

#### Technology & Vision

William Littman's custom-made camera is becoming "must-have" gear for Bruce Weber and other photographers.



**B**ruce Weber calls it "sweet." Patrick DeMarchelier says it's "the smartest thing I've seen in a long time." Peter Beard has used it to shoot model-turned-actress Estella Warren on the set of the movie *Driven*. It's the Littman 45 Single—the world's only single-window 4x5 coupled rangefinder. As with a Leica, it lets you focus and compose through the same window. "I would describe it as a 4x5 snapshot camera," says creator William Littman. "It appeals to photographers who haven't used 4x5 because it's a hassle, or who want a less orthopedic alternative to their 4x5 view camera."

Littman knows his customers well.

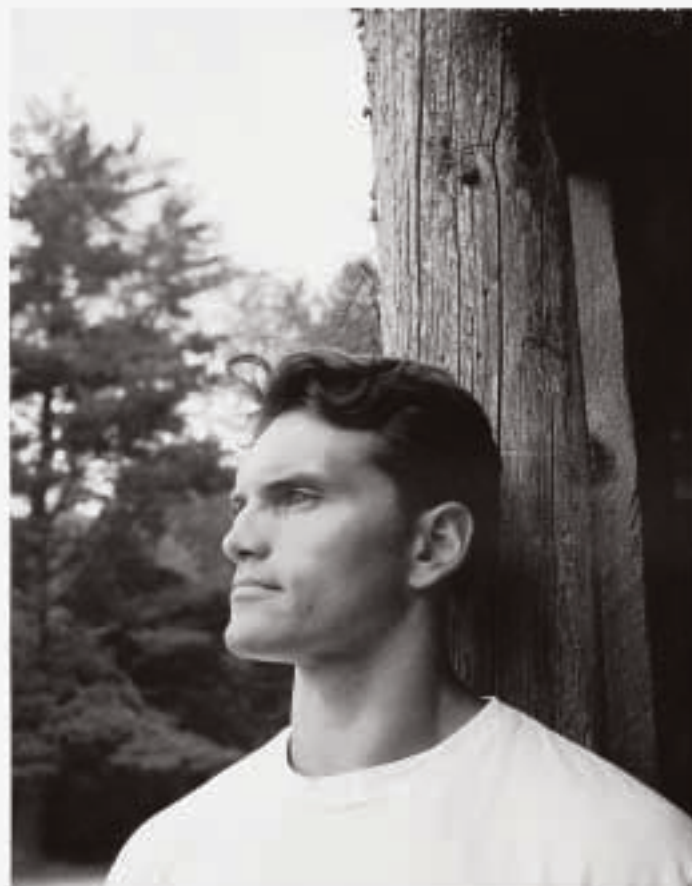
The **Littman 45 Single** can be had in several versions, each with a different lens. Bruce Weber's choice features the Polaroid 110's original 127mm f/4.7 Tessar, which is about the equivalent of a 75mm lens for a 6x7cm camera. But you can get the camera with a 120mm, 135mm, or 150mm Schneider Apo-Symmar. (Littman has to modify each camera's rangefinder cam for accurate focusing with the chosen lens.) The 45 Single above is shown with the 120mm and a special hotshoe-mounted accessory rangefinder that lets the lens focus closer than three feet.

An accomplished fashion photographer who has worked for *Taxi* and *Harper's Bazaar*, he helped heat up Miami's South Beach as a location for fashion photography in the mid-1980s, later opening the area's first daylight studio. Photography is in his blood: His grandfather was a prominent Argentine portraitist who took pictures of Eva Peron and other Buenos Aires luminaries.

Littman builds the 45 Single on the stripped-down chassis of a Polaroid 110 rollfilm camera, but there the resemblance ends. In addition to adapting the back to take 4x5 sheet film holders, says Littman, "every part has to be de-riveted, machined, and re-riveted to the correct tolerances." That precision explains the patent-pending camera's \$1,900 price tag.

"You can focus more quickly because of the rangefinder," says Bruce Weber, who has used the camera for fashion shoots and to make snapshots at his summer retreat in the Adirondacks, such as this chiseled portrait of a local football coach (see our story on page 62). "So you're not always having to yell at your subject—Don't move! Keep your eyes open! Watch that hand!"

For more information about the Littman 45 Single, including dealers, e-mail [littwi@earthlink.net](mailto:littwi@earthlink.net), call (917) 404-8115, or visit [polaroid-oem.com](http://polaroid-oem.com).



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# technology & vision

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AMERICAN  
PHOTO

# Camp Weber

Bruce Weber  
shot these  
Polaroids for  
*American Photo*  
with the Littman  
45 Single.



© BRUCEWEBER (4)

The famed fashion photographer takes a handmade camera to his summer retreat.  
By Russell Hart

**W**hen you go out on assignments, most of the time you're sitting around for hours waiting for girls' hair and makeup to be done," says Bruce Weber. "And I don't like just sitting around—I like taking pictures. So one thing I try to do during that down time is shoot with different kinds of specialized cameras. I use them to take pictures of friends, landscapes, the sky." Most recently, Weber, one of the most influential fashion photographers of our time, has been





shooting with the Littman 45 Single. Hand-built by photographer William Littman on the chassis of an old Polaroid 110 rollfilm camera, the 45 Single is the world's only single-window 4x5 with a coupled rangefinder. (See Technology & Vision, page 91, for more about the camera.) Why would Weber want to shoot with such a contraption? Because it allows him to combine the high quality of 4x5, a stodgy format he long avoided, with the ability to handhold the camera. That approach is fundamental to the freewheeling aesthetic of Weber's work. "I like to handhold things," declares the photographer, who says he recently compared notes with Helmut Newton about whether they could still hold a camera steady at 1/15 second. "I'm crazy that way."

So crazy, in fact, that Weber took the Littman 45 Single on a month-long summer vacation to his personal "camp" in New York's Adirondack Mountains, a place so isolated it's accessible only by canoe. To show *American Photo* what the camera can do, Weber (who ordinarily shoots with a Pentax 67) took these 4x5 peel-apart Polaroids of friends and visitors. "I've been going to the camp for 12 years," says Weber, "so I've seen these kids grow up."

Weber feels that while the 45 Single is simpler to use than a regular 4x5, "you do have to be involved with the camera to get something good from it. It's sort of like a human being." But it's harder, he says, to adapt to Adirondack light. "I have to spend two weeks every July getting used to the light up there," he says. "It's mountain light—a bit overhead and into the valleys. The way I get to know it again is to take long walks with our golden retrievers, because they don't ever hold still, and the light's changing every second. Sometimes your meter reading just doesn't mean anything." ■



# AMERICAN PHOTO

Responses to the article from readers of

Dear friends,  
the Littman 45 camera seems to be the most important contribution to professional photography since the Sinar-P, please let me know how I can buy one of these cameras. My name is Ludwig etc etc-

Dear Mr. Littman,  
I read with great interest the review of your genius modification to the Polaroid 110. I have fumbled with 4 x 5 cameras for years trying to get non-static fashion images, and short of keeping Kodak and Fuji in business, it has been mostly unfruitful.

Ah but now you have done it! I must have one, and am eager to find out how to go about purchasing a Littman 45 Single.  
Thanks in advance for your help and response. And damn you, I sure didn't need to find another expensive toy!

Hi,  
I have been looking for something like this camera for the past few years. I finally saw the pic in American Photo.

Hello, I am interested in purchasing one of your cameras, could you send me information of dealer info on your available cameras with pricing.

I'm really excited about your new camera design. Where, when and how much? Especially with the 150mm lens!

Dear William,

My name is Steven etc etc and I am an English photographer currently living in Denver, colorado. I just read an article in American Photo about your camera and I am very excited indeed. I also just left a dumb message on your machine! This camera will allow me to use 4 x 5 film in areas where my current large format cameras can not go.

Dear William Littman,

I read about your new camera and I am very intrigued. I'm a fine art photographer and I've always dreamed about a hand-holdable 4 x 5. People recommend the Speed Graphic, of course, but I'm a small woman and I can't seem to hold and use that camera at the same time!