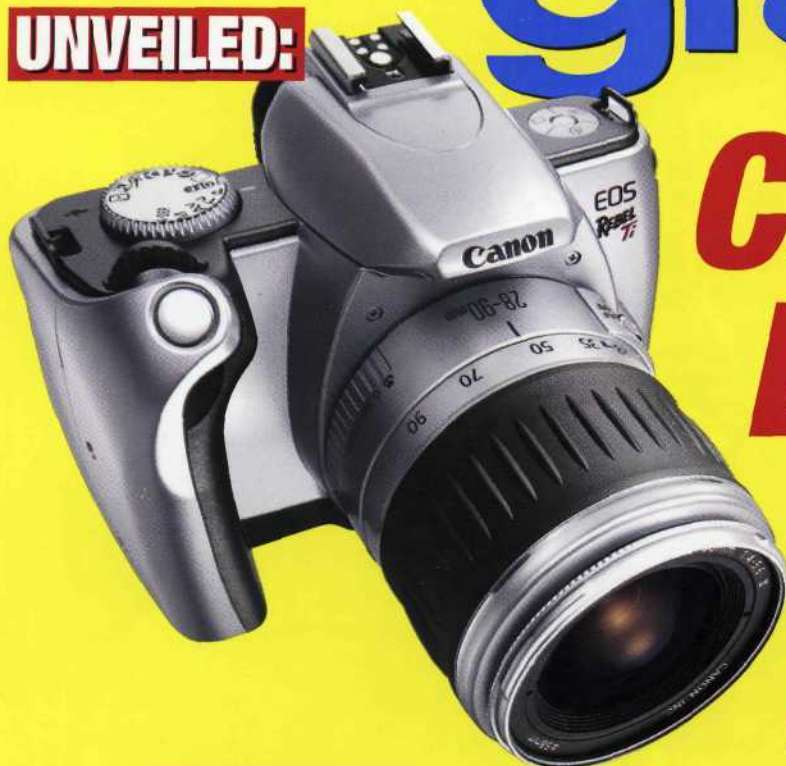


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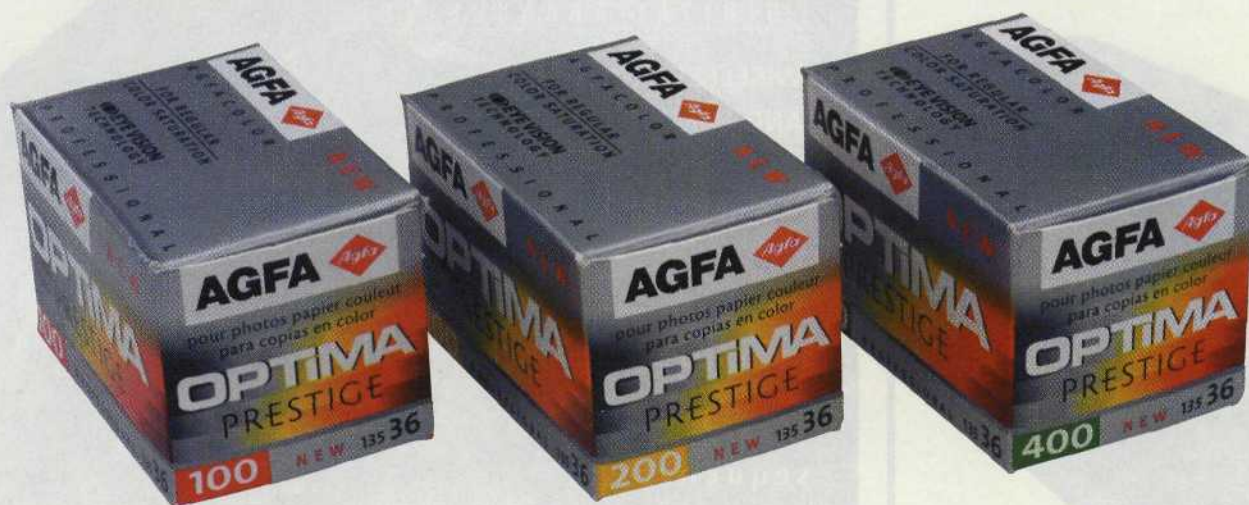
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# Agfa Optima Prestige

Three updated pro color print films hit the mark

*Text and photos by Jack and Sue Drafa*

In this very competitive world, new technology is the name of the game. One of the leaders in technological advancements in photographic emulsions is the Agfa Consumer Imaging Group. Their most recent introduction is the professional line of Optima color negative films which includes ISO 100, 200, and 400 in the 35mm format and ISO 200 and 400 in the 120 film format.

With any new film introduction there has to be a focus point that makes the new emulsions more desirable than their predecessors. With Optima, it is the addition of the Agfa Eye Vision technology which was originally introduced in 2000 in both the Vista and Futura II amateur films. This patented technology is designed to reproduce colors to better represent the way the human eye sees.

The problem colors for films in the past have been in the blue and green shades due to an increased red component. Photos tended to reproduce blues as a violet tone, and greens tended more toward the browns. Photos taken under fluorescent lighting always had that telltale green hue. With Agfa's Eye Vision technology, the new emulsion can better reproduce both the blues and greens,

and still keep the rest of the color spectrum in balance.

Agfa also made some changes to the silver halide structure of the film, and created a new generation of crystals known as SXM (Surface eXtended Multistructured). The efficiency of these crystals has been improved 50% over the previous emulsions, resulting in enhanced color reproduction and finer grain without sacrificing any film speed.

Surprisingly, all three 35mm emulsions have RMS granularity values that are very close to each other with Optima Prestige 100 at RMS 4.0, Optima Prestige 200 at RMS 4.3, and Optima Prestige 400 at RMS 4.5. Since they are all members of a film family, the color balance and other image characteristics are close enough that it's easy to print from one emulsion to the next.

Agfa's Optima color negative films are designed to have no sensitivity variance with exposure times from 1 second to  $\frac{1}{10,000}$ . This ensures that for the majority of your exposures, the ISO rating of each emulsion will be accurate and require no exposure adjustments or color correction. Optima 100 needs a  $+\frac{1}{2}$ -stop correction at 10 seconds, and





New Optima Prestige (which, curiously, replaces Optima II Prestige in Agfa's pro color-print film line) utilizes new technology to produce even better results. Optima Prestige 100 is a fine sunlight general-purpose emulsion, also excellent for macro work with electronic flash and long-exposure effects at night.



1½ stops when you reach a 100-second exposure

duration. Optima 200 and 400 require +1 full stop for 10 seconds, and +2 full stops when exposure times reach 100 seconds. No color correction is needed for these increased times. Since Optima has an exposure latitude of 6–7 stops, you could start with a +1-stop correction and bracket your exposure for those once-in-a-lifetime photos.

Optima is balanced for daylight and can be corrected to tungsten lighting with the use of an 80A filter and a +2-stop correction in exposure. If you really need the film speed, you can shoot without the filter and have the color shift removed during the printing process, or after the image has been scanned into your computer system. Fluorescent lighting has always been a problem, but can be partially corrected with a CC30 magenta filter. Since the Eye Vision technology addresses this problem, you can shoot without a filter and correct any slight shift later.

Normally, when we select a theme for a film test, we try to avoid holidays, since the delay between the testing and publication is about three months. Who wants to see Fourth of July images in October? Rules can be broken. We had a county fair coming up and with its variety of events, it was perfect for the film test.

A few days before the fair, we decided to try a couple of rolls to make sure the cameras were working properly. We loaded one roll of ISO 100 and one roll of ISO 400 and headed out to our outdoor studio (otherwise known as a back yard) to photograph a wide variety of flowers and birds that gathered around the fish ponds.

As we scoured the area, we spotted a small white dot on a spray of purple flowers. Upon closer inspection we found it to be a beautiful crab spider. Now not everyone thinks of spiders as beautiful, but they do make great photographic subjects. This was perfect as we could test both color and the contrast range of the two films on one subject.

We also used this preliminary testing to confirm that the new chemistry was on target. Everything checked out and





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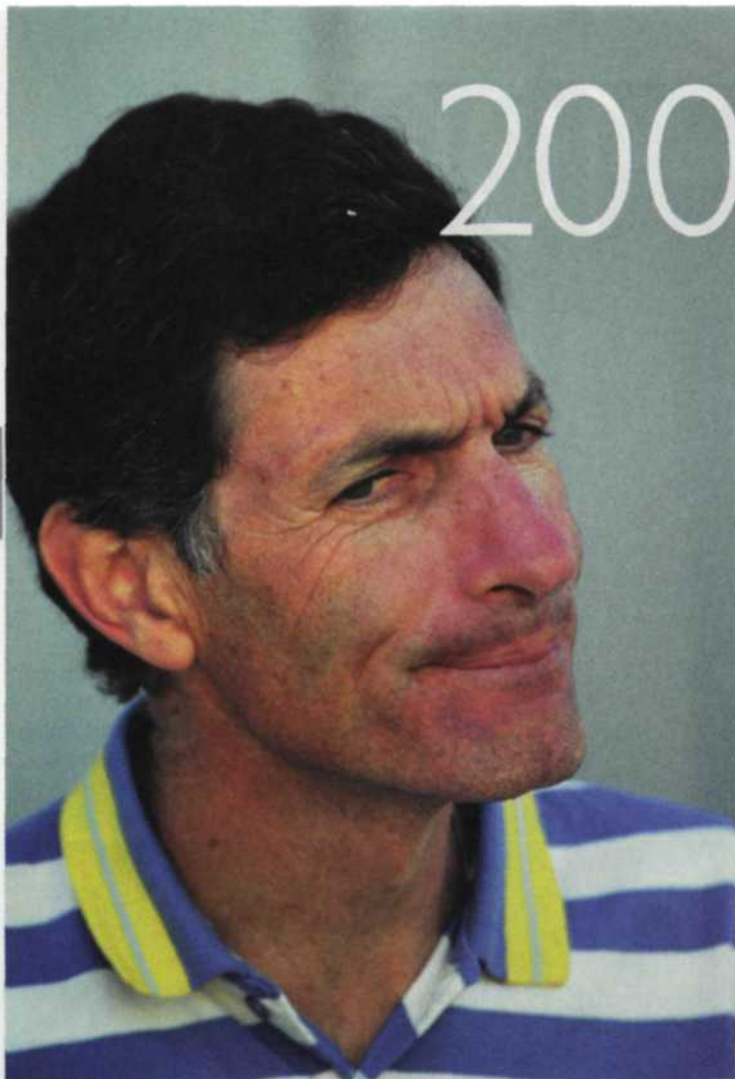
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the first negatives looked great. The rated ISO speed looked to be right on. So, we were off to the fair!

This year's county fair was blessed with warm, sunny weather and plenty of varied activities. First on the agenda was the horse races. We were using our Nikon F5s so we could get up to 7 frames a second with shutter speeds up to  $\frac{1}{8000}$ . The horses were at the gates...and they were off and running. We panned the horses as they raced past us with our camera loaded with Optima 400. The lighting was coming from the side, so the scene contrast was quite extreme. This would definitely put this Optima to the test. On the second race we tried the ISO 200 emulsion to see how it would handle the colors and contrast. The horses on which we bet didn't win, but at least we captured their defeat on film.

Next on the schedule was a talent contest. There were plenty of people dressed in colorful clothing wearing hats in every shape, and that was just the folks in the crowd watching. There were also singers and dancers, and several of the contestants had fluorescent colored costumes that you see for miles. The lighting was full shade, so again we tried both the ISO 200 and ISO 400 emulsions. We used a 75-300mm zoom so that we could change cropping quickly. Thanks to the high speed film, we still had exposures in the  $\frac{1}{500}$  second range, even with the slower 4.5-5.6 f-stop.

No county fair would be complete without the carnival and its rides and games. We mingled with the crowds of people enjoying themselves and feasted upon a few of the fair's gastronomical delicacies. We rotated films from ISO 100 through ISO 400 to see how each would handle



Optima Prestige 200 offers a stop more speed, fine grain and great sharpness. It's a good portrait film, and handy anytime you need a little more film speed to get the picture.

the varied lighting conditions as the day wore on.

Next on the docket was one of the strangest events you'll ever find at a county

fair. It's called the Pig-n-Ford race. Each contestant runs from the starting line to a container that houses several 25-pound piglets. A squirming critter is selected and the contestant races to a Ford Model T, starts the crank engine, climbs aboard and races around the track. Once back at the starting point, the squealing piglet is returned and another one selected for the next trip around the track. The winner is declared the first one who brings the second piglet back to the starting box.

This world-championship event was the perfect challenge for all three Agfa emulsions. The action was so fast that all we could do was hold the shutter button down when the race started and use an entire roll per event. The lighting was harsh, the action fast, and the photo opportunities fun. The problem was holding the camera steady to avoid movement from our own laughter and excitement.

The final test consisted of time exposures of the various carnival rides and was made after the sun had set. We used the ISO 100 emulsion, to obtain the longest exposures possible. In order to make the photos work, we needed exposures long enough for the ride to make at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a revolution for the best effect. As it turned out, most exposures were in the 4-second range at f/22.

We didn't worry about bracketing our exposures, because of the film's wide exposure latitude. Twenty rolls of film later we dragged our very tired feet and headed for home. The processing in C-41 chemistry would have to wait until the next day.

As with all the film families today, the three emulsions all looked the same when processed. The only way to really see the difference was to read the rebate edge. Wow, the images looked great! All the emulsions did a great job reproducing the greens and blues which were touted improvements of these films. The color saturation was extremely well balanced and all three films did an excellent job capturing the flavor of the fair.





The grain structure was considerably smaller than we had seen with the previous film versions. We did note that the grain structure of the ISO 100 and ISO 200 seemed almost identical, while understandably, the ISO 400 was slightly larger.

All three emulsions easily scanned into our computer system using one film setting. The images of the spider had the most color contrast, but they recorded well too. Even the harsh lighting ratio of the horse races showed excellent detail in the deep shadows. The high shutter speeds had helped capture more than just the thrill of the moment.

After running these films through the paces, we find that they will easily stand up to the high standards demanded of today's professional films. All three Agfa Optima emulsions, with their Eye Vision technology, are great traveling companions whether you head to the county fair or beyond. For further information on these and other fine Agfa films, check out [www.agfa.com](http://www.agfa.com). ■



Optima Prestige 400 provides even more speed, handy when shooting action or hand-holding a telephoto lens, as well as for dimmer light. But it doesn't exact a large penalty for the added speed—it's only half an RMS number grainier than Optima Prestige 100, very sharp, and provides great color.

