

THE GOODS: PRO REVIEW

Is there a place for film in 21st-century professional photography? Five photographers who share a passion for traditional medium-format capture test an award-winning film.

Modern *film*

KODAK PROFESSIONAL EKTAR 100

If you think no one uses film anymore, you're mistaken. When *Professional Photographer* went looking for some medium-format film photographers to try out Kodak Professional Ektar 100, we readily found them on *PPmag's* Facebook page. The volunteers we selected represent a variety of photographic styles and subjects, but all of them have a passion for film.

Kodak Professional Ektar 100 is designed to deliver ultra-vivid color and exceptional sharpness, even at maximum enlargement. A 2010 Hot One Award winner, the film is now available in 35- and 120mm rolls and

4x5 and 8x10 sheets. For this evaluation, our participants used Ektar 100 with their typical subjects, as well as subject matter that would challenge its vaunted features. Here are the photographers' reports.

RICHARD ISRAEL Charlotte, N.C.

I rediscovered my passion for film three years ago. I love the organic, honest and timeless look of film, which is now my signature look. I shoot 80 percent of my work on film, and shoot digitally in extremely low-light situations. I'm quite familiar with the 35mm



version of Ektar and use it for detail shots; now I'm in love with the 120 version.

I chose my daughter as the subject in my test shots. I used a Mamyia 645 AFD camera with 80mm f/2.8 and 80mm f/1.9 lenses and photographed under various lighting conditions—all I can say is *wow!* The unbelievable tonality, color palette and fine grain gave my images a delicate but rich, almost painterly look. The film would be a little slow for my wedding work, but it is perfect for portraits.

I enjoy a hybrid workflow, and have high-resolution scans made along with the processing; this film scans beautifully. Skin tones can have a little magenta cast, but that's easily remedied with minor adjustments at the scanning and print stages.

The Ektar 120mm format is now one of my favorite films. Can't wait to try the 4x5 version. richardisrael.com, richardisrael.com/blog

AILEEN REILLY Aileen Reilly Photography Washington, D.C.

This project marks my first experience with a medium-format camera and 120mm film. Although I had shot Fujicolor Pro 400H film on my recently purchased Hasselblad 500 c/m camera, but hadn't yet seen the prints. I didn't convert to digital until late 2006, convinced that digital was a fad and would never take the place of good, old-fashioned film. As I learned the ins and outs of digital, I realized how much time I was spending processing my digital images to make them look like film captures. I shoot a

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greenish cast. Although the printed shots are darker than I'd prefer, that's something that could be modified at the lab, and the skin tones are accurate and pleasing. There's a softness to the tones that's surprising, given the brilliance of the sunny day.

aileenreilly.com

C. GARY MOYER

Maywood, N.J.

Light Leaks magazine contributor

I've been shooting film on and off for over 20 years. I got into digital photography with an early Sony model, then used a Canon DSLR. The last few years, I've gravitated back to film, using it in toy and vintage cameras. I've been involved in several publications on toy camera photography, and have been in various gallery shows over the past few years, showcasing lo-fidelity photography.

lot of black and white, and because I haven't been able to replicate the depth and richness of my film tones, I was thinking of incorporating film back into my workflow. The *Professional Photographer* call for photographers interested in medium-format film came at the right time.

For my senior session, I used the Fujicolor Pro 400H film first, then the Kodak Professional Ektar. It was a beautiful, glorious day at the monuments in Washington, D.C., and the color fidelity of the Kodak film is incredible. The depth of the blue in the sky is truly luscious—the colors just pop. There's a definite difference between the look of Fujicolor 400H and Kodak Ektar captures, as you'd expect. The Ektar grain is so extremely fine as to be virtually nonexistent. The prints are crisp and vibrant.

Overall, the film's performance was brilliant on bright sunny days—deep, rich colors, vibrant beyond belief, crisp, clean. On the cloudy days, though, the film had an almost



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Even with my low-tech film cameras, I tend to photograph my subjects outdoors. With the lack of controls on many toy and vintage cameras, I have to rely on the flexible latitude of negative films. For this test, I used a plastic Holga camera, and I had basically one shutter speed and one aperture. Looking at my results with the Kodak Ektar 100 film, I was pleasantly surprised at the colors. I had shot on a day with some clouds but good stretches of sunlight. In the prints, the sky and the reds looked the most vibrant, and were true to my memory of the scene. I'm very happy with how the film responded with my low-tech camera choice. cgmoyer.blogspot.com

MARIANNE DRENTHÉ

Marmalade Photography

Chicagoland area, Wilmington, Ill.

My first medium-format experience was this test shoot. I'd purchased a used Mamiya 645 1000s on eBay that needed new light seals. I'd just completed the fix when this opportunity came up, but I couldn't resist.

The camera came sans manual, so the first big project was to figure it all out before I jumped in with the film.

I dove right into all-digital in 2005 when I turned pro, but I'd been an avid filmie in my hobbyist days, and used a 35mm SLR. In my business, my cameras are a Canon EOS-1Ds Mark II and a 5D. I *love* digital, but do I miss the look of film in my personal work, which is why I purchased the Mamiya.

I photographed my daughter in a forest where I do a fair amount of shooting; with an unfamiliar camera, I wanted as much control as possible with my setting and my model, who is representative of the subjects I usually photograph.

The Ektar film is outstanding. It was wonderful to use a film with such contrasty tones, great detail and fine grain. I was blown away with how well the Ektar handled the warm tones of the late afternoon-early evening sunshine, in both the sky and the skin tones. The details in my images came out beautifully, and with the film's lack of noticeable grain, the sharpness in the areas

of focus was incredible. The out-of-focus areas are creamy and smooth. The prints seemed a bit underexposed, and it was fun to bring the scanned images into Photoshop and tweak them to my preference. I zoomed in to 100 percent and couldn't believe how beautifully the details were represented. At 300 percent, I was amazed at how much depth and smoothness remained, which just doesn't happen with digital captures at that magnification.

All in all, I'm impressed with Ektar film, and I'll be getting it for my personal work in both 120mm and 35mm format. It'll be great fun to marry my love of this film with some digital edits.

marmaladephotography.com

ROB BUSCH

Robert Busch Photography

Orange County, Calif.

The majority of my work is done under strobe lighting in the studio or other controlled environments. I often shoot film, mostly for fine-art work, and exclusively black and white. It had been several years since I shot color film.

My wife, Victoria, and I regularly put together concept shoots with local models for our portfolios. Inspired by the recent popularity of vampire-themed entertainment, we decided to try the undead look, but without the blood and gore—a more sophisticated kind of vampire. We found two models who would push the limits of the film in color and contrast.

I shot digital and film side by side for this project. I wanted the quick image turnaround of digital for my models, and digital and film versions of the images for comparison. For lighting, I incorporated a 15x30-foot overhead soft box with side light softened by soft boxes, gridded strobes and reflectors. I used a Hasselblad 500cm film camera with a 150mm lens.

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When the prints arrived, the colors had less pop than I'd expected. I quickly flipped through them and set them aside, thinking it was unfair to compare them to my print of the high-resolution digital file from the same shoot, in which the colors were spectacular. When I reviewed the film prints a couple days later, I was pleased with the overall color balance, softness and accuracy. I printed an unprocessed digital RAW file for comparison. To my surprise, there was quite a bit of parity between the digital and film prints. My benchmark was the red hair, specifically, the detail and depth of the hair. The film prints accurately replicated the detail.

Overall, I was pleased with the results of the Ektar film's performance in the trial, and I've purchased a few rolls to try in other situations. In my trials, it worked very well in outdoor settings, specifically landscapes.

buschphoto.com ■



THE MODERN FILM LAB

For this project, Printmakers, Inc. of Rhode Island developed the medium-format Kodak Professional Ektar 100 film, scanned it, and printed the images. We asked Tony Rodrigues, the owner of Printmakers, to explain how the company has evolved with imaging technology, and how it maintains high-quality, professional film developing and customer service. (printmakersinc.com)

Printmakers has served professional photographers for more than 20 years. Its pre-production services include C-41 film processing, high-resolution scanning, color correction, retouching and restoration. Post-production services include mounting, laminating, UV coating and pro-edging services. Printmakers offers an array of photo products printed on

Kodak Professional Endura media.

"Printmakers has evolved with the industry to serve both film and digital shooters," says Rodrigues. Its staff comprises a mix of traditionally trained photofinishing engineers and technological innovators. "This fusion of skills facilitates the application of new technology and how it fits within the industry," he says.

To maintain quality, says Rodrigues, "Each day, the lab staff runs control strips, plots the data into a database, and ensures that the chemistry is in control."

Printmakers also offers marketing services in the latest media. "Social media is still somewhat daunting to some photographers, so we offer consulting services to take out some of

the mystery, and help them take advantage of all social media can offer," says Rodrigues. Leading by example, Printmakers is active on Facebook, connecting with clients and serving as a resource.

Rodrigues stresses the importance of building relationships with the company's customers. "The team spends time speaking with photographers to truly understand their styles and techniques," he says. Printmakers uses Kodak Digital Production software, which provides non-destructive editing that allows the technician to safely fine-tune images. "This becomes crucial as photographers develop signature styles that push the creative boundaries of traditional photography."