

Mercury 135 Panoramic Back Instructions

LOADING (this can be done in daylight)

1. Open the Mamiya shell and remove the film Insert. Like any RB67 back, you must properly load the film into the insert.
2. Identify the two round parts of the Cartridge Adapter. The part with the round hole on the end is the top part; the one with both square and round elements is the bottom part. Insert these into the film cartridge, then the entire cartridge into the left (feed) side of the film Insert, remembering to keep the orientation correct.



3. Pull out a length of film. Wrap it around the Insert's left roller, along the pressure plate, and back around the right roller.
4. Remove the takeup reel from the Insert. Make a crease in the end of the film, then insert it in through the slot in the takeup reel. One of the film's sprocket holes should catch on the bump inside the slot; if it doesn't, slide it around until it does.
5. Insert the takeup reel back into the right side of the Insert. While putting a bit of pressure on the film to prevent it from slipping out of the takeup reel, wind the film lever. The film should catch and begin winding onto the takeup reel. Wind just enough to determine that the film is holding tightly on its own and in no danger of slipping off the takeup reel.



6. If you have loaded the film correctly, the dull, emulsion side of the film should be visible across the pressure plate and the shiny side down (not visible). Double check this!
7. Reinsert the Insert into the shell. Close and latch shut the shell. Your back is now loaded!
8. Wind the lever two full strokes. Now you are at frame 0 and ready to shoot.

FRAME GUIDES

When composing with ground glass, you can use one of the included transparent ground glass cutouts for precise framing. Cut these out carefully with a good pair of scissors. The Mercury cutout is designed to be inserted beneath the existing mask on the Ground Glass back, sitting on top of the ground glass itself. The Graflex and Mamiya RB67 cutouts are designed to be placed on top of the ground glass, under the retaining brackets. Loosen the screws that hold down the retaining brackets, insert the cutout, then re-tighten the screws.

When shooting handheld, with a viewfinder or sportfinder, you can use one of the cutouts as a rough guide and add framing marks in the appropriate places of your finder. Or, you can simply estimate the frame, remembering that the frame is a full 6x7 width, but only about 35% of the height, in the center of the frame.

SHOOTING

To expose a frame, slide out the darkslide until the red line on its reverse side is visible. Expose the film. Close the darkslide. There are no interlocks, and the darkslide can be inserted or withdrawn at any time, so it is important to pay attention and (a) remember to pull out the darkslide when taking a photo and (b) reinserting it before advancing the film to the next frame.

The darkslide is only fully reinserted when its handle touches (or nearly touches) the side of the back. If it feels like you've closed it all the way, but there is still a visible gap between the handle and the side of the back, then you have hit a bit of an obstruction and need to wiggle the slide a bit and/or push a bit harder past the obstruction. If you find that the slide is frequently obstructed, it has probably been bent slightly out of shape and needs to be slightly rebent. Remove the slide and make sure that its tips are not bent too far in either direction. In general, it is best for the tips to be bent ever so slightly upward. You can experiment until it slides smoothly.

To advance to the next frame, wind the lever one full stroke (as far as it will go). You are now on the next frame.

The automatic, internal frame counter on the Mamiya back will not function when loaded with 135 film. Instead, you can keep track of your frame number, if you wish, by either advancing an adhesive pointer (such as a piece of tape) along the vertical counter on the rear of the back, or utilizing the digital counter, if included.

When you reach the end of your roll, the lever will stop advancing and you will feel resistance. Do not force the film, or it may come untaped from the core of its cartridge, making it difficult to impossible to rewind.

UNLOADING (must be done in pitch dark!)

Unloading must be done inside a film changing bag, darkroom, or other completely dark space.

1. Open the shell, remove the Insert, and then remove both the feed adapters and cartridge and the takeup spool.



2. Remove the top adapter from the cartridge and replace it with the rewind crank.
3. Crank the film clockwise until it is completely rewound into the cartridge.
4. You may now expose these components to the light in order to reassemble the back and load a new cartridge if you wish.

DEVELOPING

If developing commercially, it is essential that you indicate that you wish to NOT CUT THE NEGATIVE. Otherwise, their cuts are likely to go right through some of your images.

SCANNING

Long panoramic images such as these are best scanned on a medium format capable scanner, using some sort of mask to cut down on light bleed (given how skinny the film is).

If you only have access to a 35mm film scanner, you can scan each panoramic image as several “standard” frames. Just make sure to leave adequate overlap for each scan, and then stitch the resulting scans together to reconstitute your full panoramic photo.