



by Julia Silber and Peter Kolonia

28 B&W FILMS COMPARED!

If color photography is “gaudy,” as the famous photographer Walker Evans is said to have proclaimed, what does that make black-and-white? Elegant, refined, understated, cerebral, cool, straightforward, graphic, yet subtle. These and many other qualities could help make your next vacation album or portrait sitting something special. And for our money, if you want to learn photography’s ropes, there’s still no better, less expensive, or more satisfying way than developing and printing black-and-white film in your very own darkroom.

Now more than ever, film manufacturers are making it easy to shoot, process, and print monochrome films. As our chart shows, traditional black-and-white emulsions are plentiful. Kodak recently demonstrated its commitment to black-and-white by building a state-of-the-art, computerized, and highly automated film-coating facility in Rochester exclusively for its T-Max, Tri-X, Plus-X, and other monochrome emulsions. As for processing, most Qualex-affiliated photofinishing sites (CVS,

If you haven't tried classic black-and-white yet, here are 28 compelling reasons why you should!

RiteAid, Target, Walgreens, etc.) accept conventional black-and-white films for processing and printing; it takes about a week, and costs approximately \$5 for developing and \$.39 for each print. Call 1-800-345-6973 for the location of a Qualex lab near you.

Conventional films like Ilford HP5 Plus or Kodak Tri-X aren't your only entrée to the magic of black-and-white. Chromogenic (C-41 process) films such as Kodak T400 CN and Ilford XP2 Super let you shoot and drop off

black-and-white at any minilab where it can be processed and printed in regular color chemistry, usually inexpensively and quickly. Still other options include a black-and-white slide film (Agfa's Scala), and the distinctively different look of black-and-white infrared films.

Our advice? Explore several different paths to black-and-white, and by the time you're finished, you may just find yourself agreeing with Mr. Evans!

Except for street prices, all data presented in the following charts came from the film manufacturers, and are valid at press time, but subject to change. ☺

MANUFACTURER	FILM NAME	ISO RATING	LETTER CODE	RESOLUTION (LINES/MM)	RMS (GRANULARITY)	RECIPROcity RANGE*	PUSHABILITY	FORMATS	PRICE**	COMMENTS
Agfa	Agfapan APX 100	100	APX	150	9	1/2-1/10,000 sec	NR	A, B, D	\$2.99	Relatively steep characteristic curve well-suited to low-contrast subjects. Excellent smoothness claimed for subjects with uniform tonality.
Agfa	Agfapan APX 400	400	APX	110	14	1-1/10,000 sec	2 stops	A, B	\$3.09	Wide range of contrasts possible by varying dilutions of Rodinal, Agfa's century-old black-and-white film developer.
Forte	Fortepan 100	100	FP 100 L	90	NA	NA	NR	A, B	\$2.95	Rollfilm format's antihalation backing accepts retouching dyes. For best resolution, fine grain developers are recommended.
Forte	Fortepan 200	200	FP 200 L	80	NA	NA	NR	A, B, D	\$2.99	Antihalation backing of roll- and sheet-film formats accepts retouching dyes. Claimed to perform well in high- and low-contrast situations, and to exhibit excellent shadow detail.
Forte	Fortepan 400	400	FP 400 L	70	NA	NA	1.5 stops	A, B, D	\$2.99	Claimed to be particularly well-suited for use under tungsten light due to extended red sensitivity. When pushed to ISO 1000, pronounced grain may result.
Fuji	Neopan 100 Acros	100	NEOPAN 100	200	7	120 sec and faster	NR	A, B	\$3.59	Said to have the finest grain of all nonspecialty black-and-white films. Extremely favorable reciprocity failure characteristics.
Fuji	Neopan 400	400	NEOPAN 400	125	10	10 sec and faster	2 stops	A, B	\$3.49	Claimed to be highly resistant to static electricity marks, and is therefore well-suited to dry climates.
Fuji	Neopan 1600	1600	NEOPAN 1600	100	16	10 sec and faster	2 stops	A, B	\$3.89	May be processed using same developing times as Neopan 400, so that films may be processed together. (a.k.a. Neopan 1600 Super Presto.)
Ilford	100 Delta Pro	100	DELTA	NA	NA	1/2-1/10,000 sec	1 stop	A, B, D	\$3.89	Will produce full-tone black-and-white slides when processed in black-and-white reversal chemistry.
Ilford	Delta 400 Pro	400	DELTA	NA	NA	1/2-1/10,000 sec	3 stops	A, B	\$3.59	With fine grain, excellent sharpness, and wide exposure latitude, Delta 400 Pro may be Ilford's best general-purpose black-and-white film.
Ilford	Delta 3200 Pro	3200	DELTA	NA	NA	1/2-1/10,000 sec	1 stop	A, B	\$4.49	For special purposes (e.g. surveillance), Delta 3200 may be rated as high as ISO 25,000.
Ilford	PAN F Plus	50	PAN F	NA	NA	1/2-1/10,000 sec	NR	A, B	\$3.09	Ilford claims that the fine grain of this film makes it suitable for "mural-size" enlargements, if film is correctly exposed and processed.
Ilford	FP4 Plus	125	FP4	NA	NA	1/2-1/10,000 sec	1 stop	A, B, C, D	\$2.59	Claimed to have unusually broad exposure latitude. May be overexposed by six stops or underexposed by two and still produce a printable image.
Ilford	HP5 Plus	400	HP5	NA	NA	1/2-1/10,000 sec	3 stops	A, B, C, D	\$2.74	Depending on the film developer, HP5 Plus may be optimized for fine grain and speed (Ilfotec HC 1:15) or maximum sharpness (Ilfosol-S 1:9).
Kodak	Technical Pan	25	TP	320	5	1-1/10,000 sec	NR	A, B, D	\$8.79	Kodak's slowest and finest-grain black-and-white film. It's suitable for general photography, but requires special developer (Technidol) for best results.
Kodak	Plus-X 125	125	PX	125	10	1/10-1/1,000 sec	3 stops	A, B, C	\$4.59	Strobe users, please note: Plus-X requires exposure compensation (i.e. extra exposure) due to reciprocity failure with exposures shorter than 1/1000 sec.
Kodak	T-Max 100	100	100TMX	200	8	1/10-1/1,000 sec	3 stops	A, B, D	\$4.49	May produce full-tone black-and-white slides when processed in black-and-white reversal chemistry.

*Range of shutter speeds for which no exposure compensation is required. **for 36-exposure 35mm roll

Formats: A = 35mm; B = 120 Rollfilm; C = 220 Rollfilm; D = Sheet Film sizes. NA = Not Available; NR = Not Recommended

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	Kodak	T-Max 400	400	400TMY	125	10	1/10-1/10,000 sec	3 stops	A, B, D	\$4.59	With wide exposure latitude, fine grain, and excellent sharpness, this is one of Kodak's best general-purpose black-and-white films.
	Kodak	T-Max P3200	800	P3200 TMZ	125	18	1/10-1/10,000 sec	3 stop	A	\$5.69	For special applications (e.g. surveillance), may be rated up to ISO 25,000.
	Kodak	Tri-X 320	320	320TXP	100	16	1/10-1/1,000 sec	2 stops	B, C, D	\$2.97	This film is especially made for retouching, and will accept liquid retouching dyes on either backing or emulsion sides.
	Kodak	Tri-X 400	400	400TX	100	17	1/10-1/1,000 sec	3 stops	A, B	\$4.25	Prized by many photographers for its distinctive tonal rendition and grain pattern. Note compensation is required for exposures shorter than 1/1000 sec.
CHROMOGENIC	Kodak	T400 CN	400	T400 CN	NA	9	120-1/10,000 sec	3 stops	A, B	\$3.49	Kodak's C-41 monochromatic film best suited for printing on conventional black-and-white papers.
	Kodak	Black&White+400	400	BWC	NA	NA	120-1/10,000 sec	3 stops	A	\$2.99***	Kodak's C-41 monochrome film best suited for printing on a wide range of minilab RA-4 color enlarging papers (i.e. Royal Edge).
	Kodak	Portra 400BW	400	PORTRA	NA	9	120-1/10,000 sec	NR	A, B, C	\$6.39	Kodak's C-41 monochrome film best suited for Kodak's line of pro-oriented enlarging papers (Porta, Ultra, and Supra III).
	Ilford	XP2 super	400	XP2	NA	NA	1/2-1/10,000 sec	1 stop	A, B	\$2.89	Claimed to have extremely wide exposure latitude, and to be optimized for printing on conventional black-and-white enlarging papers.
INFRARED	Ilford	SFX 200 Infrared	200	SFX	NA	NA	NA	NR	A, B	\$6.49	Most dramatic infrared results are obtained with Ilford's SFX 200 red filter, which requires a four-stop increase in exposure.
	Kodak	High Speed Infrared	NA	HIE	80	18	1-1/10,000 sec	NR	A	\$10.99	Speed varies with color temperature of light source. Daylight: approximately ISO 50 (with No. 25 Wratten filter); tungsten: approximately ISO 125 (with filter).
SLIDE	Agfa	Agfa Scala 200x	200	SCALA	120	11	1/2-1/10,000 sec	3 stops	A, B, D	\$7.49	The sole b&w film for slides only. It's processed at just three labs in the United States. Check Agfa's web site (www.agfa.com) for lab locations.

*Range of shutter speeds for which no exposure compensation is required. **for 36-exp. 35mm roll ***for 24-exp. NR = Not Recommended
 Formats: A = 35mm; B = 120 Rollfilm; C = 220 Rollfilm; D = Sheet Film sizes. NA = Not Available.

Digital B&W: A May-to-December romance?

Despite the age difference, veteran black-and-white film and newcomer digital imaging are quite compatible. All the monochrome shooter needs is a good film scanner to enjoy image enhancement, cool collages, and superb inkjet prints.

Black-and-white may even be *preferable* to color, digitally speaking. Its files are usually smaller, so your computer will run faster, and file storage fades as an issue. Moreover, black-and-white inkjet prints use primarily black ink (duh), which, if your printer takes separate cartridges for black and color inks, can save you some bucks. (Black cartridges are often less expensive than color.)

For our money, though, the sweetest reasons to go digital with black-and-white are the plug-ins made for Adobe Photoshop. Most are designed for color use, true, but many will create eye-popping effects when applied to black-and-white originals, too. The Nik Color Efex Pro plug-ins (www.nikmultimedia.com), for example, successfully "antiqued" the contemporary black-and-white street scene at right with a mouse click or two! —P.K.



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