

# FORTE FILM SYSTEM

New Contenders in the  
B&W Film Market

by Jack and Sue Drafaahl

## PHOTOGRAPHIC'S USER REPORT

Black-and-white has been the cornerstone of photography since the first photographic image was recorded in 1826. Even today, beginning-photography students record their first attempts at photography on black-and-white film, and eagerly process their efforts in the darkroom. Many professional photographers swear by the qualities of black-and-white, and there seems to be a trend by many to return to the simplicity of monochrome photography.

With this added interest in the genre, we are seeing a new crop of films, developers, and papers for the black-and-white enthusiast. GMI Photographic has introduced an entire such line. In this report we will center on GMI's new offering of Forte films—Pan 100, Pan 200, Pan 400, and Portrait Pan 100—and their companion chemistry, Zonal Pro Gamma Plus.



Forte films with Zonal Pro Gamma Plus developer.

# FORTE FILM SYSTEM



ALL PHOTOS BY AUTHORS

**Forte Portrait Pan 100**

## FORTE PAN 100

This emulsion is designed for general-purpose photography, in which the lighting is reasonably bright. Forte Pan 100 is a fine-grain emulsion that is sensitized so that its spectral sensitivity to sunlight and tungsten light is almost the same. This will ensure the tonal values of a given color will record the same in both types of lighting conditions. Forte Pan 100 has the best contrast range, from highlight to shadow, of the four films in this review. We found it to be ideal for landscapes, macrophotography, portraits, and any subject where we could control the scene.

The latitude of this film, under normal processing conditions, will produce detail in subjects from two stops under to three stops over the metered brightness, allowing it to record a scenic brightness range of five stops. Using pull-processing techniques (reduced developing time), we found we could add another three stops to this range, bringing the total brightness-range coverage to eight stops. The film can also be pushed one stop with extended development. GMI Photographic offers this emulsion in both 35mm and 120 formats. Forte Pan 100 can be processed in most black-

and-white developers, from 60–100° F, if necessary.

## FORTE PAN 200

This emulsion is unique in that it is the only black-and-white film on the market with an ISO 200 rating. You may wonder, why the need for an ISO 200 film when the 100 and 400 films have so much latitude? We feel that by offering an ISO 200 film, Forte gives the photographer more camera flexibility without the need to make processing adjustments in the darkroom. That extra stop of speed gives one the ability to stop the action a little better, or obtain better results under less-than-perfect lighting conditions.

The Forte Pan 200 emulsion has the same spectral response to both sunlight and tungsten as the Forte Pan 100, which keeps the tonal separation the same as you move from one light source to the next. The sharpness of 200 is very close to 100, but with a slightly larger grain pattern. Processing times for Forte Pan 200 can be extended longer than the 100 emulsion, allowing for additional pushing speed.

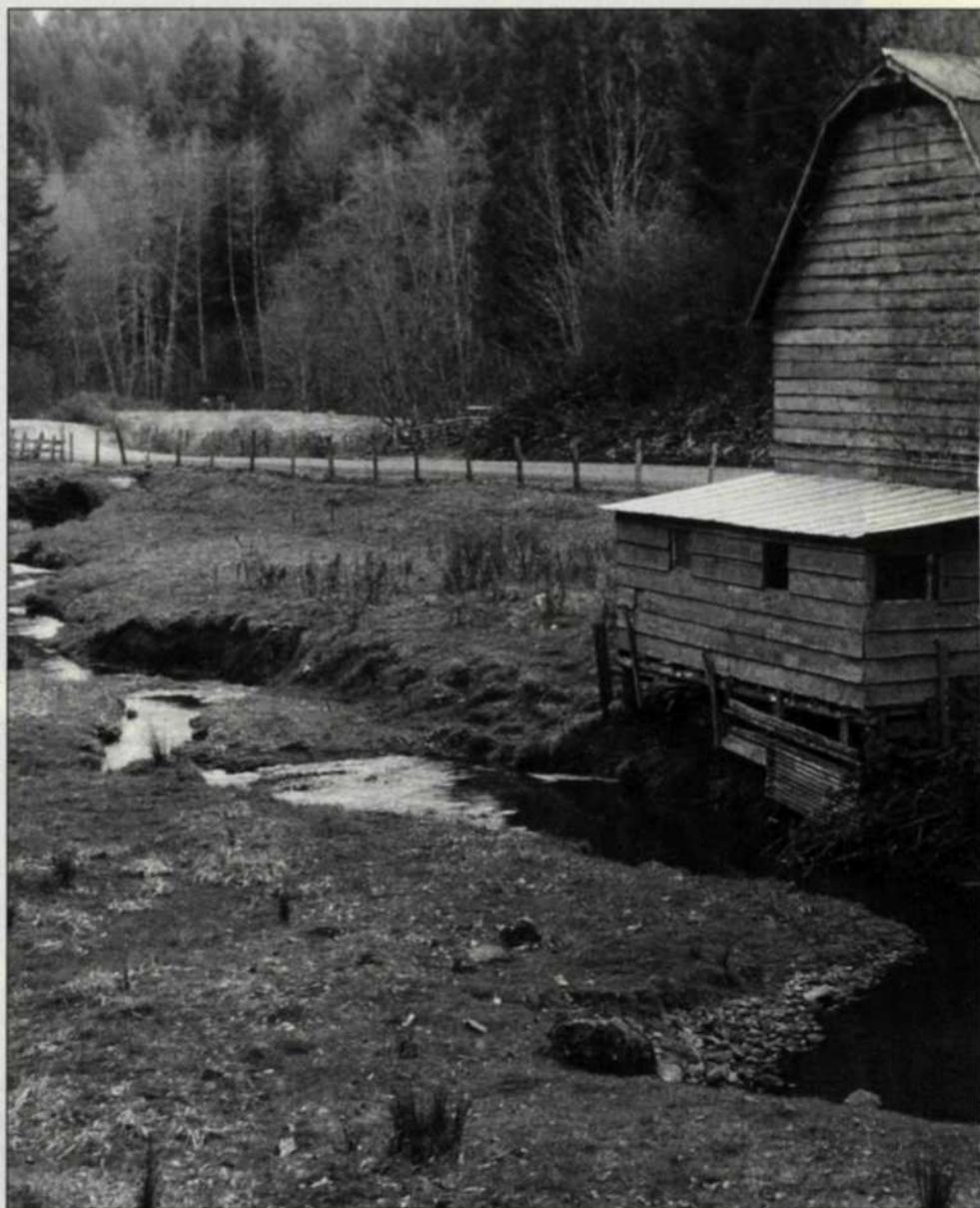
The film's scenic-brightness-range latitude of six stops (two under and four over) under normal development can be

extended to about ten stops with pull-processing, giving the film a combined latitude of ten stops of exposure. Forte Pan 200 is available in 35mm, 120, 4x5, and 8x10 formats, and can be processed in most general black-and-white developers, at temperatures from 68–100° with little change in quality.

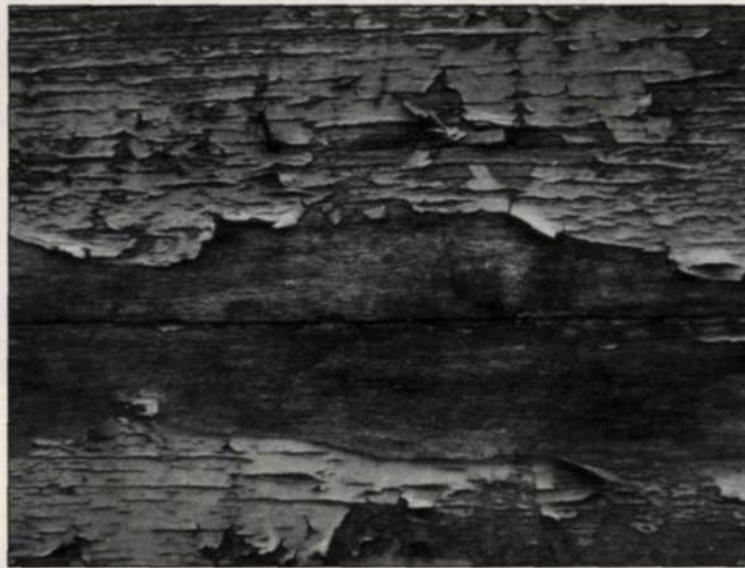
## FORTE PAN 400

The workhorse of the Forte group is, surprisingly, the 400-speed film. This high-speed emulsion uses a special double-emulsion layer, in which one captures the highlights, and the other records the shadows. Considering the fact that most high-speed photos are taken in contrasty lighting, the combination of these two emulsions makes this film "zing" in those difficult lighting situations.

Better yet is the fact that when you push this film several stops, you don't lose the shadow detail that is often lost with other films when they are pushed to the limit. Obviously, the grain structure is larger than with the slower ISO films, but it is still very fine for this speed. The spectral response between sunlight and tungsten is the same except for red, to which it is more sensitive under the tungsten lights.



**Forte Pan 400**



Forte Pan 200



Forte Pan 100

With normal processing, the film will record detail in subjects from three stops dimmer than the metered subject to four stops brighter. This seven-stop scenic-brightness-range latitude can be extended to nine stops through pull-processing. The film can also be push-processed up to EI 3200, with increased development. We developed the film from 3–20 minutes, and got usable negatives—that's a heck of a lot of development latitude! Forte Pan 400 is available in 35mm, 120, 4x5, and 8x10 formats. As with the other Forte films, Pan 400 can be processed in a variety of general developers from 68–100°.

#### FORTE PORTRAIT PAN 100

This special version of the Forte Pan 100 is specifically designed for the portrait photographer. The main difference between the portrait film and standard Forte Pan 100 is the film coating. Both the base and the emulsion sides of Portrait Pan have a matte retouching surface, so portraits taken with this film can easily be retouched. The resolution drops very slightly, compared to the standard 100 film, due to the added retouching surfaces.

The latitude of this film is at least one stop greater than that of Forte Pan,

putting it at about two stops under and four stops over. The film can be pushed a stop, and three stops of scenic brightness range can be added through pull-processing. Forte Portrait Pan 100 comes in 120 format only, and can be processed from 68–100°.

#### FILM PACKAGING

The packaging, labeling, and general look of these films is quite different from other black-and-white films on the market. One clue as to the reason for this difference is evident when you first look at the sides of the film box. These four films are manufactured by the Forte Photochemical Company in Hungary. They have a different set of guidelines for packaging films, such as no plastic containers—each roll or sheet of film is wrapped in paper foil and sealed for freshness. Even the film boxes themselves have the look of recycled paper, although the box does not indicate this.

The 35mm films are half-frame numbered, and the 120 films do not have frame numbers at all. The only feature we found missing was DX coding—we prefer being able to switch from one film to another without worrying that the correct film value was set on the camera.

## ZONAL PRO GAMMA PLUS DEVELOPER

GMI Photographic, Inc., also offers a special chemistry for black-and-white photographers: the Zonal line. This developer, and its chemical counterparts, are manufactured by Alta Photographic, Inc. The other chemicals include Vara Soft and Factor One print developers, Archival Rinse, EC Rapid Fixer, Fixer Hardener, Wet & Dry wetting agent, and Development Restraint.

The Gamma Plus film developer is a low-activity, compensating developer that allows the photographer to process films from 3–20 minutes, depending on temperature and exposure index. Processing temperatures can range from 60–100°, and mixing ratios can vary from a 1:1 mixture to 1:30. Zonal Pro Gamma Plus will process Kodak, Agfa, Ilford, Fuji, and Forte Pan films. The compensating qualities of the developer result in fine grain and nice, long tonal gradation from black to white. The shelf life of the Gamma Plus developer can be from 1–3 years, depending on storage conditions.

#### FIELD TESTS

All the tests using the Forte films and Gamma Plus developer were run in our Wing-Lynch rotary film processor at temperatures from 68–100°. Changing developing times from 68° to 100° was a matter of extending the time-temperature chart until we had our new times. We found very little difference in quality between the two temperatures. Each test was run twice, using different camera bodies, in order to eliminate any possibility of error. Push tests were made under a controlled studio environment, so we could easily control lighting ratios and changes in exposure. Additional tests were also run using Kodak T-Max developer and the Forte films, so we could see how much the developers differed.

We found the Forte-Gamma Plus system to be so flexible, that testing is a must before you concentrate on your best black-and-white work. We assume that most photographers using this film and developer combination will have a unique system that may differ from the next photographer's, and therefore, testing is required.

#### CONCLUSION

Whether you like to dabble in black-and-white only once in a while, or you make your living as a professional, you will enjoy the versatility of the Forte film family and the Zonal Pro Gamma Plus developer.

For further information, contact GMI Photographic Inc., 1776 New Highway, P.O. Drawer U, Farmingdale, NY 11735; (516) 752-0066. □