

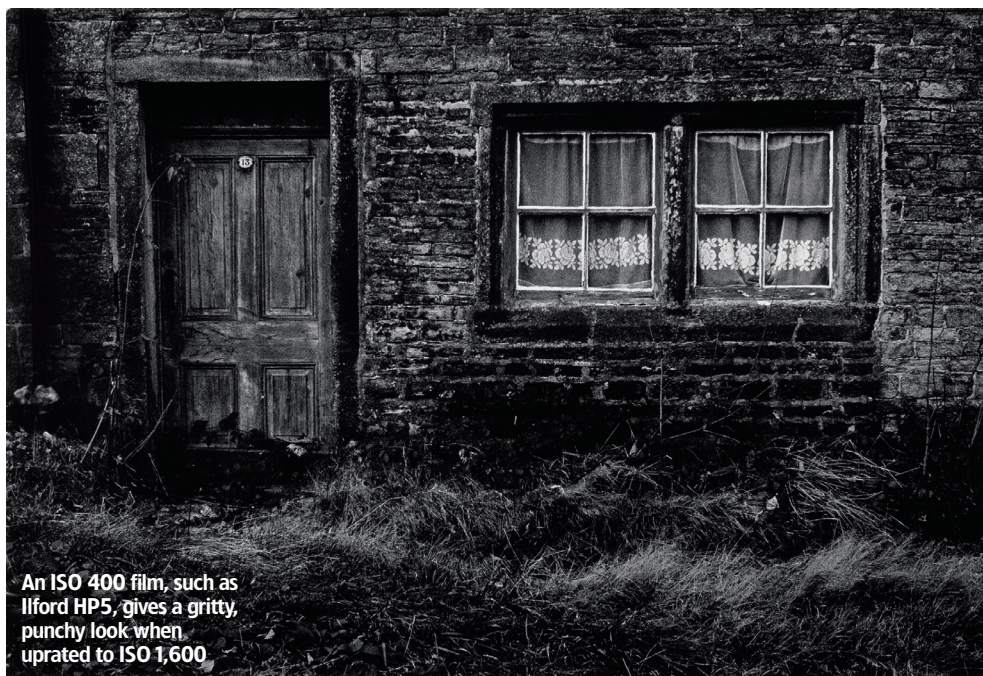
2 Fast films

ISO 400 films were once considered fast, and a lot of press photography was shot on them. If you're after a slightly grainy look, these will provide it. While they're not as grainy as they used to be, due to advances in film manufacture, the grain is still visible. These are good general-purpose films and excellent for street photography. Ilford HP5 Plus, Ilford Delta 400, Kodak Tri-X, Kodak T-Max 400, Fomapan 400 and Kentmere 400 are all worth looking at.

There are a couple of ISO 400-speed films that have a much finer grain structure (strictly speaking, a dye image), but they need to be processed using the same chemicals as colour negative film. This C-41 process is used by all high-street minilabs, making it easy to get this type of film developed.

The films are known as chromogenic films and there are currently two on the market that I know of: Ilford XP2 and Fujifilm Neopan 400 CN. Both are rated at ISO 400, but I'd suggest you set your meter's ISO to 320. This will overexpose each frame a bit, but give you much better negatives. Don't tell the lab, though! Just get them to process it as normal.

Fast films today are between ISO 1,600 and ISO 3,200. Fujifilm Neopan 1600 has been discontinued, but you may find the odd roll online. Some photographers love it, but I found it a bit too contrasty. Ilford's Delta 3200 is a good all-rounder: it can be rated at speeds between ISO 800 and ISO 3,200, although it's claimed it can be rated much higher. You're welcome to try this, but don't expect much printable detail on the negative. My own preference is to rate it at ISO 1,600 and process it for the appropriate time, as this gives a good tonality and superb grain. Kodak made one of the same speed for a while, but I believe it has been discontinued.



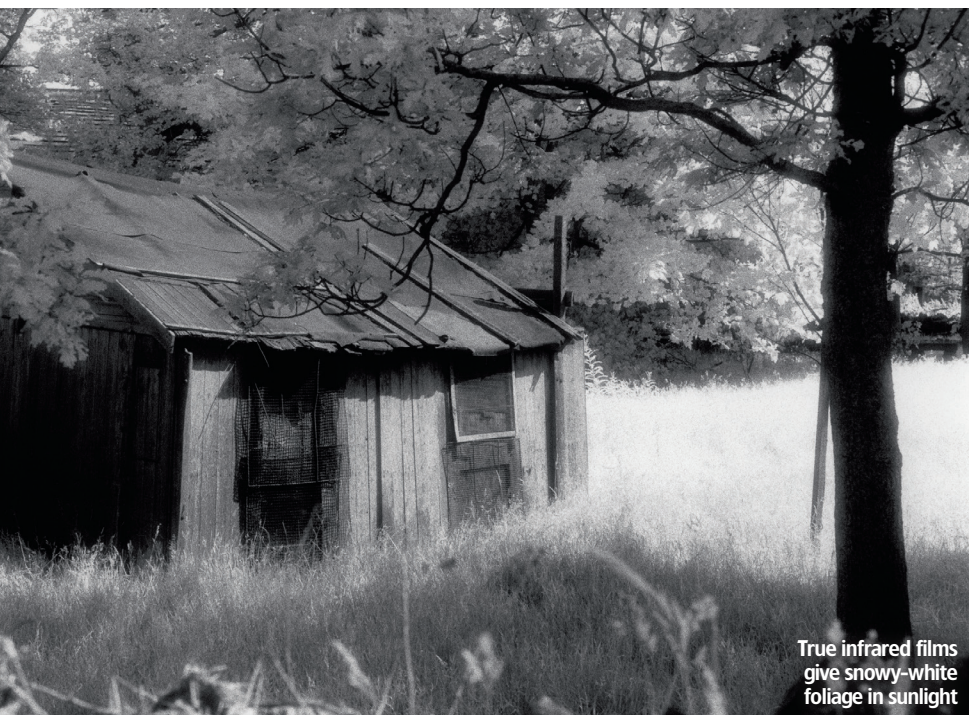
An ISO 400 film, such as Ilford HP5, gives a gritty, punchy look when uprated to ISO 1,600

3 Middle-range films

DIFFERENT photographers have their preferences, but the quality is good with all middle-range films. Processed in the correct developer, they will still give you fine grain and smooth tonality, but not as fine as the previously mentioned films. Ilford FP4 Plus, Ilford Delta 100, Fomapan 100 Classic, Fujifilm Neopan 100 Acros, Kentmere 100, Kodak T-Max 100 and Rollei Blackbird 100 – I haven't tried them all, but I know that FP4, Delta 100 and T-Max 100 all produce beautiful negatives.



Fine-grained films give a creamy quality to the lighter tones in an image, such as the sky here



True infrared films give snowy-white foliage in sunlight

4 Specialist films

THERE are a few unusual films that fall outside the normal range listed so far. There are infrared and pseudo-infrared films, such as Ilford SFX, as well as oddities like Ortho film. This will give you different tonality to ordinary (panchromatic) films, since it is mainly blue-sensitive. This means skies are rendered oddly and skin tones come out much darker. It can, however, be loaded and processed under red safelight rather than total darkness.

So that's my quick rundown on film. Go out and shoot some and enjoy the challenge it provides. Film imposes a discipline that will sharpen your wits.

USEFUL CONTACTS

For more information on available black & white films and darkroom equipment
RK Photographic at www.thedarkroom.co.uk
www.rolleifilm.com, www.ilfordphoto.com,
www.foma.cz, www.fujifilm.co.uk,
www.kentmere.co.uk, www.silverprint.co.uk

On pages 12-13, Andrew looks at film processing and developing