

It's getting towards spooky time, when young hobgoblins cover the byways of our neighborhoods. The leaves drop off faster than we can count them. The colors change from bright to dull to gray and brown. In short, it's time to take pictures!

Most of you will probably use color film. Which film will you use? Some films are finer grained, some are sharper, some yield higher contrast, some are grainier. The choice of film can have a lot to do with how you want to represent the subject(s). If you are trying to focus on the make-up on a Halloween reveler, a fine grained, slow speed film with flash will be excellent, but to tackle the extraterrestrial costume, a grainy, less sharp image may well be more appropriate. There's no film that is perfect in all situations, so consider what pictures you plan to take before you go to take them. Keep a couple of different film types in your camera bag. Use shorter rolls to get the film in and out of the camera quickly, increasing the odds on getting the right film when you need it.

In considering some different films, here are some observations we've seen across the counter and some objective information as well.

Color negative (print) film is responsible for over 90% of all exposures taken. Color slides and black & white combine for about 9%, with Polaroid, etc. being that last little percent. Typical color print films range from ISO 100 to ISO 1600. That's a fourfold change in sensitivity. Slower films tend to be finer grained (as we learned last month) and have a more "normal" contrast range. When we go to more sensitive films, the contrast range becomes somewhat more constricted as the film becomes coarser. Many people complain about visible grain in photos, but I don't. I don't object to graininess, as long as the grain is sharp. You can always make sharp grain look mushy, but the opposite is not true.

Most all films are designed to render colors accurately when correctly exposed at noon on a sunny day on the White House steps. As films are taken earlier in the day, later that day, in overcast weather, indoors, etc., the color accuracy disappears. Electronic flashes are designed to simulate the noon, sunny day, White House steps scenario, also yielding accurate color. (Color is rated objectively on the Kelvin temperature scale.)

A major problem we encounter in understanding color temperature is that we're too smart (or that film is too dumb). Because we are smart, our brain automatically filters the colors we see to render those colors to the White House steps standard. When we go into a building lit by incandescent light bulbs, we don't see everything in terms of shades of orange, but film does. Fluorescent lights don't look purple or green to us, but it does to film designed to be exposed at noon on a sunny day.... The use of colored filters in front of the camera lens can add or subtract the complementary color of the light source to yield "normal" color again.

Sometimes, the differences in color rendering can enhance a picture; sometimes it can ruin it. A formal portrait shot under typical fluorescent lighting will yield ghastly, pasty skin tone on Caucasians, with equally unflattering renderings of other flesh tones. We must change either the quality (and perhaps the quantity) of light, or the way the film sees that light. Adding daylight or electronic flash light to the subject is a big help; so is filtering the light.

When shooting autumn foliage, as a different example, we can't change the light source; we can only filter it. A filter called an Enhancing filter intensifies the red area of the spectrum, with no visible change in other colors. This exaggerates the reds and oranges, but doesn't alter the sky or water. Greens look normal. Combine this with a less contrasty film, and reds scream out. Use it with a coarser film and the reds and oranges will be super saturated with brilliant color. The professional always considers what the final picture is to look like, and chooses his films and filters carefully. He or she has mastered photography: the study of light.

A Halloween idea: When asked "trick or treat?", say, "Trick. I want to take a picture of you in your costume acting out the theme of your disguise". What great subject matter! To add "spookiness" to your pictures, turn your camera upside down so that the light is coming from below your subject's face. This will distort the shadows we usually see and lend a mood of eeriness.

In other news, twenty-four of us went to the New York Renaissance Faire last month and had marvelous weather. Many shots were excellent, and you'll be notified when they are posted online. Nikon lent us some awesome equipment for the day.

[Www.takebetterpictures.com](http://www.takebetterpictures.com) has a totally revised site which is definitely worth looking at. My compliments to the Photo Information Council for the job they've done on their site.

If you are a new reader to this newsletter and would like back issues, please let me know by email to jerry@madisonphoto.com.

Happy shooting!

Jerry & Lynne