

A FRESH PERSPECTIVE

Find out how a free online resource developed by a dedicated London-based cinematographer can help with selecting the ideal lenses and filters for your next project.

Richard William Preisner sits at the monitor for filter tests (Credit: Antonio Mendes)

The Lens & Filter Library (LFL) is an online tool providing a database of lens and filter tests to filmmakers for their evaluation. It has been shot and compiled by London-based cinematographer Richard William Preisner and features a growing library of over 200 individual lens and filter tests, with many of the test videos available in 4K. This allows for detailed analysis of the tests, making it a useful resource for cinematographers wanting to learn more about lenses and filters, as well supporting their planning during pre-production. The LFL is also available for on-the-go viewing on tablets and phones, and includes video instructions of how it can be saved as a shortcut on both iOS and Android devices.

The idea for the LFL came after Preisner worked on another tool, in collaboration with Rosco, the DCT - Diffusion Comparison Tool - allowing for the comparison of a range of Rosco lighting diffusion materials.



Camille Corgeron sits in for Zeiss Supreme Prime tests (Credit: Richard William Preisner)

"By working on the DCT with Rosco I was able to learn much more about lighting diffusions and it was rewarding to share what I'd found," he explains. "Once finished, I decided to turn my attention to the much larger topic of lenses and filters and find a similar way to share my work."

When initially developing the LFL, Preisner considered that if he himself found it a useful resource then it would likely be useful for others too. His aim was to demystify and understand more about the look of certain lenses and filters whilst discovering the creative options available.

"I found myself using the same lenses and filters repeatedly and as a result I was missing out on what other options were available to further develop the look of the projects I shoot," he adds.

Preisner started by compiling the lens and filter tests he had already shot and putting them online for the first version of the LFL at the end of 2022. After a positive response he was able to organise a series of dedicated test days shooting alongside focus puller Klimas Jurevičius before he released LFL V2 at BSC Expo 2023. Following feedback, the LFL was redesigned for V3 and now includes a vast range of filters thanks to the support of Aaron Medway at Panavision London.

"The tests differ depending upon whether I'm testing lenses or filters and my approach continues to develop," Preisner says. "I wanted the tests to be comparable with one another, so I needed to have a controlled environment and a repeatable method whilst still thoroughly testing the lenses."

A model sits in frame and lenses are tested from wide open in one stop intervals to around T5.6. Skin tone, colour bias, spot flare, veiling glare, focus breathing and close focus are all tested for, with the tests allowing for bokeh, sharpness and lens depth perspective to be analysed. "I learned a lot about how to conduct lens tests from Jay Holben (ASC associate member) and Christopher Probst ASC in their fantastic book *The Cine Lens Manual*," says Preisner. "I understood that it was vital for me to test to learn more for myself and it is why I see the LFL as a guide to help other cinematographers consider their options but not as a replacement for their own specific tests".

The LFL is still evolving and Preisner is looking for feedback to continually develop the tool. "With an infinite number of lens, camera and filter combinations, this is definitely a long-term project that I will be growing throughout my career as a cinematographer."

Visit the Lens & Filter Library at lensfilterlibrary.com