

# Ricoh GR IV Monochrome Red Filter Explained (Before & After Results)

## What's poppin', people? It's Dante.

Today we're going to be discussing the **Ricoh GR IV Monochrome's red filter**.

We'll talk about:

- what the red filter does
- how it works mechanically
- why it matters for black and white photography
- and look at some **before and after examples** to see how impactful it really is.

The Ricoh GR IV Monochrome has a **physical red filter built into the lens** that darkens blue light, increases contrast, and interacts directly with the monochrome sensor to produce **stronger black and white tones straight out of camera**.

You can see me turning it on here. I actually have the video button on the side of the camera set so that when I hold it down, it toggles the red filter on and off.

Honestly, this is **extremely clutch** and really innovative.

## The Immediate Impact

When I'm out on the street using it, the first thing I notice is **how dark the sky becomes**.

With the monochrome sensor and the built-in red filter, blue skies suddenly turn **deep black**. The contrast becomes dramatic, and it changes the entire feel of the photograph.

*The red filter is blocking blue light and allowing red light to pass.*

That means it's **changing the tonal relationships** in black and white photography.

And the effect is honestly insane.

Look at the result of this photo — the dark blue sky and the dark water with the reflection popping from the brighter areas. This is something I wasn't really able to achieve with the Ricoh GR III or Ricoh GR IIIx.

Before, I would try to get results like this by **underexposing** and playing with exposure. But that never gave the same effect.

Now the **red filter naturally produces those deep black skies**.

### **Stronger Contrast and Tonal Separation**

What the red filter is doing is increasing overall contrast and separating tones more aggressively.

Bright objects stay bright.

Cool-toned areas — especially blues — become much darker.

That's huge.

Because one of the problems I had when shooting black and white on the Ricoh GR III was that when I underexposed to create drama, **everything became darker**, including the highlights.

But with the red filter, the **contrast separation becomes much more pronounced**.

The images become more:

- graphic
- dramatic
- abstract

And honestly, it just looks beautiful.

## **Dramatic Skies and Abstract Landscapes**

One of the most exciting parts about using the red filter is the sky.

The sky becomes this **rich deep black**, while the clouds pop bright and defined.

It creates this surreal, almost dreamlike look.

And that's been keeping me curious.

Because suddenly I can take a **completely ordinary scene** — a house next to the river, some buildings, a simple skyline — and transform it into something much more dramatic just by toggling the filter.

*The red filter can turn a mundane situation into something visually powerful.*

## **The Exposure Effect**

The red filter cuts roughly **two stops of light**.

That means:

- exposure drops slightly
- contrast increases
- tones deepen

When you compare before and after images, you can clearly see that the sky and water become much darker while highlights remain visible.

This is where the contrast really starts to shine.

## What It Does to Skin Tones

The effect on skin tones is actually really interesting.

I made a self-portrait with the red filter, and what happens is that **warm tones become lighter**.

Skin appears smoother.

Freckles and blemishes are reduced.

There's almost this **soft glow on the skin**, which I found really beautiful in the image.

One thing I love about black and white photography is separating the subject from the background.

With the red filter, the background can become **crushed in black**, while the face stays soft and luminous in the light.

It creates a really strong visual separation.

## Darkening Blue Objects

Anything blue becomes darker.

That includes:

- sky
- water
- distant atmosphere

You can see it clearly in scenes with the river — the water and sky become nearly black while reflections from brighter surfaces still pop through.

That creates a very **graphic, high-contrast look**.

And the abstraction you can get from that is extremely intriguing.

## **A Physical Filter, Not Digital**

This is important.

The red filter on the Ricoh GR IV Monochrome is **not a digital effect**.

It's a **physical filter** that shapes the light **before it reaches the sensor**.

That means the tonal effect is baked into the image during capture.

The ND filter from previous GR models is replaced with this red filter.

But Ricoh compensated for that by adding a **faster electronic shutter up to 1/16,000th of a second**, so you can still shoot in bright light.

Interestingly, the red filter also behaves **a little bit like a mini ND filter** because it reduces exposure by about two stops.

## **Why It Works So Well with a Monochrome Sensor**

The Ricoh GR IV Monochrome sensor has **no color filter array**.

Every pixel records **pure luminance information**.

Because of that, color filters behave more like they did in **black and white film photography**.

So the red filter is literally shaping the luminance relationships in the scene **before the image is recorded**.

This isn't something you're recreating later in software.

It's happening **optically**.

### **Why I Love It for My Workflow**

This is especially amazing for me because **I shoot JPEG**.

So the image comes **straight out of camera** with this tonal structure already baked in.

No editing needed.

Just shoot.

### **When I Use the Red Filter**

Lately I've been using the red filter mostly when I see:

- blue skies
- buildings and architecture
- rivers and landscapes

It's perfect for those walks along the river where the sky and water can create strong contrast.

I haven't used it as much for classic street photography yet, but I can definitely see it becoming part of that workflow too.

### **Final Thoughts on the Ricoh GR IV Monochrome**

This camera is honestly one of the most interesting photographic tools I've ever used.

Think about the history of photography.

Niepce experimenting with chemistry.

Eugène Atget carrying around a huge wooden camera with a bellows and tripod.

And now we have a camera that:

- turns on in half a second
- has image stabilization
- can shoot **1/16,000th of a second**
- and has a **mechanical red filter built into the lens**

It's kind of insane when you think about it.

*You can pretty much be a human tripod.*

I'm not the biggest tech guy, honestly.

I just wanted to experiment with this feature and share my thoughts.

So yeah.

Thanks for watching.

And I'll see you in the next one.

Peace.