

FOCUS ON PHOTOGRAPHY

Don't get photo 'blues' on 'blah' days



MONTE NAGLER

Are you a fair-weather photographer? Do you shoot for those deep blue skies in all your pictures, thinking that's the only way you can bring home the good shots? If so, you're missing out on a lot of photo opportunities.

Overcast skies, often referred to as "blah weather days," can actually provide you with numerous photo possibilities just not obtainable with any other kind of weather conditions.

Overcast days possess a soft, special light quality you can't get on a sunny day. Outdoor portraits, for example, are much more flattering when shot under overcast skies. The lighting is delicate and natural, and harsh shadows are non-existent. Squinty eyes are eliminated, and genuine, relaxed expressions are easily captured on your film.

You might think that colors appear more brilliant on a sunny day. Quite the contrary. Subtle overcast light will actually intensify colors and make that red barn or green maple leaves more vivid. Astute photographers are well aware that overcast lighting will produce more glorious and saturated autumn colors than direct sunlight in our fall color season.

Remember, too, that film can't "see" the same way as can the human eye. In other words, film doesn't have the latitude that the eye possesses. On a bright, sunny day, our eyes can easily and quickly adjust to extreme contrast differences while viewing a scene. We can see the details in the shadows while at the same time we can pick out texture in an area lit by a burst of sunbeams.

But film can't respond in this way, and often our sunny day photos will have distracting "hot spots," areas in our prints where the image is too bright and detail is lost.

Rest assured, the subtle light quality on an overcast day won't produce annoying "hot spots." The reduced contrast will conform to the latitude of your film and a very pleasing print will be yours.

You might ask, "Shouldn't I always try to have a dramatic cloud pattern to augment the sky?" Well, why not use a

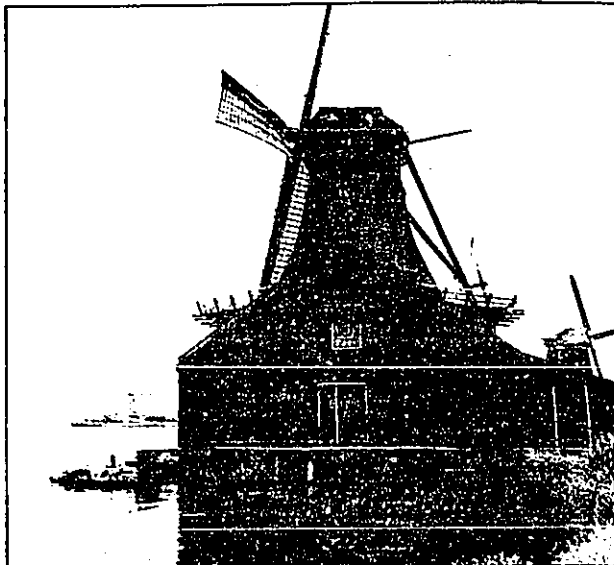
bald, overcast sky to actually enhance your picture? Notice in the accompanying photograph how the plain sky helps to complement and maintain viewer attention on the windmills.

Black-and-white photographers especially prefer overcast skies. Contrast is reduced and zone values "fall" perfectly into place for an easy-to-obtain, full-tonal-range print.

Of course, weather conditions that often accompany overcast days can be put to photographic advantage. Mist, fog, storm clouds, etc. can all work for you to improve and strengthen your shots. You'll obtain mood and emotion you just can't get on a sunny day.

Monte Nagler is a fine art photographer based in Farmington Hills. You can leave him a message by dialing (313) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then his mailbox number, 1873. His fax number is (810) 644-1314.

Dutch treat: The bald, overcast sky actually enhances Monte Nagler's photograph of these windmills in Zandijk, Holland. It helps give an almost graphic quality to the picture.



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