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Manual exposure on the Sony HVR-Z1P

Q - Why does it still look like it is in Auto mode?

A - If your Z1P appears to be applying automatic exposure control, even though you are sure you have the camera in manual exposure mode – then read on.

The Z1P, & in fact all consumer & low end professional cameras, use 3 different camera functions to control exposure, when in automatic mode:

1. Iris is used to control the exposure within the optimum exposure range of the camera.
2. Gain is used to lift the exposure level if the camera detects the light level is too low.
3. Shutter is used to reduce the exposure level if the camera detects the light level is too high.

Often, people are aware that gain must be set to manual control, but they don't realise that the shutter is still on automatic mode. When the camera detects a highlight (such as the sky or a window) in the shot, the shutter will engage at a high speed to shorten the exposure time, and it will appear that the iris is closing automatically, even though the iris control is set to manual.

Here's how to fix it:

1. Switch the 'Auto lock' switch to the centre position.
2. Press the 'Iris' button – the f stop of the iris should appear at the bottom of the viewfinder screen.
3. Press the 'gain' button – the gain setting will appear at the bottom of the viewfinder screen followed by the letters 'db' (decibels) to the right of the F stop display
Press the 'shutter' button – the shutter speed will appear at the bottom of the viewfinder screen, to the right of the gain setting display. The shutter speed should be 1/50th of a second (displayed as '50'). If not, use the jog/ dial on the back of the camera to adjust it.

If all 3 settings are displayed, the iris will function normally. As a guide, your ideal exposure range should be between F4 and F8. Use the ND filters to reduce the sensitivity of the camera in outdoor & strong light settings. Use the gain to increase the sensitivity of the camera in low light situations

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