



Viewfinder



The M8 is a rangefinder camera, this means that instead of looking through the lens as you would in an SLR you look through a dedicated optical viewfinder which indicates the frame size using framelines, focusing is carried out using the rangefinder metering field, a super-imposed image which appears in the center of the frame.

The M8's viewfinder view is huge, bigger than you're used to seeing even if you use a full-frame SLR, it literally fills your vision (switching back to an SLR is like looking into a tunnel). It's also very bright with 'bright line' frames which appear as light overlays on the frame and the rangefinder 'metering field' (a rectangular area in the center of the frame) provides accurate manual focusing.

Bright-line frame view

The M8's viewfinder has bright-line frames which appear in the viewfinder depending on the lens used. They are displayed in pairs of 24+35 mm, 28+90 mm and 50+75 mm. This means that if you are using a 50 mm lens you see two frames, one for 50 mm and one for 75 mm, this may seem odd but is fairly easy to learn. You can also manually move the frame selector lever to see if the scene would be better suited to a different lens. The frames (and metering field) also move depending on the lens focal length to compensate for parallax error (because the viewfinder axis is offset from the lens axis).



24 + 35 mm frames



50 + 75 mm frames



28 + 90 mm frames

Viewfinder LED display

Along the bottom of the viewfinder view is the status line which includes four LED digits, with two dots, a light balance indicator (two triangles with a dot at the center) and the flash ready indicator. The digits are used to indicate shutter speed, a countdown for long exposures (those longer than 2 seconds), under- or over-exposure warning and buffer full message. The smaller dots between the first and second digit indicate exposure lock (top) and exposure compensation warning (bottom).

The two arrows pointing inwards towards the circle are the light balance indicators which are used during manual exposure (manual shutter speed selection) to indicate under- or over-exposure (or correct exposure). The LED display adjusts its brightness depending on ambient light.



Distance metering / focusing

The M8 uses a rangefinder metering field which provides a bright superimposed image in the center of the frame. Very simply you adjust the focus manually until the double image becomes one, this then means that the part of the frame covered by the rangefinder metering field will be in focus.



Distance meter area shows a double-image, this part of the frame is not in focus



After adjusting focus we have a single image which indicates a good focus here

How it works

There are three windows on the front of the camera:

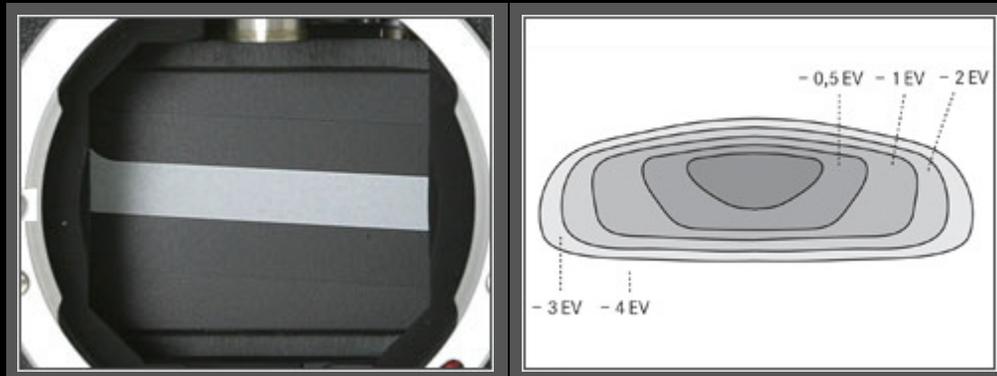
1. **Distance meter viewing window** - provides the image for the bright rangefinder metering field (above).
2. **Bright line illumination window** - gathers ambient light to produce the bright lines frames in the viewfinder view.
3. **Viewfinder window** - provides the main image for the viewfinder, this image is combined with the bright line frames, rangefinder metering field and LED indicators.



Metering

The first M series camera with TTL metering was the M5 in 1971, although it achieved this with a mechanical swing arm carrying the photo diode, in 1984 Leica introduced the M6 which achieved its metering by measuring the light reflected off a white dot on the shutter, the photo diode mounted in the base of the lens mount / shutter chamber.

The M8 uses a similar setup but instead of a single white dot one of the metal shutter blades has been painted white. Because the photo cell is 'aimed' at the center of the frame metering is still center biased but there is obviously some influence from the left and right of the frame (as shown in the diagram below).



Base / bottom cover

The base of the M8 is very clean, with a tripod thread, and on the left side the locking toggle for the bottom cover. I'm sure some Leica owners will be pleased to see the more logical central position for the tripod mount however it does appear to be central to the body and not the lens axis. The bottom cover itself is made from a piece of milled brass (just like the top) and is removed by turning the locking toggle counter-clockwise, it hinges on a small protruding lip on the right side. Once removed you can see the battery and SD compartments.



Battery / SD compartment

As mentioned above to access the battery and SD compartments you must remove the bottom cover, while this may seem a little eccentric (and it is) it does mean that (a) the compartments are protected while the cover is in place and (b) the clean lines of the camera are not spoiled by such annoyances as compartment doors. The M8 takes SD cards (the manual specifies up to 4 GB which implies SD-HC but nowhere is this stated explicitly). The M8's Lithium-Ion battery has a capacity of 1900 mAh at 3.7 V (7.03 Wh).



Battery charger



The M8 is provided with a battery charger for its Lithium-Ion battery, this charger comes with international plugs for the UK, Europe and USA as well as a cable for connecting to a car cigarette lighter.

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