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Agfa Vista

Text and Photos by Jack and Sue Drafaht, March, 2001



Versatile new color-print film comes in four speeds.

The ultimate goal for film manufacturers is to create emulsions that produce images that best represent what the photographer saw from behind the camera eyepiece. Agfa recently introduced its Vista 35mm color-negative film line featuring Eye Vision Technology. This new technology sensitizes the emulsion to provide more precise colors to better represent the perception of the human eye.



Vista 100 is the slowest and finest-grained member of Agfa's new color-print film family, with the widest latitude. It also has the highest color saturation, yet reproduces pastel tones equally well. It's one fine film.

The Vista family consists of 35mm films in four speeds: ISO 100, 200, 400 and 800. This is Agfa's first ISO 800 color-negative film ever. These Vista emulsions will replace the Agfa HDC+ line of consumer color-negative films.



Vista 200 is a stop faster than Vista 100, as its name implies. That extra stop of film speed means the ability to shoot hand-held

Agfa's Research and Development department found that the human eye could distinguish between each color with just three sensors (cones). Because of this, Agfa decided not to pursue the fourth-layer concept, and instead worked on improving the three layers so they more closely matched the sensitivity of the human eye. The results were a more-efficient silver-halide crystal technology called SXM or Surface eXtended Multistructured. The efficiency of these crystals has been improved 50% over the previous Agfa SEM crystal technology, resulting in enhanced color reproduction without sacrificing film speed.

A big improvement seen with this new Eye Vision Technology found in the Vista emulsions is regarding the blue and green tones that previously rendered as violet/purple or brownish tones due to an increased red component. In addition, photos taken

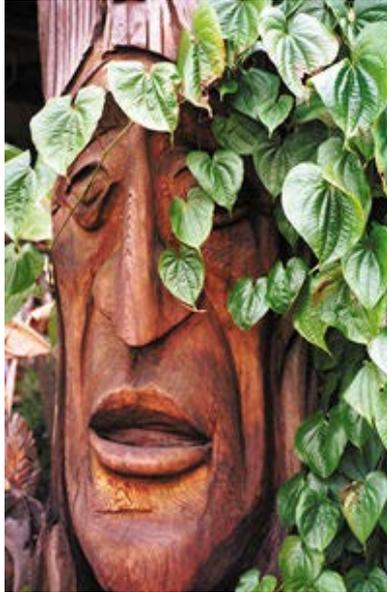
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in dimmer light, or with more depth of field, or at greater distances with flash. And you still get excellent image quality (but with a bit less tolerance for underexposure).



under fluorescent lighting, which were once recognizable by their greenish cast, now feature a reduced color distortion.

Agfa Vista 100: The Sunstar

The lowest-speed film in the Vista film family is designed for situations where you have sunny, cloudless skies or use electronic flash. This film is ideal for nature macro where extreme subject detail and fine grain, especially in the out-of-focus backgrounds, are crucial to the image impact. Vista 100 has a wide exposure latitude of -2 to +3 stops that translates to acceptable images from ISO 12-400! This emulsion offers high color saturation, yet it still has the ability to reproduce fine pastel colors.



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Vista 400 adds yet another stop of film speed, providing 4X the action-stopping power and twice the flash range of ISO 100, with little loss in image quality and exposure latitude. A fine general-use film.



Vista 200 excels in overcast lighting.

Agfa Vista 200: The Multistar

When you need an extra stop to compensate for the sun sneaking behind a cloud, increased subject action, or additional distance between the subject and your flash, then Vista 200 might be your best choice. One additional stop may not seem like a lot, but an increase of one shutter speed means your image will be twice as sharp. Or you can use the next smaller aperture and increase your depth of field by at least a third. That additional stop will also increase a maximum flash distance of 8 feet to 11 feet. As you can see, sometimes that additional stop of exposure can make all the difference. The exposure latitude of Vista 200 is slightly less than that of Vista 100 with a range of -1.5 to +3 stops, or ISO 25-640.

Agfa Vista 400: The Allstar

When the lighting and your subjects are constantly changing, you need a film that can handle a variety of photographic situations. Vista 400 has the two extra stops of speed to stop the action, compensate for low light, or to assure that the proper flash distance is attained. When compared to Vista 100, this emulsion can stop the action 4X better, provide increased depth of field, and double the maximum flash distance. The exposure latitude of Vista 400 is a bit less at -1 to +3 stops or ISO 50-800, but its range still makes it tough to miss an exposure.

Agfa Vista 800: The Superstar

This is a first for Agfa...they have never had an ISO 800 color-negative film before. Vista 800 offers the most advanced technology of the four emulsions, with six DIR couplers in its interlayers that improve the efficiency of the silver-halide crystal and decrease the grain size simultaneously. With a three-stop advantage over Vista 100, this low-light emulsion is designed to work in situations where it is tough

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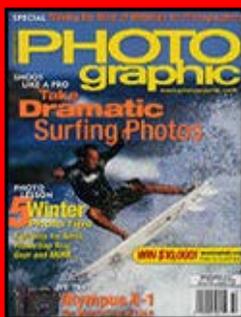
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to get sufficient exposure, even using flash. This film is ideal for situations requiring the use of long lenses, small apertures or extreme flash distances. Compared to Vista 100, the shutter speed is 8X faster, depth of field is extreme, and a flash distance of 8 feet with ISO 100 now extends to 22 feet. The exposure range of Vista 800 is -1 to +3 stops or a whopping ISO 100-1600.

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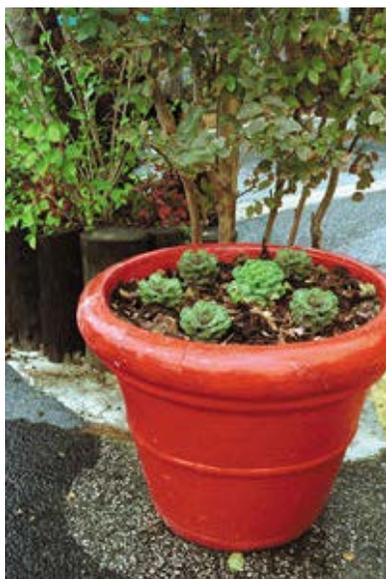
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Vista 800 is Agfa's first ISO 800 color-print film, and it's a dandy. It's great for situations requiring use of long lenses, small apertures or extreme flash distances. Image quality is amazing for the high film speed, and exposure latitude is the same as Vista 400's. The new Vista film family rocks!

Putting Vista to the Test

Over the years we have constantly battled the weather when performing film testing for Photographic. It always seems that there are more films to test in the winter months than in the warm, dry summer months, right? It may still rain in the summer, but at least it is warmer rain. Well, the forecast again was for rain, so we thought we would try to outsmart Mother Nature, and make a trip down to the Sunshine State—Florida. We arrived with a brick of each emulsion, a couple of Nikon F5s, and a battery of lenses, ready to really give the Agfa Vista a warm, sunny test. We should have figured that luck was not ours since Florida recently changed its name to the re-count state!

The rain came down in buckets. Trees were bending and boughs were breaking. Not at all what we expected after flying across the entire United States for a film test. We guess it's true that it's not nice to make fun of Mother Nature.



We did find a couple of breaks in the weather, and made a mad dash outdoors. The lighting was rather low, so we started the test with Vista 400 and Vista 800. As we moved around the Florida Panhandle, we found a general theme running throughout most of our photos—faces. Not the human type, but those faces painted on the sides of buildings, totem poles, and faces carved into wood. Thus we nicknamed this film test, The Many Faces of Agfa Vista.



For a very short time, the light level increased and we even saw a brief glimpse of the sun. We quickly switched from Vista 800 to Vista 200 and photographed around a brightly painted shopping center. The colors were quite extreme and varied from one building to the next. It would have

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been a photo tester's dream come true if the weather had been more cooperative.

With no improvement in weather in sight, we decided to finish the film testing back at home. Of course, back home they hadn't seen a drop of rain the entire time we were gone. As we landed in Portland, the co-pilot announced that the forecast was for rain. Oh well....we only had Vista 100 left to test, so we moved indoors with flash.

Luck would have it that we found one of the neighborhood children indoors working on a puzzle with her mom. What a great way to spend a rainy afternoon! Our two birds were very glad to see us after our trip and were more than willing to pose for Vista, and the modeling fee was peanuts. Our African Grey is great for testing neutral tones while our Scarlet Macaw covers the full color spectrum. They are both used to us taking pictures of them and love to ham it up.

Now that all the film was exposed, it was time to process it and analyze the results. Tests from all four emulsions indicated that the rated ISO for each film was a true ISO and did not require any compensation. The indicated exposure latitudes provided by Agfa also were right on the money. We noticed that the grain pattern from the Vista 100 to the Vista 800 had only a slight variation. Pretty amazing, huh?

The color saturation of the film exposed in the heavy-overcast weather was excellent, especially on the color shopping center buildings. Color packs for all four emulsions were very close, and all four emulsions easily scanned into our Nikon LS-2000 film scanner. One group of Vista 400 images taken of a walkway with red and blue markings and rich greenery was vibrant...exactly the way we had seen them in the camera. Guess that Eye Vision Technology really works!

Agfa Vista film should be available by the time you read this, in the familiar lengths of 135-36, 135-24+3, and 135-12+3. In addition, Vista 200 will also be available in the 110-24 format. You can find out more about the many faces of Agfa Vista at www.agfaphoto.com.