

Friday, June 18. 2010

2010.06.05: Slide film sucks . . .

. . . for wedding photography. Or so I thought until I received two rolls of Fuji Astia 100 non-F back from my pro lab of choice, ABC Photocolour, after Dong Kim and I shot a wedding for a black couple (with mostly black wedding party) a couple Saturdays ago. I don't usually blog wedding photos nor do I advertise myself as a wedding photographer but I feel that I need to share these images with a larger audience because I regularly express my feelings of aversion towards positive film for existing light photography because of its narrower exposure latitude, lower maximum speeds available, and inconvenience since the closest good lab being in Vancouver. Up until recently, I would shoot almost exclusively Fuji NPZ/Pro-Z ISO 800 negative print film rating it at ISO 640 and Ilford HP5+ or Delta 400 at anywhere from ISO 100 to 3200 and processed in Kodak HC-110 or Kodak XTOL. I would then shoot formal portrait photos on a dSLR like the Nikon D300 or D3 because of the flexibility of shooting at a low base ISO, higher maximum shutter speed than my Leica M7 or Zeiss Ikon, and the often superior colour output with satisfactory black and white conversions. These two rolls of Astia 100 make film rangefinder photography outdoors for formal wedding portraiture totally feasible with my shooting style. Positive frame borders deliberately retained when scanning with the Nikon Coolscan 5000 ED. All but the first frame selected from a roll of thirty eight exposures.

And a huge thank you to Yvette and Alvin for selecting Dong and I as your photographers. I couldn't have hope for a better start to the wedding season. The baring of unfiltered emotions, the love shared by all of the wedding party and guests which have been cultivated, in some cases, for a period longer than I have been alive, the dozen high school aged female total strangers that you allowed to join your dance, and even the hour and a half of beautifully composed, delivered, and thoroughly entertaining toasts during the reception made shooting this wedding one of the most fun wedding shooting experiences I have ever had.

I shot this image last of the set being posted but it makes more sense to see this image first. It just happened that we shot the formal photos before the wedding ceremony. Shot with the Leica M7 at 1/1000s and F/2 through the Zeiss Biogon ZM 35mm F/2. It's also important to note that all of my M-mount equipment is in chrome/silver colour because the colour of the camera equipment has a huge impact on the images it creates.

One of the few shots with "real" wind blowing Yvette's veil. Leica 90mm F/2.8 Elmarit, first generation in chrome.

In retrospect, the photographic challenges imposed by very dark-skinned person in very white clothing without artificial light control in a slightly backlit scene should have turned any more risk-averse photographer away as inexperienced as I from trying film technology which is known to have less exposure latitude than professional negative films and modern professional digital still capture devices on a production shoot but I am glad that I took the risk. Zeiss Biogon 35mm F/2 @ F/2 and 1/1000s. Strangely, the bride's face turned out noticeably darker than the rest of her exposed skin. In the final deliverable photos I will likely lighten her face to be a bit more consistent with the rest of her body.

Alvin had an irremovable grin on his face the entire day. I struggled with it at first as I tried to create more dramatic and serious photos but as a photographer trying to take a contemporary approach to wedding photography I think it is more important to act as channel for the day's emotions than to try to create something untrue; Alvin really is the happiest groom that I have ever seen.

The problem with having only one roll of film loaded at a time is that you are stuck using whatever film you have loaded even when the situation changes. I originally wanted to shoot some HP5+ and let it overexpose a little by using it at rated speed and then processing in Ilfisol S as part of the non-formal coverage of the formal portrait session to allow for some noticeable grain structure but I had a few frames of Astia left loaded in the camera so that's what I used. Same settings as previous frame. I noticed that Astia 100's

anti-halation measures may be weaker than with other films thus resulting in more "glow". The glow is further amplified by the dirt on my lenses that I refuse to clean off.

The graduating high school classes and the handful of other photographers with wedding parties at the Alberta Legislature were very co-operative keeping out of our field of views and giving us time to work. Which is good or else the bridesmaids were ready to muscle us through the crowds and maintain a perimeter. Still, I think someone's elbow is just into the frame near the bottom right edge. Leica M7, Elmarit 90mm F/2.8 first generation M-mount.

It was about time to leave the formals location when we realized that we needed some shots of just the couple. I haven't seen Dong's shots yet but he has some more dynamic arrangements. That said, a bench in the Lois Hole Garden east of the main building gave us what we needed to change up the terrain a bit.

Hahah . . . awesome.

With the exception of a handful of shots during the ceremony and some ISO 12,800 shots during the reception, I was Nikon D3-free for the entire day. This allowed me to pack a two camera digital/analog hybrid system with the M7/35mm Biogon/90mm Elmarit and the GH1/20mm 1.7/14-140 with twenty rolls of film in a bag with total weight around 8lbs. If you're wedding shooter looking to lighten up your kit I highly recommend considering the combination of the GH1 and an M-mount rangefinder like the modern Zeiss Ikon, Leica MP, Leica M7 or, if you can deal with the replacement of chrome with paint on a Leica body, the Leica M9.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Shoots at 04:38