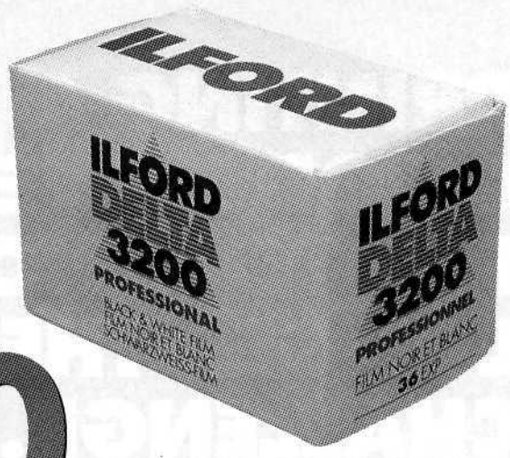
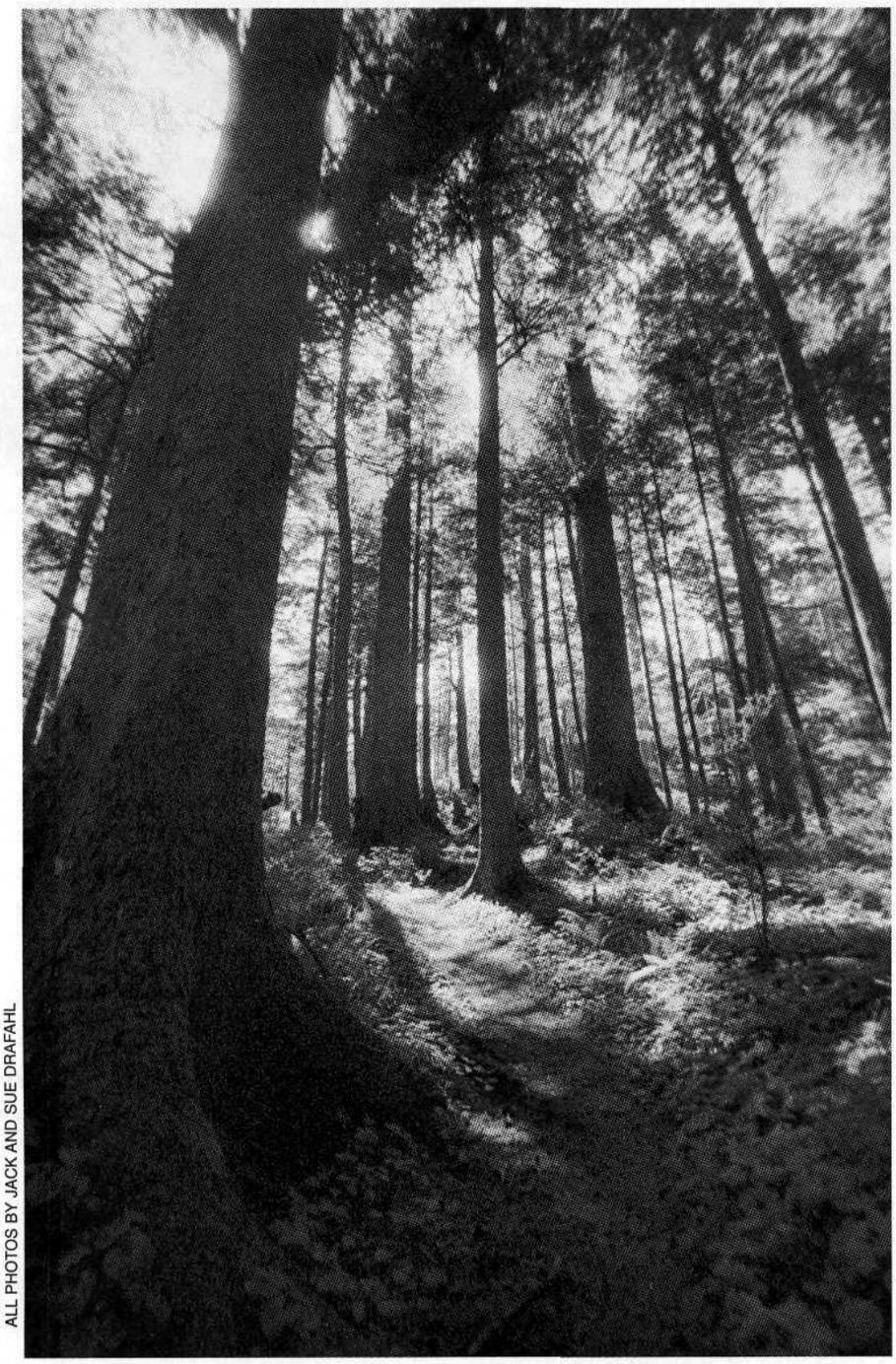
Ilford Delta 3200 Professional



by Jack and Sue Drafahl



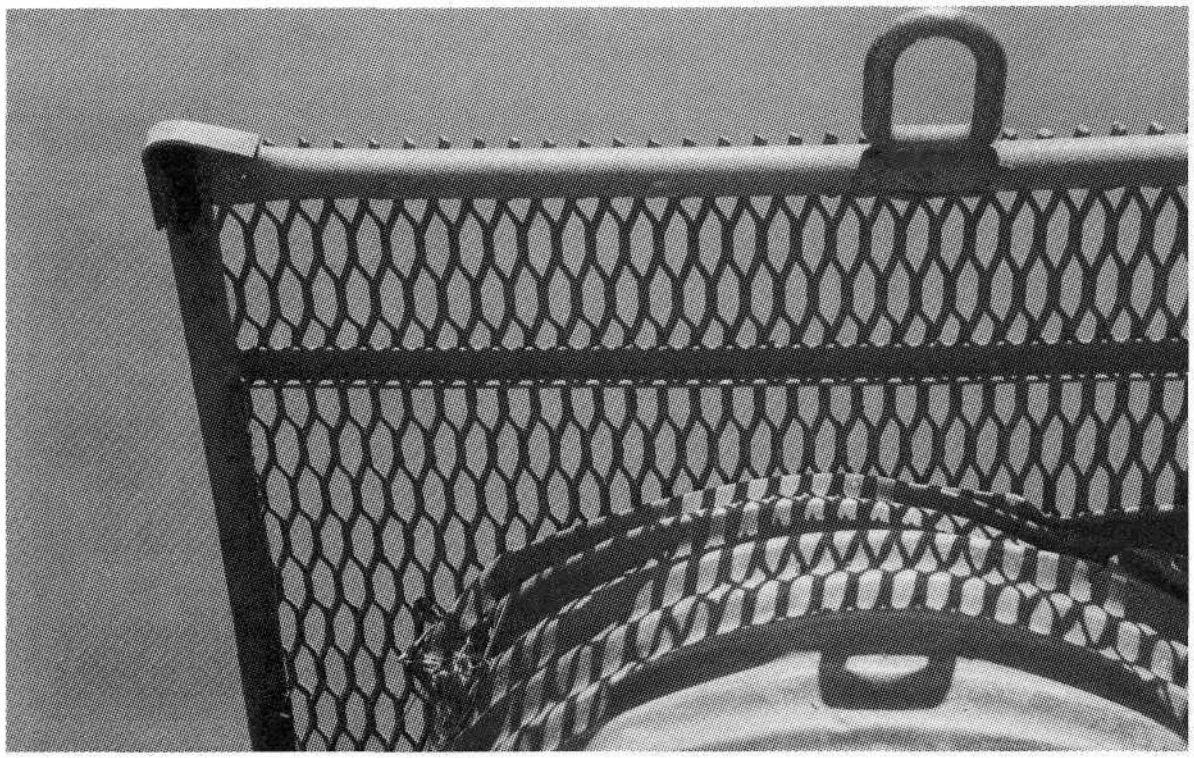
ALL PHOTOS BY JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL

This new black-and-white film offers speed, indeed!

Ilford Imaging has once again proved that black-and-white photography is alive and well. At PMA 99, Ilford added a speed demon to its black-and-white Delta film group by introducing Delta 3200 Professional. This new film is more than just a fast film, it has the ability to be all that you want it to be. Using special black-and-white crystal technology combined with extreme latitude with its push-pull techniques, this film can be rated from EI 400 to EI 25,000. No, that's not a misprint; we did say EI 25,000. Granted, at that extreme film speed, you are not going to find the grain structure equal to that of a slow film, but you are going to be able to capture images never before possible. To top it off, you will be able to achieve high-quality, fine-grain results when using the lower 3200 speed.

When we first learned of this new film, we were somewhat skeptical. As we scanned through the promotional sheets, we were impressed with the image quality shown in the examples. We learned that Delta 3200 uses a special advanced crystal core shell technology and can be processed in a variety of black-and-white developers. The outer shell of the crystal controls the development rate, while the inner shell maintains fine grain and sharp images. The core of the crystal is actually what controls the speed of the film.

This film really works at EI 3200—as demonstrated here, it can handle tough, contrasty scenes when exposed at that speed.



Ilford uses new patented methods and equipment to control the crystal size during growth to ensure a film with tight grain and high sharpness.

Since this is such a high-speed film, always load and unload the camera is subdued light. At airports, request visual inspection and carry the film in your carry-on luggage. Delta 3200 Professional is available in 36-exposure 35mm cassettes and 120 rolls.

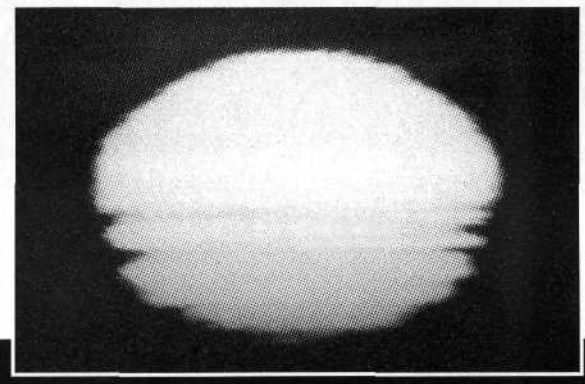
Delta 3200 can be developed at either 68° or 75° F, depending on your room temperature and how long you want to be in the darkroom. If you go with the recommended liquid developer, Ilford Ilfotec DD-X, you can use 9.5 minutes at 68°, or 7 minutes at 75°. If you live in a cold climate, we recommend processing at 68°, while development at 75° is best suited for summertime or warmer climates. Development at either temperature provides good results, and we were hard pressed to see a difference between the two.

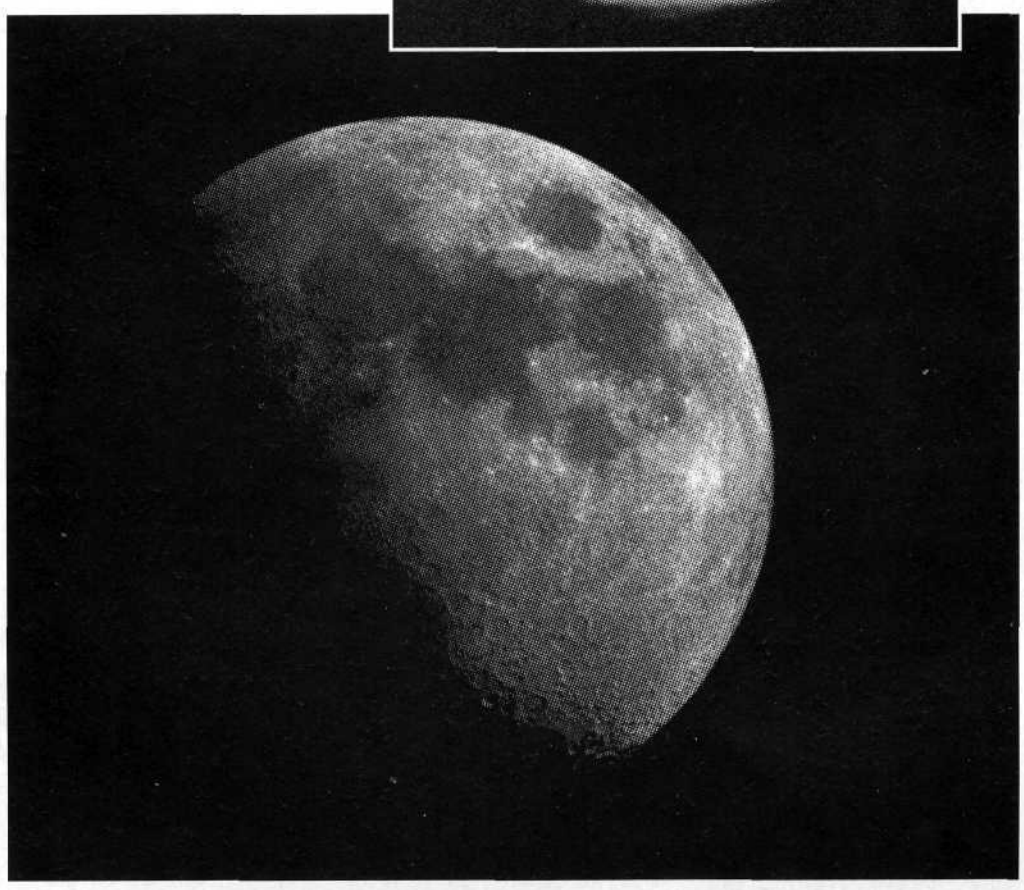
We only had time to try one developer, Ilfotec DD-X, but we did check out the processing guide Ilford has as a PDF file on their website. This points you to the right chemical to use for obtaining a specific aspect from the film. For example, the finest grain is achieved by using Perceptol (powder) or Ilfotec DD-X (liquid). Maximum sharpness is gained by processing in Microphen (powder) or Ilfotec DD-X. If you want to use different developers at other film speeds, an expanded chart includes EIs from 400 to 12,500 and lists Ilford's Ilfotec, Ilfosol, Microphen, ID-11, and Perceptol developers. The list also includes non-Ilford developers such as Agfa Rodinal and Kodak D-76, HC-110, Microdol-X, T-Max and Xtol.

If you want to try the EI 25,000 rating, only two Ilford developers are recommended: Ilfotec DD-X and Microphen. Beware that the processing time at 68° is going to be 22–25 minutes, and about 17 minutes for 75°. If you want to try other time and temperature combinations, a special conversion chart is also supplied in the PDF file. Ilford recommends that if you plan on using the EI 12,500 or 25,000 rating, you should run a battery of tests to really zero in your system.

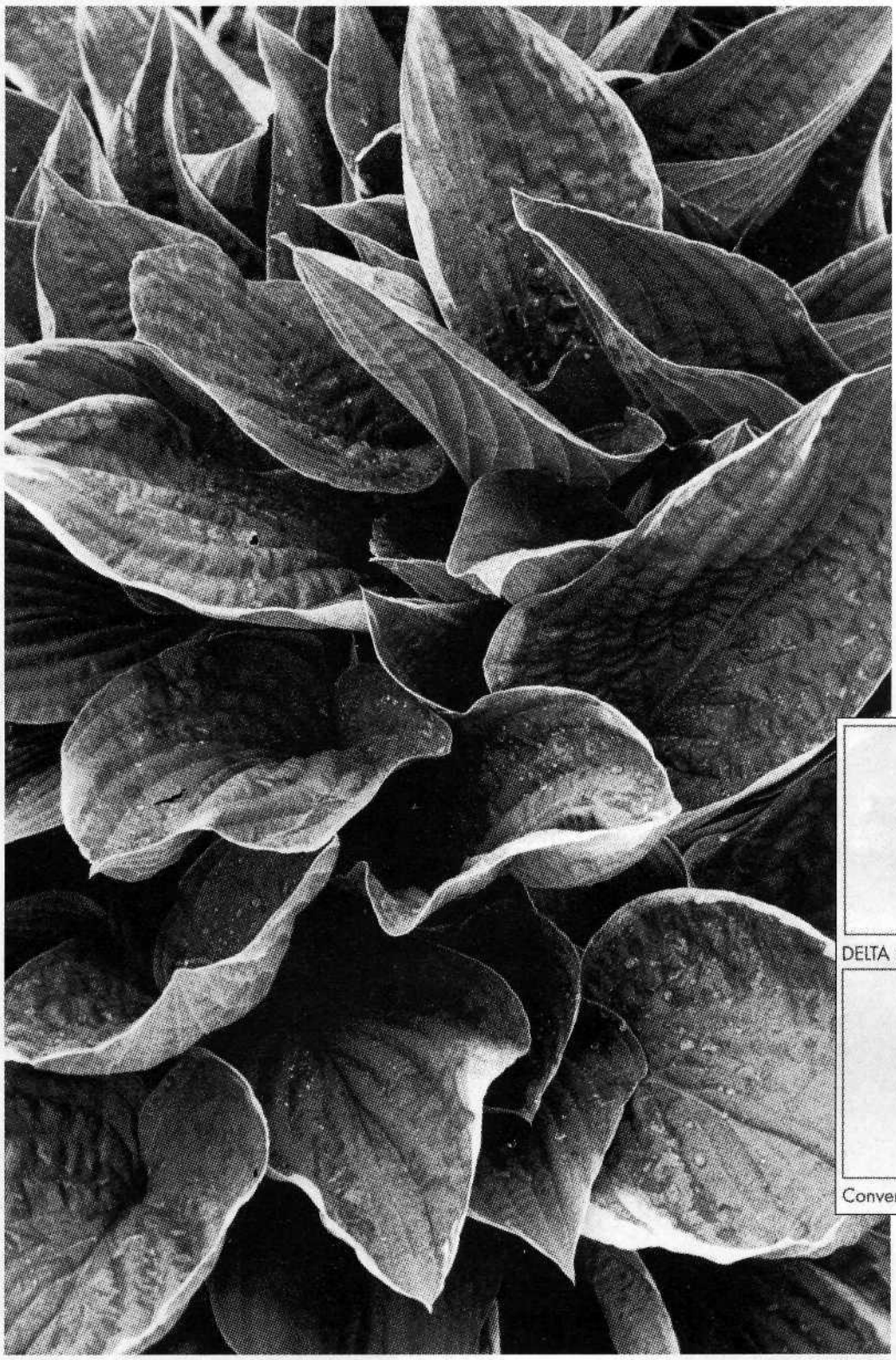
Before we put this film to the test, we ran a quick roll in daylight to check the ISO rating, processing and grain structure. We felt a little strange making exposures in excess of 1/2000 at f/16. We set the bracket to ±1 stop to check latitude and actual ISO with this development. We were very impressed with the overall image quality and, as it turned out, the middle exposure, or EI 3200, was the best exposure. The ±1-stop exposures were printable, but anything beyond that would be difficult to print. This means that you can expose from ISO 1600 to 6400 without changing processing.

At EI 1600 (top), 3200 (below) or 6400 (bottom), Ilford Delta 3200 provides great versatility. The sun and moon shots were made with a 1250mm mirror lens, at 1/8000 and 1/2000 at f/15, respectively.





We couldn't test this film only in daylight situations, so we put on our thinking caps to come up with a low-light situation that would challenge it. It was then that we remembered a local pioneer museum that would fit the bill. We were not sure if the low light level was for effect, or rather that the museum was almost as old as the artifacts displayed. Ilford's Delta 3200 slogan of "Who's Afraid of the Dark?" sure fits this place! Many of the ancient scenes were hard to see with the naked eye and here we were taking pictures without a tripod or even long exposures. One scene of a blacksmith seemed almost



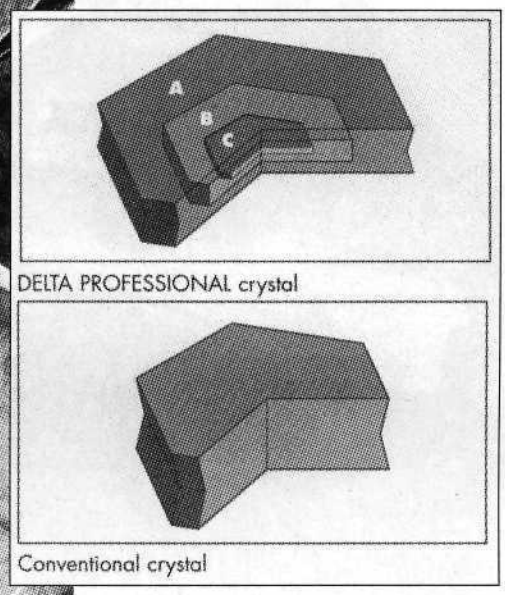
impossible, but a rating of EI 6400 was able to salvage the picture. We used wide-open apertures and shutter speeds down to 1/10, but we were able to capture scenes that normally would have required flash.

Another local challenge was a factory with very dim sodium-vapor lighting. Our initial test came out one stop under the rated speed, so we tried a second test at one stop overexposed. This time the pictures looked great. Ilford recommends that you run tests when photographing under varied light sources, but we thought we had the answer. Well, now that we ran some tests, we do have the right answer. Way to go, Ilford!

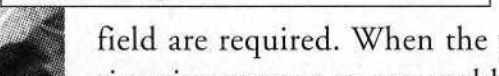
We processed the film for 7 minutes at 75°, so it wasn't long before we were evaluating the results. The negatives rated at EI 3200 and 1600 seemed to be identical in image quality. The grain was tight and the sharpness very good for this high an speed rating. The film rated at EI 6400 and given normal development showed an increased grain structure. Generally, the grain structure of the film rated at all the speeds seemed different than other fast films we have used in the past. It was smaller, more uniform, and reacted more like a lower-speed film. Pretty amazing that we could achieve this kind of quality in such poor lighting conditions.

We were curious about film shot at EI 12,500 and 25,000 and push-processed, so we exposed one roll to see what it looked liked. As expected, the grain was heavy due to the pushing. EI 12,500 was easy to obtain through pushing and yielded a very printable negative. We found that EI 25,000 is the limit for this film. You can obtain an acceptable print from these negatives, but barely. If you really need to use EI 25,000 for your application, we recommend that you scan the negative into your computer and adjust the gamma and contrast curve before output.

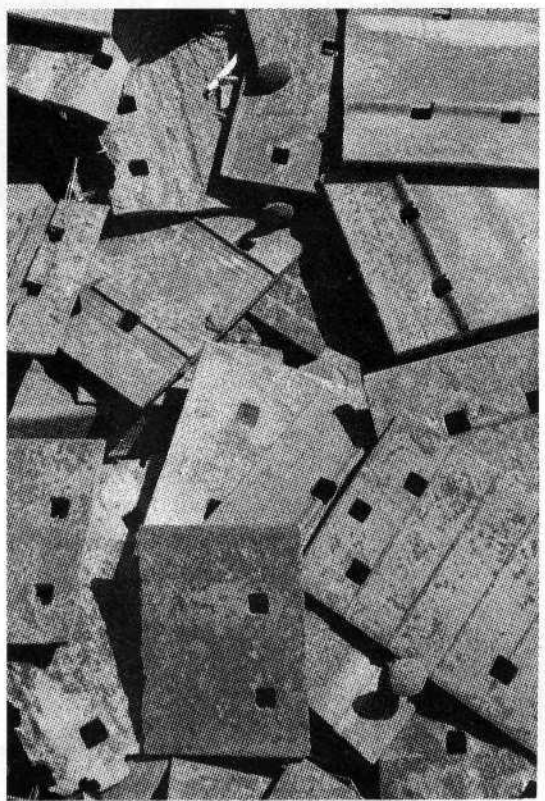
You can use Delta 3200 film for difficult lighting applications beyond the scope of other high speed films. Some examples of extreme low-light conditions are interiors, twilight, street lights, and concerts. You might even need this film for situations in normal light where both extremely high shutter speeds and depth of field are required. When the photographic situation returns to acceptable light levels, you can switch back to Ilford Delta 100 or 400. With all three films, you have the ability to shoot a range of more than 10 stops of exposure! Grab a roll today and think of Ilford Delta 3200 Professional as your new photo insurance.



DELTA PROFESSIONAL crystal


Conventional crystal

Ilford Imaging USA Inc., West 70 Century Rd., Paramus, NJ 07653; 201/265-6000; on the Internet www.ilford.com. ■



Top left: **When pushed to EI 12,500 (shown), Delta 3200 still produces a good image, although grain becomes more noticeable. EI 25,000 is about the limit, and at that speed you'll have better luck scanning the negative and using Photoshop to adjust it.** *Left:* **At EI 3200, in harsh sunlight, Delta 3200 works great.**