

COLOUR FADE

(Dr. Film)

Most of the color film stock that you will encounter as a collector is "Eastman". You can determine the stock of a film by the printing along the sprocket hole edge of the film. Every few feet you will see the name of the stock and it helps to have a magnifying glass to read it. You can take your projector's lens out, turn it around and read the film edge easily with it. Unfortunately, with but one exception, all Eastman manufactured prior to 1982 has or will fade. Numerous attempts to restore this faded film have failed. Once the film has faded it cannot be reversed. Some projectionists use color filters in front of the lens in an attempt to restore the original color... it is a poor remedy.

There are two exceptions to Eastman stock fading. Stock bearing a "3b" on its edge is still holding up well. This stock is usually found on MGM titles printed between 1969-74 and includes cartoons. I have never seen an explanation as to why this "3b" stock is holding up and all the other Eastman prior to 1982 fades. The other exception is some Eastman stock made in 1982... which is LPP but does not bear LPP markings on the edge. LPP is a no fade stock which has a yellow-green bias in its color balance. Some collectors report that individual "airline" Eastman prints from the early 1970's, which used mylar (estar) as a base, are holding up well. However, many such airline prints are fading and the group cannot be labelled an exception.

There are seven color film stocks that have proven themselves to be low fade, they are: I.B. Technicolor; distinguishing itself as the real champ in holding its color. You can easily tell this stock by it's appearance... early stock had a blue sound track and usually soft focus and the more abundant later stock has sharp focus and a solid black sound track. Fuji stock has a purple bias in its color balance and is holding up nicely. Eastman 3b, Eastman LPP and the New Eastman (since 1996) are considered low fade. Kodachrome and Anscochrome are holding up nicely. Bear in mind, any stock, even I.B. Tech, will change when subjected to high heat and humidity. In all instances one should be storing all stocks in a cool, dry place. Contrary to early hopes and observations, Kodak SP is fading.

The only way to fully arrest color fade in the fading stocks is the deep freeze. Second to that one should store their films in as low temperature and low humidity conditions as possible.