LEADERS THROUGH INNOVATION
STARLIGHT XPRESS ltd

Handbook for the Starlight Xpress
Standard Filter Wheel

Thank you for your purchase of the Starlight Xpress Standard Filter Wheel. We hope that you will enjoy using this advanced SX unit, which offers many unique features. This handbook will help you to put it into operation and to understand its capabilities.
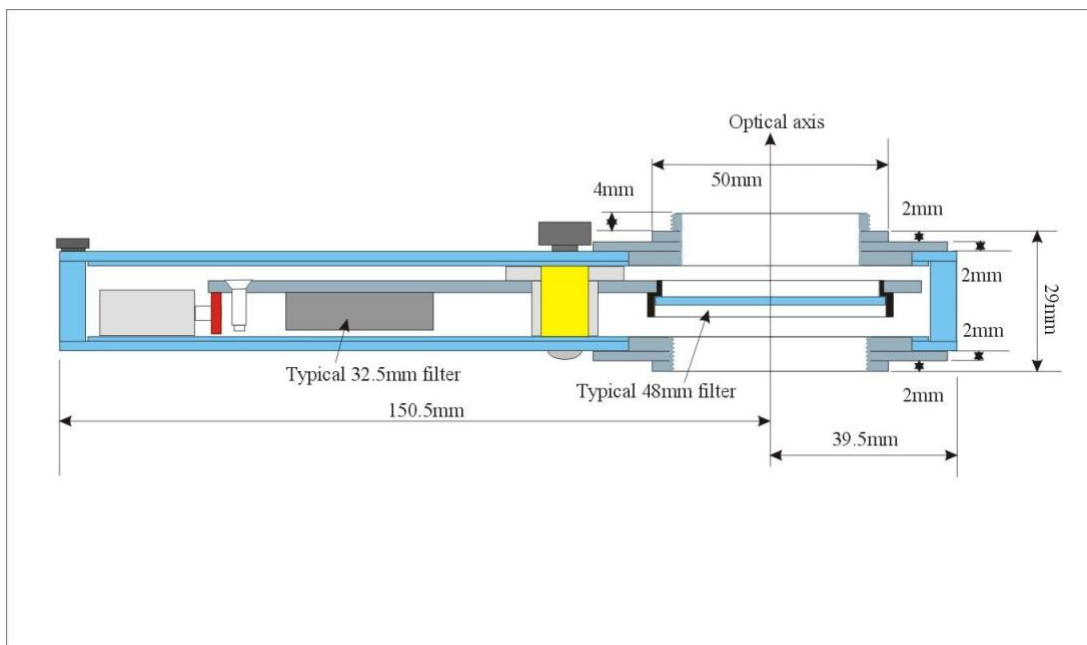
Description:

The SX Standard Wheel is especially designed for use with medium format CCD cameras and can use interchangeable carousels for 1.25 inch threaded.

The SX Standard Filter Wheel has several important advantages over older and less sophisticated designs:
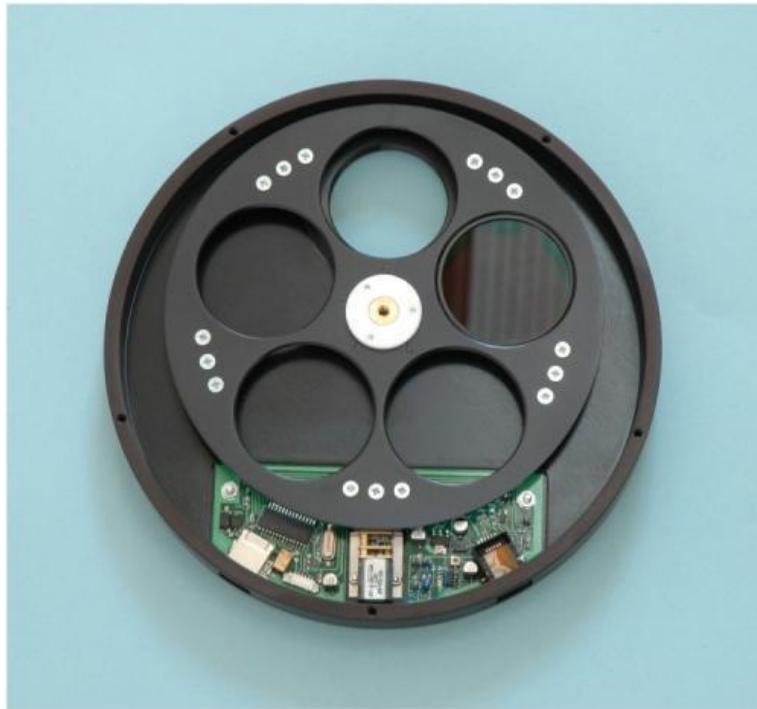
1) The wheel uses an internal sub-miniature DC motor drive to turn the filter plate. This consumes far less power than the more typical stepper motor and allows wheel operation directly from the USB input, thus eliminating the cumbersome power supply and extra power cable. The DC drive also produces a quiet and vibration-free filter translation and eliminates a significant amount of bulk and weight.

2) The filter locations are encoded by 3 Hall-effect magnetic sensors, which permit up to 7 unique filter positions to be defined. The control software can specify a particular filter without prior knowledge of the location of 'position 1' – so the filters can never get out of sequence. The lack of any infrared optical sensors also prevents stray infrared light from entering the CCD camera and causing strange image artefacts.

3) Although USB operation is the normal mode, the extra RJ12 socket also permits serial port control or „handbox" manual control.

4) The input and output adaptors are both removable and also may be oriented at any rotational angle to set the wheel and camera into optimum positions. The standard „T" thread adaptors may be replaced with other versions for „SCT" thread etc. simply by unscrewing three fixing bolts.

5) Four interchangeable filter plates are available – one with seven x 32.5mm filter positions and the other with five x 48mm filter locations. These are easily swapped by removing 6 „thumbscrew" fixings and simply dropping the plate into place. There are no gears or belt drives to engage and the plate drops directly into contact with the motor drive drum. Easily done, even by flashlight!

6) The ultra-slim design of the SXUFW minimises the loss of optical back focal distance to only 29mm overall (including the T thread adaptors).

Here is a simplified cross-sectional view of the filter wheel

Loading the filters:
Open the wheel by unscrewing the 5 small thumbscrews from around the periphery of the wheel chamber, lift off the cover. You can now lift the filter plate off the centre bearing and place it down with the magnet pillars facing upwards. Your filters may now be screwed into the plate from the magnet screw side, placing them in the desired numerical order according to the engraving on the plate. Re-assemble the wheel by reversing the sequence of operations above.

Installing the software:

No drivers are required for the SX Standard Wheel. The USB input is an 'HID' device which Windows recognises automatically. Popular third-party software, such as AstroArt and Maxim DL include the command sets for the SX Standard Wheel, and the latest SX software can also be used with the wheel. You may also use a simple Windows 'Console' program, which is provided on the USB Stick. This program, 'SX Filter Wheel.exe', may be copied into a folder on your computer and will display a filter wheel control panel when executed. It may be found useful for both testing the wheel and operating it when the camera software does not support the SX wheel protocols.

Connecting up the wheel:

USB control:
If you are using USB control, then the only connection required is that between the USB port on the wheel and a USB output on your computer. You may, of course, use a USB hub, if necessary – a powered hub is recommended to ensure that the wheel motor has sufficient torque to operate reliably. When the wheel is first connected, Windows will display a message about 'New hardware found' followed by 'SX filter wheel'. Shortly afterwards, the wheel will rotate once or twice as it calibrates and determines the number of filter positions available. It is now in position 1 and ready to use. If the wheel motor 'pulses' in a cyclic fashion and doesn't stop, then the calibration has failed and you need to check that the USB connection is good and that the carousel can move freely.

Filter Wheel maintenance:

Very little maintenance is required and is limited to occasionally cleaning the carousel and drive wheel to remove any dirt or grease deposits that might cause slippage. A few drops of alcohol on a soft cloth will clean the surfaces and fix any drive problems. Under very cold conditions, residual moisture might cause the central bearing to freeze to the brass shaft. This can be alleviated by applying a single drop of light oil to the shaft to repel moisture.

Starlight Xpress Standard Filter Wheel Communication Protocols

Interfaces available:
   USB: 1.1 or 2.0

General parameters:

Total Filters: This is the number of filters fitted on the wheel, and is currently 5 or 7 for the standard Wheel.

Filter number: This is any number from 1 to <Total Filters>

(If a Filter Number higher than Total Filters is requested then the Filter Number is set to <Total Filters>)

USB Protocol:

The SX filter wheel uses a simple "Human Interface Device" protocol, so no special driver needs to be installed. The driver is an integral part of the Windows PC operating system.

Communications between the PC & filter wheel is by input and output reports (referenced to the PC). These reports are both of a fixed length of two bytes. The PC sends the output report and the filter wheel, about 1ms later, will send an input report in response.

The output report data is formatted thus:

Description	1st byte	2nd byte
Select Filter	New Filter number	Zero (0)
Request current filter number	Zero	Zero
Get Filter Total	Zero	One (1)

The input report data is formatted thus:

Response To:	1st byte	2nd byte
Select New Filter	New Filter number or Zero = filters moving	Total filters
Request current filter number	Current Filter number or Zero = filters moving	Total filters
Get Filter Total	Current Filter number or Zero = filters moving	Zero

NB: The 'Get Filter Total' command responds straight away with a "filters moving" message. However, there is a delay of several seconds before the Total Filters data is available to the "Request Current Filter Number" command. This is the time taken for the wheel to complete between one and two complete rotations. During this period the Total Filters will be reported as zero. When this command is completed filter 1 is automatically selected.

Serial Port Protocol:

The SX filter wheel implements a four-character format, which has just three commands thus:

Notes: Checksum is 8bit addition of Header + Command + Data
       0xA5 is the hexadecimal number = decimal number 165
       0x20 is the hexadecimal number = decimal number 32

Output Command/Data from PC

Description	Header (1)	Command (2)	Data (3)	Checksum (4)
Select Filter	0xA5	1	New Filter number	4 = 1+2+3
Request Current Filter	0xA5	2	0x20	4 = 1+2+3
Get Filter Total	0xA5	3	0x20	4 = 1+2+3

Input Data to PC

Description	Header (1)	Response (2)	Data (3)	Checksum (4)
Select Filter	0xA5	0x81	New Filter Number	4 = 1+2+3
Request Current Filter	0xA5	0x82	Filter Number + 0x30	4 = 1+2+3
Get Filter Total	0xA5	0x83	Total Filters + 0x30	4 = 1+2+3

Examples, (all characters expressed in hexadecimal):

Select Filter Number 3:
PC -> Filter Wheel,   0xA5, 0x01, 0x03, 0xA9
Filter Wheel -> PC,   0xA5, 0x81, 0x03, 0x29

Request Current Filter (which is 2):
PC -> Filter Wheel,   0xA5, 0x02, 0x20, 0xC7
Filter Wheel -> PC,   0xA5, 0x82, 0x32, 0x59

Get Filter Total:
PC -> Filter Wheel,   0xA5, 0x03, 0x20, 0xC8
Filter Wheel -> PC,   0xA5, 0x83, 0x37, 0x2F (after delay)

Note: The 'Get Filter Total' command has a delay of several seconds before the response is sent back. This is the time taken for the wheel to complete between one and two rotations. When completed, filter 1 is selected. Do not send any new requests until the response is received. Any data sent during this period would be read but then discarded.

Dear Observer,

Thank you for purchasing a Starlight Xpress product. We are confident that you will gain a great deal of satisfaction from this equipment, but please read carefully the instruction manual, supplied with your product, to ensure that you achieve the best performance that it is capable of providing.

As with most sophisticated equipment a certain amount of routine maintenance is necessary to keep the equipment operating at its optimum performance. The maintenance has been kept to a minimum, and is fully described in the manual.

Starlight Xpress Ltd. warrants all Starlight Xpress products to be free from defects in workmanship and materials, under normal operating use and conditions, for a period of two (2) years following the original invoice date. This limited warranty does not cover failures due to abuse, accidental damage, or when repairs have been made or attempted by anyone other than Starlight Xpress. A defective product meeting the warranty conditions set forth herein will be replaced or repaired at no charge.

Replacement or Repair
If a product arrived with the user and is immediately faulty, Starlight Xpress, if contacted within 30 days of purchase, and with evidence proving a defective product, will offer a free replacement, subject to the verification of the defect or malfunction. The customer shall return the complete product package, including all parts, accessories, and manuals, etc. for a replacement.

Exclusions:

1. The equipment shall only be used for normal purposes described in the standard operating instructions, and within the relevant safety standards of the country where the equipment is used.
2. External mechanical force (i.e. dropped, scratched sensor window, damaged metalwork, a broken or damaged USB port, power supply connector etc.)
3. Water or moisture inside the product due to improper storage or use.
4. The guarantee shall not apply to the equipment damaged by flood, fire, earthquake, lighting strike etc. (Force majeure)
5. Disassembling, repairing, or refurbishment made or attempted by anyone other than Starlight Xpress without prior authorisation.
6. This guarantee shall not apply to components that have a naturally limited life.
7. Starlight Xpress' decision in all matters is final, and any faulty component which has been replaced will become the property of Starlight Xpress Ltd.

This Limited Warranty is NOT transferable and applies ONLY to direct customers who purchase product from Starlight Xpress or/and its authorized dealers.

Please don't forget to register your SX Product at https://www.sxccd.com/support/warranty-policy-and-registration/ to initiate your warranty

For further info. or advice, please contact us:
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