JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL

Fujifilm Provia 100F

Fujifilm's introduction of Provia 100F (RDPIII) was somewhat slow at the start. We saw some examples at PMA '99, but getting test rolls was tough. We were amazed at the enlargements Fuji displayed in their booth. They were spectacular, and the grain was almost non-existent. This looked like a film too good to be true—only time would tell.

Several months later, we finally got our hands on enough rolls for a full test and it was well worth the wait. By the time we received the film, we had read reams of material expounding on the film's good looks. It was touted as having the finest grain pattern of any slide film on the market, including those in the ISO 25–50 category. We even had to re-read the data when saw an RMS film rating of 8. That number seemed almost impossible when we checked and found Velvia had a RMS value of 9, and Astia a 10. Wow! We also read that Provia 100F could be pushed up to 2 stops and pulled ½ stop in processing. This was going to one fun film test!

To fully understand how this is possible, we dug deeper into the data sheets until we came upon five specific technologies that make Provia 100F the powerhouse that it is. Some technical advancements are new, while others are improvements to current Fujifilm technologies. We normally try to stay away from too much technical jargon, but this film has so much behind its makeup, it would be an injustice to skip this data, so we will make it brief.

Super-fine Sigma-Crystal Technology: This new technology combines Fujifilm's Sigma-Crystal and Super Uniform Grain technologies to create a fine grain level never before attained. In addition, this technology maintains a true ISO 100 rating so that no compensation is necessary. This technology is also responsible for a better reciprocity response and improved detail in the shadows.

Micro-grain Solubility Control Technology: During processing silver halide solvents enhance interlayer effects and the pushing potential of the film. These same solvents tend to deteriorate the super fine grain, so Fujifilm added a new process that negates this effect to maintain a very fine grain pattern.

Advanced DIR Technology: This technology has been around for some time, but Fuji reworked it so the film could give the best color rendition possible. This technology is also responsible for the great push-processing capabilities.

Yellow Dye Technology: A new type of yellow filter replaces the standard yellow colloidal silver in the yellow filter layer. This new layer has better spectral characteristics and improves the film's color tolerance and ability to keep a good color balance during push processing.

Advanced Emulsion Aging Stability Technology: This technology is responsible for minimizing color balance and sensitivity changes during long term film storage.

Field Use

If you're anything like us, you like to know there is a lot of great technology behind a new film, but what really counts is how it actually performs in the field. Normally when a new film comes into our lab, we test it, send the results to the magazine, and then move on to the next new film. Since this film took so long to appear in the marketplace, our testing period extended over several photo trips.

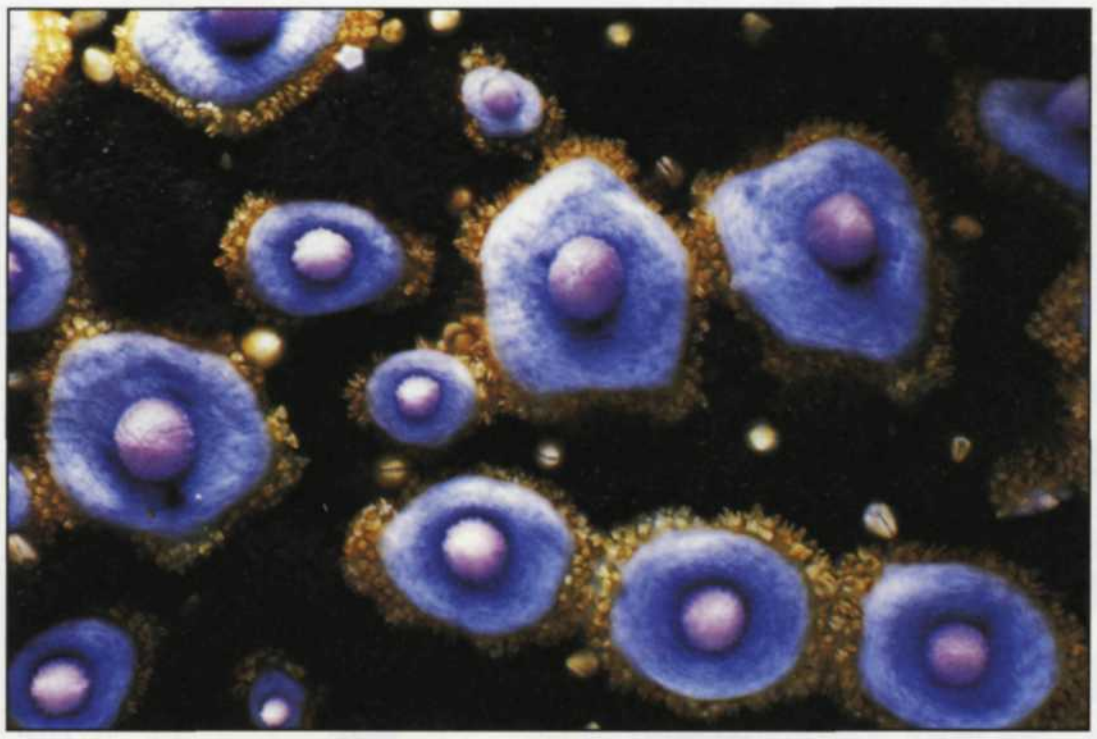
Over the years we have written several travel articles on Fiji for *Skin Diver Magazine*. We were just ready to lead a group of divers to Fiji to show them some great photo opportunities, when our Fujifilm Provia 100F arrived. A village visit for our group was planned, which was a perfect place to test Provia 100F. The lighting was extreme, but the subject matter was great. We photographed people, flowers, and landscape images to capture fabulous Fiji. We bracketed some of the more important shots with a +/– .7 stop latitude to ensure success.

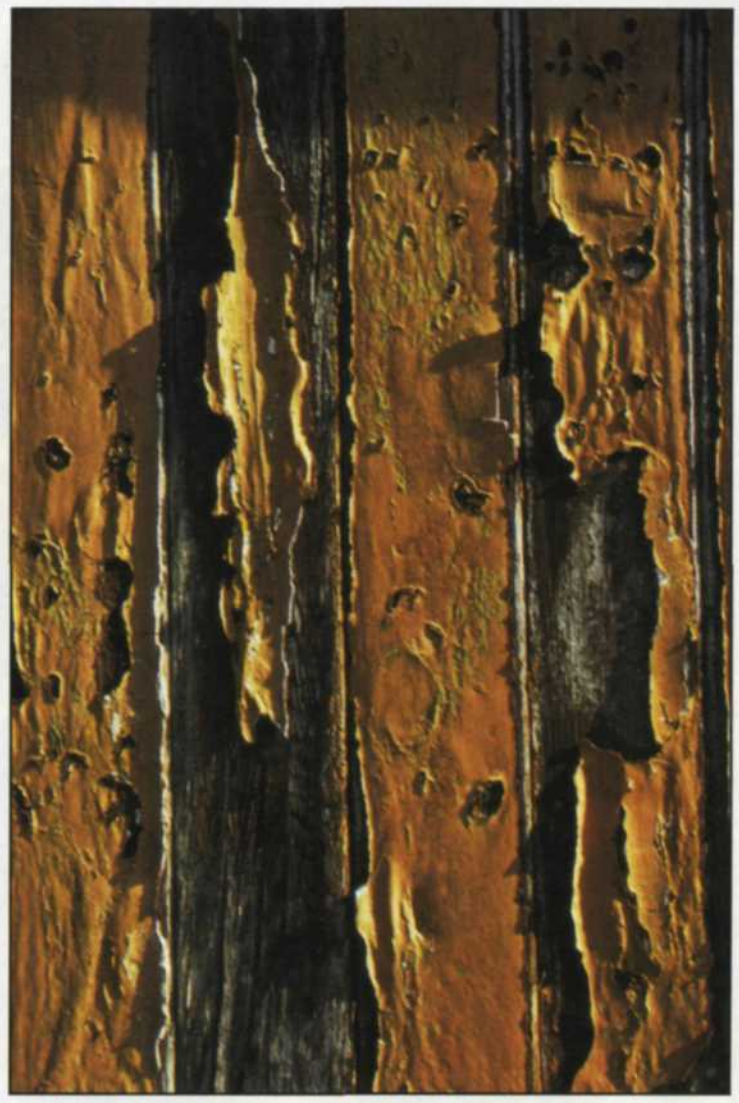
A couple of days after our return, we had all the film processed. As we examined the images, we were impressed. The sharpness was tack, the color saturated, and the grain… well, it did not exist. In most cases all three bracketed images were usable. Up to this point, our Fujifilm film choices were Velvia and Astia, but not anymore. We were ready to switch.

Push-Processing

Fujifilm said Provia 100F could be pushed, so we had to give it a try. A friend had just dropped off some freshly picked flowers, so we grabbed a grayscale chart to make the official push test. We shot the test on one roll using the bracket function, cut the film in thirds, and processed at normal, one-stop push, and two-stops pushed. We found the normal and one-stop push to be so close to each other that it was hard to tell them apart. The two-stop push did have a slight increase in the Dmax, but it was more than acceptable for a two-stop push.

Fujifilm also indicated that the film could be pulled. In theory, pulled film has a wider latitude, finer grain, and a lower ISO rating. We wondered if this fine grain film could actually achieve even smaller grain. We decided to go even further than Fuji's recommendation and pull the film a full stop by rating it at ISO 50. The results were excellent. We wouldn't recommend this as a normal setting, but you can feel confident that if you have a situation with extreme scene contrast, you can rate the film at ISO 50 and be very impressed with the results.





Images from our recent trip to Fiji fully field tested the latest Fujifilm offering, RDPIII, which proved to be an unbelievable performer in the areas of grain, push- pull processing, sharpness and color saturation.

As we were getting ready to put this article to bed, Jack was asked to join the final voyage of the millennium with Brooks Institute of Photography. (You noticed who had to stay home and hold down the fort!) The "Just Love" is a converted fishing trawler used by the school for the Underwater Photography program. We were working on a special underwater project photographing super-macro at 2:1 to 4:1 magnifications, so Provia 100F was perfect for the job. There was a Wing-Lynch E-6 film processor onboard, so we were able to process several rolls and see the incredible results. We were photographing subjects we could barely see, and getting colorful images with crystal sharp detail. Provia 100F had helped open a door into an incredible tiny world.

You may wonder how we can get excited about performing a new film test every month. It is actually easy, because we never know what film manufacturers have up their darkroom sleeves. Just when we think film advancements have leveled off, something like Provia 100F shows up. This film is going to be hard to beat, but who knows what other surprises Fujifilm has on the horizon.

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