

Advice on buying a used Nikonos V

by Peter Rowlands



With the news that Nikon have ceased production of the Nikonos V it will become inevitable that new cameras will be hard to find leaving you with no alternative but to look for a secondhand one.

Since the Nikonos V has been in production since 1984 you could be looking at a camera which may be up to 17 years old but unfortunately there is no way of dating a camera as the serial number does not indicate the camera's age.

There is, however, one way of checking if the camera you are inspecting is a later rather than earlier model. Look at the battery compartment and if there is no chrome surround then this is an

earlier camera. This modification was an improvement to the O ring sealing surface so priority should be given to a later camera. If it is an earlier model this should not totally eliminate it from your choice but, if you have an option, I would go for the later model.

The general external condition of the camera is a good indication of how the camera has been looked after. The diecast aluminium body is extremely hard wearing and will take a lot of hard work without affecting the internal mechanisms but you should give priority to the outer condition of the body.



Shutter release lever

The first area to check is the shutter release button. When this is depressed it should spring back into place. Any sluggishness is an indication that there is a build up of corrosion around this O ring and you would be advised to have such a camera serviced before buying it.



(Above) Newer models have a chromed ring fitted around the battery compartment. Older models (left) don't have this ring





Wind on lever

The same is true to the wind on lever which should return smartly after the film has been wound on. Any sluggishness in this action should be taken as suspicious. A simple service of the camera should rectify the action but it might be an indication that water has got past the O ring and corroded the wind on return spring.

Fire and wind on the camera to frame one and you should see the red LED exposure indicators in the viewfinder. If they don't appear it may be that the battery needs replacing. If this doesn't solve the problem the camera could need an expensive repair. Shade the lens until the triangular light to the right lights up and fire the shutter. There should be a noticeable slow shutter speed as the shutter first opens and then closes. If there is just one sound there may be an expensive problem with either the shutter or the electronics.



Take the lens off and look into the shutter blades. These must be clean and have no signs of slight corrosion



Film sprockets and take up spool

Having opened the camera back, set the shutter speed dial to "R" and you should be able to rotate the film wind on sprockets freely in either direction. Also check that the film take up spool can be rotated in each direction (whatever setting the shutter speed dial is set to). Failure of either of these tests is a good indication there is internal corrosion which could be expensive to rectify.



Remove the battery holder in the base of the camera and carefully inspect the black plastic which surrounds the centre contact.

It is a fairly common problem that this plastic can crack and cause intermittent power to the electronics. The camera may be working fine but with such a battery compartment there is always the possibility the camera will stop working when you least want it to.

To rectify such a fault is expensive as the whole camera has to be taken to pieces to gain access to the inner battery compartment.



Next remove the flash port plug in the base of the camera and check the condition of the contacts. The two smaller contacts are sprung loaded and should be standing about two millimeters proud. The other three solid pins/contacts should be shiny. Any traces of corrosion in this area will be expensive to repair.

Finally test the flash TTL performance as follows. Make sure you are wound on to at least Frame 1 and fire the flash straight into the lens with it set at the widest aperture (F2.5 on the 35mm lens). When you fire the flash you should get a very small flash and a very fast recycle time.

Now cover the lens with a lenscap or place the camera face down on a solid surface. When you fire the flash now the output should be much brighter and the ready light will blink a few times, go out and then the flash will start to recycle. This indicates that the flash has fired at full power and that your TTL system is working fine. Any deviation from this indicates that a repair will be necessary.

Finally it's worth asking the owner about any previous service history. Just as with cars, a camera's value is enhanced if documentation can be produced which shows that the camera has been regularly serviced.

I hope this article hasn't frightened you too much. There are loads of good condition cameras for sale out there and if you follow the tests in this article you should be able to make a purchase with confidence.

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