

A developing story told in black & white



By John Dingman
AP Newsfeatures

Many photographers like myself work in a temporary darkroom that must be set up and taken down each time it's used. Storage space is limited, but supplies are needed. One of the most economical ways to buy paper is in packages of 250 sheets or more. But if you need more than one different grade of paper — and most photographers do — then storage can be a problem. Most negatives do fine on No.2 and No.3 paper, but there are times when anything from a No.1 to a No.5 is needed. Five boxes of paper take up a lot of storage space.

I use a lot of variable contrast paper, for both storage and cost reasons. Kodak Polycontrast and Ilford Multigrade II have produced decent results. But neither compares with the new Ilford Multigrade III. Ilford Multigrade III works like other variable contrast papers. You expose it in your enlarger in the usual way. However, with Multigrade III, colored filters are used to change the light and the contrast. The filters produce contrasts from Grade 0 through Grade 5 in half steps. Most of the time, I use a No.2 to No.3 1/4 filter. It's relatively easy to learn how to gauge what is needed by inspecting the negative.

camera angles

ON THOSE OCCASIONS when the negative is less than perfect, it's a joy just to switch filters to get the desired contrast grade. And, if you have an enlarger with a color head, you can easily dial in the equivalent of the gelatin filter. I have worked up a little chart for the side of the enlarger, giving the settings for the various contrast grades. Ilford Multigrade III produces some of the whitest whites and blackest blacks of any paper I have used, including graded papers. With the proper grade filtration, the prints just leap out — great for prints for my personal use, and, more important, for the engraver who does my church magazine. Exposure times are short, even with the filters in the enlarger, and except for the scale, a change in filtration does not change exposure. Ilford Multigrade III is a fast-developing paper. If you use the spe-

cial Multigrade developer, the image snaps up in about 10 seconds, and the print reaches full development in about 60 seconds.

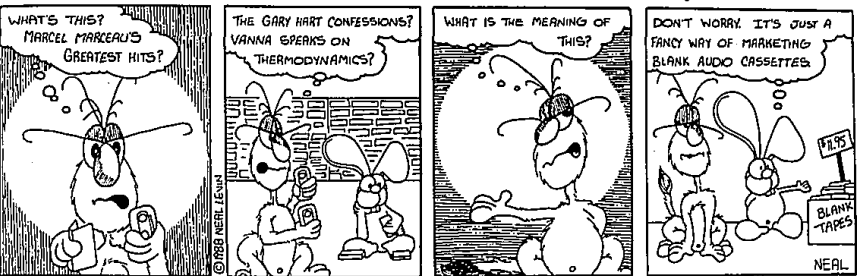
You don't have to use Multigrade developer — any good developer will work. But others are slower in the tray; about 30 seconds for the image to appear, and about two minutes to reach full development. Not critical, but if you are making a lot of prints, it can add up.

ALTHOUGH Multigrade III is intended primarily for use in automatic developing machines, my tests were 95 percent successful in the sort of trays most of us use at home.

I did some printing at a commercial darkroom with a Kodak processor and the results were not any better — just quicker in time, mostly in drying.

There is a side benefit to Multigrade III and the other variable contrast papers. In a pinch, you can make prints from color negatives. The results are not as good as with Kodak Panalure, and you will have to fuss around to find a contrast grade that will work with your enlarger. However, it will work, and you can process under a safelight, something you cannot do with Panalure.

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by Neal Levin



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