GEAR

ON TEST:

Samyang T-S 24mm f/3.5 ED AS UMC

As the appeal of tilt-shift lenses continues to broaden, Samyang has unveiled a 24mm perspective-control optic in a range of popular fittings – and at a price that's considerably lower than rivals from Nikon and Canon

WORDS **TERRY HOPE**

Traditionally, tilt-shift lenses have been seen as specialist products, aimed at architectural photographers wanting to correct converging verticals and product photographers seeking to maximise depth-of-field. The high price of such lenses reflects the low numbers sold, as well as the precision nature of their design and construction. But despite this, the tilt-shift lens seems to be undergoing something of a resurgence in popularity.

This increasing appeal isn't because photographers are shooting more architecture or box shots. It's more down to the popularity of miniaturisation effects in landscapes, where such a tiny part of the frame is in focus that it appears as though you are looking at a scale model, rather than the real thing. It's an effect that many hobbyist DSLRs, CSCs and compacts can generate digitally, and it's straightforward to create in Photoshop too, but these digital recreations are just approximations. To get the real thing you'll need to shoot with a tilt-shift lens.

Up until now that would cost you over £1500, and when you consider the number of assignments you might shoot in a year using a tilt-shift lens, that's not great value for money. Things are set to change, though, because there's a new kid on the block in the shape of the Samyang T-S 24mm f/3.5 ED AS UMC, which has a street price of less than £1000. That's still far from loose change, but at least getting on the tilt-shift bandwagon is now more affordable than it used to be.

ABOVE **Tilt-shift lenses have traditionally been the preserve of specialist pros with deep pockets, but with this new offering from Samyang that could be about to change.**

Functionality on offer

First of all, let's have a quick look at what constitutes a tilt-shift lens. Such an optic can perform two different types of movement: rotation of the lens plane relative to the image plane, which is called 'tilt', and movement of the lens parallel to the image plane, which is called 'shift'. Tilt is used to control the orientation of the plane of focus, and hence the part of an image that appears sharp. Shift is used to adjust the position of the subject in the image area without tilting the camera back. This is the characteristic of the lens that helps the photographer to avoid the convergence of parallel lines.

The Samyang T-S 24mm f/3.5 ED AS UMC is a wide-angle, full-frame lens that is reasonably compact and not excessively heavy, ensuring that you can work hand-held when required. Despite its competitive price, build quality is high and the lens feels solid and sturdy.

On the inside, 16 lens elements are arranged in 11 groups, including two aspherical and two extra dispersion (ED) elements. These elements are said to enable the lens to resolve fine detail even when the tilt-shift (T-S) functionality is being used. Each optical component is also covered with multi-layered, anti-reflective UMC coatings, enabling the best possible light transmission for high contrast and natural colours.

The tilt-shift function allows fine adjustment of the focal plane by angles of up to ±8.5°. It's also possible to introduce a parallel shift of the optical axis by as much as ±12mm. The lens' mount and tilt-shift section can both be rotated around its optical axis to allow adjustments in any orientation and it's possible for tilt and shift movements to be aligned with each other if required. A useful depth-of-field scale is marked on the lens barrel for hyperfocal focusing, although this only applies when no tilt movements are used.

The lens offers no electronic or mechanical coupling with metering systems, although most cameras will work well enough using stop-down metering. There's also no autofocus, but manual focusing turns out to be a very straightforward affair. The trick is to focus at the maximum aperture of f/3.5, using the brightest possible view, then to stop down the aperture manually before firing the shutter. More laborious, perhaps, but you do get used to it.

There are four knobs on the lens's barrel; two grey, two black. The grey knobs act as locks, while the black knobs adjust the tilt and shift movements. It's very quick and logical, and soon becomes second nature. Unlocking the grey knob only slightly means there is still some resistance in the lens's movements, making it easier to control.

Results and performance

It's a challenge to step back to manual ways of working, but after some practice things get easier and it's enjoyable to see what can be achieved using each of the movements individually, and then together. This is best accomplished working on a tripod, but I also achieved some interesting results working hand-held.

SAMYANG T-S 24MM F/3.5 ED AS UMC SPECIFICATIONS

WWW.SAMYANG.CO.UK

STREET PRICE
£949

MIN FOCUSING DISTANCE
0.2m

NUMBER OF DIAPHRAGM BLADES
8

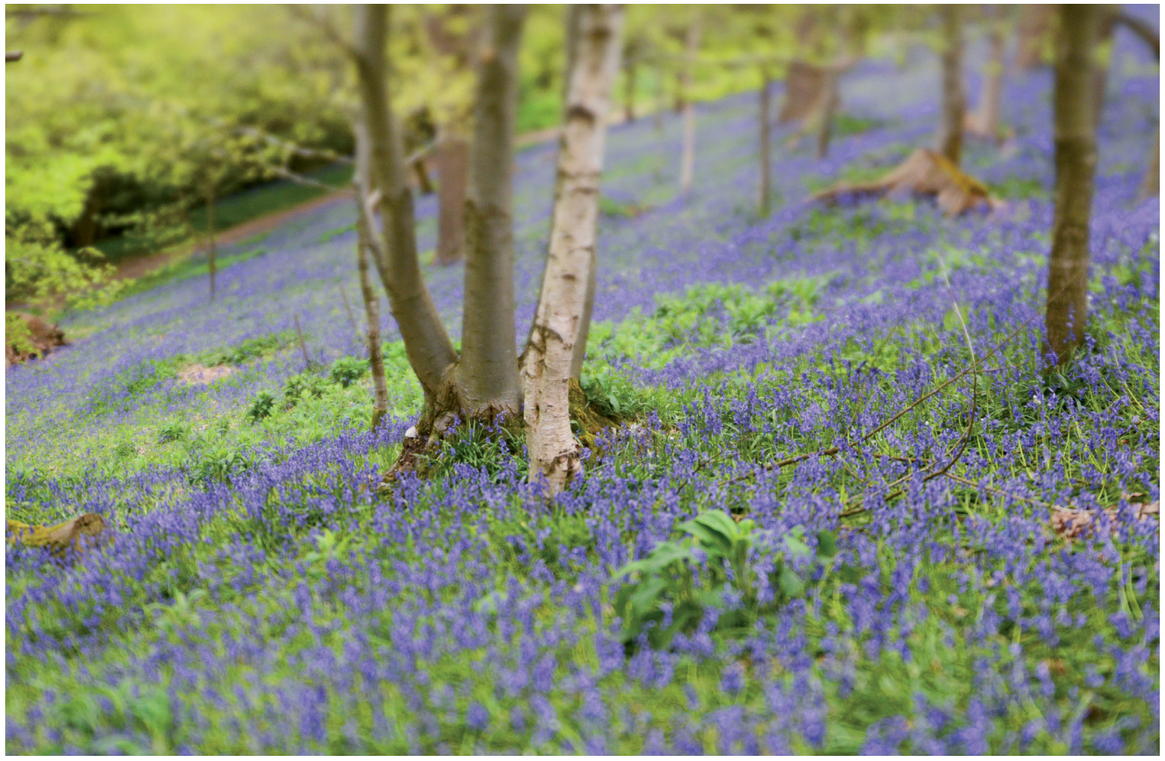
LENS CONSTRUCTION
16 elements, 11 groups (two aspheric elements)

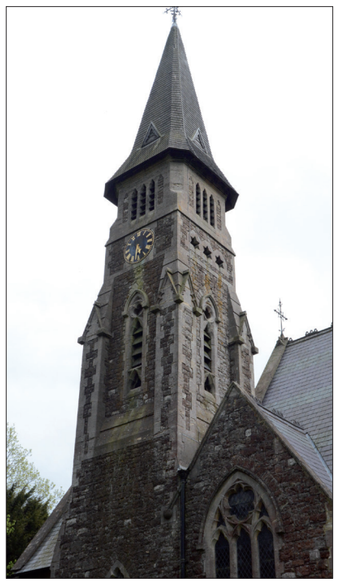
DIMENSIONS
110.5-113mm x 86mm

WEIGHT
680g

FILTER SIZE
82mm

FITTINGS
Canon, Nikon, Pentax, Sony





ABOVE **Look, no Photoshop! Converging verticals corrected and focusing areas precisely controlled in camera – the Samyang T-S 24mm f/3.5 could save you time as well as money**

"Optical quality of the lens is testament to the reputation Samyang is rapidly gaining"

The optical quality of the lens is very good, and is testament to the reputation that Samyang is rapidly gaining in the optics market. Sharpness, particularly in the centre of the frame, is impressive. When used without any movements, the best results are seen between f/4 and f/11. Fully shifted, the lens performs best between f/5.6 and f/11.

Conclusion

Although its price point hardly marks this optic out as a budget lens, it's something of a bargain compared to the equivalent Canon and Nikon (£1639 and £1480 street price respectively) optics. These more expensive lenses offer electronic meter coupling and an automatic aperture, giving them a technical advantage, but the Samyang's build quality is excellent and the functions are easy to control.

Working without the electronic refinements isn't as big a deal as you might imagine. Tilt-shift lenses were never really designed for spur-of-the-moment grab shots.

The tilt-shift look isn't for everyone, but for those who would love to have a play – or for photographers with a need for perspective and depth-of-field control – this optic from Samyang is something to seriously consider. **PP**

PHOTO PROFESSIONAL RATING

FEATURES	8/10
PERFORMANCE	9/10
HANDLING	8/10
VALUE FOR MONEY	10/10

Overall Rating 9

MORE INFORMATION

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