

# NIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

The key to making photographs in low-light situations is to make sure the film does not end up underexposed. Light meters generally are incapable of reading light in such situations, and, even if they can, they are not to be trusted since they overestimate the amount of light actually there. There is no sure way to calculate exposure time; the best thing to do is bracket – and bracket a lot at that! A quarter of a second at f4 is not really that much of an exposure for 400 ISO film even under what may seem like really bright light under a street lamp. Not actually knowing the specific situation you could face, the best I can do is give a very loose starting point of 1 second at f4 with 400 ISO film. And from there, I would bracket at least two stops – meaning another exposure of 2 seconds, and another of four seconds – all of this under a bright looking street light!

Moving from town to the country, under the full moon, in an open field, with 400 ISO film at f2, I would switch my starting point to 30 seconds, then bracket one exposure at 1 minute and another at 2 minutes. If there was only part of the moon, I would start with an exposure of 1 minute, then bracket at 2 minutes and 4 minutes. In a situation with what may look like no light, such as a moonless night, start with the exposure of 4 minutes, then bracket at 8 minutes and 16 minutes (that right – an exposure of 16 minutes!)

Due to the extremely long nature of your exposures, you are going to have to use a tripod. A cable release is also extremely useful since it prevents your hand from accidentally shaking the camera during the long exposures. A cable release can often be locked into position, keeping the shutter open until you loosen it again. In older releases, you twist the round dial at the end; in newer cable releases, you press the exposure button and slide it up.