

Many filmmakers and dealers alike are improperly identifying the various models of Bolex cameras. And there have indeed been many models since the first Bolex H was made in 1933. Here is a summary of the differences.

H-8 vs. H-16

Bolex has made **H-8** (8mm) **H-9** (9.5mm) and **H-16** (16mm) cameras, all with the same large housing with 100' spool capacity. This causes some to assume that any large Bolex is an H-16. Not so! You are not likely to encounter an H-9, but lots of H-8's have been put up for auction recently, erroneously called H-16's. An **H-8** has D mount 5/8" diameter lens threads. There are other differences too, but that's all you need to know to determine it is an H-8. An H-8 8mm camera will usually have a lens complement, and matching viewfinder focal lengths, of 6.5, 12.5 and 38mm. An H-16 16mm camera will often have a lens complement, and matching viewfinder focal lengths, of 10 or 16, 25 and 75mm. Of course, it is always possible that the wrong viewfinder could be attached.

There have been plenty of non-reflex models including the Leader, Standard, Deluxe, Supreme, T, M and S. We will concentrate below on the Reflex ones however, since that is where the greatest interest and money concerns are. The beginning **serial number and year** should be taken as approximate since numerous Bolexes were factory converted to equal a newer model, while retaining the old serial number. Also the same serial number sequence was used for all H cameras; thus, only if a camera is a Reflex, and has a certain serial number, can it be safely assumed to be a particular Rex model.

There was also an **H-8 Reflex** and **Rex** line, and these can be insidious as, with the usual bad or nonexistent photo, they can be hard to tell from an H-16 Reflex. The H-8 Reflex/Rex takes lenses with the same 1" thread diameter as 16mm. However, the prism block behind the turret is thinner and the holes are displaced somewhat on the turret. The "H-8 RX" designation on the lenses, or a side finder that includes 6.5, 12.5 and 38mm focal lengths, would be strong hints; or of course handling the camera to examine the reflex prism, filming aperture, and sprockets would be definitive. H-16 or other C mount or RX mount lenses will not focus properly on an H-8 Reflex. H-8 RX lenses will not focus on an H-16 except for extreme closeups and will not cover the whole frame.

Some H-8 and even H-16 cameras have been converted for **Double Super-8** film. This usually cannot be determined except by handling and opening the camera.

For critical work, select a camera with a serial number of 100,401 or higher with the so-called **Registration Claw** movement, as earlier cameras can give a noticeably unsteady image. All Reflex cameras (except possibly earlier models that were later factory converted to Reflex) have the Registration Claw.

H-16 Reflex Cameras, In General

All Reflex and Rex cameras have a 1" diameter RX (or C) lens mount. All Reflex and Rex cameras have a filter slot behind the lens turret, that takes very thin filter holders that are stamped out of thin black metal. All Reflex and Rex cameras have a permanently attached finder on top, not to be confused with the removable Eye-Level Focus accessory that was an option on the non-reflex Bolex cameras (except the M single-lens models.) The reflex prism diverts about 25% of the light to the viewfinder, requiring an exposure correction.

H-16 Original Reflex

The Reflex, sometimes called Rex-0, has a focus adjustment on the SIDE of the reflex finder. It lacks a variable shutter. Finder magnification is 6X. There is a single tripod socket on the round pillar-type base.

Shutter opening is thought to be 143 degrees. Introduced in 1956 beginning with serial number 116,001.

H-16 Rex-1

The Rex-1 has the focus adjustment on the SIDE of the reflex finder. It has a variable shutter behind the turret, with settings from 0 (full open) down to closed. Finder magnification is 6X. There is a single tripod socket on the round pillar-type base. Shutter opening is 131 degrees for this and later models. Introduced in 1959, s/n 162,306.

H-16 Rex-2

The Rex-2 has the focus adjustment AROUND THE EYEPIECE of the reflex finder. Finder magnification is increased to 10X. Otherwise it is essentially the same as the Rex-1. Introduced in 1963, s/n unknown. Only made for a short time.

H-16 Rex-3

The Rex-3 has a rectangular base with three tripod sockets. Several motor mounting holes have been added on the side. This is the last model with an I-T (instantaneous-time) LEVER next to the speed dial. Apart from the base and motor holes it is essentially the same as the Rex-2. Introduced in 1963, s/n 202,501.

H-16 Rex-4

H-16 Rex-4

The Rex-4 has an added 1:1 drive shaft so the camera will accept the various official Bolex electric motors such as the MST and ESM. The I-T selection is now a ROUND KNOB in order to make room for the added drive shaft. Apart from the 1:1 shaft and I-T knob it is essentially the same as the Rex-3. Introduced in 1965, s/n 210,601 and made until recently.

H-16 Rex-5

The Rex-5 has an added saddle on top to accept a 400' magazine. Some had an attachment point in the turret to install a bloop light for the MST motor. Later ones had a higher magnification 13X or 14X finder. Apart from the magazine saddle it is essentially the same as the Rex-4. Introduced in 1967, s/n 226,001. 13X finder introduced in 1971, s/n 253,020. A TV finder mask was offered in 1978, s/n unknown. Just recently discontinued.

H-16 SB

The H-16 SB is the same as a Rex-4 except for having bayonet mount for heavy lenses, instead of a 3-lens turret. There is also a built-in filter holder. Introduced in 1971, s/n 300,201 and made until recently.

H-16 SBM

The H-16 SBM is the same as a Rex-5 except for having bayonet mount for heavy lenses, instead of a 3-lens turret. Introduced in 1971, s/n 300,001 and still being manufactured.

The **EBM** (1971, 300,401) and **EL** (1975, 310,001) are variations of the SBM with a built-in electric motor instead of the spring. The nameplate actually identifies them (wow!) so no description is needed here. These are both still being manufactured. These have, as far as I know, 170 degree shutter openings, with no variable shutter.

Some models are now available in Super-16 which increases their cost and value considerably.

New! [Photos of Recent Bolex Cameras](#) and lots of other info!
[Photos of Ancient Bolex Cameras](#)

Hope this is helpful.

Clive Tobin, Tobin Cinema Systems ©2001-2007 TCS

Time lapse and animation motors for Bolex. Also telecine equipment to transfer your film to video:

<http://www.tobincinemasystems.com>

[How to Load Your Bolex](#) (on another website)

[Bolex Rex-5 Operating Manual](#) in PDF also largely applies to other models

About **Bolex serial numbers**:

Since there is a single serial number sequence that is combined for all of the H models, you cannot determine the model from the serial number alone!

Bolex History: <http://www.city-net.com/~fodder/bolex/history/index.html>

Bolex Info Site: <http://www.bolexcollector.com>

