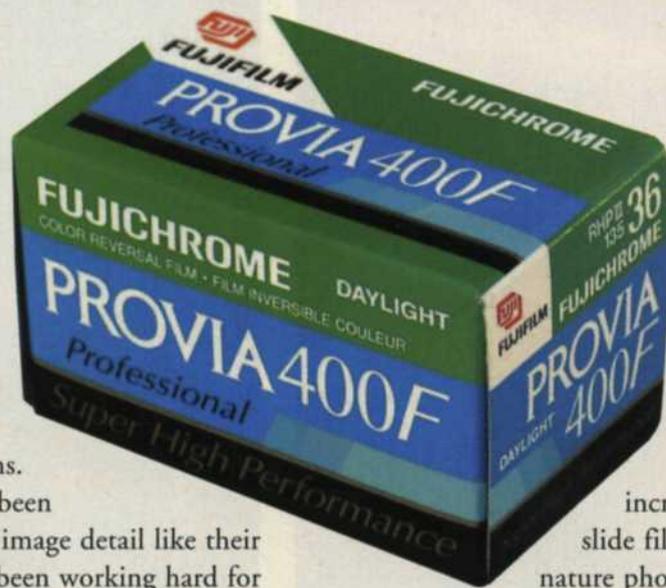


Fujichrome Provia 400F

Fine Fine-Grain 400-Speed Slide Film

Text and Photos by
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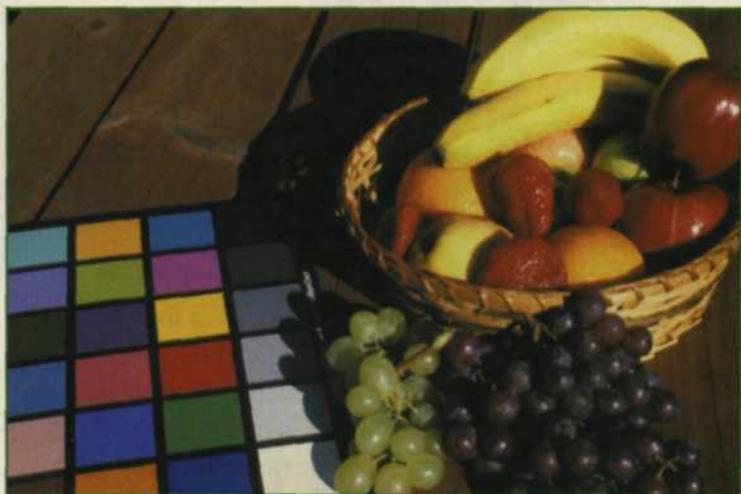
It just seems that film manufacturers keep making photographers' lives easier. Film technology today has resolved most photo problems related to speed, grain, color, saturation, sharpness and tonal gradation. It is tough to find a bad emulsion today. The only area of exception is with high-speed slide films. Typically, high-speed slide films have been contrasty, grainy, and couldn't resolve image detail like their lower ISO counterparts. Fujifilm has been working hard for an answer to this problem and now presents its solution in Provia Professional 400F (RHPDIII).

This improved emulsion shares the Sigma Technology found in Provia 100F. This allows the film to feature superfine grain, yet have ISO 400 speed for capturing fast action or shooting in low light levels. The previous version of Provia 400 (which was by far the finest-grained ISO 400

slide film) had an RMS granularity value of 15, while the new Provia 400F has reduced that number to 13. That is quite a drastic reduction in grain, which definitely warrants a WOW for this improved emulsion.

So why is there such an increased interest in high-speed slide films? Just ask any sports or nature photographer and you will quickly have an answer. Even though both types of photography are quite different, they share similar problems. Subject movement requires higher shutter speeds to stop the action, whether it be a fast-moving motorbike or a hawk making a winged escape. Both photographers use longer-than-normal lenses, which also tend to require higher shutter speeds due to their long focal lengths, but whose smaller

Fujichrome Provia 400F produces accurate colors and a good tonal range, similar to those of its slower counterpart, Provia 100F. Grain is amazingly fine for ISO 400 speed, and sharpness is excellent. The extra speed provides faster shutter speeds to freeze action, or smaller apertures for increased depth of field—and you don't pay a big price for these benefits. The film even survived a trip through airport carry-on luggage x-ray machines—although we can't guarantee that'll always be the case. Provia 400F scans very well, too. A great film!



maximum apertures work against that.

Another factor is the level of light itself. It always seems that the elusive deer hides in the shadows and race-car events are held on overcast days. As the light level drops, you have to open the lens aperture to compensate. Eventually you will run out of f-stops and have to reduce the shutter speeds. The subject movement will then start to blur the image, so your only solution is to use a higher ISO film. A jump from ISO 100 to ISO 400 may not seem like a lot, but an exposure factor of 4X means images are four times sharper, or you gain 2 stops' greater depth of field. Often this is a critical factor is capturing the image.

Our testing phase of Provia 400F started at our home base in Oregon and continued at the 2002 Photo Marketing Association (PMA) tradeshow in Orlando, Florida. We settled on a Nikon F5 and the more compact Nikon N8008 for traveling. Our Nikkor lenses ranged from a 20mm to a 75–300mm zoom.

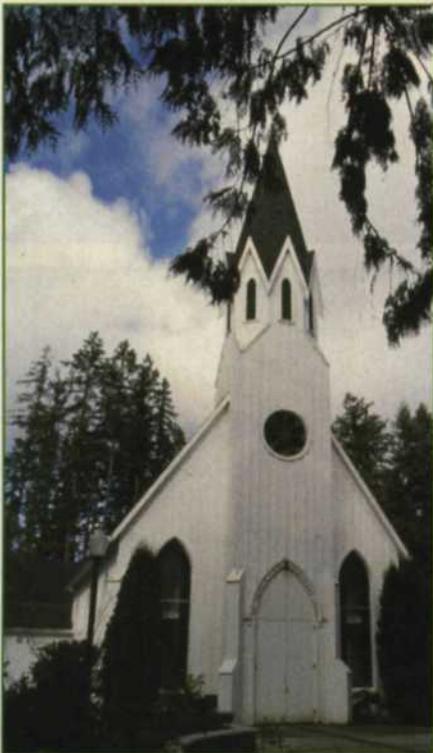
We shot an initial test roll on our morning beach walk to confirm the film's ISO rating and to insure that all systems were properly working. The ISO rating proved to be very close to the rated 400, or if anything, maybe even slightly

more. The color saturation and tonal range looked very good, so we packed the rest of the film and headed to Florida.

When we travel by air, we normally hand check our film as a safety precaution. With airport security being so strict these days, we decided that hand checking film might prove to be a major hassle, so we sent it on through the carry-on luggage x-ray machines for all our flights. Just in case, we left a couple of rolls behind so we could still finalize the Provia 400F film test.

As we rode the bus to the PMA convention center, we passed a shopping mall with very large, colorful children's toys on the outside of the buildings. A large teddy bear and spinning top that stood more than 50 feet high, a Raggedy Ann doll, friendly crab, wooden blocks, and a beach ball were just daring us to capture them on film. Although there was no need for high-speed film, we wanted to see just how the film captured vivid colors, and this was a great setup.

Upon our return to Oregon, we ran into a very rare occurrence—nice sunny weather. So off we headed to our first scheduled test. Sand Lake is a great place for those who love to roam the sand dunes with ATVs and motorbikes. They were all having a great time cruising as



One generally doesn't think of an ISO 400 slide film as a landscape film, but Provia 400F does the job very well. The fine grain and great sharpness combined with added depth of field and hand-holdability add up to a first-rate film for scenic work. Provia 400F also pushes quite well to EI 800 and even 1600 with just a small increase in grain and contrast. It's a fine all-around film.

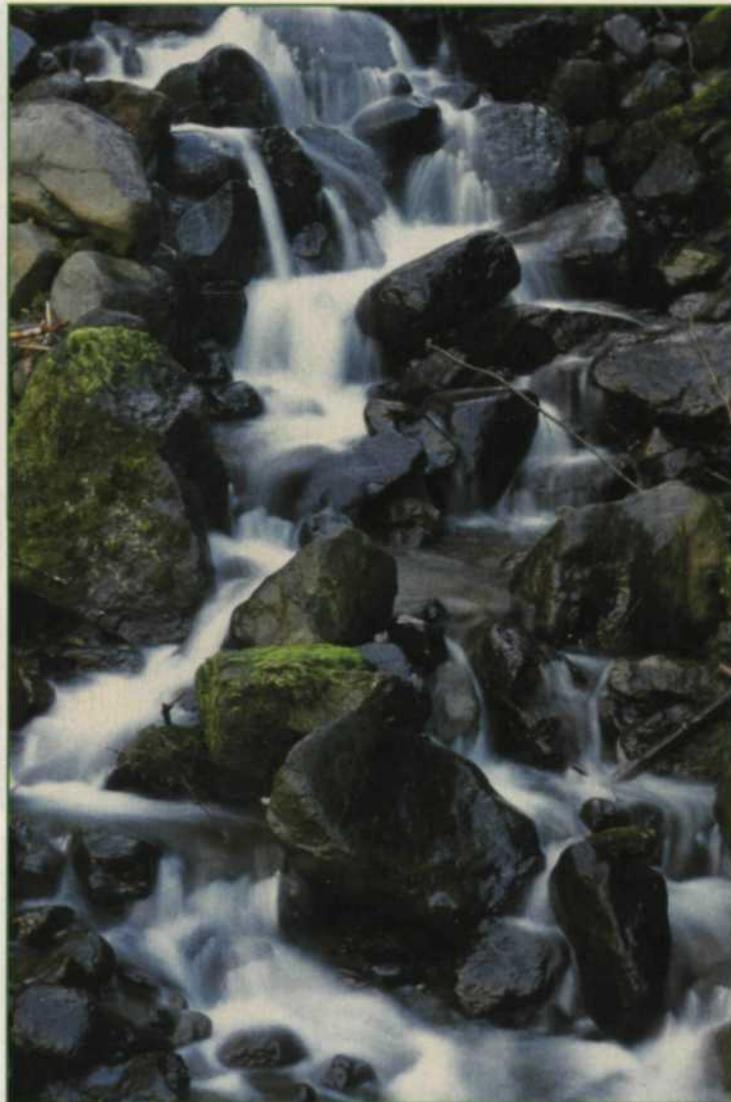
the sand flew in every direction. We zoomed and panned the action with the high shutter speeds the ISO 400 film provided.

Somehow the word got out about our film test, so it seemed all nature's critters were ready to pose for our cameras. A family of deer slowly moved in and out of the shadows providing a lighting ratio challenge for this film. Further down the road the egrets and blue herons wandering the shallows of the bay showed us their fishing techniques.

The final test was to see how Provia 400F does when pushed to EI 800 and 1600. Over the years we have avoided the fruit bowl test, but finally decided that we had to do at least one. We threw in a MacBeth color chart along the side, and made sure that each of the white to black squares were in sunlight and shade. Now that all the film was shot and our deadline was quickly approaching, we started to process the film in our E-6 Wing-Lynch processor.

Some other photo pros had already raved to us about this film's quality, so we expected great results from Provia 400F. A few hours later the film was dry and laying out on the light box, ready for inspection. At first glance, everything we were told was quickly confirmed. Wow!

We are happy to say that this is the finest grain ISO 400 slide film we have seen to date. It is better than most of the ISO 200 slide films and comes very close to most ISO 100



slide films. We saw no damage from the airport x-ray machines, but still recommend hand checking if possible. The tonal range and color saturation were excellent and very close to Provia 100F's. The balance is so close that it can be mixed with the lower-ISO Provia 100F in presentations and with slide scanner profiles.

Speaking of scanners, we also ran a test using the new grain-reduction technology from Applied Science Fiction that is found in the Nikon 4000 ED film scanner. We used it with Provia 400F to further reduce the grain level to more closely match that of an ISO 100 film. Since many of the images today end up in a digital format, this film works great and becomes the best of both worlds.

Moving on to the push tests. We did find a small increase in grain and contrast when we pushed the film to EI 800, and slightly more when we pushed it to EI 1600. Overall, the results were very acceptable and provided remarkable film speed for slide film. Although we don't push film often, it's nice to know that Provia 400F can help save the day if push comes to shove.

When we reviewed Provia 100F, we felt that a new yardstick for ISO 100 slide films had been created. Thanks to Provia 400F, we now have a new yardstick for ISO 400 slide films. Best of all, they both are members of the same family, and come in both 35mm and 120 film formats. So what are you waiting for?

For further information, log on and check out www.fujifilm.com or call them at (800) 800-3854. ■