

KODAK EKTAPRESS GOLD

Film Testing on Location in Las Vegas



by Jack and Sue Drafaahl

PHOTOGRAPHIC'S USER REPORT

It seems you can't trust anyone anymore! Over the past few months Kodak has been finding ways to improve older films and simultaneously releasing so many new films that you need a score card to keep track of what's new in the film world. Kodak wasn't satisfied with having four Gold films (ISO 100, 200, 400, 1000) and two new Ektars (ISO 25 and 1000); they went one step further and introduced an entire new film system called Ektapress Gold. These new films come in three ISO flavors—100, 400, and 1600—and boast to be the only color negative films a professional photojournalist will ever need.

The original Gold films were designed for amateur use, where contrast and high color saturation are most important. The professional photographers, on the other hand, usually require films with more exposure latitude and less contrast. In addition, the professionals occasionally found it necessary to push the film one to two stops. So Kodak provided them with their own film system, which proves to

be just as versatile as the equipment they use on their assignments.

Of special interest to pros who do a lot of on-location shooting is the fact that the new Ektapress Gold films were designed for room-temperature storage, and do not require refrigeration like most other pro films.

TESTING

In order to really see what these new films could do, we tested them in Las Vegas. Here we could shoot color film day and night. We scheduled ourselves for daytime shoots at Hoover Dam, in some tourist traps, indoor shooting at a press conference for Jacques Cousteau, and night shots in the city where the lights never grow dim.

We found the contrast range of the Ektapress 100 and 400 to be slightly less than that of the other Gold films. We liked the contrast and the extended exposure latitude these films provided. The resolution and grain of the Ektapress 100 held a slight edge over that of Gold 100. Ektapress 400 was extremely close to Gold 400 in resolution and grain structure, but had a much better exposure latitude.

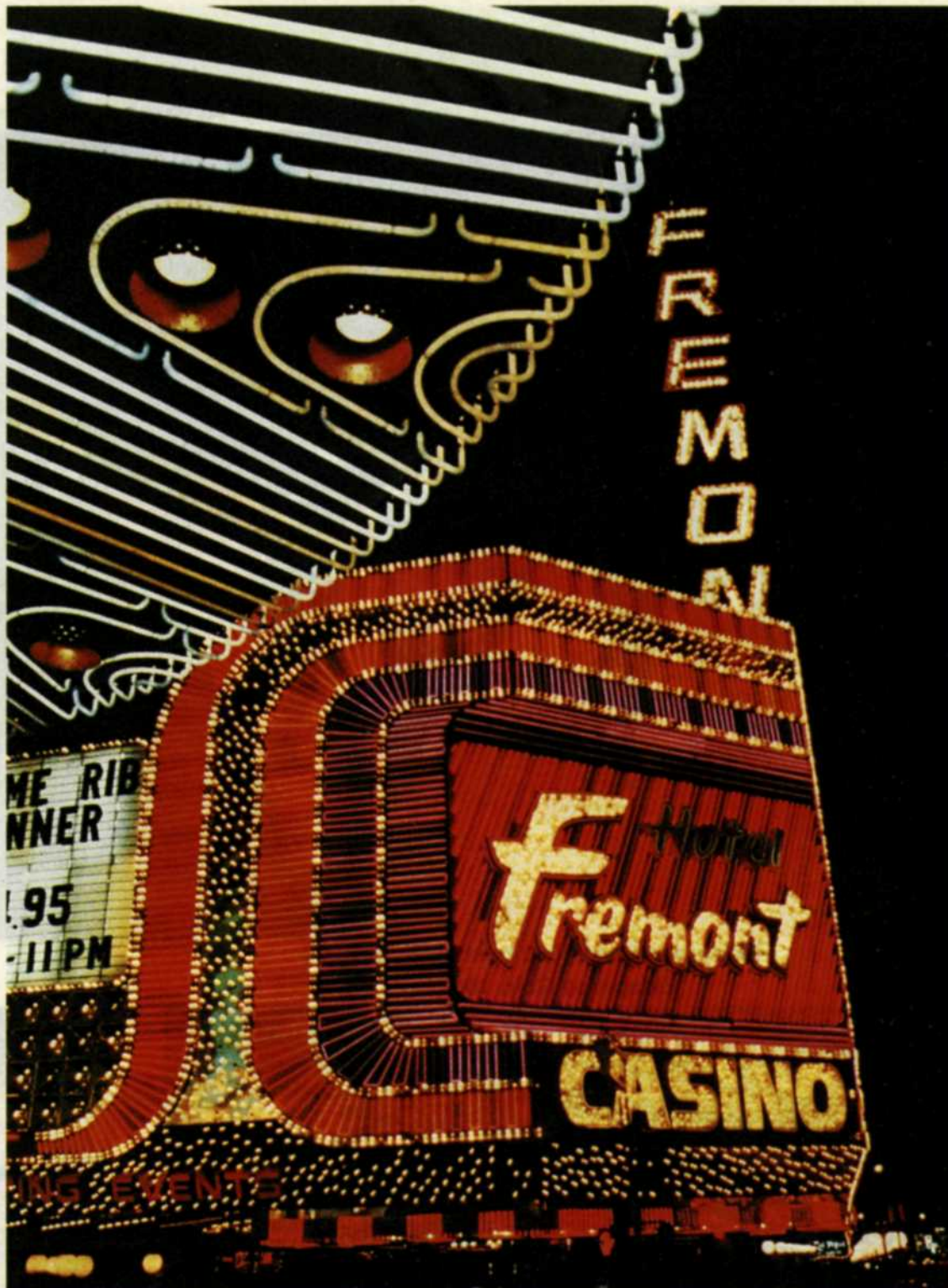
The 1600 contrast range was somewhat higher, and therefore the film had less exposure latitude. The grain of the 1600 Ektapress was larger than that of its two partners, but we were still able to make excellent color enlargements up to 11×14 with small grain patterns. What really surprised us was the resolution of the 1600 film. We were able to read small street signs in tiny portions of the photos.

We loved using the Ektapress 400 and 1600 for indoor photography. For example, while other photographers in the Cousteau press conference blasted away using flash, we quietly let the motor rip through a roll of film in seconds. We got great results while the other photographers ended up with exposure problems and harsh shadows.

Another new twist to the Ektapress films is Kodak's code designations for the films: PPA=ISO 100, PPB=ISO 400, PPC=ISO 1600. Simple as A, B, C. We did have some problem with the appearance of the 100 and 400 films in that they looked very similar to T-Max packaging—so much so, in fact, that during a hurried shoot, we accidentally shot a roll of T-Max 400 instead of



Ektapress Gold 400



Ektapress Gold 1600



Ektapress Gold 100

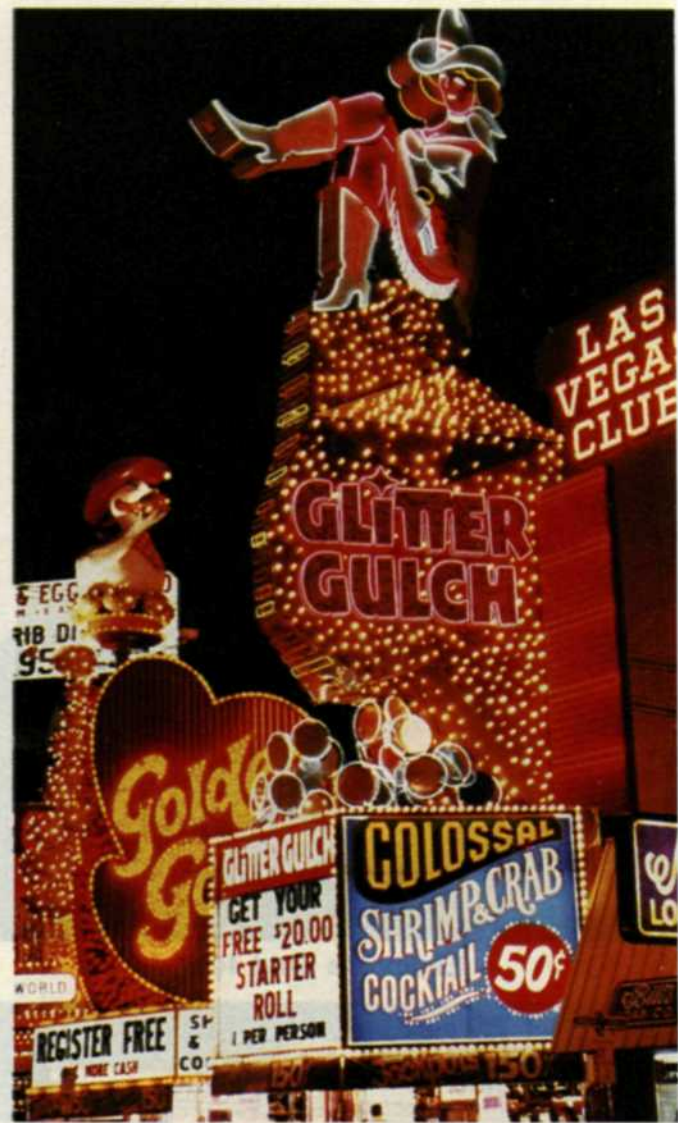
Ektapress Gold 1600



Ektapress Gold 1600



Ektapress Gold 1600 pushed to EI 6400
Ektapress Gold 100



Ektapress Gold 400
Ektapress Gold 1600



KODAK EKTAPRESS

Ektapress 400.

A unique aspect of the Ektapress films is their ability to provide quality negatives even with push-processing. With all pre-Ektapress films, any increase in processing time, to compensate for pushing, caused a color cross-over between color layers, and a great loss of shadow detail. The result was a flat, grainy, colorless print—not up to professional standards.

To solve this problem, Kodak introduced into Ektapress 400 and 1600 very large, slow-developing crystals that do not activate unless the normal processing time is exceeded. If the film is underexposed one stop, the developer time is increased by 30 seconds. When the process reaches the end of the normal processing time, these extra crystals "kick in," and extra DIAR couplers are released to keep each color layer in line. The results are sharp, full-color prints from EIs as high as 6400. Normal development time is 3 minutes, 15 seconds; time for a one-stop push (to EI 3200) is 3 minutes, 45 seconds; and time for a two-stop push (to EI 6400) is 4 minutes, 15 seconds.

When we returned from Las Vegas, all the films were processed and then printed on a mini-printer. We found that both Ektapress 100 and 400 negatives used the same filter pack as the amateur Gold films, but the 1600 film had more base density, requiring longer exposures, and a slight filter correction (for a slight red shift).

While testing Nikon's F4 camera, we used some of the Ektapress 1600 at a local indoor track meet. We needed sequential shots of the various events, and using flash was out of the question. A meter reading indicated that subject blurring would occur with the lens aperture wide open using ISO 1600 film. We reset the ISO to 6400 and rechecked our meter. An exposure of $1/50$ at $f/2.8$ seemed to be acceptable, but the question was, what about the results? We were amazed with the results! We had never seen such sharp, colorful pictures produced at such a high film-speed rating.

If you take the ISO ratings of Kodak's three new Ektapress films, and add the EI's from pushing these films, you have films with speeds of 100, 400, 800, 1600, 3200, and 6400. Kodak, you have created six professional color negative films for the photojournalist, not three! Are you done now—or at least for a couple of months? ■

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