the colors are good, the bokeh soft.

To the left you have the typical image in spring sunlight at noon. The sky turned white and burned out because I wanted the details on the ground. Aperture is f/5.6.

For the illustration: A High Dynamic Range image. Combined from 5 pictures with 1 EV between each. Aperture is f/5.6. Here the sky has the bright blueish color AND the details in the shadows are kept:

The fire hydrant is clear and crisp. Aperture is f/4.

The markings (shark teeths?) in the street is handled fine. And you have to remember that they are quite bright being highly reflective.

Again aperture is f/4.

Below you have the remains from a site of fire. A small cottage burned to the ground and I am shooting in full sunlight. Aperture is f/5.6.

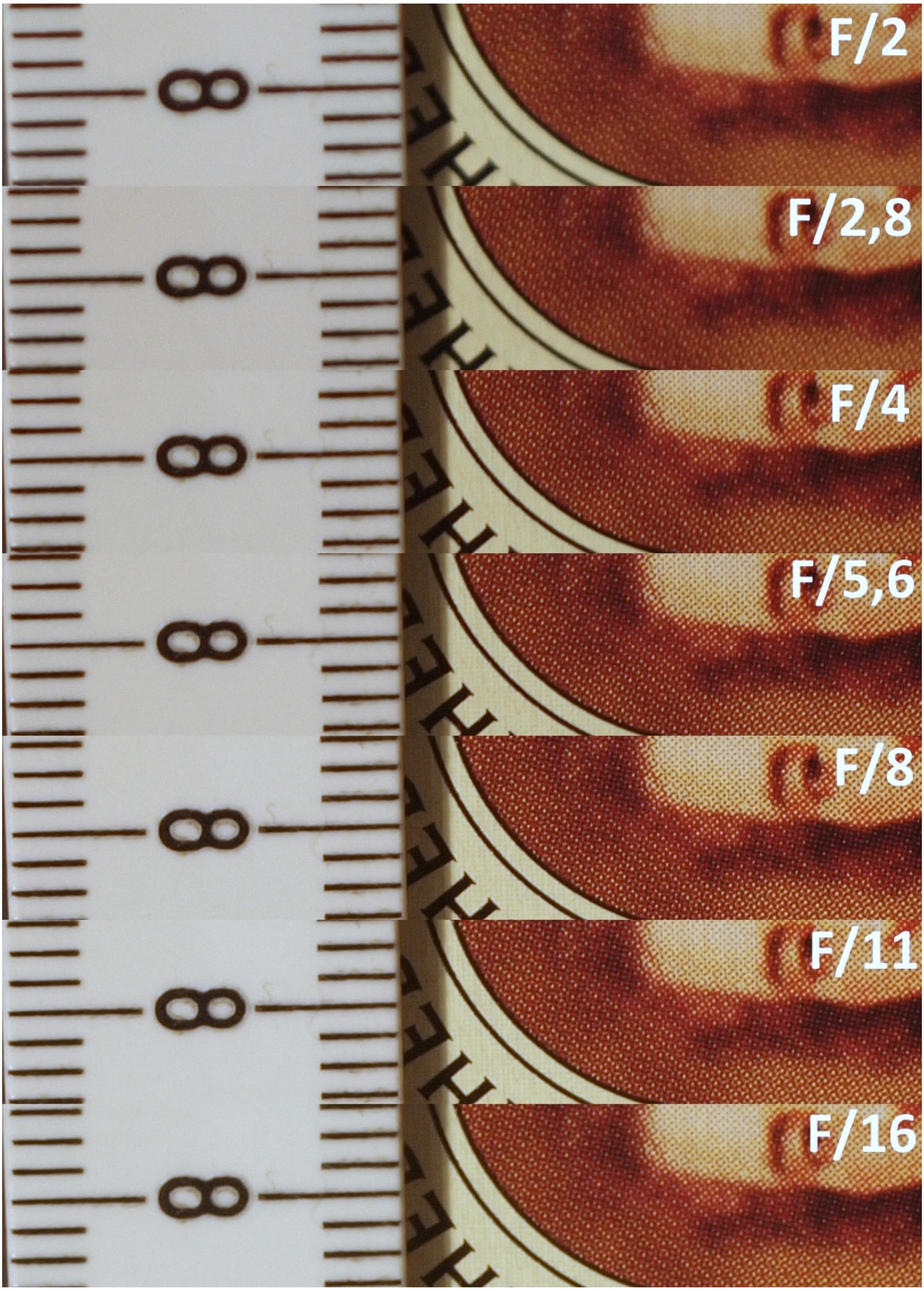
Sharpness

Sharpness is always one of the interesting features about a lens. In my opinion a lens has to be sharp. Even if I don't want the razor sharp picture. If I want blurriness, I can easily add that to the picture in my computer; but I can never properly save a picture that just isn't sharp.

Thats why I have done a small test. The distance is about 1.5 meters. I take a picture using each aperture step on the lens and make a crop to compare the results.

Below you have my setup. It has been resized. The red square is to show you how much (or how little) of the picture I use for the test – the square is 1000x200 pixels.

See the test on the next page:



IMO: The Asahi Takumar 55mm f/2 appears to be razor sharp from f/4 to f/11. F/2.8 might be considered sharp, but not razor sharp. F/2 is somewhat blurry ot me.

Remember that the pictures are 100% crops. We are very close.

<u>More sharpness</u>
Again just to show the sharpness.Here we have about 40 meters from the lens to the focus point (my balcony).

The red square indicates how much of the picture a 1000x750 pixel crop is..

The crop.

Bokeh

Bokeh is also very important to me, when I look at lenses.

Here you have a picture using f/4. A nice smooth bokeh.

(just for the fun of it: An HDR of the same motive).

Those windows could de with some cleaning….

Very close here. 45cm from the lens. At the near limit. Aperture is f/4. The front is not a vinget; it is the railing of my balcony being too close to be sharp – front bokeh.

Conclusion

I really like many of the old lenses. I have owned and used quite a number of them now – and very often I am impressed with them. Asahi Takumar 55mm is a lens that will impress you. It is sharp, the coloring is very nice, the bokeh is smooth and the handling is nice. It is, however, not in the top of the range. Sharpness above f/4 isn't as good as I want it.

But considering the cost you have a very fine lens here. And one thing is for sure: This little lens is fully cable of putting a smile on your face.

Out of 5, I give it: 3,5