

## Night Photography

by J. G. Archibald

An acquaintance asked about shooting some night pictures of an overseas city. So I suggested, if you are going to shoot slide film, you can get fairly good results by setting the camera on a tripod and letting the camera's built-in auto-exposure system decide the exposure for you.

These are the tips to keep in mind:

- First, you will get the best results, especially when there is a lot of pin point bright lights in the scene, if you stop your lens down a stop or so— $f/8$  is a good working aperture.
- Second, most slide films lose effective speed with long exposure (reciprocity failure), so you should bracket your exposure. There will be little point to bracketing on the under exposure side, but if you can spare the film, I'd bracket at the rated speed and +1, +2, and +3 stops exposure compensation.
- Third, night time scenes tend to be very contrasty, because of the light incorporated in the scenes. Your slide film probably won't have enough range to record both the lights and the shadows you can easily see with your eyes. Another argument for bracketing: you can decide later which rendition you like the best.

Color-negative films have a much larger exposure range (latitude) than slide films and are much more tolerant of overexposure. Most of them also show less reciprocity failure. For those reasons, bracketing is less important. Simply to be on the safe side, I'd make all my exposures a +1 "over-exposure". If you decide to bracket, make one additional exposure at +3 f-stops. Remember, you can print down an over exposed color negative and get excellent prints. But you can't restore detail that was never recorded, if you under exposure your negative. If you want a slide, just copy the color print.

Incidentally, slow films can work just as well if not better than fast ones for night exposures. Sure, the exposure times get longer, but the sharpness, fine grain, and great tonality cannot be beat.