



Kodak Black & White + 400

B&W prints from your one-hour lab, the easy way

by Jack and Sue Drafa



Some of the worst weather ever seen in the Northwest provided plenty of opportunity to really put Black & White + 400 to the test. And the new chromogenic black-and-white film responded to the challenge extremely well, delivering sharp, fine-grained images with beautiful tonality throughout, whether on distant vistas or close-up details.



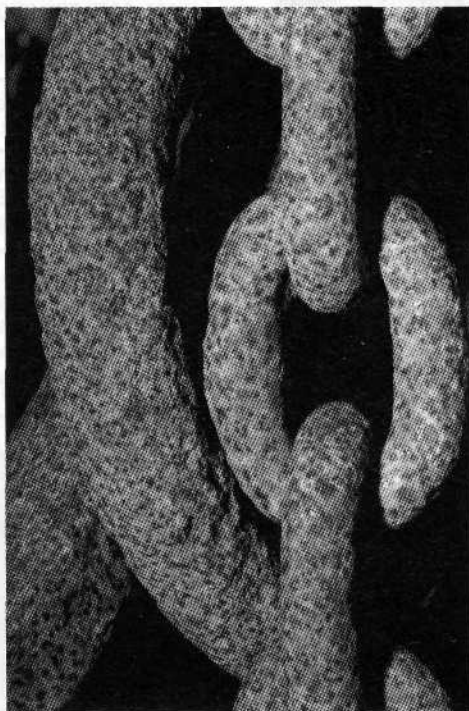
As we enter the last year of this century, Kodak adds a new and improved chromogenic black-and-white film to its Select Series film portfolio, which is designed to help photographers simplify their film choices. The concept of chromogenic films is not new at all. In fact, Kodak created the first such film 40 years ago for scientific research by the Atomic Energy Commission and NASA. Today, chromogenic films are becoming more popular because they incorporate the best of black-and-white film and color-negative film technologies.

The main advantage of the new Kodak Black & White + 400 film over traditional black-and-white films is the fact that it is processed in standard C-41 color-print film chemistry. Now you can expose this film just like any other black-and-white film, and process it along with your other color-negative films. Professional photographers may not see this as an advantage since they use professional processing labs. Pro labs have traditional black-and-white processing equipment and process film on a regular basis. Amateur photographers, on the other hand, don't always have access to a professional lab. No longer does any photographer have to hunt for a pro lab when every mini-lab processes C-41 hourly. It makes this an ideal film for photographers, professional and amateur alike, to exert their creative black-and-white juices.

One of the best features of this new film is its ISO 100 quality with ISO 400 speed. The exposure latitude actually extends from -2 stops to +3 stops (good prints can be made from negatives exposed at EI 50-1600—on the same roll!). The fine grain of this film is thanks to T-Grain technology and characteristics of chromogenic film processing. The processed images look like color negatives with an orange-brown mask, but have no negative color in the image. The negatives can be printed on standard black-and-white paper or even color paper. Some of the more advanced mini-labs may even offer special color print variations such as sepia, denim or cranberry.

This chromogenic film is as easy to use as any traditional black-and-white film. You can still use black-and-white filters for special applications, such as a red filter to darken blue skies or a green filter to enhance portraits. The grain pattern becomes smaller as you increase exposure and the grain increases as the film ISO is increased. The change in grain structure is due to the multi-ISO layer capabilities of this film.

If you have been printing on a standard black-and-white enlarger, you will need to adjust your use of contrast filters slightly. In most cases you will find that a one-filter-grade increase will yield the results to which you have been accustomed. Since much of the ability to control contrast through development adjustments has been removed with the C-41 process, you



will find yourself controlling contrast range more in printing than with the processing. Some die-hard black-and-white photographers may have a hard time giving up the processing control, but even they should find that the increase in image quality is worth it.

For photographers trying black-and-white film for the first time, the problem will not be adjusting to the film, but rather learning to see in black-and-white. As photographers who started out in black-and-white, we offer some words of advice: Black-and-white is a study of tonal values, shades of gray, lighting trends, contrast control, and emotional impact.

Black & White + 400 is a super film for fine detail, with fine grain and great sharpness, and the ability to produce excellent images at EI 50-1600 with no processing compensation.

Black-and-white is not better than color, nor is color better than black-and-white. Each provides us with a different way of looking at the world around us. The use of chromogenic films just speeds up the black-and-white learning curve with fast film turnaround.

For those of you reaching into digital photography, Black & White + 400 is a great film for scanning. Scan times are about three times faster than with color, and the digital process provides all the gamma, contrast, burning and dodging capabilities that black-and-white photographers have used for more than a century. With the high-quality inkjet printers on the market, black-and-white photography no longer needs to be done in a darkroom.

Our tests of Kodak Black & White + 400 came at the start of 1999, and at the end of the worst weather we have ever seen in the Northwest. The streets were under three feet of water, and we saw inches of snow on the beach for the first time in years. There was almost no color outside, so

Land- and seascape photography requires all the things Black & White + 400 is terrific at: great sharpness, fine grain, and an excellent tonal range. That you get all this at film speeds from EI 50-1600 with standard C-41 processing available at one-hour labs just about everywhere is a wonderful bonus. The negatives can be printed on color paper to give an appropriate warm or cool tone if you wish.

ALL PHOTOS BY JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL



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A great film for nature still lifes, Black & White + 400 records sharp detail and a wide range of tones. And its ISO 400 speed gives you lots of depth of field, important in close-up shooting. If you need even more depth of field, you can expose the film at up to EI 1600 while retaining good image quality.

We processed all the exposed film in our standard C-41 processor. As the film was spending its time in the dryer, we decided to review the results of our previous tests of Kodak chromogenic films. We also compared them to the original chromogenic films made 40 years ago. The quality of the new film is far beyond that of the original film, and slightly better than those released over the last two years. The grain was very fine when the film was exposed at ISO 400 or less, and slightly greater

when the ISO went higher. We selected a dozen images, scanned them into our computer system, and analyzed them in Adobe Photoshop. The quality of the final images was superb and the image control was excellent.

The only drawback we see with this new emulsion is for those black-and-white photographers who like to have image control during the processing. For them, Kodak still makes silver-based black-and-white film and will for some time to come. For the rest of us, the new chromogenic films are fine, and Kodak Select Black & White + 400 is one of the best.

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what better time to test a black-and-white film? We were limited on the amount of film we could test, so we skipped the exposure bracketing. With Black & White + 400's five-stop latitude we felt achieving a correct exposure would not be a problem.

Since many of the black-and-white images taken today are classified as art, it was now time to get out and play! We looked for subjects that would help demonstrate the film's ability to capture fine detail, low scene contrast, high scene contrast, low-light situations, and subjects with soft-focus backgrounds. We purposely overexposed some images and extended the ISO rating on others to see if the grain pattern was proportional to exposure.

Black & White + 400 scans well for digital applications, whether you're after a straight rendition of the image or a digitally manipulated one. Once the image is in the computer, you can use an image-editing program such as Adobe Photoshop (used to produce the solarized image at far right) to do anything you'd do in the darkroom when making a print, or apply a wide range of special effects.

