



Rangefinder Magazine Archives

First Exposure: Fujicolor NPS 160

by Jack & Sue Drafahl

Fuji keeps making improvements to their incredible lineup of professional films and their most recent is Fujicolor NPS 160 Pro. This film is designated as a portrait and wedding film offering natural skin reproduction and wide exposure latitude. Since these portraits offer extreme scene range with the white wedding dresses and black tuxedos, the amount of detail captured from white to black is critical. Fujicolor NPS 160 Pro performs well under mixed lighting, which makes it a perfect candidate for architectural and industrial photography as well.

Fuji's NPS 160 Pro is designed for photo situations that require excellent color reproduction. This film's emulsion has special configurations that allow the film to closely match the subject's color. This means both saturated and pastel colors fall in line to reproduce "the real thing" as closely as possible. This actual color reproduction is vitally important when photographing people since you need to capture the smooth, natural renditions of skin tones. In reality, the same exactness is also important in commercial, industrial and architectural photography. The color of a structure and its drapes or furnishings, for example, need to be exact. Industrial and commercial products have very specific colors and tonal values that must be accurately reproduced. In addition, all these photo conditions require a fine grain structure and wide exposure latitude to capture image detail in the shadows.

Fuji's improved NPS 160 Pro offers solutions to all these problems. The key ingredient that really makes this film work is its wide exposure latitude. NPS 160 Pro is a true ISO 160, meaning that no "fudge factor" is required to obtain the best results. Just set your meter to 160 and start shooting. You can bracket towards overexposure by as much as +4 stops for increased shadow detail. You can bracket as much as -3 stops in the other direction, but you will lose shadow detail and find a grain increase. So, this saves time when bracketing exposures, as you only have to go in one direction.

The heart of this improved film version is Fuji's innovative emulsion technologies. Fuji's N Real-Tone Technology allows this film to reproduce colors the way they are seen by the human eye. Its Fine-Grain Technology produces individual grains that are one-third smaller for smooth, tight images. NPS 160 Pro is a daylight-balanced film that works down to 1/44 second exposure with no color or exposure compensation. From 1/42 second to 2 seconds a +1/42 stop exposure correction is necessary. Fuji recommends exposures not exceed 2 seconds.

For best results, additional color filters such as an 81A, may be necessary for high color temperatures, such as cloudy weather or open shade. At the other end of the scale, low temperature filters, such as an 82A, should be used for morning and evening portraits. You can go without filtration in all of these situations and adjust the image in printing, but you may have to deal with color crossovers. When shooting under tungsten lights, you should use the tungsten version of the film, NPL 160 Pro, so you will not reduce your exposure by using color correction filters.

Now, the tests—we need to tell you right up front that we don't take very many traditional studio portraits. We would rather capture the moment outside in a more environmental situation. Better yet, we would rather take portraits of critters than humans. OK, so we don't fit the mold of the traditional portrait photographer, we enjoy doing what we do and that's what's important, right?

For the sake of the testing of Fuji NPS 160 Pro, we did arrange for some human portrait candidates, as well as a variety of other subjects. We figured that if this film was designed to work well capturing portraits, then it should work well in most any other situation.

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We headed out on one of our typical film test trips designed to make more than half a dozen stops throughout the countryside, netting us about the same amount of exposed film. We process half in a local lab, and the rest in our in-house lab. We did a little bracketing on our exposures, but deduced from an advance test roll that there was little need to bracket. We just exposed the rolls at ISO 160 and forgot all that fancy ISO manipulation.

Looking through the processed negatives, we found that images overexposed picked up a little contrast, but had little change in the grain pattern. The few underexposed images had an increase in the grain area, and lost some shadow detail.

The images exposed correctly had very nice tonal gradation, and reproduced all the colors very accurately. The skin tone on the portraits were right on, which makes NPS 160 a great film choice for portraits of humans and other critters.

When a manufacturer tells us that we shouldn't use a product a certain way, we always scratch our heads and say, "Why?" It's like they are daring us to try it and see what happens. Of course, we immediately try it, and that's what our testing is all about.

Fuji does not recommend exposing NPS 160 Pro for more than 2 seconds. We often find subjects, other than humans, that require longer exposures. Some long exposures capturing waterfalls were taken at 2-15 seconds in duration. They looked great with no color shift, so we're not quite sure why Fuji recommends against long exposures.

Fuji NPS 160 Pro comes in 35mm, 120, 220, and sheet films in 4x5, 8x10, 9x12cm, and 13x18cm sizes. Fuji also makes a NPL 160 for use under tungsten lights. If you need a higher ISO and similar contrast or saturation levels, the company offers NPH 400 Pro, and NHGII 800. Since lighting situations tend to change often during a photo session, we would recommend a roll or two of each film to cover all your bases.

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