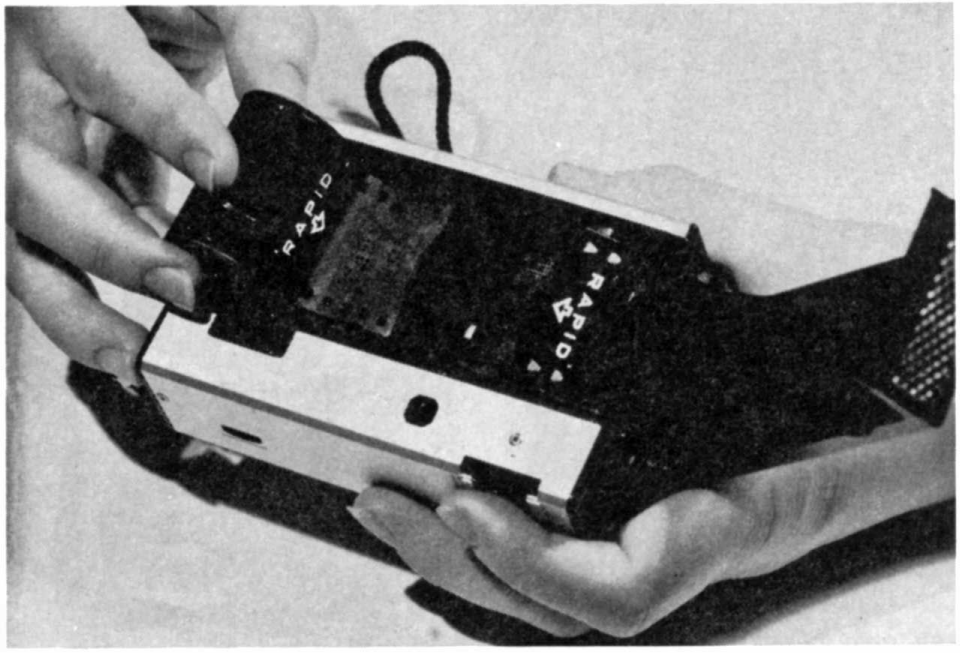
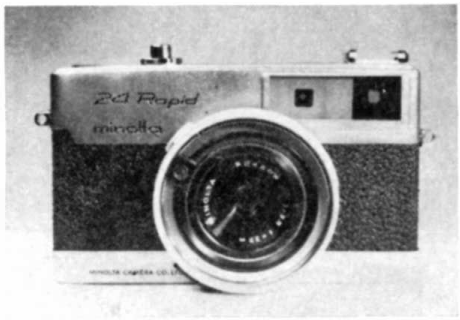
**Photographic companies galore, both Japanese and German, have designed new cameras to take Agfa-Gevaert's Rapid film. The system which features instantaneous loading with two 35mm cassettes is international in scope—many of the Rapid cameras promised are pictured below.**

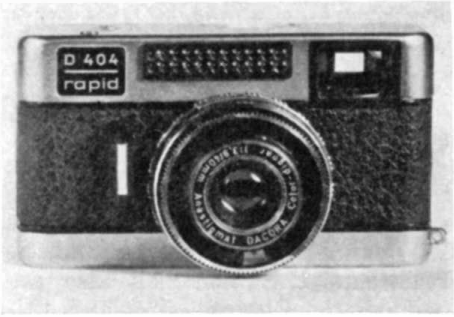



**TWO** *cassettes comprise the Rapid System—the first cassette is dropped in and automatically feeds itself into an empty cassette. The cassettes are reversed at the end of shooting.*




**MINOLTA 24 RAPID**—*A coupled rangefinder camera with speeds to 1/250, this Japanese 24x24mm format camera takes Rapid film.*

# RAPID ARRIVES

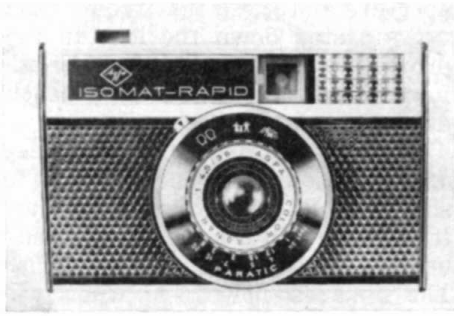



**DACORA D 404**—*One of the many other cameras that takes Rapid film, this 24x36mm format camera has automatic exposure control.*

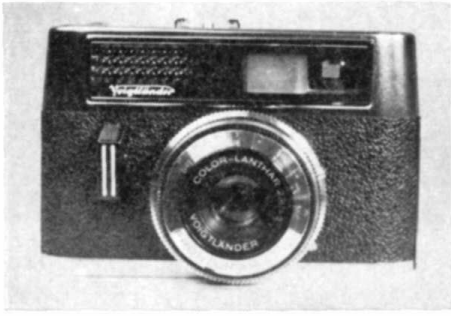
THE Rapid System, very much like a long awaited house guest of whom you have heard so much, has finally made its bow to these American shores. Ever since first news of the novel loading system reached us, we Yankees have been impatient to see for ourselves what all the fuss was about. Initial availability of the films and specially designed cameras in Europe only served to fan the fires of our anxiety.

Well, by August 1, all that will be in the past as first shipments of the cameras and film begin filling dealers' shelves throughout the country. The initial supplies will be meager in comparison to that available to European amateurs, but this is expected to be true only for the beginning until the full 27 members of the Rapid Group and their American distributors get the operation going full swing.

Agfa-Gevaert, chief impetus be-

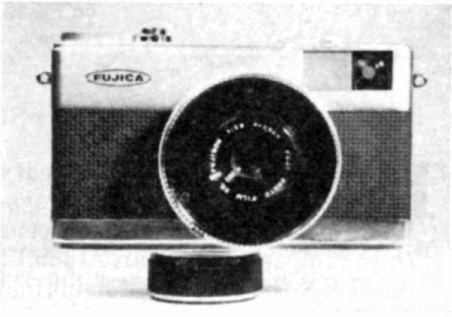



**AGFA ISOMAT RAPID**—*Made by the mother of the Rapid System, this camera features a 38mm Color-Agnar lens and a 24x24mm format.*

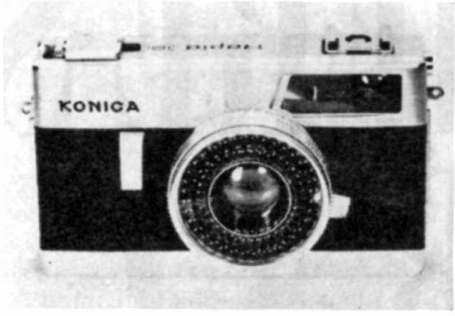



**VOIGTLANDER VITORET RAPID D**—*Featuring 35mm format, the Vitoret has a built-in meter coupled to shutter speeds from 1/30 to 1/125.*

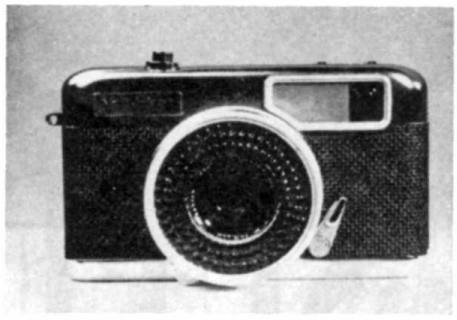
**PETRI AUTO RAPID 28**—*Also sporting automatic exposure control, this rangefinder camera has a 45mm lens and shutter speeds to 1/500.*




**FUJICA RAPID D-1**—*A motorized transport plus a 28mm lens makes this 24x24mm format camera unique. It has automatic exposure.*




**KONICA** *Rapid makes 12 exposures of full frame (24x36mm). Camera features electric eye. It will be available here in early fall.*



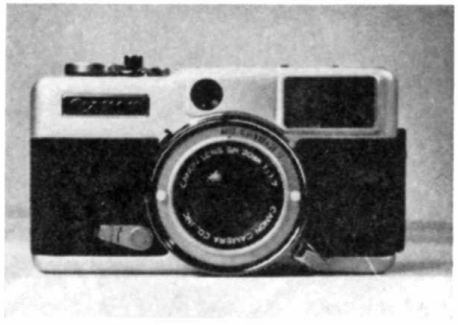
**YASHICA HALF 17 RAPID**—*With a fast f/1.7 lens this half-frame camera yields 24 exposures instead of 12. It has an auto exposure system.*

hind the Rapid Group, will start the ball rolling with two moderately-priced cameras and three film emulsions: Agfapan Rapid ASA 200 black-and-white, Agfacolor Rapid color negative film rated at ASA 40 and Agfachrome Rapid CT 18 ASA 50 transparency film.

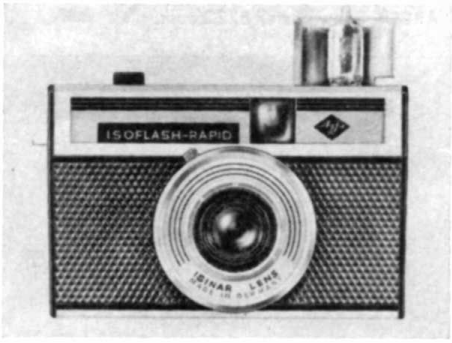
However, at the recent IPEX show in New York, numerous film cartons from Germany, Japan, England and Italy were on display along with an overwhelming array of assorted cameras from the camera manufacturer members of the Rapid Group. When and, even more important, *if* these films and cameras are ever available here is the big question; and one, I'm afraid, which no one seems able to answer.

To understand the situation better, a little bit of history will help. Back in September, 1963, the Rapid Group and its intentions were first announced. To those in the industry, this appeared to be a direct answer to the startling success of Kodak's Instamatic cameras on the continent and England. Formation of the group also made history because it was the first time that two keen rivals, the German and Japanese photographic industries, had joined in a mutual venture. And, as if to underline their determination and cooperation, all members agreed to share any Rapid developments and patents with each other.

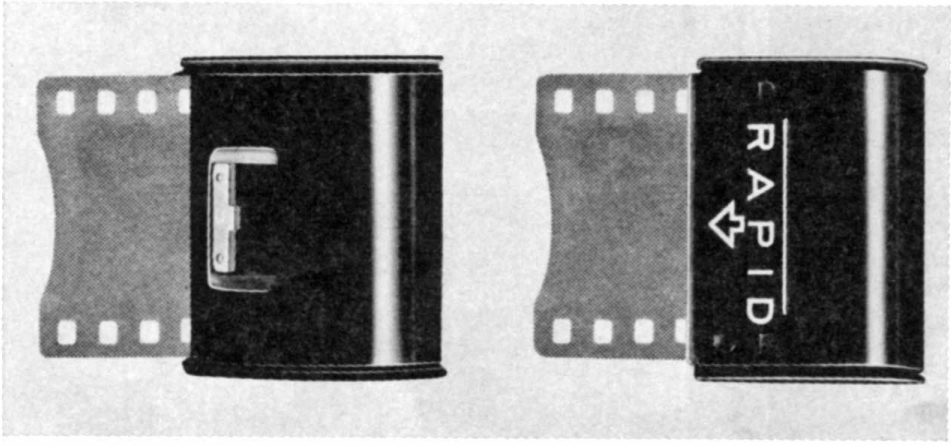
The European members include: Adox, Agfa-Gevaert, Balda, Bilora, Dacora, Ferrania, Ilford, Perutz, Regula, Voigtlander, Vredeborch and Zeiss Ikon. The Japanese ranks are made up of: Asahi Pentax,



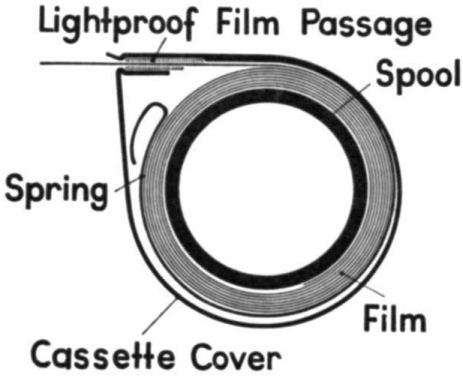
**CANON DEMI-RAPID**—*Automatic exposure is a feature of this compact 18x24mm format camera with a 30mm lens and speeds to 1/500.*




**AGFA ISOFLASH-RAPID**—*Providing a 24x24mm format, the Isoflash has a selenium exposure meter fully linked to the diaphragm.*




**RAPID FILM** *is standard 35mm size, but only 24 inches long. An inch of film extends from the cassette, which, when the camera back is closed, automatically feeds into the light-tight take-up cassette. The film is backed up by the camera pressure plate when exposed.*




Canon, Fuji, Konica, Kowa, Mamiya, Minolta, Miranda, Nippon Kogaku (Nikon), Olympus, Petri, Ricoh, Sankyo, Topcon and Yashica.

By July, 1964, six Rapid cameras and sixteen Rapid films (seven color, the rest black-and-white) were on sale in Europe. As time progressed, the number of cameras and films increased. Even two non-members, Rollei and Leitz, expressed interest in the system.

Briefly reviewing the system since it is not really new to *U.S. Camera* readers three important features are stressed: drop-in loading, no rewinding and quality results because a pressure plate is used to hold the film plane flat. This last point is a direct reference to the Instamatic cameras and the Kodapak cartridges which lack the pressure plate method of holding the film (*Continued on page* 80)

## RAPID ARRIVES

(*Continued from page* 53)

flat. Basically the Rapid film is the same 35mm emulsion found in regular cassettes. Here, similarities end; the Rapid cassette does away with the usual plastic or metal spindle to which the end of the film is attached. Instead, there is a spring-core arrangement which permits the end of the film to leave the cassette unhindered. But this spring serves an even more important purpose. As mentioned, there is no rewinding; this is possible because the film feeds from one cassette into another.

### CASSETTES ARE SWITCHED

In use, the Rapid cassette with unexposed film and short leader is dropped into one chamber and an empty cassette into the other. The camera is closed and the film advanced. As this is done, the film is guided along the film track into the empty cassette where it is engaged. Upon completion of the roll, the exposed film is now in the other cassette, eliminating the need for rewinding. When loading the next roll, the empty cassette is switched to the other chamber and the process repeated.

The Rapid cassette, as with the competing Kodapaks, feature a device which automatically triggers the ASA setting on a built-in meter if the camera has one. Range is from 25-400 ASA.

Further analysis of the two systems is unimportant here; advantages and disadvantages of both have been outlined earlier on these pages and our main concern at present is the availability of the Rapid System to American amateurs.

### WIDE RANGE OF CAMERAS

To those who attended the IPEX show in New York last May, the display cases at the Rapid booth containing seven different brands of film in assorted emulsions and over 20 cameras created an impressive reaction. Ranging from half-frame models to those producing 24x24mm and regular 24x36mm frames, the cameras stretched over a broad price range. Contrasted, for example, with the simple models that would sell for under $20, there was a rangefinder model from Canon that featured automatic exposure control and a 30mm f/1.7 lens!

However, after placing a few questions to those who should know, it is still difficult to state definitely if these will remain promises in a display case or merchandise available to the American photographic buyer, as it is to his European and Japanese counterparts.

The film situation, regretfully, is the same. Only the Agfa-Gevaert film, mentioned earlier will definitely be available after August 1.

Realistically appraising the situation, you should realize that many factors must be taken into consideration by a manufacturer if he is to make a Rapid camera or film available to the untested American market. The distributing firm who handles his products here must be consulted, for instance. Because they are here and know the market potential, their word carries much weight. Also to be considered is the service which the distributor feels he can provide to insure the manufacturer's reputation. Then, because this is a revolutionary system requiring special film, the camera manufacturer has to be dead sure that film will be readily available throughout the country.

### MORE MARKETING PROBLEMS

The film manufacturer, on the other hand, must be sure there will be cameras in the hands of the public to use his special format film. And, as in the case of Ferrania, Ilford, Fuji and Sankyo color films that are not even remotely familiar to the general American amateur, there must be processing facilities that will insure the same quality results each company enjoys in its own country. The cooperation of black-and-white processors must also be considered; especially with the Rapid cameras that produce 24x24mm square frames.

So, as you can readily see, it is all not quite as simple as we, the consumers, would want it.

However, you can be sure that many keen eyes will be watching the public reaction to the Agfa

(*Continued on page* 88)

***". . . One thing more your honor, may I have custody of our five cameras?"***

## RAPID ARRIVES

(*Continued from page* 80)

Rapid cameras and Agfa-Gevaert films when they become available in mid-summer.

The moderately priced Agfa Isoflash-Rapid camera takes 16 24x 24mm pictures on a roll and it is designed for easy operation. A fixed focus and fixed aperture 43mm f/8 Isinar lens is designed to achieve this. The shutter has two speeds which are set by a lever on the side of the lens. When set to the sun (outdoor) symbol, the shutter operates at 1/80 of a second for daylight pictures; when set to the flash symbol, the speed is 1/40 of a second for dim light and flash exposures.

The built-in flash reflector uses AG-type bulbs and remains recessed into the camera's top when not in operation. A knob on the back of the camera raises it for use.

Other features include: blank and double exposure prevention; built-in locking device that prevents shutter operation if the camera is not loaded or if the supply cartridge is incorrectly loaded; eye-level viewfinder; automatic exposure counter that resets when the back is opened; shutter release on the camera's top; metal loop for a wriststrap and a tripod socket.

It is finished in black and chrome and measures a compact 4½x2x3". Sold only in kits which included camera, battery, four AG-1 bulbs, flashguard, one roll of Agfa Rapid film and a wristrap, it will cost $14.95. A deluxe kit containing the same plus a black eveready case will retail for $17.95.

### ISOMAT—RAPID

The other, more sophisticated model is called the Isomat-Rapid. It also provides 16 24x24mm pictures to a roll but has a fully coupled built-in selenium cell exposure meter. Linked with the fully automatic diaphragm and viewfinder signal system, the meter reads the light conditions and automatically selects the correct aperture for the shutter and film speed. The eye-level viewfinder contains a red-green warning system which indicates if there is sufficient light. When there isn't, the red signal indicates that either this be increased or flash be used.

The three element 38mm f/4.5 Color Agnar lens can be used with either zone focusing or a distance scale; conventional click stops set the diaphragm.

Similar to the Isoflash-Rapid, a lever on the side of the lens sets either of the two shutter speeds. When placed towards "A" (for automatic), the speed is 1/80 of a second; when on the flash symbol the shutter speed is 1/40 of a second. In this position the aperture setting may be set manually.

An accessory shoe atop the camera takes a specially designed flash reflector which uses AG-type bulbs. A bulb ejector is also provided. Other features are the same as with the Isoflash-Rapid. It measures 4½x3x2¼". Also only sold in kit which contains camera, flashgun, flashguard, battery, four AG-1 bulbs, one roll of Agfa Rapid film and eveready case, the price is $44.

### FUTURE PLANS

The occasional snapshooter is obviously the initial market for which these two cameras are aimed. However, not all the cameras displayed fall into this category. At this writing it must be kept in mind that even though the longest available film length is 24" there are plans to increase the Rapid cassette's capacity. With a full frame 24x36" format, one only gets 12 exposures at the present; the 24x24" frame increases this to 16 and the half frame cameras shown move it up to 24. Realizing that this may discourage the more serious photographer from investigating the Rapid System, there are unspecified plans of increasing the length to equal the regular 35mm cassette capacity of 36 full frame pictures. Once this is achieved, there would appear to be more impetus for designing more advanced cameras that would interest advanced amateurs and maybe even professionals.

Besides designing new cameras, according to the Rapid Group, it is not very difficult to adapt existing cameras for use with the Rapid cassette. If this ever became a reality, many professionals, me for one, would gladly adapt it to avoid the time-consuming labor of rewinding, rapid rewind crank or not!

As with most new approaches to old problems in photography, the Rapid System offers much. And, at last, we need not feel left out in determining the system's future. By August 1, the Rapid System will be here; it may be a modest scale at first, but, if the promise extended by the models displayed at the Rapid Booth become realities, we may be witnessing an important step in 35mm photography. After all, the first commercial Leica unveiled at the Leipzig Fair in 1925 faced far greater commercial handicaps.—*Michael Edelson*