

U.S. CAMERA

and Travel

tests the new
Canon
88C

JULY 1968 ISSUE



It's like what's happening in Super 8. With a 12-to-1 zoom lens that stretches to 90mm, the 88C comes on as a 5½-pound gem for us "Peeping Toms."



CANON 88C

WHETHER you'll love or hate the Canon 88C depends on your answer: What do you want to do with a movie camera?

Do you want to slip it into your pocket? Keep it out of sight and mind until you see something interesting to shoot, and stick it away again? If you do, you're part of a sizeable number of people who consider movie-making secondary to their involvement in what they're doing. You use movies mainly to enhance your memory of an experience—be it your child's birthday party or a vacation trip—and to recall highlights for your own gratification.

Your needs are legitimate, and a number of manufacturers—indeed, most of them—have devised a wide array of machines to satisfy you. But keep away from the Canon 88C; Canon didn't have you in mind when they built it.

The 88C is for you only if the process of movie-making itself is your pursuit. If you want a machine that puts almost no limits on the things you can shoot and the way you shoot them—and if you admire a camera that's been designed so you can do this easily—then your reaction to the 88C will be akin to mine: enthusiasm, bordering on ecstasy.

The 88C is probably the largest cartridge-loading Super-8 camera in the world. Reason for this is its lens—a truly phenomenal hunk of optics with an incredible 12-to-1 zooming range. That's 7.5mm to 90mm, friends—the most extensive range of focal lengths on any 8mm camera ever built. It provides you with a formidable wide-angle for shooting in tiny areas, or for squeezing out every inch of depth-of-field you can get. And at 90mm, you've got a potent telescope of nearly 7½ power; you can reach out and fill your frame with objects so distant or small as to be hard to see with the naked eye. If you've had much experience with lenses, you'll be further impressed by the f/1.8 speed of this one. There's nothing new about big zooming ratios; Angenieux, for example, has been building 10-to-1's for 16mm and 35mm movie cameras for years. But these offer a maximum aperture of f/2.2.

Canon has outstripped these professional jobs not only in focal length, but in speed, too! This lens—called Canon C8—can only focus as close as six feet (although depth-of-field at small apertures and wide focal lengths should let you get much closer), but this is hardly a limitation when you remember that,

at this distance with the lens fully racked-out, your subject will appear as if less than a foot away!

Zooming with this lens is quite an experience. At 7.5mm, you see a panorama—then the power zoom begins at either "high" speed (which I'd call a moderate zooming speed) or "low" speed (snail's pace) drawing you through an almost unbelievable sweep into close-up, locking into a part of your original view that you hadn't even seen at the beginning. If you buy this camera, my advice is that you run around the house for a couple of days, zooming in and out on everything, until you get used to it. It's hard to resist; and, of course, you should resist over-doing anything in your films.

Incidentally, Canon has provided you with "locks" so you can preset your zoom to run between and stop at any focal lengths you choose. These locks have clickstops at 7.5, 10, 15, 20, 30, 40, 50, 70 and 90mm—and may be set anywhere in between—so that the lens with the widest zoom range also becomes the lens with the smallest, if you wish.

Equally unusual as the lens is the lens shade. Looking more like a matte box (and usable as such), it's huge, it's square, it screws into the side of the lens (via a bar,

rather than screwing into the filter threads near the front element) and it's made of rubber. Being so constructed, it serves admirably as a "bumper," protecting the long lens should you accidentally knock it against something; also, it's large enough to balance the camera if you decide to rest it on its nose.

Since it does not physically touch the focusing ring, it does not turn as you focus. Therefore, you could use it to support masks ("keyhole," "binoculars" or whatever) and "focus through" without altering the mask's position.

The 88C's reflex viewing system is among the best I've seen on any 8mm camera. It employs a circular microprism rangefinder in the center of the screen, but this device seems almost superfluous. The groundglass itself gives a fine impression of picture clarity, and to my own tastes, full-field focusing is

the most realistic and desirable. The 88C's glass is particularly responsive, leaving no doubt about pinpoint focus; Canon might just as well have left the rangefinder out.

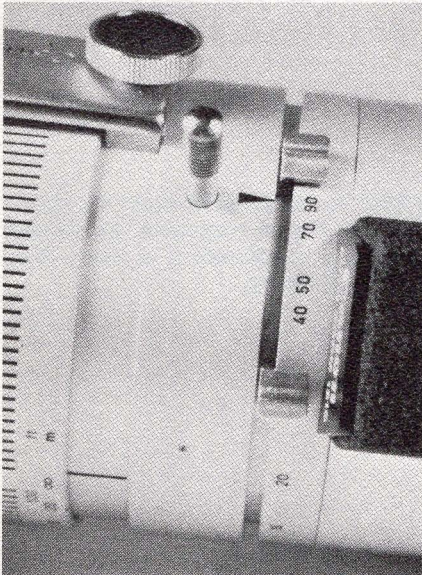
The 88C employs a fully-automatic, through-the-lens exposure meter, with a manual override; f/stops are visible inside the viewfinder. The manual override is almost too responsive—turning the knob the slightest amount can cause the lens to leap a good one to two stops. It's possible to work your way down to fractions of stops, of course, but it takes a bit of doing. Canon might consider re-working

the manual control to make it a little less eager; it's hardly a serious hang-up, but it's surely surprising to see that needle bounce all over the scale at the slightest adjustment.

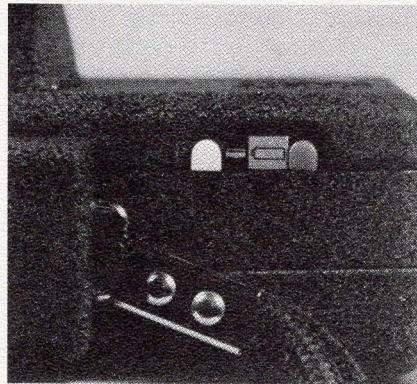
There is one flaw to this camera that Canon could correct quite easily: the pistol grip. Never before has a pistol grip looked more like the grip of a pistol; like a .45 it has a trigger guard, and it stands perfectly vertical. Maybe it works better with guns, but a vertical grip makes cameras—especially one which is a bit cumbersome and front-heavy to begin with—a little difficult to hold steadily. Angling the grip a little would help on both accounts. And making it a bit thicker would make it far more convenient for big-handed movie-makers like myself.

In addition to variable speeds (normal 18fps, "slow motion" and single-frame) the 88C offers the usual complement of features: battery test (for both motor drive and electric eye); built-in type "A" filter for converting indoor-type film for outdoor use; and cable release and remote-control sockets.

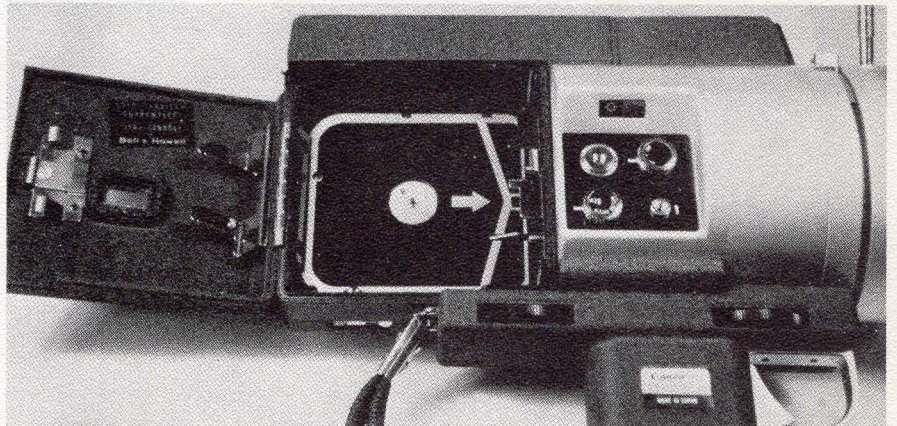
An important design considera-



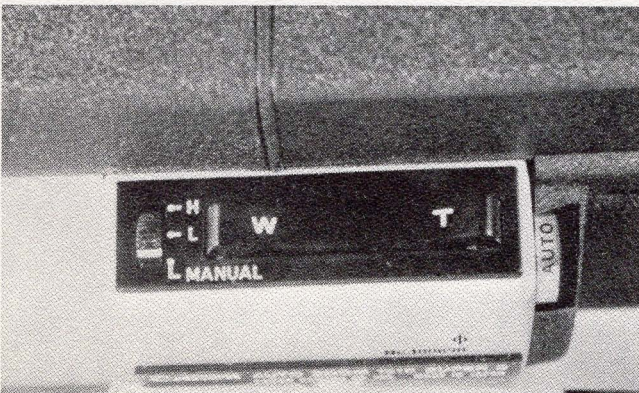
LOCKS can be preset to limit the zooming range to any focal lengths one wants to use.



TWO battery checks on bottom of camera indicate condition of motor and meter batteries.

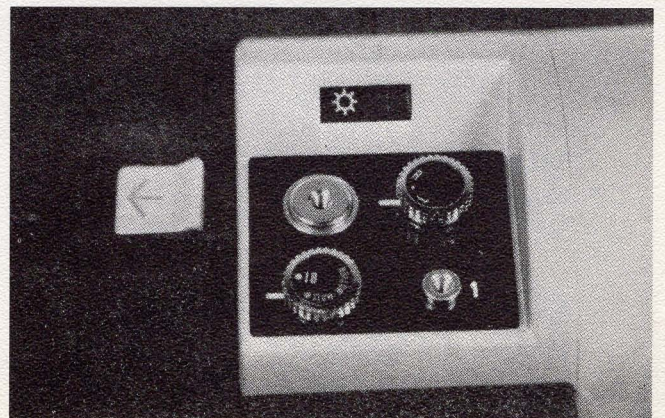


HINGED BACK opens at the flip of a switch for insertion of the Super 8 cartridge. Pistol grip can be easily removed from camera.



ZOOMING can be accomplished manually or by low or high-speed power. Exposure also offers an option of manual or automatic control.

CONTROLS on right of camera are filter switch, run-or-lock button, filming speed selector, cable release, single exposure sockets.



tion, of course, is placement of all camera controls. They must be located so that the user can position his hands to hold the camera steady, and still be able to manipulate the controls. Canon has performed intelligently here. Lens functions—zoom-in, zoom-out, high- and low-speed zoom, and f/stop—are all controlled by various knobs and levers situated on the camera's left side, surrounding a battery chamber. You might ordinarily grasp this chamber to steady the camera with your left hand; and by so doing, your index and third fingers automatically command zooming direction. Your thumb naturally places itself over the aperture dial, and your pinky can control zooming speed. With just the slightest practice, you could "play" all these

functions as a pianist plays a piano; you could do it without ever looking, while still holding the camera steady. This makes for an easy and efficient manual change of f/stop while-zooming-while-shooting. It also makes easy work of a fade immediately before or after a zoom.

Another brilliant touch is the lens cap; insignificant as it seems, Canon has finally given us a means of keeping the lens shaded and also protected. The cap plugs into the front of the lens, inside the lens shade, instead of over it. By simply reaching inside the shade and grasping a handle on the cap, you can pull it out in the same way you pull a stopper out of a sink. The result is the unusual combination of being able to retain the lens shade, keeping your lens protected at the

same time, and being immediately able to uncover the lens and start shooting.

ALL BUSINESS

There's no doubt about it: The Canon 88C means business for the filmmaker who means business. It will undoubtedly attract those professional filmmakers who use Super-8—sales and industrial filmers and so on. And amateurs who want to feel in command of any shooting situation will love it. It will have to be a compelling love, for the 88C costs \$800. But considering the mechanical and optical wonders of this machine, and the almost limitless, certainly matchless, capabilities it presents, this will surely be money well spent.—*Don Sutherland.*

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