

Mercury battery replacement

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Like anybody else, I use digital cameras. They're convenient. But I also love shooting with film cameras. It's a different experience, and using different tools make you see the world differently.

Film cameras are now extraordinarily cheap, and as long as you're in no hurry to see your images and don't take too many pictures, using SLRs or rangefinder cameras from yesteryear is a rewarding experience.

In the nineteenth century, photography did not kill watercolor painting and cars did not drive horses to extinction. In the nineteen eighties digital watches did not kill mechanical watches, and vinyl records are making a comeback 20 years after CDs were launched.

People paint, ride horses, wear mechanical watches and play vinyl records for a multitude of reasons, some of them unsuspected 150 or 20 years ago. And they will still be shooting film 10 years from now.

Cameras designed and manufactured before 1975 very often use coin shaped Mercury Oxide batteries to power the CdS cell in charge of metering – the most common being the PX625 aka PX625 / PX13 / MR9 Mercury Cell.

The chemistry of those 1.35 V. batteries is based on mercury oxide. The sale of mercury batteries was banned in 1996 because of their toxicity and environmental unfriendliness, and, unfortunately for the owners of camera of the early 70s, there is no perfect substitute. For all of their drawbacks, mercury oxide batteries had two big advantages – they delivered a constant 1.35v tension across their lifespan, and if not used, they kept their charge for a very long time (at least 10 years).

Older cameras (like the original Pentax Spotmatic, for instance) use a smaller button (or pill) shaped Mercury Oxide battery, and more recent models (practically any camera designed and launched after 1975) use silver oxide or lithium batteries in many shapes and forms.

The WEIN cell worked on every camera I tested. It's a relatively expensive solution if you want to use cameras designed for Mercury Batteries on a daily basis: because of the short life of the battery once you've activated it, you will have consumed a significant quantity of batteries by the end of the year.

If you're absolutely determined to use a Leica CL or a Leica M5, I'm afraid there is no real substitute to WEIN cells. That being said you could also shoot with a Minolta CLE or a Leica M6, the experience would not be very different, and those cameras rely on Silver Oxide batteries (*). Up to you.

(*) – I did not find a more modern substitute to the Canonet using silver oxide battery. The models that immediately followed (the Canon A35F and A35 Datelux) were sold well into the eighties, and still used a



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mercury battery. Cameras launched after the A35 are motorized autofocus compact cameras – a totally different experience. If you like cameras in the style of the Canonet, Zinc-air cells are in your future.

Properly maintaining your batteries helps ensure your engine starts up easily and your other electronic accessories are properly powered when you're ready to head out for fun and adventure on the water.

Marine batteries are designed specifically for use on a boat, with heavier plates and robust construction designed to withstand the vibration and pounding that can occur on board a powerboat. For this reason, marine batteries are usually more expensive than automobile batteries, which can tempt some boat owners to purchase an auto battery instead of one designed for marine use. Don't make that poor decision. A marine battery will last longer and be more reliable than an auto battery in a boat.

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Web: <https://www.sumthingtasty.co.za/contact-us/>

Email: energystorage2000@gmail.com

WhatsApp: 8613816583346

