



# FILM IS NOT DEAD

A DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHER'S GUIDE TO SHOOTING FILM

*BY JONATHAN CANLAS & KRISTEN KALP | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JONATHAN CANLAS*

# Film Is Not Dead

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*A Digital Photographer's Guide to Shooting Film*

*By Jonathan Canlas & Kristen Kalp  
Photography by Jonathan Canlas*



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For my wife, Callie, and our beautiful children: Isaac, Ila, Ruby, Lulu, Weston, and Kalani.

Each one of you has inspired me to create these images and together, you all are responsible for any success I have in life. Thank you.

And for my father, Arsenio Canlas.  
I did it, Dad. *I did it.*

– Jonathan



Dear Mom and Dad,  
Turns out that English degree wasn't useless, after all.

All my love,  
Kristen

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P.S. MattMatt, dear husband  
of mine...thank you. More than  
you can possibly imagine.

# The Preface

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*Holga 120S, Kodak E100VS, cross-processed, “sunny” setting. Paris, France.*

**FILM IS NOT DEAD. THAT’S WHY YOU’RE HERE.**

Whether you’re shooting for the first time or returning to film after a hiatus, welcome.

With this book, you have all the information necessary to leap from digital shooting to film shooting on the day your shiny new film purchases arrive in the mail. (Or the day you get your film gear out of the closet and start shooting film again.)





*Holga, Kodak E100VS, cross-processed, “sunny” setting. Maui, HI.*



*Contax 645, 80mm lens, Fuji 400H, f/2. Provo, UT. Taken by Allison Cox.*

**Hi, I’m Jonathan Canlas. And you need to trust me.**

You don’t have to send me your social security card, or anything...but trust the way this book is arranged. I’ve held tons of Film Is Not Dead workshops and answered thousands of questions from peeps around the world about film. This book condenses aaaaaaaall those questions into an easy-to-read guide.

It’s designed for you to read all the way through to build the beginnings of a film foundation. Let me repeat: it’s designed for you to read *all the way through* before freaking out about the 6,873 questions

this book has created.

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You're going to have questions. It's great to have questions! I'm gonna need you to write those questions down. Many times, your questions will be answered later in the book. If they're not answered – don't waste having gone through the trouble of writing 'em down! Google 'em.

Google provides a lot more current data about the cost of X camera body or X lens or X accessory than this book can. Google can find stuff that's available for sale. Google knows the sunny 16 rule just as well as I do. *Google is king when it comes to finding what you need.*

If your question isn't answered in this book *and* you've got Google stumped, you can ask me. I have no secrets, and I don't believe in industry secrets. Sometimes there's a question that requires an honest-to-goodness film-shooting veteran's opinion or knowledge – I'm happy to answer those questions!

Just know that *many* times, my answer will be pretty boring. My answer will be “try it and see” or “practice, practice, practice” or something along the lines of a long rambling answer ending in “hard work, sacrifice, and discipline.” Imagine a 250-pound dude giving you those same three answers over and over, and you'll be finding your own answers to questions in no time. (I get pretty repetitive, after all.)



# Table of Contents

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*Mamiya RZ Pro II, Kodak Ektar 100, 110mm lens, f/2.8. Kahuku, HI.*

**HERE'S HOW IT'S GONNA GO DOWN.** We're going to talk about why I shoot film. The reasons I shoot are probably the reasons you're interested in shooting, so we can compare notes in a few pages. From there, we'll cover the rules of shooting film. These used to be child's play, taught in any Photography 101 course, but they're being lost. It's up to us to keep 'em alive and kicking.

Do not skip the rules. They are both important and useful.

After we've run through the rules, we'll get to the gear: cameras and film. I'll let you know what I recommend, which film stocks I shoot, and which film stocks are still in production. Things get a bit more technical after we talk film, as we'll talk *light meter*. Oy.

Do not let your eyes glaze over. Do not get scared. It is only a tiny little instrument that helps you expose your film. If you can add tunes to your iPod, you can most certainly work a light meter.

Then, we'll cover editing and storing your film – this chapter is short because film is light on the post-production work and is simple to archive. Following that, we'll cover personal projects, just to see how film in real-life situations play out as projects and inspiration.

We'll wrap with tutorials, as well as a look at my favorite vendors and film resources. And *then* you'll be left with no choice but to get out there and start shooting *film*!

## [The Reasons](#)

The look, the ease, the depth of field, and the dropping price of gear are just a few of the reasons to get on board with film. We'll explore each of the reasons in more depth with a quick overview of film's outstanding qualities.

## [Why I Shoot Film](#)

## [The Rules](#)

Rules for exposing your film, hand-holding your camera in low-light situations, and choosing gear to buy are all covered. We'll also define personal work in shooting and explore the ways to create meaningful projects.

[\*\*Sunny 16 Rule\*\*](#)

[\*\*More Rules\*\*](#)

[\*\*Know Your Camera\*\*](#)

## [\*\*The Cameras\*\*](#)

There's something for everyone here, whether you're a seasoned pro or an absolute newbie. Find a camera that speaks to you and start shooting it immediately by using these chapters as your guide.

[\*\*Medium Format\*\*](#)

[\*\*35MM\*\*](#)

[\*\*Instant\*\*](#)

[\*\*Toy\*\*](#)



## **[The Film](#)**

You probably have tons of questions about selecting and shooting film stocks. Fuji, Kodak, consumer-grade, black and white, slide, and instant films are covered, so you'll be fully prepared to choose the perfect film for any shooting situation.

### **[Fuji or Kodak Film](#)**

#### **[Basics](#)**

#### **[My Recommendations](#)**

#### **[Pro Stock](#)**

#### **[Slide Film](#)**

#### **[True Black and White Film](#)**

#### **[Generic Film](#)**

#### **[Buying & Storing Film](#)**

[Film: FAQ](#)

[Instant Film](#)

[FP-110C Instant Film](#)

## [The Exposing](#)

You'll make friends with a light meter in these chapters, learning to meter for various film stocks and to expose your film perfectly in common shooting scenarios. Step-by-step instructions and common beginner questions will keep you from freaking out as you get used to snuggling up with a Sekonic.

[Exposing Color & C-41 Film](#)

[Your Buddy the Light Meter](#)

[Metering B & W Film](#)

[Exposing Slide Film](#)

[Exposure: FAQ](#)



[The Backend](#)



Your film has been exposed, but what do you do with it now? We'll examine your budget and your skill level to find the lab best suited for meeting your needs. Editing and storage of your film captures are also handled.

[Developing: For Real](#)

[Developing: Your Local Lab](#)

[Developing: On the Cheap](#)

[Developing: On Your Own](#)

[Nintendo Time](#)

[Editing](#)

[Storage](#)

## [The Personal Projects](#)

This is my favorite part of the book, no questions asked. We'll examine my top personal projects in detail: family, where I live, Hawaii, and charity work. Your most common questions about how projects evolve and influence my professional work are answered, too.

[Burning Personal Questions](#)

[Project Hawaii](#)

[Project Family](#)

[Project Lehi](#)

[Project CMN](#)

## [The Tutorials](#)

These pages will pay for the book many times over! They'll prevent you from losing rolls of film through trial and error. Tutorial pages are printed with black edges, so you'll know where they're located when you need to find 'em, stat!

**Loading Film into Your Contax & Swapping Out Inserts**

[How to Load a Yashica Mat 124-G](#)

[How to Load Film into Your Girlfriend](#)

[Operating the Polaroid 600SE](#)

[Loading the Holga](#)

[Metering with the Sekonic](#)

## [The Resources](#)

The professionals mentioned in the book are compiled for handy reference, and we've included a page for recording questions worthy of Googling in this section as well.



# The Reasons

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*Mamiya RZ Pro II, Kodak Portra 160NC, 110mm lens, f/2.8. St. Louis, MO.*

*SURE, I'M COMMITTED TO FILM — BUT WHY? WHAT MAKES IT WORTH THE EFFORT OF CREATING AND MAINTAINING MY OWN LAB? THE ANSWERS AWAIT.*

## Why I Shoot Film

**FILM ALLOWS ME TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH MY FAMILY, LESS TIME WITH MY EYES GLUED TO A COMPUTER SCREEN.**

**ONE: THE LOOK OF IT.** Film has a distinctive look and feel – an incredible color palette and tangible softness. Film is where it's *at*, visually. You may have tried to make your digital images look like film and failed – or just realized that the easiest way to get the look of film is to shoot film.

**TWO: THE EASE OF IT.** I have a full-time photography business that requires loads of travel. I also have a wife and six kids who would like to see more than my face staring at a computer screen every once in a while. Film allows me to shoot, develop, scan, tweak, and upload images to clients in a fraction of the time it takes to process the same number of images digitally. The majority of my finished images are straight from the camera, with only minor adjustments to make them sing.



***Contax 645, Kodak Portra 400, 80mm lens, f/2. Chattanooga, TN.***

***FILM WILL HELP YOU CUT DOWN ON SPRAYING AND PRAYING. WHERE YOU WERE ONCE TAKING 15 IMAGES, YOU'LL FIND YOURSELF TAKING ONE OR TWO.***



***Contax 645, Fuji 400H, 35mm lens, f/8. San Francisco, CA.***

**THREE: IT FORCES YOU TO BE A BETTER PHOTOGRAPHER.** There's no chimping in film! You have to know how to nail the exposure, how the light is interacting with your subject, and how your camera will react to both *before* you press the shutter.

Because each frame costs money, you'll be more diligent about clearing the frame of unwanted distractions. Film will also help you cut down on spraying and praying – where you were once shooting 10-15 images, you'll find yourself taking just one or two frames.

Pressing the shutter less often also saves time when culling images later. Fewer frames, fewer decisions...more time with family!

Finally, when you shoot enough with one film at one ISO, you learn the exposures necessary to handle different lighting situations. Film makes your exposures like clockwork, if you shoot it enough – so you can concentrate on your subject. *Not* your camera settings.

**FOUR: DETAIL RETENTION IN HIGHLIGHTS AND SHADOWS.** *I dare you* to shoot the same ultra-high-contrast scene at identical exposures using film and digital cameras. The results will show an incredible retention of detail in both highlights and shadows of your film image. A *huge* dynamic range of tones with even gradation from darks to lights.

In digital? Not so much. I'm not hating, either – just try it and see.

**FIVE: THE DEPTH OF FIELD IS UNREAL.** Unreal, like bokeh so buttery you'd swear it belongs on your toast.

**SIX: YOU LEARN TO SEE THE WORLD FULL-FRAME.** Many digital cameras have a crop factor of at least 1.5, which means digital photographers see the world in a semi-telephoto state all the time. *What you say!?* A 50mm lens on a film camera does not have the same angle of coverage on a dSLR with a 1.5 crop factor, as it is now effectively a 75mm lens. (Full-frame digital cameras are available, but if you don't have one, you're seeing the world through your lens differently.)

**SEVEN: IT CAN MIX AND MATCH LIGHT WITH NO PROBLEM.** Let's say we're in a room together. You're being lit by window light from the side and tungsten light from overhead. A digital capture will render all sorts of issues with mixed, uneven light. With film, there's no problem. You'll end up with even gradations from tungsten to ambient light. (And no white balance nightmares!)

**EIGHT: THE DROPPING PRICE OF FILM GEAR.** As the brightest and shiniest dSLRs hit the market, film cameras can be picked up for pennies on the dollar of their original value. What used to cost as much



as the latest high-end Nikon or Canon release is now only a fraction of the price.

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*Contax 645, Fuji 400H, 35mm lens, f/3.5. San Francisco, CA.*

I can replace everything in my main camera bag – two Contax cameras and their lenses, film inserts, Polaroid 600SE, light meter, modified Holga, Nikon flash, video light, batteries, and tripod — for less than \$6000. *Everything*. For less than the cost of a Nikon D3 body and lens.

**NINE: LEAF SHUTTER, BABY.** There isn't a dSLR on the market with leaf shutter capabilities. But what's a leaf shutter? Instead of the camera's shutter being a focal plane shutter – inside the camera, behind the lens – the shutter is *inside the lens*. Leaf shutters can sync with a flash at all available shutter speeds. If the camera goes up to 1/500, it can sync at 1/500. That means you're no longer stuck at 1/250 or less for your fastest sync speed!

Also with leaf shutter, particularly Twin Lens Reflex (TLR) cameras, there is no mirror in the body that has to go up and down. No mirror equals less camera shake, which equals hand-holding when shooting at much lower shutter speeds.

**TEN: FILM SETS YOU APART. FAR APART.** Quite frankly, those who shoot film know their crap. And when you know your crap, you can forget the technical aspects to shoot the world the way you see it. Your vision comes out to play when you leave all the latest actions, presets, and doodads behind to focus intently on the subject matter before you.



*Contax 645, Fuji 400H, 80mm lens, f/2. Artesia, MS.*





*Contax 645, Kodak Portra 400NC, 80mm lens, f/2. Oakland, CA.*



*Contax 645, Fuji 400H, 80mm lens, f/2. Salt Lake City, UT.*

# The Rules

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*Contax G2, generic color neg film from China, 21mm lens, f/2.8. Salt Lake City, UT.  
FOLLOW THESE RULES, AND YOUR IMAGES WILL AMAZE EVEN YOU.*

## **Sunny 16 Rule**

**ON A SUNNY DAY, SET YOUR CAMERA APERTURE TO F/16 AND YOUR SHUTTER SPEED TO THE RECIPROCAL OF THE ISO FILM SPEED.**

Let's say you have 400-speed film in your camera. There's a person in the sun over there and you want to shoot them – but you have no light meter! Applying Sunny 16 all quick-like, you know to set your aperture to f/16 and your shutter speed to the number closest to the reciprocal of your ISO: 1/500 of a second. (Reciprocal is just a number with 1/ over it. The reciprocal of ISO 100 would be...you got it, 1/100. You would shoot at 1/125, the shutter speed closest to the reciprocal.)



*Contax 645, Fuji 400H, 80mm lens, f/2. Aspen, CO.*



*Contax 645, Fuji 400H, 80mm lens, f/2. Washington, D.C.*



*Contax 645, Kodak Portra 400, 80mm lens, f/2. Salt Lake City, UT.*

## **More Rules**

**MEMORIZING THESE RULES WILL HELP YOU MAKE BETTER USE OF YOUR CAMERA AND HELP TO ENSURE YOUR SHOOTING SUCCESS.**

**THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SUNNY AREA AND A BACKLIT AREA IS GENERALLY THREE STOPS.** For example: I'm shooting in direct sun. I know my exposure when shooting Kodak Portra 400 is f/5.6 at 1/4000 of a second. The exposure of the same subject standing in the shade would be f/2 at 1/4000 of a second. That's a three-stop difference.

**YOU CAN HAND-HOLD SLR CAMERA SHOTS FOR AS LONG AS THE FOCAL LENGTH OF THE LENS ON YOUR CAMERA.** So, I can hand-hold a 35mm lens for 1/30 of a second. A 50mm lens for 1/50 of a second. I can hand-hold in low light and without a tripod all the time. *All the time.*

With a leaf shutter, you can push this rule even further. For example, I hand-hold my Polaroid 600SE down to 1/15 of a second – and the lens is a 127mm lens. On the Fuji GF670, which has an 80mm lens, I can hand-hold down to 1/8 of a second.

**FUJI FILM AND KODAK FILM ARE TWO ENTIRELY DIFFERENT BEASTS: FUJI FILM IS GREAT WITH GREENS AND BLUES. KODAK IS GREAT WITH YELLOWS AND REDS.**

**FUJI FILMS AND KODAK FILMS SHOULD BE EXPOSED DIFFERENTLY.** Fuji color film typically needs to be overexposed from one to two stops to create the ideal exposure. *Most* of the new Kodak color negative films – especially Portra 800, Portra 400, and Ektar 100 – only need to be overexposed by half a stop (The new Portra 400 can be *underexposed* by up to two stops without introducing muddy or shifting color into the frame. That's unheard of – and friggin' rad.)





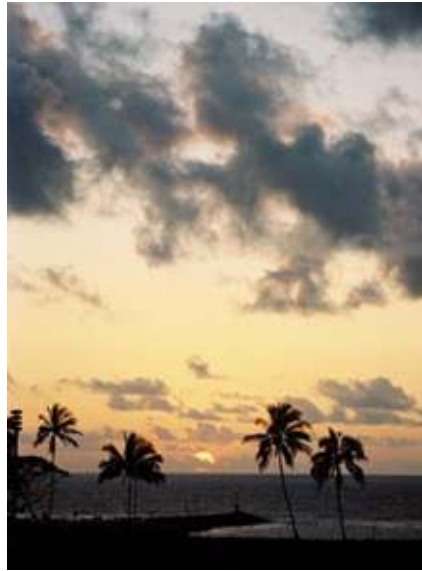
*Contax 645, Kodak Portra 400, 80mm lens, f/2. San Francisco, CA.  
FUJI FILM AND KODAK FILM ARE ENTIRELY DIFFERENT BEASTS.*

**Know Your Camera**



~~YOU DON'T NEED TO HAVE EVERY LENS AVAILABLE FOR YOUR CAMERA. GET THE JOB DONE WITH THE LEAST AMOUNT OF EQUIPMENT POSSIBLE.~~

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***Contax 645, Kodak Portra 400, 210mm lens, f/4. Kauai, HI.***

I constantly camp out at f/2 on my Contax with my 80mm lens. That doesn't mean you'll get the same look from your Nikon F100 and 50mm f/1.4 lens shot at f/2! Different camera, different lens, different look.

Same goes for family formals. I typically shoot 'em at f/8 with my Contax and 80mm lens, but they would look completely different if captured with a different lens and camera combo. Get to know your lenses and their depth of field. Know what f-stops you need to use for *every* situation. There are markings on all lenses that will tell you what will be in focus when shot at each f-stop.

Shoot around, practice, find what you like. This helps tons when the pressure is on while shooting an event. Or when Uncle Bill yells, "Take the damn picture already!" at your next family reunion. Know which lens and which f-stop you need, then meter accordingly. Know your gear, know what your image will look like at any given f-stop, no questions asked.

**DON'T TRUST YOUR CAMERA.** Use an external light meter to determine exposures. External light meters allow you to spot meter, which is a lot more precise than matrix metering – your camera's default for taking in a whole scene. If you're going to take the time and effort to shoot film, meter correctly.

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sample content of Film Is Not Dead: A Digital Photographer's Guide to Shooting Film (Voices That Matter)

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