

First Exposure

Scott Adams



tributed to the continuing task of improving image quality. Now a new film is born. Astia, whose name is derived from the celestial word Astro, takes image quality to new heights! Astia incorporates the best aspects of previous Fujichrome transparency films, into a very high quality professional transparency film designed to meet the challenges of fashion, portrait and commercial photography.

Color reproduction was the primary criteria in the new technologies used in this emulsion. Fuji was not looking for just pretty colors, but for more accurate ones. They wanted flesh tones to look real, product colors to be accurate, and fashion photography to be enhanced with this new emulsion.

Professional Fujichrome Astia

Over the past few years, Fuji Photo has introduced a variety of high quality films for both the professional and amateur market. Sensia, Provia and Velvia all con-



Fujichrome Astia 100



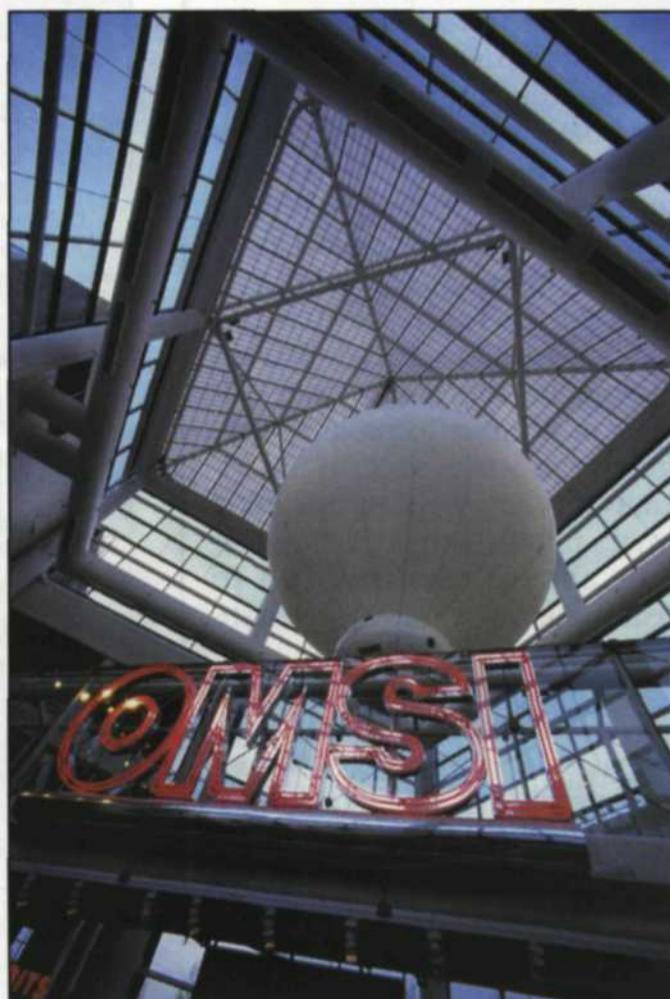
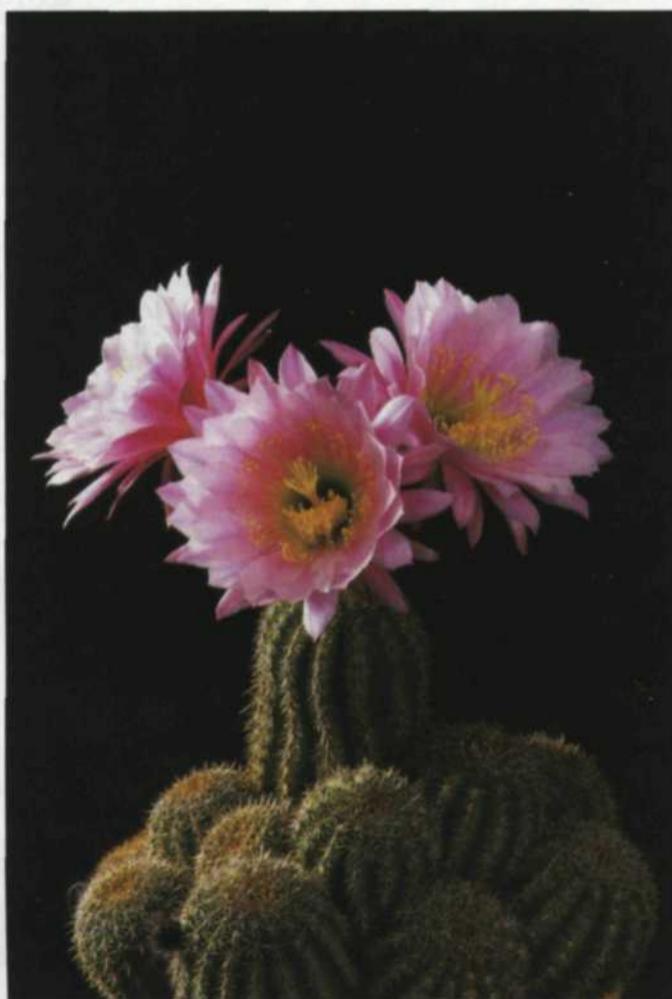
Fujichrome Velvia 50

Above is a film recorder comparison of Astia and Velvia. You be the judge.

Right—Fuji Astia exposed at +1/3 stop produces livelier image quality than the recommended ISO speed.

Technical Innovations

Accurate color reproduction in Astia is controlled by improved emulsion layer-interaction technologies. The ICG (Inter-layer-effect Controlling Grain) technology uses a type of grain that allows better rendition of delicate hues, while maintaining the more saturated colors. The FTS (Fine-tuned Spectral Sensitivity) technology works with the ICG technology to match the spectral response of the subject to the color layers in the film.



The AGC (Accurate Gradation Control) technology comes into play when you have subjects with tonal variations in one color. The AGC uses triple sub-layers in each emulsion to insure a smooth transition from dark to light in one color region. This helps the flesh tones shot in both soft and harsh lighting to reproduce more accurately. If you have ever used Velvia, you know that the color saturation is excellent, but the film sometimes gives a sunburned look when taking flash fill portraits. Astia resolves this problem with smoother, softer tonal curves that render more accurate flesh tones.

Push-pull processing is improved because of the MFIL (Multi-functional Intermediate Layer) technology. By controlling the intermediate layer, this technology allows you push or pull Astia by one stop with minimal loss of image quality.

When making extreme enlargements grain becomes a definite consideration. Astia uses SUFG (Enhanced Uniform Fine Grain) technology to produce extremely fine grain in those areas where grain shows itself first. Blue skies and out-of-focus backgrounds now record smoothly, while the main subject retains its fine image detail.

Sometimes professional photographers are required to take multiple photo sessions of a subject over a long period of time. The film they use must be stable in color balance, so that the subject's color matches from one photo session to the next. Astia solves this problem with EES (Enhanced Emulsion-layer Stabilizing) technology. This stabilizer chemistry keeps the film on track and consistent during manufacturing, shipping and storage.

Testing & Evaluation

Now it is time I put these new technologies to work. My first evaluation test let Astia show off some of my greenhouse beauties. My greenhouse at this time of the year is teeming with flowers, so I loaded up my first roll of Astia film and shot away. I used the diffused light of the greenhouse, followed by portable flash, flash-fill sunlight and finally I moved several flowers back into the stu-

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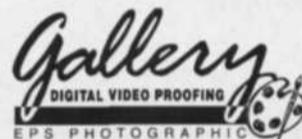
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Say You Saw It In
RANGEFINDER

First Exposure

(Continued from page 39)

dio. I bracketed at +/- 1/2 stop over 5 steps in order to accurately determine Astia's true ISO.

I then moved into the darkroom and loaded the film into a Wing-Lynch Model 5 processor. This is a special com-puter-controlled single shot E-6 proces-sor. An hour later I laid the roll out on the light box and pulled out my trusty high-powered loupe. The first and most noticeable fact was that my center expo-sure was dark and the + 1/2 stop exposure was best. Grain was almost non-existent, even with the image that had an out-of-focus blue sky. The tonal range was magnificent and the color balance was right on the money. This was definitely a professional's transparency film.

I then tried additional outdoor tests with a variety of large and small subjects before moving into the studio for a cou-ple of simple product shots. I tried copy-ing black-and-white prints on the copy stand using an 80A filter. Any shift in color would show right away, but the resulting images looked liked black-and-white reversal film.

After these Astia rolls were processed, I found myself definitely leaning toward using ISO 80 as my main meter setting. This started me thinking about Velvia, a film I love, but which I also rate at + 1/2 stop. I have talked to other professionals and found that some of them rate Velvia at 32, others at 40, but few use it at the factory rating of ISO 50. I assume that since the ISO results of Astia look the same as Velvia, we will find professionals regularly making changes to Astia's ISO. Fuji may not agree, but if it works well, so what!

As I was testing the exposure latitude of Astia, I shot an additional roll and pushed it one stop. The results were very good, with little increase in contrast, and no noticeable change in the grain pat-tern. The latitude did drop 1/2 of a stop, but was still acceptable.

The final test was the most critical. In my business I use a digital photo device called a film recorder. It's much like a digital color printer, except that it prints onto film instead. I have tried dozens of films in the unit, and have found Velvia to surpass all. Because this device is so sensitive to color, it will display the slightest variations between different films. I decided to give Astia a try. I com-pensated for the difference in ISO be-tween the two films and ran both against each other. The results were quite unexpected—they looked almost identical! The color balance and grain looked the same and only at extreme magnification could I see a slight sharp-ness edge in the Velvia image. Con-sidering that Velvia takes twice as long to shoot in the film recorder, I am now leaning toward switching to Astia for this application.

Sizes & Availability

Astia will replace Fujichrome RDP 100 and will be offered in 35mm, 120, 220, 4 x 5 sheet, and 8 x 10 sheet formats. I was given several rolls of 35mm and 120 for my testing. In some of the test-ing I shot both formats, and when processed I was unable to discern any difference between the two. Since Fuji has been very good about consistency between different film formats, I am assuming that the 4x5 and 8x10 films would have performed equally well. That's unfortunate because I had no ex-cuse to get out my view cameras for field testing. I guess I need to find something new to complain about, be-cause it's sure not Astia.

Information: Fuji Photo Film U.S.A., Inc. 555 Taxter Rd., Elmsford, NY 10523.

Scott Adams is a freelance journalist/photographer living in the Pacific Northwest.

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