Agfa RSX Film

With the introduction of the new Agfachrome RSX films, Agfa has improved their professional transparency product line. Each of the three available emulsions—ISO 50, ISO 100, and ISO 200—have excellent characteristics

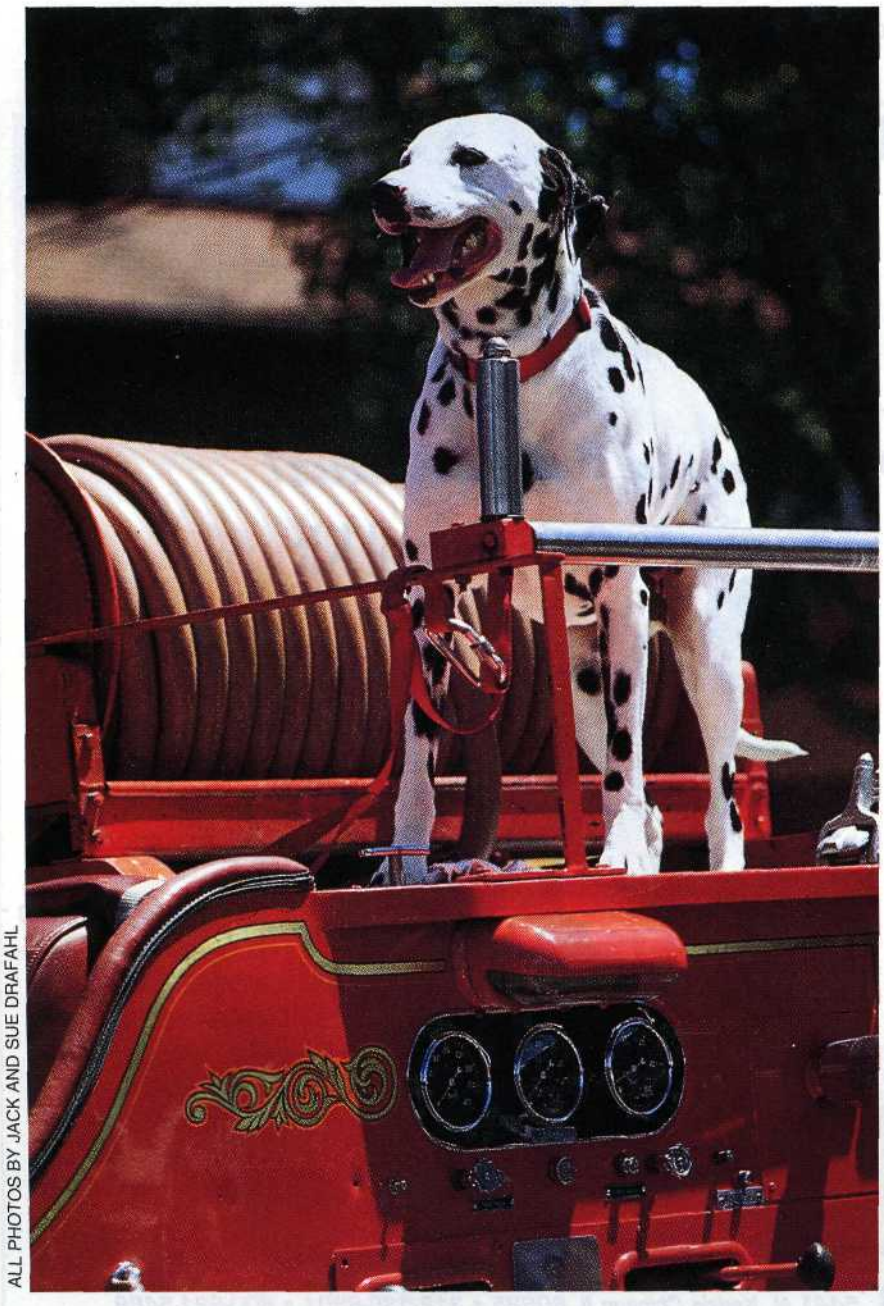
by Jack and Sue Drafahl

On a recent newscast we heard that our area had set a record for rainfall for the month and more rain was on the way. That could only mean one thing—a film test was soon to arrive on our doorstep. In the next couple of days the rain increased and a package of Agfa RSX Professional film arrived on schedule. We had not heard of this new film family and were surprised that Agfa had completely overhauled their RS Plus line of films and replaced them with this new RSX line.

Agfa has always prided themselves on producing emulsions that have excellent color saturation, so it was logical that the target improvements for the RSX family were mainly in the color saturation area. The trick was to increase the color saturation yet maintain the true color of the scene, which is absolutely critical in professional photo applications. To this end, Agfa has created three new films—RSX 50, RSX 100 and RSX 200—each with a specific application in mind.

All three emulsions have improved color saturation, tonal separation, and are more stable with standard or push/pull processing. The new enhanced inter-image effects are most responsible for the improved color saturation. When the RSX 100 is measured against the RS 100 Plus across the entire color spectrum, it has a 9.6% increase in color saturation. A side benefit of this improved color saturation is more accurate tonal separation and increased edge effects resulting in greater sharpness.

Agfa also worked on improving the reciprocity characteristics of each emulsion and reduced the compensation time and color correc-



ALL PHOTOS BY JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL

Left: **Agfachrome RSX 100 faithfully renders this fire truck and its spotted passenger, a firehouse dalmatian. The brilliant red of the truck was recreated beautifully by the RSX 100 with deep saturation and great sharpness.**

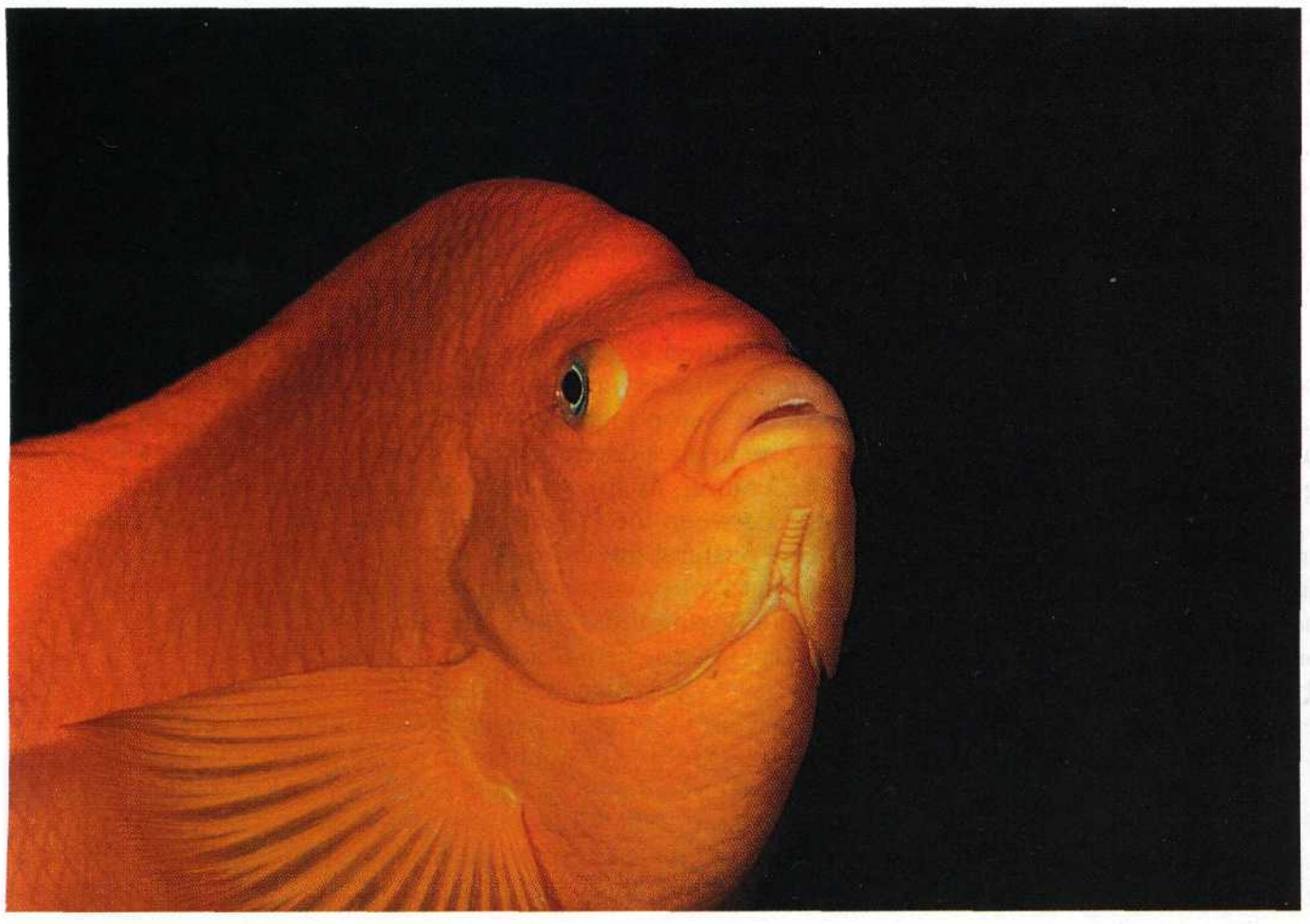
tion necessary for long exposures. For example, an eight second exposure on RSX 100 has 50% less compensation than RS 100 Plus and requires a straight blue correction of five points compared to 10 points of cyan with RS 100 Plus.

Tight production tolerances played an important part in the quality levels of the new RSX films. To qualify as an Agfa professional film, there must be an ISO speed variation of less than ⅓ of a stop and color balance changes of less than ±5CC filter points. Agfa has received the ISO 9002 Quality Assurance Certificate from Lloyd's of London for its high quality production of professional negative and transparency films. What this means to the photographer is color consistency from one image to the next. If you shoot a product on the 3rd of the month and have to shoot more on the 29th, the images will match in contrast, saturation and exposure.

Let's take a look at RSX 50. This emulsion has the finest grain of the three films, and is designed for situations where the photographer has the most control over the scene. In studio photography, for example, the use of high-powered electronic flashes gives the photographer control over all aspects of a photo session. Fine grain, excellent color saturation, a high degree of sharpness, unlimited depth of field and maximum tonal curve make RSX 50 the wise choice. Since no trade-offs in quality are required, the nature photographer will also love this film. It's excellent for scenics, flash macro photographs of flowers and insects, and is well suited for general sunlight photography.

RSX 100 is very much like RSX 50 except that it offers an additional stop of exposure to help the photographer control depth of field and subject movement. The trade off, of course, is that the grain is slightly larger and the color is a little less saturated. The spectral responses of RSX 50 and RSX 100 are very much the same, so each can be used in similar situations and images will match in appearance on the light box.

When we get to RSX 200, we find an emulsion that is quite different from the first two. Since an ISO 200 film would be used for situations with more difficult exposure problems, the contrast and color saturation have been modified to match these needs. The color saturation of RSX 200 maintains almost the same level as the first two films, but the gamma curve has been reduced to capture the more difficult lighting situations. Candidates for use with this film include low light, mixed lighting with filters, long lenses, high speed action and high contrast scenes.



Right: **These kayaks were photographed on Catalina Island with RSX 200. The ISO 200 film yielded good saturation and relatively fine grain.**
Below: **Photographed underwater, this fish's rich natural colors came out beautifully with the RSX 100 film.**
Bottom right: **This picture, taken at the end of our trip to Catalina, demonstrates the excellent sharpness, color saturation and tonal range possible with the new Agfa RSX 50 emulsion.**

Our first round of RSX film tests took place during a yearly event in Portland Oregon, called the Portland Rose Festival.

Cameras, lenses and film were packed. We had run basic exposure tests on each emulsion and were ready for action. We had colorful subjects, great new film emulsions and lousy weather. Well, two out of three isn't bad. We chose the RSX 50 and RSX 100 to shoot a hot-air balloon race; the RSX 200 and RSX 100 would be used to shoot the action and color of the festival's parade and boat races.

The hot-air balloon race was spectacular. The most impressive balloon was a giant Energizer Rabbit. This huge rabbit was vivid pink and proved to be a perfect subject to test color saturation

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and tonal gradation. The thing was so big that we had difficulty getting it all in the frame, even with a 20mm lens!

After almost getting stepped on by a large rabbit foot, we moved to a large orange pumpkin balloon. We loaded the camera with RSX 50 and took a variety of shots. About this time we were wishing Agfa had sent more film because the colors and shapes were fantastic. We hoped that the film would catch all the color and detail and that we wouldn't catch a cold from this damp weather.

When we returned to the lab, our results were just like the scene we had enjoyed. Both the RSX 50 and RSX 100 yielded high color saturation and excellent tonal gradation. We had set our bracket back to ±0.7 of a stop and each exposure resulted in an acceptable image, but the best image was the one rated at the Agfa's stated ISO.

Moving on to the parade, we loaded our cameras with RSX 100 and RSX 200 film. The parade was full of flowers, high-stepping bands and smiling faces—a great variety for our tests of color saturation and tonal gradations. The weather was even getting better because the raindrops were getting smaller.

The dragon boat races provided a setting for some great color and interesting design images. We arrived before the race had started and found that the crew had left their red oars next to the colorful dragon boat. They must have known that we needed bright color and patterns for our film testing. We tried several angles and compositions on both the RSX 100 and RSX 200 emulsions before the race began. We shot a few images of the race, but knew the best photographs were of the brightly colored oars.

When we got back to the lab we processed all the pictures and reviewed the parade images first. Even with the wide variety of colors and shapes, both emulsions faithfully recorded the scenes. Both the RSX 100 and RSX 200 did a great job with the subject, although we debated which emulsion's contrast level was best suited to the brightly colored oars. We finally concluded that with these two emulsions a photographer could record the same subject in two contrast levels with similar color saturation.

Above: **A beautiful oceanside scenic shot taken with RSX 100. The film's broad tonal range and contrast level are apparent in the level of detail visible in both the sky and tree in this silhouette.**

The second round of tests was accomplished while we were guests on the Brooks Institute of Photography's research vessel, the "Just Love." Cruising from one Channel Island to the next provided us sunlight opportunities not found in the Pacific Northwest at this time of the year. We ran tests with the RSX 100 underwater on several types of colorful fish and local animal life. On a stop in Twin Harbors on Catalina Island, we found a stack of kayaks along one side of a shop. Each was a different color, so we tried our compositional skills testing both the RSX 50 and RSX 200 films.

At the end of each day we processed our film in a custom-fitted Wing-Lynch processor aboard the boat. The first roll of underwater images indicated that the RSX films needed a ⅓-stop increase in exposure due to the water density. The images taken on land were accurate at the indicated ISO rating. Again we noticed the difference in contrast range between the ISO 50 and ISO 200 emulsions. Additional tests pushing the ISO 200 emulsion to ISO 400 gave us results that looked much like a standard ISO 400 slide film. Instead of having three films, we really had four distinct, usable film speeds using only three Agfa emulsions.

Now that we have X-amined our RSX tests, we can X-claim that the improvements in the RSX films X-hibit X-tremely X-emplary qualities that X-ceeded our X-pectations. There isn't any X-cuse for you not to X-periment and X-pose some RSX. While you're out X-ploring, if you run into that huge pink Energizer balloon, watch out for that rabbit's foot. It's really biiiiiiiiiiiiiig! ■