
TRADITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY; TALKING ABOUT FILM

FROM THE jbhphoto.com BLOG

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**MUSINGS, OPINIONS, COMMENTARY,
HOW-TO AND GENERAL DISCUSSION
ABOUT TRADITIONAL WET DARKROOM
PHOTOGRAPHY TAKEN FROM THE PAGES
OF THE jbhphoto.com BLOG.**

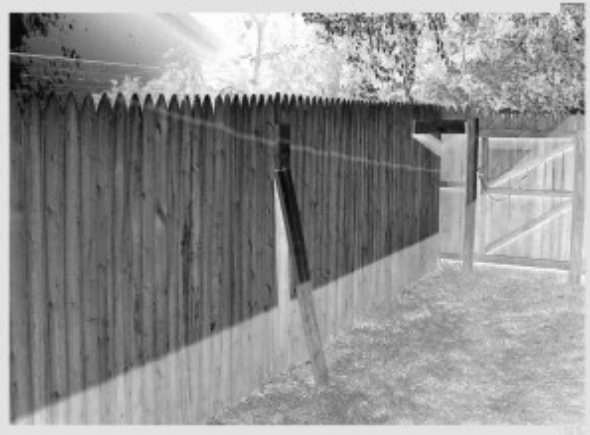
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FILM IS NOT DEAD!

September 26, 2010



Contrary to popular belief boys and girls, **FILM IS NOT DEAD!** And I have the proof to boot! One question that everyone has is, where do you get film for that camera? Or, even more disturbing, I thought they didn't make film any more? Then, where do you get film processed? And finally the most frustrating of all, why would you want to mess with film?

Well, I am not going to address all of this, but I am going to shout from the roof tops again, **FILM IS NOT DEAD!** Something great has just happened and I am jumping up and down with excitement. Keith Canham, owner of [KB Canham Cameras](http://www.kbcanhamcameras.com) has just

announced at Photokina this year that he is now partnered with Kodak to coordinate orders for LF and ULF film. Keith will now take orders for any current Kodak film, in any size! Let me say this again. . . *any current Kodak film, in any size!*

Plus, just to reinforce the idea that film is not dead, Kodak also announced a new color film. Think about this now. . . Kodak is still developing new film emulsions. They are still doing R&D and improving film! Need I say this again. . . **FILM IS NOT DEAD!** Here is a portion of the announcement;

Kodak Introduces new Film at Photokina

Yes, a new film: Kodak Creates World's Finest Grain 400 Speed Color Negative Film with New KODAK PROFESSIONAL PORTRA 400

ROCHESTER, N.Y., Sept. 14, 2010 – Eastman Kodak Company today introduced their new KODAK PROFESSIONAL PORTRA 400 Film, featuring the finest grain structure available in a 400 speed color negative film. The new film incorporates KODAK VISION Film Technology, plus Antenna Dye Sensitization in the cyan and magenta emulsion layers to achieve its unbeatable fine grain.

Yes, a new fine grain color negative film from Kodak. . . and. . . you can get it in any size you can dream of! You can find more information from Photokina on the Kodak BLOG.

Also. . . don't forget, Kodak is not the only game in town. [Ilford](http://www.ilfordphoto.com) offers their B&W film in LF and ULF sizes. Plus there is imported sheet film in many sizes from places like [Freestyle Photographic Supplies](http://www.freestylephoto.com) and others.

Think I am excited. . . well, yes I am! *A very special Thank You to Keith Canham and Kodak for your support!!!*

I just have to shout this one more time; FILM IS NOT DEAD!

JB

FILM DIAGONAL

January 29, 2011.

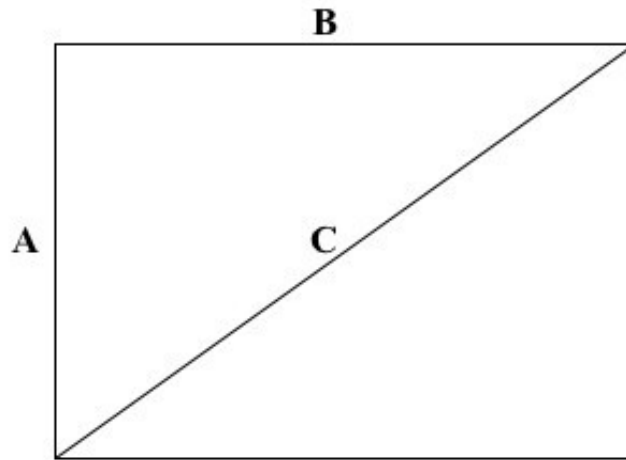
Sometimes it is necessary to know the diagonal dimension of a particular film format. This is especially true when trying to determine if a lens has a large enough image circle in order to adequately cover a certain film format. Modern lens manufacturers publish specifications that will tell you the maximum format the lens is designed for. But, with older lenses this information is sometimes not available. If you can determine the image circle of the lens, then you can determine which film sizes will work with the lens.

For example, say you are contemplating buying a lens and you know the image circle is 325mm. Looking at the table below you will immediately see that 325mm is the exact diagonal of a sheet of 8×10 film. This lens would probably work. But, you would have absolutely no movement available when using the camera. This lens would adequately cover 4×10 and would have generous coverage for 5×7 and 4×5 formats.

Here are a few common film sizes and their diagonal dimension;

FILM SIZE inches	FILM SIZE mm	DIAGONAL inches	DIAGONAL mm
4x5	102x127	6.40	162
5x7	127x178	8.60	218
4x10	102x254	10.80	274
8x10	203x254	12.80	325
11x14	279x365	16.03	407
8x20	279x508	21.50	546
16x20	406x508	25.60	650
20x24	508x610	31.20	793

If you need to calculate the film diagonal of any format, here is the formula.



$$C = \sqrt{A^2 + B^2}$$

- A = Film Height**
- B = Film Width**
- C = Film Diagonal**

Keep in mind that the actual image area is slightly less than the film dimension due to the hold-down guides that keep the film held in place in the holder. This calculated diagonal measurement is plenty close enough to determine adequate image circle of any lens.

Hope you find this information helpful!

JB

CLEANING FILM HOLDERS

January 1, 2012.

Dust is forever the biggest enemy of the large format shooter. Seems that no matter how meticulous you are, that one little speck of dust sneaks in and plants itself right in the middle of some nice smooth area. . . like the sky. It is a never-ending battle and requires continuous attention.

It is obvious that you need to keep your camera clean and it is imperative that you vacuum out all of your film bags and equipment cases. Dust gets everywhere, and it is good practice to vacuum everything before you go out to photograph. But, there is one area we have found to be extremely important for dust control, and that is keeping your film holders clean.

We have found that a thorough cleaning of every holder just prior to loading film keeps the dust problem to a minimum. If the inside of the holder is clean, then the outside is the only place where dust resides. Realize that the most critical time is before and during exposure. If a dust speck gets on your film after exposure, at least it is no longer a threat for making the dreaded pinhole which leads to the black spot on the print. After exposure, the worst a dust speck can do is possibly scratch the film during handling.



Everyone has their own methods for cleaning and loading film holders, and here are my main concerns and how we prepare our holders for loading. I will begin by saying that every holder is cleaned and inspected just prior to every loading session. Even on the road, we never load a holder with fresh film without cleaning. My biggest concern is dust inside the holder. I want the inside to be as clean, and dust free as possible. No matter how clean your film bags and cameras are, dust will always settle on the outside of the holders. If you thoroughly clean the inside of the holder, you will have a better chance of keeping the film dust free. I begin by cleaning the work surface with a damp towel and after

dry I vacuum the area just to be sure. I always use the round brush on the end of the vacuum hose and before attaching I vacuum it well to make sure the bristles are free of dust.

I work each holder individually and begin by vacuuming the entire outer surface of the holder with the dark slide still in place. I pay particular attention to the entire area around the parameter of the holder where the slide meets the holder. I want the exterior of the holder as dust free as possible before I remove the slide.

One area that collects dust is the light trap area. Any dust on the dark slide will be wiped off by the felt in the trap. It is imperative that the dark slide be completely removed and the light trap vacuumed thoroughly. Also, while the dark slide is out of the holder, I vacuum the inside of the holder and the entire parameter, paying special attention to the film hold down and dark slide slots along the sides. I open the loading flap and vacuum under it also. The last thing I do before reinserting the dark slide is vacuum both sides of the slide and inspect it for dust or any possible damage. Each dark slide is removed, one-at-a-time, and always replaced in the same side of the holder. I never mix up slides, they always go back into the same holder and same side. . . always!

Once the holders are cleaned we immediately load them with fresh film and place them into their film bag. It is a good idea to vacuum the film bag before placing newly loaded film holders back inside. This is a good idea, especially if you have been in a particularly dusty area.

This is the ritual we go through every time we load film and we have little problems with dust on our film. Everyone has their own way of doing things and this is the procedure we use when loading film. There are a few things that we have found that greatly improve the odds of keeping your film clean. Remember, the vacuum is your best friend when it comes to dust. See my previous post titled “[DUST.. .A Four Letter Word!](#)” for more information.

JB

IS THAT A FENDER THIN?

March 20, 2009



Unless you play guitar, you probably have never heard of a Fender Thin. If you are not a guitar connoisseur, it is a guitar pick. Now why on earth would someone that shoots LF and ULF be interested in a guitar pick, you ask?

Ever try to unload a sheet film holder while wearing Nitrile gloves? Or ever had a sheet of film that has a slight rearward curl. Then you know how difficult it is sometimes to get your finger under the sheet to remove it from the film holder. Now do you see the value of a thin guitar pick?

I keep a small container of thin guitar picks near the back of the enlarger baseboard where I normally unload film. I can locate my stash of picks in the dark and they are invaluable sometimes to get that stubborn sheet of film coaxed out of the film holder without excessive handling or damage. A thin guitar pick can easily be slipped under the film to allow you to get your finger under the film edge.

The next time you see a music store, stop in and purchase a few thin guitar picks. They could save you a lot of frustration. Who knows, you might want to take up the guitar!

Finally, just for the record, I really don't use a Fender Thin. I prefer the super thin nylon 0.46mm pick sold under the Jim Dunlop name. In case anyone is really interested.

JB

DUST... A Four Letter Word!

July 11, 2010.



Yes, the number one adversary of the LF photographer is DUST! Dust is a four letter word in the world of photography. Seems we are always fighting Dust. It gets into everything. The one place you absolutely can not tolerate the pest is on your film. A tiny speck of dust or lint in your film holder will always find its way onto that one area of smooth even texture.

So, the question is how to battle dust? One thing to do is, as mentioned in my previous post titled “Wax On. . . Wax Off” is to wax your equipment. Waxed surfaces are easier to keep clean. Also, vacuum out all of your bags, cases and packs regularly. Before every outing, take the time to disassemble your camera and clean it. Remove the bellows and vacuum out all of the folds, inside and out.

Next comes your film holders. Before you begin loading, dust the table top. I like to go over the surface with a damp cloth just to be sure. Your best friend when it comes to your film holders is a good vacuum. We travel and have to deal with film loading in all sorts of, less than desirable situations. Our number one tool is a small portable vacuum.

I first saw these small commercial vacuums being used by copy machine techs years ago. The vacuum they carry is a small, self-contained, field service vacuum and the most popular seems to be one made by 3M. We searched around and bought a 3M SV-497AJM vacuum on that auction site years ago. One of the best purchases we have made for sure!

A little searching on the Internet turned up this from 3M, “Designed by 3M Corporation for its own office products service department, this durable, reliable vacuum cleaner set the standard for all others. Designed specifically for cleaning toner from copy machines, it also is great for cleaning printers, floors or just about anything else a field engineer might encounter.” The unit is self contained with hose and attachments housed in the top and is 17” x 6.5” x 7.5” weighing 9 pounds.

Our 3M field service vacuum has logged many miles with us over the years and we would not consider travel without it. It is also great to have around the darkroom to help keep dust under control.

JB

TRAVELING WITH FILM

October 25, 2010.



I have received several inquiries as to how we handle film when traveling. Our photographic outings typically last anywhere from two weeks to well over a month. We each shoot several different formats and we usually shoot a lot of film. We do not process film on the road since it is not practical to work with LF and ULF film anywhere but in our darkroom. So the question comes up, how do you handle several hundred sheets of exposed film when traveling?

First I have to say we keep meticulous notes on every negative we make. Everything from exposure, to location, to time of day is recorded on a small digital voice recorder. Every sheet of film gets an entry detailing all pertinent information. Search here on the jbhphoto.com BLOG for previous posts about our record keeping in these entries; “[KEEPING NOTES](#)” and “[PRINTING NOTES & CATALOG.](#)”

We only have room to haul just so many film holders in each format. So it is always necessary to carry fresh film and to reload holders on the road. Depending on how much we shoot on any particular day, we may reload every evening, or we could go several days before having to reload. Obviously we carry fresh film and empty boxes. How much film? The rule of thumb is to carry twice what you think you will shoot in any format. How do you know? Experience is the only answer to that question. If in doubt, throw in another box just in case. All I can say is we have never ran out of film on any trip. We always come home with unexposed film.



When reloading becomes necessary it is important to be able to sort the exposed film into groups that require the same developing time. We have printed sheets for unloading film. When it comes time to reload, we go through our audio notes and record the film holder numbers into columns that denote the development of each sheet of film. Once we have the sheet filled out, it is just a matter of locating the holders and arranging them in piles before unloading.

We do not practice anything very exotic when it comes to film development. We expose with the intention of one of three development times for any particular situation. Each sheet of film is exposed to be processed either Normal, Normal +1 ½, or Normal -1 ½. That is it. . . we need three sets of empty film boxes for each format, each labeled for the appropriate developing time. As we load more film we empty more boxes that are then used to unload more exposed film. We carry labels that we print off before we leave and affix them to the boxes as needed. The labels denote film developing time and that the box contains exposed film.

We also carry a handful of large rubber bands. All boxes, whether exposed or unexposed are held closed with two rubber bands. This is insurance against a box coming open or accidentally opening the wrong box. In our scheme, any box with rubber bands on it contains film. . . Do Not Open!

We carry a large Harrison tent, but I hate using it. So, we also carry spring clips, small nails, a hammer, tape and blackout material to cover windows as needed. We can nearly always find a bathroom or other room that is easily transformed into the temporary darkroom for film handling. We also carry a small folding table which comes in handy at times. Dust is always a problem when loading film. We carry a small field service vacuum, see the BLOG entry titled "[DUST. . . A Four Letter Word!](#)" Every holder is vacuumed, inside and out, every time we reload.

When traveling and shooting LF and ULF you have to be creative and prepared. This entire process is much more difficult to explain than it is to put into use. You just need a little forethought and planning. Traveling with film is not that difficult.

JB

SHEET FILM UNLOAD RECORD									
NAME: _____		DATE: ____/____/____							
FILM: _____		FILM SIZE: _____							
	N		N		N		N+1½		N-1½
1	46		91		1		3		3
2	47		92		2		2		2
3	48		93		3		3		3
4	49		94		4		4		4
5	50		95		5		5		5
6	51		96		6		6		6
7	52		97		7		7		7
8	53		98		8		8		8
9	54		99		9		9		9
10	55		100		10		10		10
11	56		101		11		11		11
12	57		102		12		12		12
13	58		103		13		13		13
14	59		104		14		14		14
15	60		105		15		15		15
16	61		106		16		16		16
17	62		107		17		17		17
18	63		108		18		18		18
19	64		109		19		19		19
20	65		110		20		20		20
21	66		111		21		21		21
22	67		112		22		22		22
23	68		113		23		23		23
24	69		114		24		24		24
25	70		115		25		25		25
26	71		116		26		26		26
27	72		117		27		27		27
28	73		118		28		28		28
29	74		119		29		29		29
30	75		120		30		30		30
31	76		121		31		31		31
32	77		122		32		32		32
33	78		123		33		33		33
34	79		124		34		34		34
35	80		125		35		35		35
36	81		126		36		36		36
37	82		127		37		37		37
38	83		128		38		38		38
39	84		129		39		39		39
40	85		130		40		40		40
41	86		131		41		41		41
42	87		132		42		42		42
43	88		133		43		43		43
44	89		134		44		44		44
45	90		135		45		45		45

Each volume of **TRADITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY** is derived from years of past writing on the jbhphoto.com **BLOG**. These are short articles about advanced wet darkroom, film and view camera techniques. Each volume contains selected writings about a specific topic.

Is all of the information contained in this installment of **TRADITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY** too technical or advanced for you?

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This e-book series has been created for those interested in the traditional large format film photography practiced in the wet darkroom.



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