

(Re) Discovering ELPROs

By David Young



The ELPRO VIa shot with the ELPRO VIb on 50mm Summicron-R

For years, I've used extension tubes for my close-up work. They work fine with most lenses, but not all. But, when I acquired the 80-200/f4 Vario-Elmar, I soon discovered that *no* zoom lenses work well with extension tubes, as such lenses requires that the rear element stay a fixed distance from the film plane in order to maintain focus throughout the zoom range. The answer was the, often ignored, ELPRO!

ELPROs are true achromats, consisting of two, cemented elements, giving a dramatic improvement in image quality over the more common (and much cheaper), single element, close-up lenses. But, Leitz/Leica does not make their ELPROs in a 60mm size! The solution was a B&W 62EI-60EA step up ring, and a Nikon 6T... another two-element achromat. This combination works quite well (*though not as well as the 50 Summicron + ELPRO*) and is so small that the retractable lens hood on the Vario-Elmar slides over it as if they were made for it!

Recently, I had a chance to pick up the ELPRO VIa and VIb. These fit my older, 2-cam, 50mm Summicron-R. The ELPRO 1 & 2 are optically identical, but fit the E55mm filter threads of the newer 50mm Summicron-Rs. (*There are also Series VII (a&b) ELPROs, for the 90 and 135mm lenses. The E-55 versions are called ELPRO 3 & 4.*)

ELPROs are ideal for the traveling photographer, as they are smaller, lighter and easier to use than extension tubes. There is no loss of light and the quality is often superior to that obtained with extension tubes - as some lenses (*the original 90mm R-Summicron springs to mind*) do not perform well at very close focus.

The ELPROs yield superb results and are quite inexpensive, used, and not bad new. Give one a try!



Postage stamp, showing Queen Elizabeth II taken by Canadian rock-star Bryan Adams w/Leica M6

ELPRO 1 or VIa	Distance	Field of View	Reproduction Ratio
50 Summicron R	41 to 21 cm	276x184mm to 138x92mm	1:7.7 to 1:3.8
ELPRO 2 or VIb			
50 Summicron R	21 to 14cm	141x94mm to 93x62mm	1:3.9 to 1:2.6
ELPRO 3 or VIIa			
90mm f/2.8 or f/2.0 -R	61 to 30cm	241x161mm to 108x72mm	1:6.7 to 1:3
100mm Macro-Elmar-R	61 to 24cm	218x145mm to 72x48mm	1:6 to 1:2
100mm Macro-Elmar-R + 14256	24 to 17cm	73x49mm to 44x29mm	1:2 to 1:1.2
135mm Elmarit-R	61 to 42cm	160x107mm to 99x66mm	1:4.5 to 1:2.8
180mm Elmar-R	61 to 45cm	120x80mm to 72x48mm	1:3.3 to 1:2
ELPRO 4 or VIIb			
100mm Macro-Elmar-R	135 to 31cm	484x323mm to 92x61mm	1:13 to 1:2.5
100mm Macro-Elmar-R + 14256	31 to 20cm	94x63mm to 51x34mm	1:2.9 to 1:1.4
135mm Elmarit-R	135 to 68cm	354x236mm to 159x106mm	1:9.9 to 1:4.4
180mm Elmar-R	135 to 75cm	267x178mm to 120x80mm	1:7.4 to 1:3.3