

With advances in dye and color coupler technology, finer grain, and saturated color, Fujifilm introduces a faster successor to Velvia 50

BY ELLIS VENER

Not so *loud*

FUJICHROME VELVIA 100 PROFESSIONAL

Fujichrome Velvia 100 Professional film isn't merely Velvia 100F with another name, and it's certainly not a one-stop-faster version of the original, Velvia 50. It's more like a soft rock version with less aggressively punchy colors. (You'll still have to watch your exposure range to prevent high-tone blowout.)

If you plan on sticking with the original Velvia, better stock your freezer

now. Fujichrome Velvia 50 has been discontinued, although Fujifilm expects the in-stock supply to last until early 2006.

The new film reflects recent advances in dye and color coupler technology and, says Fujifilm, compared to the older version, it's one stop faster, has greater dye stability and a finer grain, yields cleaner whites and purer colors, and can be pushed farther before the

colors start shifting. These advances should also lead to better scanning results.

Velvia didn't start the super-saturated color revolution in transparency films—Fujichrome 50D did that in the early 1980s, and before that, there was Kodak Kodachrome 25. But the effect Velvia had on color photography was like pouring gasoline on a smoldering fire. Suddenly just about anyone could create photos with intense colors.

Some reviled Velvia for having “funny-page” colors, but landscape and industrial photographers loved how its vibrant palette could transform so-so scenes into rich visual experiences. The cool colors were more intense, the warm

This architectural study taken in mid-morning light tests the ability of Velvia 100 to record details in bright highlights and deep shadows. Exposure was calculated by averaging spot readings of highlight and shadow areas. Velvia 100 exposed at ISO 80, Arca-Swiss 69FC with 210mm f/5.6 Nikkor W lens, standard processing times.



colors popped, and the greens snapped. Even the shadows had character. If you photographed the same scene with any other color transparency film and compared the results on a light box, the Velvia shot would almost always be the art director's choice, as long as dead-accurate color wasn't a critical factor.

Of course, these same properties could also make harsh or reddish skin tones if you weren't careful. Retouchers weren't thrilled to work with it. The original RVP was an acquired taste, but once you figured out when and how to work with it, you could make quite savory images.

But tastes change. In the past few years, there's been a shift in preference toward more naturalistic colors, a kind of color unplugged movement, due in part, perhaps, to improvements in desktop scanners and inkjet printers. Velvia 100 is a step in that direction,



This shot shows Velvia 100 color response in overcast light. Metered in incident mode, compensation for 1.5 filter factor applied. Photographed using a Linhof Technorama 617 with Schneider center-weighted filter, ISO 80, metered with Sekonic L-558 meter.

but not all the way. It has the old Velvia zip, but not quite as much of it.

While the speed of the film has bumped up a stop, its RMS granularity has dropped from 9 to 8. Velvia 100 is as fine-grained as any color transparency film on the market, displaying virtually no visible grain at even 10X magnification. In my experience

with two different labs and with my meters and cameras, I'm getting consistently better exposures with rating Velvia 100 at ISO 80 rather than ISO 100, both in-studio and outdoors under various lighting conditions. That's consistent with my preference of rating the original Velvia at ISO 40 rather than 50. ■