

BESELER 23CII ENLARGER

Advancements in the Color Darkroom

by Jack and Sue Drafaahl

**PHOTOGRAPHIC'S
USER
REPORT**

In previous issues of *PHOTOgraphic*, we reviewed the Beseler beginning black-and-white darkroom enlarging system, the Cadet Enlarger Kit—the perfect choice for beginning photographers who want to experience the excitement of making their own black-and-white prints. Now it's time for us to step into the *color* darkroom, and take a look at color printing with the Beseler 23CII color enlarger and the Beseler Universal Easel. Both pieces of equipment are designed for more-advanced photographers who want to use their leisure time creating color prints.

CONSTRUCTION

Assembling the 23CII was so easy that the instructions weren't really necessary. After unpacking the shipping case, we were able to assemble the unit in about 15 minutes with a hammer and two types of screwdrivers. As we attached the control levers, we noticed that the focus controls were designed for left- and right-handed people, and the lamphouse lift-lever was reversible for the same purpose.

As the final step in the assembly process, we slid the lamphouse in an upwards direction, by grabbing the front panel. As we pushed upwards, we were able to see the lamp and filter assembly. Once we were sure that the bulb was properly installed, and we had familiarized ourselves with the lamphouse, we returned it to its original position. We then attached the lamphouse power cord to a timer, and we were in business.

ALIGNMENT

The key to high-quality enlargements is keeping your negative and the paper stages in horizontal alignment. If either is not parallel, your prints will have out-of-focus areas. Two basic alignments are possible with the 23CII enlarger. The negative-stage alignment is accomplished with a level, and



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Beseler 23CII at midheight with 16x20 Beseler Universal Easel on baseboard. 35mm, 6x4.5, and 6x9 film carriers are pictured beside the enlarger; also, lens and lens board.

the level screw located at the base of the enlarging head. As you turn the level screw with a crescent wrench, the head will move out or in at the base, depending on the direction you move the crescent wrench. The lens-alignment

knob, located just above the negative-alignment screw, allows fine adjustments to the lens stage, and requires a small level.

OPERATION

Before you start any printing operations, you will want to verify that your film format matches the lens attached to the enlarger. Extracting the lens data from the Beseler instruction manual, we found the following information for the 23CII enlarger:

Disc format	35mm lens
35mm format	50mm lens
6x6 format	75 or 80mm lens
6x7 format	90mm lens
6x9 format	105mm lens

Each lens mounts into its own Beseler lens board, which is inserted into the slotted base of the enlarger bellows. After the correct lens is installed, select a negative, place it in a Beseler negative carrier, and use a brush or compressed air to remove any dust particles. Using the lamphouse-elevating arm, raise the head and insert the negative carrier. Turn on the focus light, and size the projected image on the easel. Size is accomplished by releasing the "T" lock on the back of the enlarger, and turning the elevation crank. Two steel springs in the back two columns keep the weight of the head balanced, so the movement of the crank is very smooth. Once you have an approximate size, focus the negative with either the right or left focus control. After proper focus is achieved, you may have to modify the size slightly, as focusing may have changed the image size.

The Dichro lamphouse can be used as a diffusion, black-and-white printing system. Diffusion enlargers produce a less-contrasty black-and-white print, and tend to minimize grain and scratches. When printing on black-and-white graded paper, simply turn the lever on the right side of the lamphouse to white light, stop-down the lens, and make a

BESELER FILTER COMPENSATION CHART FOR BLACK-&-WHITE VARIABLE CONTRAST

PAPER: Grade:	Agfa Multi-contrast	Ilford Multi-grade	Kodak Poly
0	80Y	80Y	75Y
1/2	70Y	55Y	50Y
1	65Y	30Y	25Y
1 1/2	50Y	15Y	10Y
2	30Y	0	10M
2 1/2	15Y	25M	25M
3	20M	40M	40M
3 1/2	30M	65M	55M
4	45M	100M	70M
4 1/2	70M	150M	120M
5	130M	200M	170M

test strip.

When using variable-contrast papers, check to verify that the filter lever is in the filter position, and use either the yellow or magenta control to change contrast. Increasing the yellow filter decreases contrast, while magenta filtration increases contrast. Color filtration is adjusted with three controls on the face of the enlarger head: 0–200 points of yellow, magenta, and cyan are available by turning the knobs in a counter-clockwise motion.

If you prefer using your own variable-contrast filters, turn the filter lever to white light, and insert the filter into the swinging filter drawer under the enlarger lens.

Color printing is just as easy using the Beseler 23CII enlarger. If you want to set up the enlarger for color printing, simply use the starting filtration chart in the instructions. Remember that you must work in total darkness doing any type of color printing.

DISTORTION CONTROL

Distortion control in a negative can be corrected using some basic dark-room knowledge and the lens-alignment knob. Converging vertical lines are common with architectural shots, whereby buildings seem to lean out of the scene. To make the necessary correction on the 23CII, tilt the easel until the distortion is minimized. Then, release the lens-alignment knob and turn it left or right until the image is in focus across the easel. Lock-down the knob, stop-down the lens, and make a test print.

OVERSIZE PRINTING

Making enlargements that are larger than the baseboard can be accomplished in two ways. The first method requires releasing a catch on the back of the enlarger head, allowing the enlarger to swing up into a 90° position, and thereby enabling the image to be projected onto the wall opposite the enlarger. Your only restriction on print size is the paper and the wall that will hold it.

The second method takes a little more time, and involves removing the baseboard and reattaching it in the reverse position, to allow the image to be projected onto the floor. It is important that you place several large weights on the baseboard, to counterbalance the enlarger chassis. Clamping down the baseboard is the preferred method for maintaining stability.

DARKROOM TESTS

We found the 23CII easy to use after only a few minutes of familiarization. The two-column support makes the unit

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BESELER

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very sturdy, and minimizes vibrations. The two alignment functions are very easy to access, and allow for critical adjustments. The lens alignment is especially useful for distortion corrections. We found the vertical movement of the chassis very smooth-working and easy to lock into place.

The filter controls moved very easily; however, the numbers seemed a little harder to read than those of many of the professional enlargers we have used. We also found that the filter range was more extreme than that of other color enlargers. The advantage of this feature is that difficult negatives requiring high filter packs are possible to correct. The disadvantage is that fine-tuning 1-2-point changes is more difficult.

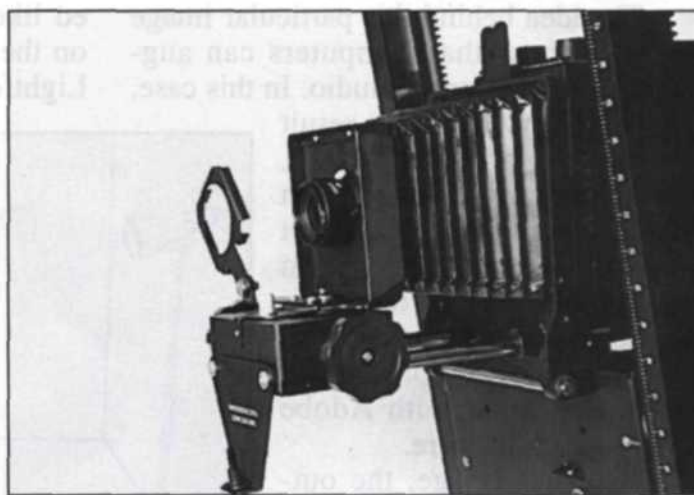
The entire Beseler 23CII system seems very reliable, and is a prime candidate for high-school and college-photography programs. This enlarger seems to have the stamina to endure the wear and tear of student use. The 23CII comes with a variety of negative carriers and lenses to accommodate all formats from 35mm to 6x9.

BESELER UNIVERSAL EASELS

One important accessory for the Beseler enlarger is a solid enlarging easel. With the Beseler Universal easels, there's more than meets the eye. The first and most impressive feature is their weight. The 11x14 easel weighs 12 pounds, the 20x24 model a hefty 20 pounds. This weightiness keeps the easel solid on the baseboard, the key to mass-producing one picture and having every print look the same.

The overall size of the 11x14 easel is 17.5x24 inches; the 20x24 is 34x27½ inches. These measurements are much larger than the 11x24 and 20x24 prints they are designed to handle. This is due to the large, heavy frame with two spring-loaded arms designed to hold a piece of paper in the designated slots. There are four slots, located in the base of the 11x14, that are designed to accept 11x14, 8x10, 5x7 and 4x5 paper. The 20x24 easel will accommodate 16x20 and 20x24 paper.

Four large masking blades attach to the sides of the easel, allowing you to make any desired cropping on your print. Large numbers along the side of the frame allow you to set the desired width and length.



Top: Front panel of Beseler 23CII. Yellow, magenta, and cyan knobs set from 0CC to 200CC of filtration for each color. Lever on left lifts head so you can insert negative carrier. Lever on right switches from white light to full filtration.

Bottom: Close-up of bellows assembly when the enlarger is in 90° position. Note filter holder at base of lens. Leveling screw is opposite filter holder.

Borderless prints can also be made by simply removing the four cropping blades and reattaching three borderless stops.

CONCLUSION

The Beseler 23CII enlarger opens the door to the color darkroom for those who dare to enter. When you combine the durability of the 23CII and the ruggedness and versatility of the Universal easels, you have a tremendous team. They both operate smoothly, quickly, and should have a long and fruitful life in your darkroom.

Charles Beseler Company, 1600 Lower Road, Linden, NJ 07036; telephone (908) 862-7999. □