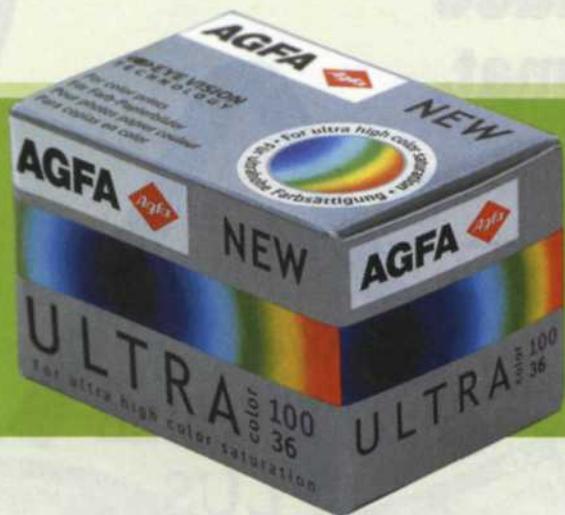


Agfa Ultra 100



New high-saturation color-print film works wonders on a wide range of subject matter

Text and photos by Jack and Sue Drafa

Agfa's most recent contribution to the unending variety of specialty films is Ultra 100, a high-color-saturation film that extends the boundaries of creativity to new levels. This new emulsion incorporates the same EYE Vision technology used in the Agfa Vista film family that allows you to shoot under fluorescent lighting without the aid of special color correction filters. It also takes advantage of the SXM (Surface eXtended Multi-structured) silver-halide crystals that are 50% more efficient than the old SEM crystals. These combined technologies produce a film that has high color saturation and fine grain, yet still maintains the ability to faithfully record a neutral color balance and accurate skin tones.

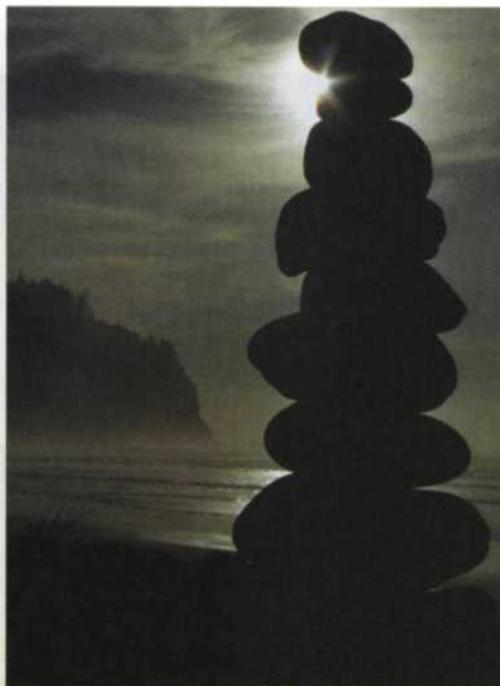
So how much color saturation are we talking about? Does this film have limited use, or does it work in almost all photographic situations? By quickly looking over the press releases and data charts on Ultra 100, we were able to discern that Ultra was designed for the photographer who likes intense color



The extra color saturation of Agfa Ultra 100 brings out the pastel colors of wood and grass (above), and accentuates the already-bright colors of flowers and leaves (left). This is an excellent film for a wide range of subject matter.

saturation. It seems that the film's increased color saturation is most obvious with subjects that normally have very low or very high color saturation. With Ultra 100, vibrant sunsets become even more vibrant, and on flat gray days that only have a hint of color, the colors become more accentuated.

Continued scanning of the Ultra 100 tech sheets, we noted the new film has an RMS granularity of 3.8, which makes it the finest-grained Agfa color-print film except for Portrait 160 (RMS 3.5). Ultra is balanced for daylight exposure, but with the new EYE Vision technology can be exposed under almost all lighting without the use of filtration. No reciprocity failure is apparent at exposure times from $\frac{1}{1000}$ second to one second, and those images requiring up to 10 seconds will need $\frac{1}{2}$ stop extra exposure. Exposures beyond that will require bracketing from +1 to +2 stops exposure.



Left: Ultra 100 has more going for it than just rich colors. For one thing, grain is extremely fine, as evident in the slightly out-of-focus background area.

Below left: The film's excellent latitude holds detail throughout this contrasty scene lit by off-camera flash.



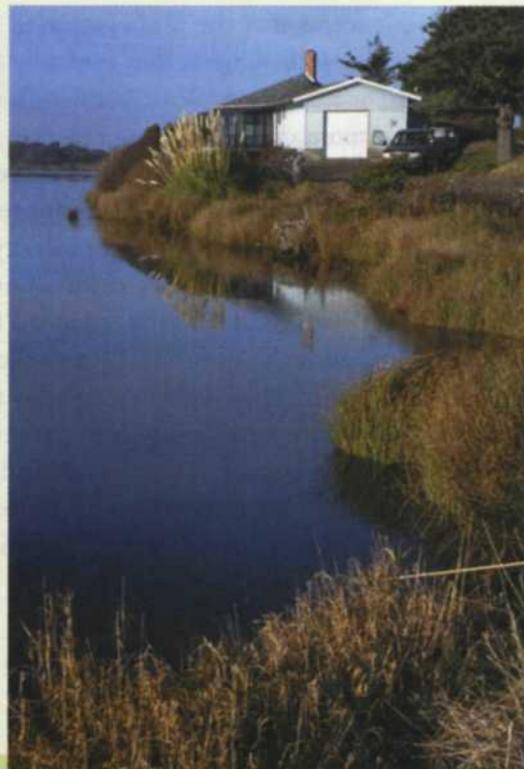
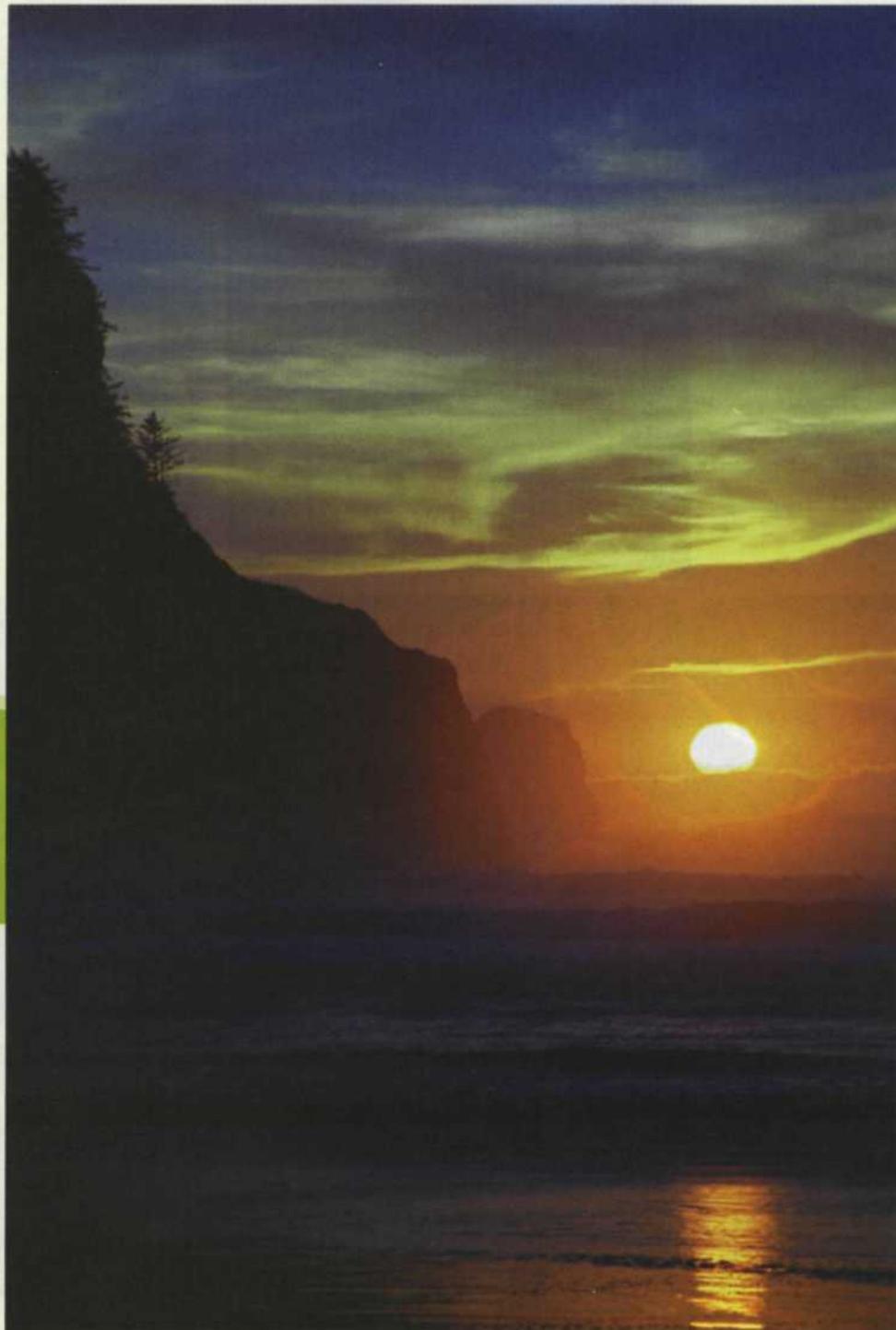
Before we took Agfa Ultra 100 out for a road test, we decided to give it a spin around the parking lot to see just what it was made of. We first processed a seven-stop exposure test using Ultra 100 and a roll of Agfa Optima 100 alongside for comparison. We found virtually no visible difference in the two strips of Agfa color-negative film other than the Ultra might actually have a bit more exposure latitude.

We scanned a couple of the test negatives to check compatibility with other Agfa emulsions and found them to closely match the color scanning profile of Agfa Vista, Futura, and Optima film emulsions. Further scanning tests with the bracketed set of negatives showed virtually no change in image quality in negatives rated from ISO 100 down to EI 12 (three stops overexposed). Images overexposed more than three stops required a reduction in contrast with the film scanner, while underexposed negatives required an increase in scanner contrast. With these minor corrections to the under and over images, we were able to get a close match on all seven stops of exposure.



Above: Partly cloudy skies softened contrast, while Ultra 100 kept tones rich and captured the fine detail of the sand sticking to the surfaces of these storm-beached kelp plants.

Left: Here's a subject that combines saturated and subtle colors, along with lots of fine detail. Ultra 100 handled it very well indeed in flat lighting.



Left: Here, Ultra 100 enhanced the subtle blues and magentas of the sunset.
Above: In overcast lighting, Ultra 100 increased the contrast between the yellow-greens of the grass and the blues of the sky.

The only thing left to do was to turn off our computers, hang out the “gone shooting” sign, and venture into the best part of film testing. Normally our film testing scheduling is designed around time restraints, weather, and other assignments we have on the docket. When the Agfa Ultra 100 test came up, we had no scheduled trips, and had decided to shoot the test locally.

Just two weeks before we were to complete the Ultra 100 article, the good folks from 120-foot dive boat *Nai'a* invited us to fill in a couple of vacancies for a week-long cruise in Fiji. Not to argue with fate, we scrambled to find airfares, packed our bags, and headed for Fiji.

This was perfect as we always like to include flowers in our film tests, and our winter gardens in Oregon are looking quite bleak. Since Fiji is below the equator, it is summer, so we should have plenty of blooming flowers for our film test.

Our first day we spent on the main island waiting to board the dive boat. We loaded up our camera bag with some Ultra 100, our compact Nikon N8008 traveling

companion and ventured among the beautiful flower gardens of Fiji. We tried sunlight, flash-fill, distant shots, and close-ups to see how this new emulsion could really handle color saturation.

After that, we had a few days of fun and sun as we enjoyed the beautiful Fijian waters. Along the way we had the chance to visit one of the local Fijian villages and enjoy some entertainment by our crew, so both were captured on the Ultra 100 emulsion.

Once we finished our cruise, we had a full day waiting for our return plane to the US, so we took the opportunity to do some sightseeing. In downtown Nadi there is a very colorful temple that looked perfect for a film test. It was very ornate and featured paint of every color. We had partially overcast skies, so this saturated film would really be put to the test. There were also curio shops everywhere we turned, so we just had to check them out too!

Arriving back in Oregon a full half day before we left Fiji (thanks to the International Dateline), we decided to rest a bit, and answer the millions of calls and heaping stacks of mail, before preparing a few final test images of this film.

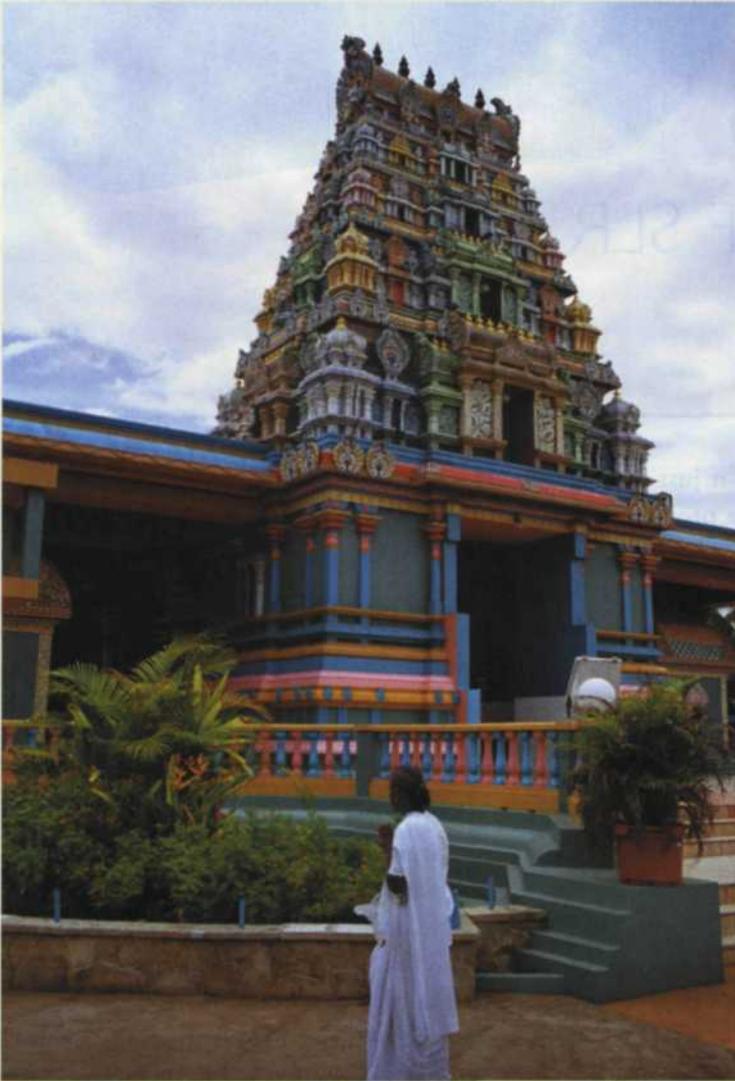
A stroll along the beach at sunset provided the colorful sunset we never experienced in Fiji. As we scoured the beach looking for new subjects for our tests, we noticed strange piles of rocks that stretched up the beach as far as we could see. Some were near the water's edge, and others were up high on the beach. Either a group of kids had a good time at the beach or we have our own unsolved mystery. Whatever the answer, we made these unusual

structures the final images of our film test.

Back at the lab our deadline was just days away, so we did our final film processing. This film was very impressive. It had extremely fine grain, and the grain in the out-of-focus areas was almost nonexistent. The overall sharpness was excellent, so this film would allow for extreme enlargements and cropping.

Agfa Ultra 100 boasted maximum color saturation and the colorful temple images told the tale. They exhibited fine detail and wide variety of highly saturated colors that zinged from pastels to intense hues. The fine grain and high resolution of Ultra 100 allowed us to zoom in and crop several of the temple images to more appealing formats.

The colors of the Fijian flowers were vivid and accented



by the film's increased color saturation. The film did a great job of recording the red flowers on green backgrounds, but most spectacular were the large yellow flowers on the deep blue background. The increased color saturation created some very dramatic images without allowing the colors to be overwhelming.

We found that the film worked well in most every situation. Even with the higher color saturation, the skin tones of the cute village children came through perfectly.

Finally, we took a close look at the bracketed images of the color chart to determine the film's latitude. Negatives shot from $-1\frac{1}{2}$ stops to $+3\frac{1}{2}$ stops were excellent. From $-1\frac{1}{2}$ to $+2\frac{1}{2}$ there was no visible change in color or contrast, and only a slight increase in contrast as it approached $+3\frac{1}{2}$ stops.

So, when would you use this film? From what we can ascertain from our tests, this film would work well anytime you plan on shooting an ISO 100 color-negative film. Although the color saturation is higher, it is not so intense that it restricts your subject matter. Its fine grain and resolving power make it a great companion for your camera bag, wherever your travels may take you.

For more information or technical data sheets on Agfa films and other related products, log onto the Web at www.agfa.com. ■



Along with its great color rendition, Ultra 100 keeps whites white (above left). Red clay colors are enhanced (left), and the high-saturation flower scene (above) is captured beautifully.