

■ **Big + beautiful**
When pitted against a Canon 1Dx, the Mamiya-mounted Leaf Credo 60 was – ahem – outstanding in its field



■ **Mamiya magic**
When married to the 645DF, the Leaf Credo will recognise a wide range of lenses



“The Leaf Credo is intended to be simple; just load your media, lock into place and start snapping”

DIGITAL BACK RRP \$32,4950

Leaf Credo 60

Touch screen interface and better design feature in Leaf’s latest digital backs for Medium Format bodies. Words and images by **Ewen Bell**.

The problem with most digital backs designed to clip onto Medium Format systems is their user interfaces look like they were designed by the team who brought you Windows 95. Times have changed and so have the digital backs offered by Leaf. With a bright screen and well thought out menu system, the system is driven by a sensitive touch screen designed for fingers instead of a stylus.

It takes very little time to learn to navigate a Leaf Credo, with quick access to stored images, shoot settings and ISO just a swipe and tap away. From the outside the device looks like a minimalist cube with a few rounded edges and a monobloc appearance. Unlike earlier Leaf backs, the battery tucks inside the block and stays out of harm/s way. Concealed ports provide connectivity for USB 3.0 and Firewire 800, or the traditional CF card slot with UDMA support for shooting on the run.

Quick start

The Leaf Credo is intended to be as simple to use as a traditional film cartridge; just load your media, lock into place and start snapping. Leaf digital backs can be operated on a wide range of Medium Format cameras, but they’re native to the 645DF bodies branded with Mamiya or Phase One. When coupled to the 645DF, the Leaf Credo will recognise a wide range of lenses and provide digital correction to improve the image.

We road tested the Credo 60 on a Mamiya 645DF with Mamiya Sekor 80mm and 45mm lenses, both of which open wide to f/2.8 and rely on the focal plane shutter inside the 645DF. These bodies feel and operate a lot like a conventional DSLR – only bigger – and that scale of design is emphasised once you put a digital back behind the shutter. Unlike a conventional DSLR, you have two battery sources to manage, one for the camera body and one for the data back.

RAW LEAF

Processing of the RAW files is supported by Capture One, but you’ll need a 64-bit version to handle the size of the images on your desktop. A license for Capture One is included with every Leaf Credo.



FLIGHT OF FANCY

Bundled with the Mamiya 645DF and an 80mm kit lens, you’ll watch your photography soar – while also waving goodbye to \$40k.

Power hungry

Power consumption on a 645DF is modest, with a handful of AA batteries good for a thousand shutter actuations. Only the exposure metering, shutter and autofocus is powered by the camera. The rechargeable batteries inside the Leaf Credo have a lot more work to perform when shooting, driving a dazzling 60MP array and keeping that bright touch screen illuminated.

Out of the box, the Leaf Credo is hungry on power and much is gained from setting the screen to timeout quickly after preview instead of lingering. Taking the complete system on a road trip demonstrated the limitations of the sensor’s power requirements, with a fraction of the frames possible on a single charge when compared side-by-side with a Canon 1Dx. For studio work the power demands are

» DETAILS

Price: \$32,495 (body only); \$39,950 (on 645DF with 80mm kit lens)

Manufacturer: Mamiya Leaf

Sensor: 8984 x 6732 pixel CCD with a 4:3 aspect ratio

Sensor dimensions: 53.9 x 40.4mm

RAW file captures: 16-bit colour depth compressed to 60MB RAW files

Dynamic range: 12.5 stops

ISO Sensitivity: 50-800

Exposure range: 60 seconds - 1/10,000

Display: 3.2 inch LCD with 1.15MP

Alternate resolutions: 80MP and 40MP models

Website: mamiyaleaf.com

» VERDICT

Simple to use, highly refined, it’s for landscape shooters looking to lift to a higher plain – and can afford to get there.

» RATING

8/10



TOUCH SENSITIVE
Navigating your way around the Leaf system is just a series of simple swipes and taps away – very instinctive.

LIGHT + BRIGHT
The extremely bright screen on the Leaf Credo back gives excellent feedback on important areas like sharpness and focus.



DREAMSCAPE
Smoothing out moving water is a cinch with the Leaf Credo 60's native ISO 50 and razor sharp apertures around f/22 or higher.

“For slow and silky shooting, lock down to a tripod and take your time to enjoy the craft”



■ **Sunset at Point Franklin**
Leaf Credo 60; Mamiya Sekor LS
80mm f/2.8 D lens; 1.0sec; f/22; ISO 50

WHAT WE THOUGHT Love it:

✓ Superb image quality for large-scale results.

Like it:

✓ Simple touch interface is very quick to learn and effective.

✓ Bright screen gives good feedback on sharpness and focus.

Loathe it:

✗ Separate battery sources and power buttons are the downside to the modular system.

✗ Occasional communications hiccups between the Credo and the camera.

irrelevant, but for landscape work it's still manageable. With sensible use you can expect 100 frames from a single battery – and you'll want to make sure to carry spares.

The charger that comes in the kit is not as high tech as the Leaf Credo, but third party solutions are available to charge multiple batteries or charge from your vehicle.

Slow + large

While there are always a few practical considerations when shooting with a Medium Format camera, the objective is quality over quantity. Not only does the bigger geometry of the lens system deliver superior images than a 35mm-sized DSLR, but the massive physical size of the sensor itself offers some compelling advantages. Pixel density even at 60MP is still less than most APS-C sized cameras, and the geeks in Denmark who design the sensors have opted for tonal quality rather than a massive ISO range.

Translation: you won't be shooting in the dark with a Leaf Credo, as the upper limit for shooting is ISO 800 – and even that's something of a compromise for noise and colour response. For slow and silky landscape shooting this isn't a problem, as you'll want to lock the body down to a sturdy tripod and take your time to enjoy the craft. Smoothing out rivers and waves is the preferred mode of operation anyway, so the native ISO 50 on the Leaf Credo, coupled with pin sharp apertures around f/22 or higher, make the ideal combination.

Of extra appeal for landscape captures is the built-in spirit level and Live View mode. You can even skip the 645DF body and mount the Leaf Credo directly onto a View Camera such as a Cambo or Linhof, employing the live view to replace the traditional viewfinder. Most Hasselblad V series models are also supported, along with H1 and H2 bodies.

MEMORY SQUEEZE

You won't need massive new memory cards to shoot on the Leaf Credo. The files are bigger than a regular DSLR but you're shooting a lot less frames per day and per second. At full speed the Credo 60 will give you a little less than one frame every second.

Studio versus roaming

In the field, this digital back coupled with the 645DF system is surprisingly practical. Weight is the main challenge for shooting, having to carry the additional bulk and a tripod good enough to support it. Back in the studio the quality of images captured by the Leaf Credo becomes brilliantly apparent. We took a series of locations shot side-by-side on the Credo 60 and Canon 1Dx and brought them up on the latest version of Capture One. The difference was night and day, with Canon's best DSLR looking rather limited against the Leaf system. »



■ **Cape Otway shimmer**
Leaf Credo 60; Mamiya Sekor LS
80mm f/2.8 D lens; 6.0sec; f/22; ISO 50



PACK + SHOOT

When you purchase a complete Leaf Credo 645DF system, it comes in a hard case that complies with airline carry-on restrictions. In the field we found that the camera, digital back and two lenses will fit easily inside a Lowepro Flipside 400 or similar travel pack.



KEEP IT LIGHT

The Leaf Credo is virtually allergic to low-light shooting, with an upper ISO limit of just 800. Stellar lumens and sturdy tripods are the way to go.

SUPERFINE

At 60MP – three times that of a Canon 1Dx – the Credo’s resolving power is intended for use in producing seriously large-scale images.



CAPTURED

At right is Capture One’s rendering of the RAW files, with a lens corrected version of the image at the top of this page, as well as a close up display of the focus mask.



“The Leaf Credo 60 is for photographers who’ve reached the limit of the DSLR format”

New Year’s high-resolution

The resolving power of the Credo 60 matches that of the Mamiya Sekor lenses, so as you drill down into the frame the detail remains clean and rich. With three times the pixels of a Canon 1Dx – and nearly double that of a Nikon D800 – this digital back has still not saturated the potential of the lens system. Where this matters most is putting an image into a large-scale display, and the Leaf Credo is intended to deliver massive files that can be rendered as fine art prints or underpin commercial campaigns.

What’s the appeal?

This kind of technology will not impress everyone and very few photographers who shoot landscapes will seriously consider

investing in a Medium Format system like the 645DF. The budget alone makes this a serious commitment, in addition to the practical logistics of shooting with the bigger format. But anyone who loves their landscape work will appreciate the allure of such unique equipment, and of creating stunning images on a scale that’s out of reach for conventional DSLR systems.

Conclusion

The Leaf Credo 60 is a refined piece of equipment that offers some very unique creative opportunities for landscape photographers who’ve reached the limit of the DSLR format. The Leaf Credos are as rewarding as they are simple to use.



■ Pin sharp
Shot with the Credo Leaf 60; 35mm lens; 1/160sec; f/3.5; ISO 100 – files displayed in Capture One version 7