

Ricoh GR IV Monochrome Review: The Most Interesting Camera Ever Made?

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

I'm currently walking towards the Delaware River here in Philadelphia — Penn's Landing, one of my favorite places in the city.

I've got the Ricoh GR IV Monochrome.

It's pretty awesome. I can't complain about this new camera too much.

First Impressions

The only real difference I notice between this and the GR III is the exposure compensation dial — which is a big deal for me.

That's basically the only setting I ever touch.

So it's just muscle memory I have to relearn.

The camera itself is thinner. More compact. It feels good in the hand. Again — muscle memory will kick back in with consistency.

The monochrome files?

High-contrast black and white, small JPEGs, highlight-weighted metering mode — they look more aesthetically beautiful.

It seems like there's more information in the shadows, even though I copied over the same image control settings from my GR III.

By default the ISO is set insanely high — up to 25,600 — and I haven't changed it. Low-light performance seems really solid.

Red Filter + Monochrome Sensor

We've got this beautiful cloudy sky with sun breaking through.

I put on the red filter.

So cool with high contrast.

That alone almost makes this camera worth it — having a monochrome sensor with a built-in red filter you can toggle.

You just hold the video button and it switches.

Simple.

Fellow Street Photographer

Ran into a guy shooting shadows. He had a Minolta medium format and a GR II with an optical viewfinder on top.

That brought me back.

My first Ricoh was a GR II in 2015. I even had the optical viewfinder on it.

Shout out to Eli — I gave him that GR II a year and a half ago and it's still running. Flash doesn't work, but the camera works.

Ricohs are durable.

I shot this GR IV Monochrome in the rain during Chinese New Year in Philly. Drizzle. No umbrella. In and out of the pocket.

Totally fine.

People are overly sensitive about their gear.

Why This Is the Most Interesting Camera Ever Made

Let's just say it.

This might be the most interesting camera released since the birth of photography.

A compact digital monochrome camera with a built-in red filter that fits in your pocket?

Imagine what Eugène Atget would've done with this.

He was walking around 19th-century Paris with a wooden bellows camera and tripod.

Now?

You pull this out of your pocket. Turn it on. Instant. No lag. Press the shutter.

It's insane.

Ricoh is the new Leica.

If Bresson was alive today, he'd be shooting this.

The Best Camera Is the One You Always Have

This is the best camera because it's always with you.

It fits in your smallest pocket.

Zero excuses.

For everyday street photography, that's everything.

No matter how mundane things seem — you have the tool in your front pocket.

With my workflow:

- High-contrast black and white JPEG
- Small file
- Contrast cranked to the max

When you crank the contrast to the absolute max, it rewires your brain.

You start seeing differently.

The mundane becomes beautiful because of how light glimmers across surfaces.

Light is the subject.

Light is the medium.

I'm not photographing reality as it is.

I'm photographing what it could be through abstraction.

And abstraction becomes the solution to the mundane.

Stripping Photography Down

Ricoh simplifies everything.

No viewfinder. Just LCD.

Loose compositions. Imperfect frames.

Liberating.

Now add:

- Monochrome sensor
- Small JPEG
- Automatic settings

You point and shoot.

You literally cannot simplify photography more than this.

There's no second guessing.

What you see is what you get.

But what you get is what you didn't see.

The surprise in the frame — that's what I'm chasing.

Travel vs The Mundane

I've traveled.

Peace Corps volunteer in Zambia.

Photographed in Israel, Palestine, Mexico, Hanoi, Mumbai, Tokyo at Shibuya Crossing.

Conflict. Baptisms. Funerals.

I'm grateful for all of it.

But now?

I have zero desire to travel.

I find infinite novelty walking the same path in Philadelphia every single day.

I don't need to travel across the world.

I can travel within my mind.

That's the power of abstraction.

Instinct Over Thought

The goal is to return to day one.

Remain an amateur forever.

An amateur is someone who loves doing the thing for the sake of doing the thing.

You cultivate your style by cultivating instinct.

Instinct comes from repetition.

Walking.

Feeling the concrete.

Sun on your skin.

Listening to birds.

Smelling the streets.

You exist outside the passage of time.

Photography becomes the vehicle that brings you into that state.

Flow.

Presence.

Play.

Stop Hunting

I'm no longer hunting for my next best photo.

I affirm life with each click.

My next photo is my best photo.

Almost like it could be my last.

And that mindset fuels me.

The Modern World Is Insane

We live in the best time to be alive.

This little camera in my pocket.

This GoPro Mini recording this.

AI pulling quotes from my transcripts so I can understand myself better.

Electricity.

Refrigeration.

Beef fat in the freezer.

Seasons changing.

Winter ending. Spring coming.

There's so much to look forward to.

Welcome to the world of Dante.