



Slow Color-Print FILMS

by Jack & Sue Drafaahl

FINE GRAIN,
RICHER COLORS,
BIGGER BLOW-UPS

Over our years at *PHOTOgraphic Magazine*, we have reviewed several hundred types of color-negative films ranging from ISO 25 to 3200. No wonder we have trouble keeping them all straight! Recent emphasis has been on medium- and high-speed films of ISO 200 and up. This increased interest in the higher-speed films stems from the simple fact that their grain pattern has gotten finer and the contrast more controlled. Photographers generally want to get the shot at all costs and will do whatever it takes to capture that critical moment in time. Higher-speed films just make it easier to guarantee success. Since most images today are viewed as 3½x5- or 4x6-inch prints, most any film made today will yield great results.

So, why use a low-speed film if the faster ones will do the job? The answer is fine grain. We know each manufacturer considers all its films fine-grain, but until they can change the laws of physics, the low-ISO films will always be the fine-grain champs. Films below ISO 100 have always been considered fine-grain, but with new technologies the range now extends to ISO 160 for portrait emulsions.

Fine-grain films are for the discerning photographer who wants the ultimate in quality and is willing to work a little harder to achieve it. These photographers demand critical sharpness and maximum enlargement capability from their creative efforts. The fine-grain, low-ISO films—and a good tripod—are their tools.

When we decided to review fine-grain films, we realized that it might be difficult to show you a comparison in print. Since the resolution of these



KODAK
PJ100



FUJI
SUPERIA 100

KONICA
VX100

Slow, fine-grain color-print films provide the richest colors and the best image quality. So we use them whenever possible. These films are great for a wide range of subjects, including underwater photography (opposite page, bottom) and producing detailed close-ups that give the viewer a real feel for the subject (this page). All of the major film manufacturers offer slow color-print films—at the moment, you can choose among 23 films from seven manufacturers. Try some of them next time you shoot.

AGFA
HDC 100

SLOW COLOR-PRINT **FILMS**

ISO 50

Agfacolor Ultra 50 Prof.
Konica Impresa 50 Prof.

ISO 100

Agfacolor HDC Plus 100
Agfacolor Optima II 100 Prof.
Fujicolor Superia Reala
Fujicolor New Superia 100
Ilford Colors 100

Imation HP100

Kodak Ektapress PJ100

Kodak Gold 100

Kodak Royal Gold 100

Konica Color Centuria 100

Konica Impresa 100 Portrait

Konica VX100*

Polaroid OneFilm 100

ISO 160

Agfacolor Portrait XPS 160 Prof.

Fujicolor NPS 160 Prof.

Kodak Pro 100*

Kodak Prof. Portra 160NC

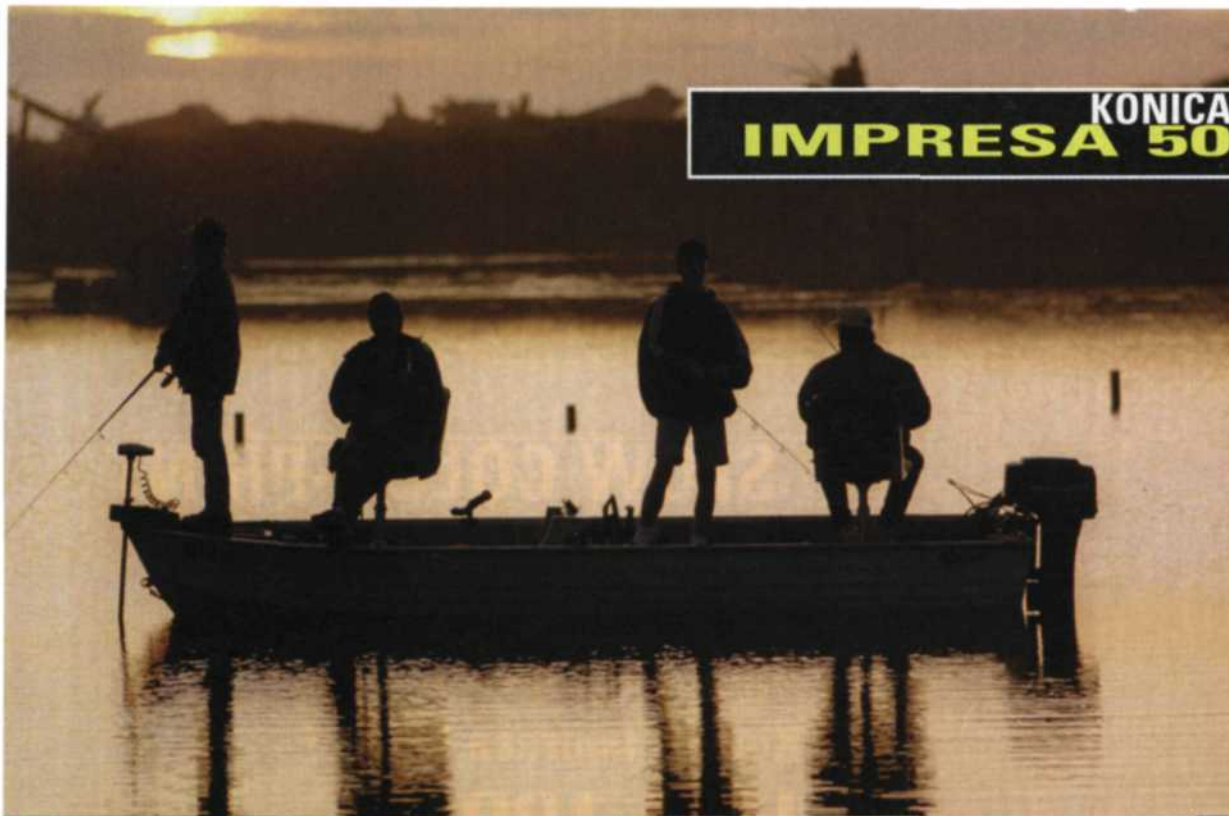
Kodak Prof. Portra 160VC

Kodak Vericolor III VPS*

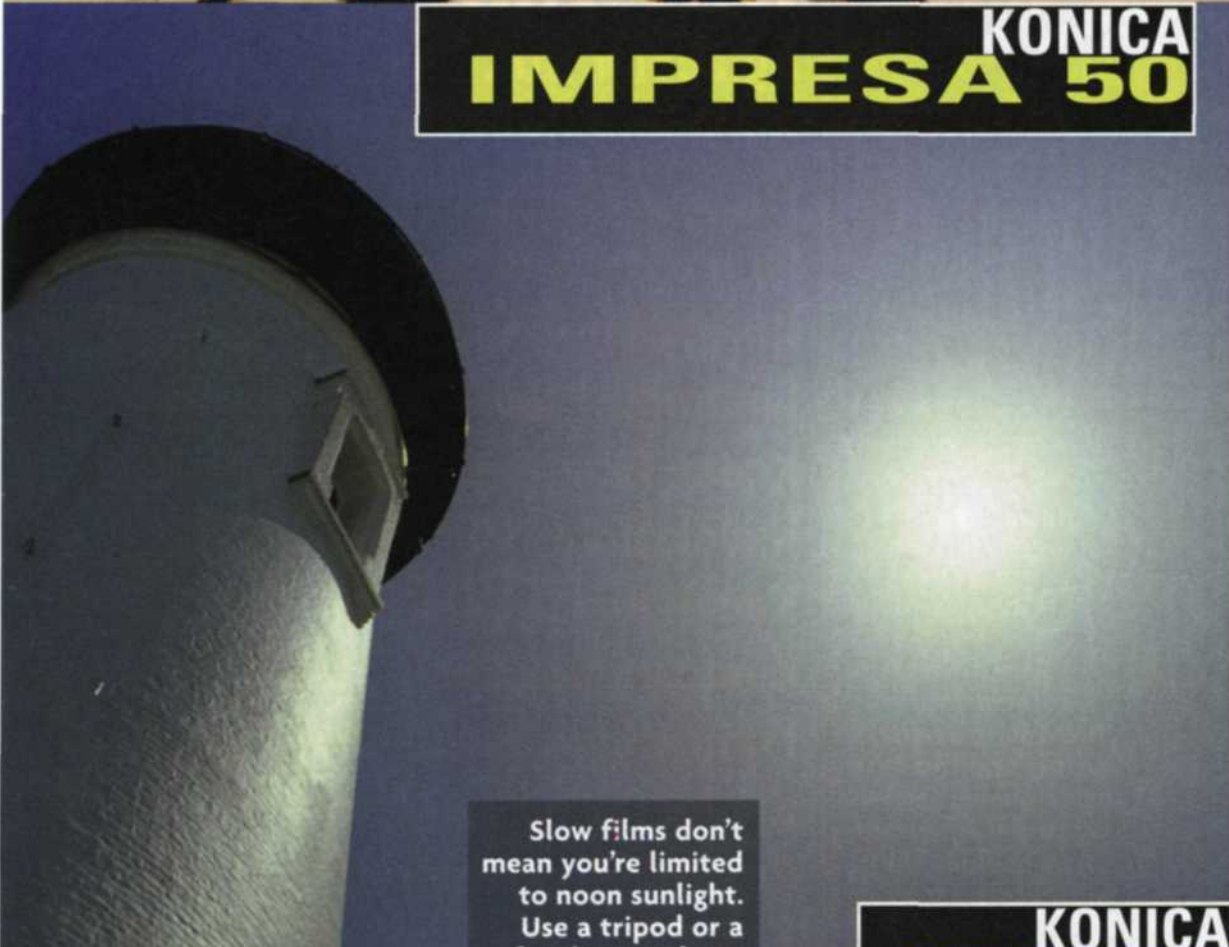
Konica Color Prof. 160

Konica SR-G 160*

* Film being replaced in manufacturer's line, but still available at photo dealers



**KONICA
IMPRESA 50**



**KONICA
IMPRESA 50**

Slow films don't mean you're limited to noon sunlight. Use a tripod or a fast lens, and you can produce amazingly detailed images in a wide range of lighting conditions—and blow them up to make beautiful big prints. Sunrises, sunsets and atmospheric shots all lend themselves extremely well to the slow-film treatment. As is the case with all categories of color films, each film has its own color palette and tonal range, so try several to see which best suit your types of photographic subject matter.

**KONICA
VX100**



films far exceeds magazine print resolution, we realized that you probably wouldn't really see much of a difference between films if we did a side-by-side comparison. So, we had to find another approach to show you the benefits of the slower films. We didn't want to get involved in the technical aspects of each film, but rather their photographic applications. So, we decided the answer was to show you why *we* use slow films.

The best way to explain why we use slow films is to show you what subjects we photograph using these films. After rooting through over 80,000 images in our files, we magically found images we thought we had lost years ago. Nobody said we were totally organized! What we did discover was a variety of subjects that excelled using low-ISO films.

Flowers seem to be the number-one subject that keeps appearing throughout our files. Flowers are great subjects for fine-grain films as they have fully saturated colors and extremely fine detail. They generally don't move around too much so the slow films work great. Flowers can be photographed in sunlight, bright overcast lighting, or even using flash. Since most flowers are shot with close-up lenses, there will be out-of-focus areas behind the main focus point. With fine-grain films these areas have a very smooth tonal scale with no grainy appearance, even when enlarged. Flowers also tend to have very contrasting colors next to each other and the slow films can handle these borders better than the faster films.



POLAROID ONEFILM 100

KODAK PJ100

Macro photography has always been a passion of ours. We like taking the camera's view beyond the scope of the normal viewing range. With this extreme magnification, low-ISO films are a must in order to capture the intricate detail. The fine-grain, low-ISO films enable us to create images that cause viewers to scratch their heads and say, "How you do dat?"

As photo instructors, we seem to be constantly looking for that perfect color composition in our images. This is one of the areas that gives color film an advantage over black-and-white. You can take a picture of almost any subject, or even no complete subject at all if color is the sole purpose of the photo. You might not photograph a weathered broken window with ivy growing in the cracks, unless it was freshly painted bright red. The contrast of old and new, drab and vivid is what is best captured in great detail on the low-ISO films. Most still-life situations offer bright, saturated colors, fine detail, and the potential of extreme enlargement. Many of these arty still-life scenes are obviously favorites of ours, and our files show we shoot them from emulsion to emulsion.



KODAK GOLD 100

Like most outdoor photographers, we like to shoot landscapes. When we first started our careers in photography, we used 4x5 cameras to capture these landscapes. The tonal range, depth, and enlarging features made the large format desirable. Over the years we have found that the lower-speed 35mm films closely compete with those 4x5 images and often offer more flexibility. Sadly, the 4x5 cameras now spend more and more time on the shelf.

AGFA HDC 100

Bright, beautiful colors in all types of lighting are characteristic of slow color-print films, along with the great sharpness and fine grain. When color is the subject of the photo, a slow film is far and away the best choice. The slow films also work wonderfully with both ambient light and electronic flash.



One of the reasons we like the slower films is that we can make sizable crops into the image area and still maintain image quality. Cropping a horizontal out of a vertical and vice versa is very possible with these fine-grain champs.

Of course, the main reason for using low-ISO films is the fact that you can make extreme enlargements. The fine grain and sharpness of these films makes large, quality enlargements a reality. Just think how good these films look at 3 1/2 x 5 inches when they look dynamite five times larger at 16 x 20 inches!

Another interesting fact about these low-ISO films is the way they perform when scanned for digital photography. If you scan one of the medium- or high-speed films at more than moderate resolution (18 megabytes), there is no noticeable gain in image quality. This is not the case with the lower-ISO films. You will notice a marked difference in the image quality when scanned up to 34 megabytes. This added quality allows you to crop negatives and still maintain a high level of quality.

Now you have to ask yourself just what type of photographer you are. What level of image quality is important to you? Are you going to need enlargements or are 4x6s all you need? Are you willing to risk getting the shot on lower-ISO film or cinching the deal with a higher-speed film? If you are the type of photographer who creates images rather than takes pictures, you sound like a candidate for low-ISO films. Fine-grain films are not restricted to a single film manufacturer. Each company has found its niche creating films where image quality is number one. ■

FUJI SUPERIA 100

