

H&Y Filter Review

I really like this filter system, but it is not for everyone. Let's get the bad news out of the way right up front: This is a 100x100 and 100x150mm filter system. It is not a 150mm wide system. If that constraint does not bother you, read on.



Like all external filter holders, there is a limit to how wide you can shoot without vignetting. If you like to shoot really wide, the holder will vignette; they all do. Where that point is depends on the system you use and the specific lens. The good news is, at least according to Tim Parkin's very thorough filter system review in [OnLandscape](#) (paid content), H&Y vignettes the least of all 100mm filter system brands. The widest lens I have is a Schneider-Kreuznach 35mm Apo-digitar, which is really 36.4mm. Not very wide at a 23mm FF equivalent, but with the Alpa STC I can shift it 18mm. Without a center filter mounted, it does not vignette at all when shifted. That is a 98mm image circle and ~107 degree angle of view. In FF terms, a 16 mm lens. I cannot test a wider angle of view than that.

System Description

The H&Y filter system starts with the usual suspect parts: threaded lens ring mount for the holder and the filter holder itself. Beyond that, it deviates from the standard "holder with slots" for graduated neutral density filters (GND). In place of the slots, H&Y uses a magnetic frame surrounding each GND, also called a caddy or vault. That magnetic frame mounts directly to the face of the holder, with shallow side rails for centering the GND. Want to use two GNDs on top

of each other? Just slap the second on top of the first; its magnet will hold it in place, and you can adjust the vertical position of each independently.



The system also comes standard with a circular polarizer (CPL). The CPL mounts directly onto the filter holder, in between the lens and the GND frame. It mounts by removing a small semi-circular frame piece on top of the holder and dropping the CPL into the filter holder. The CPL includes a prominent gear for rotation positioned at 10 o'clock from behind the camera. The gear is easily accessible even with thick gloves on. These circular filters snap in place with a solid “click” from a ball bearing registration pin.



What comes in the basic holder kit:

- 100mm filter holder
- 67, 72, 77 and 82mm lens mount adapters
- Snap on cap to cover slot (light tight)
- 95mm drop-in CPL
- Optional add-on, non-magnetic filter slots w/ mounting hardware
- Filter holder pouch

You can also purchase various neutral density (ND) filters to drop in place of the CPL or as square 100x100 frame filters (more on that later). Available ND filters include:

Filter	ND Stops	Size	Polarizer?
K Series ND8-CPL	3	95mm (drop-in)	CPL
K Series ND32-CPL	5	95mm (drop-in)	CPL
K Series ND64-CPL	6	95mm (drop-in)	CPL
K Series ND1000	10	95mm (drop-in)	None
K Series ND4000	12	95mm (drop-in)	None
K Series ND65000	16	95mm (drop-in)	None
100x100 ND64	6	100x100	None
100x100 ND1000	10	100x100	None

Typical range of adapters are available from 49-86mm. There is the normal matrix of choices for GND filters: 2,3,4-stop hard, soft, reverse and center stripe. In addition, they offer blank magnetic frames to be used with 100x150mm filters from a host of other manufacturers. 100x100mm frames are also available for other brand's square ND filters.

Assembly

The first step is similar to others: screw the adapter ring onto the lens. The holder mounts by slipping on from the bottom up, then hand-tightening the two thumbscrews on the back of the holder. At first, this can be a bit fumbly. It does become second nature pretty quickly, and it is easy to do while standing behind the camera. Again, even with gloves on.

Once the holder is mounted, the system really shines. Loading a CPL or ND is a great no-thread, drop-in experience. Adding a GND is even better: Bring the grad up to within a quarter inch or so and it jumps right in place on the frame. Adjusting it up and down is a breeze. Simply pull it off to remove.

All the above can be done almost as easily with thick gloves on; a real bonus of this design.

Quality

For the most part, quality is exceptional. The frame holder is well-designed for solid placement, and I could not detect any light leaks in the system. The GNDs are made of Corning® Gorilla Glass®. Fit and finish are great. The one exception is the magnetic frame itself. Buying completed filter/frame assemblies is no problem. The fit and finish is fine. However, when buying empty frames and repurposing them around other filters or materials, they are a struggle

to assemble. Youtube videos exist to describe the process, but none of the frames I had fit nearly as well as those shown in the videos. Most required some delicate trimming to fit together.

Design Thoughts

There were two big question marks associated with this design. First, how easy is it to accidentally knock off the GND filters? Several reviewers highlight this as a potential problem. After using the system in the field for a few months, I've never come close to that happening. Not that it couldn't, I just think it would be a very specific and rare situation for that to occur. It's also possible to knock over your whole tripod; it just doesn't happen that often.

Second, this design has a lot of slots, angles, covers and lips that are opportunities for light leaks. It *looks* like it should be a problem. However, I've never seen evidence of any. I've tried several minute exposures in broad daylight with no issues.

It is very thoughtful to include options to handle other third-party filters that are 100x150x2mm or 100x100x2mm. However, as mentioned above, the frames are not easy to assemble. It felt like I got the rejected frames from their primary filter production.

There is a little thumb set screw provided on the side of the filter holder, presumably to hold the first filter in place when using two stacked filters. I found that pretty useless and eventually removed it.

Home Made Accessories

The real reason this system interested me was the opportunity to create an LCC card and dark frame that attached magnetically. Technical camera lenses are now supplied without Copal shutters, so there is no way to close the lens for a dark frame. That is not much of an issue when you are shooting without filters; just add the lens cap and shoot the dark frame. Add a filter, especially a carefully positioned GND, and it really becomes a problem. You have to remove the filter holder, cover the lens, tell the back to go ahead and take its dark frame, then finally re-attached the filter holder for subsequent photos.

Same difficulty is associated with shooting an LCC.

There are a few characteristics associated with the H&Y system that make it the best solution I know of for this problem.

1. The magnetic filter frames attach to the outside holder in a light-tight way
2. You don't have to slide them in and out; they just attach magnetically to the front face of the holder
3. H&Y sells empty magnetic frames. They are meant to hold 100x100 or 100x150mm filters you already own, but you can fill them with any 2mm thick material.

So, after sourcing some 2mm black ABS and finding an extra LCC card I went to work. 2mm thick Black ABS can be found at Amazon in seconds, so cutting a 100x150mm piece was quick work with a utility knife and straight edge. The std 100x100mm LCC cards are more like 2.5mm thick, so I had to mill down the edges slightly to fit, although you can cram the un-milled, raw LCC card in the frame if necessary.

In the field, dark frames are just as fast, if not a little faster than putting on a lens cap for dark frames. I tested for light leaks and found none even @ 60 seconds / f/4.5 / 100 ISO in mid-day sun. I did find some faint light leaks on the pinch lens cap I've been using for a few years...

Shooting LCC's is even better because they are hands-free.

