

Light Leaks Ruining Your Pix?—Plug That Realist!

by Tony Alderson

When I bought my first Stereo Realist about five years ago, I was plagued by a persistent light leak in the camera. This leak manifested itself as a vertical pink streak in the right frame of a pair. After sev-

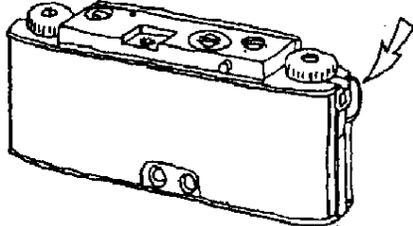


Fig 1—Location of the Realist light leak.

eral frustrating and costly repair attempts and countless ruined pictures I shelved the camera as hopeless. However, at a workshop shortly after I joined the Stereo Club, Jerry Walter pointed out the cause and care for this aggravating ailment.

While in general the Stereo Realist is a well designed and built camera, it has a minor design flaw that results in a light leak at the door by the focusing knob. Although the top and bottom of the camera back are protected by a double light baffle, the sides have, inexplicably, only one. On the left the film cassette itself blocks the light, but film on the take-up spool is vulnerable to streaks. (See Fig. 1) Carrying the Realist in its case will not prevent the leak as the case, of necessity, leaves the corner of the door near the focus wheel exposed, where most of the light gets in anyway. Taping the door will stop the leak, but the adhesive gums up the camera and will eventually pull

up the leather on the door.

Fortunately, the solution is so simple that most stereographers can perform it themselves. The leak can be stopped permanently by installing a gasket on either the door or the camera body. The gasket can be felt, but the best material is the velvet from the light-trap of a 35mm film cassette. You can buy a reloadable cassette at a photo store and pull off the velvet, which has a durable rubberized backing. Two strips should be cut from the cloth, about $\frac{1}{16}$ inch wide. If you have trouble

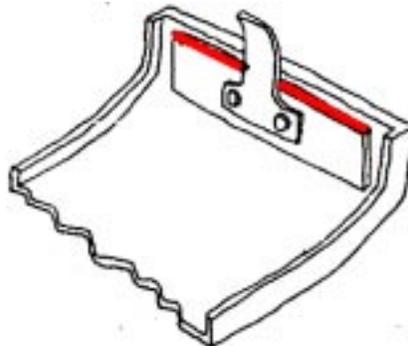


Fig. 2—Location for gasket on the camera door.

cutting straight and even strips with a scissors, try using a metal straight edge and an Xacto knife. Cut on a scrap of cardboard, so you don't score the kitchen table. Because the Realist door is wider than the velvet traps are long, the gasket must be put on in two pieces.

The best place to secure the gasket is on the detachable door. The gasket is cemented on the small ledge under the lip of the door, behind the door catch. (See Fig. 2) Contact cement will serve to attach the

strips. Follow the directions on the bottle, and be careful not to get cement where it doesn't belong. Put the longest piece of the gasket on top. This ledge is pretty narrow, so fixing the gasket can be a bit of a challenge. Tweezers and a toothpick will help.

Alternatively, the gasket may be placed on the camera body itself. Glue the gasket on the "step" where the door meets the body. (See Fig. 3) This is an easier place to get at, and probably works just as well. However, a gasket on the body seems more susceptible to snags, and may require periodic replacement.

Charles Piper is the source of the technical information in this article. Any ambiguities are entirely my own. For a modest sum, Mr. Piper will install a gasket on your Stereo Realist. For a slightly higher charge, he will clean up the mess if you botch the job.

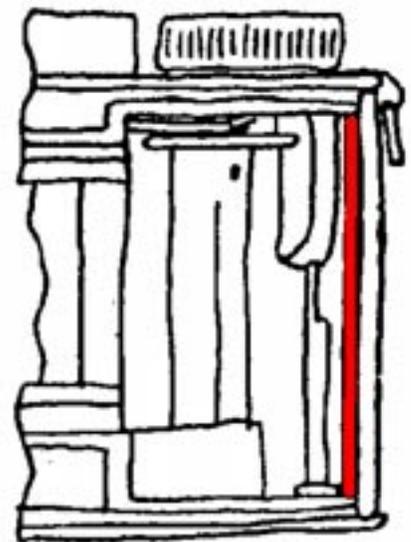


Fig. 3—Location for gasket on the camera body.