Ilfochrome Classic is the current retail version of the original Cibachrome paper and process, renamed Ilfochrome after Ilford Photo became part of the US-based Anitec empire rather than of Swiss Ciba-Geigy. In other markets such as graphic arts films, the Anitec name is paired equally with Ilford. For the British photographic market, the Anitec part is low-key as we all know the Ilford brand far better. Many British photographers, if asked to name two manufacturers of film and paper, would still reply 'Ilford and Kodak' rather than 'Kodak and Fuji' or 'Kodak and Agfa'.

We have to presume that renaming Cibachrome as Ilfochrome has not cost Ilford any sales. It's a bold assumption. Agencies and exhibition contractors were educated over a long period to ask for Cibachrome and still do. Many labs still call the product Cibachrome and ignore the name on the box. Ilfochrome was, after all, the name of various attempts by Ilford to introduce colour films over the years.

As photo labs are not going to educate the commercial buyer at this level, and as Ilford themselves can not be expected to, it comes down to the individual photographer informing the client about the nature and quality of possible results. The photographer can also, given the ready availability of Ilfochrome Classic in smaller sheet sizes and chemical packs, offer a profitable and controllable hand printing service.

I tested Ilfochrome Classic in three paper types - super glossy medium contrast, super glossy low contrast, and RC pearl medium contrast. This is an odd mixture, as the last product would normally be specified in low contrast. The pearl finish is principally used for portrait, beauty and PR prints where lower contrast is essential. The process used was Ilfochrome Classic P 30P, a clean and friendly kit which makes two litres in separate one-litre batches.

The chemical kit is expensively boxed, in the usual Ilford manner, and has clear multilingual instructions. The internal packaging is of the highest quality and should preserve the chemicals for the maximum shelf life. There are three packets of powder per litre mix, and one bottle of fixer concentrate. The powders are in impervious foil pouches; the fixer is bottled, but without a hermetic seal, so you just unscrew the cap and pour.

The developer is made up using a single pouch of powder, which is not homogenous. Some constituents have been pelletized using a drum mixer - this is a method which forms small balls, rather like seeds, of powdered chemicals. The remaining com-
ponents are crystalline. This sim-
ple answer to storing a complete
developer in powder form in one
pouch also regulates the dissolv-
ing times of the components. It
means, however, that you must
never attempt to mix a half-litre
by splitting the weight. Solution,
in an initial 800ml of water at the
working temperature of 25-30°C,
is rapid and free from residue.
You can mix a litre in under one
minute.
The bleach consists of two
pouches, and has fewer respira-
tory vices than the original Ci-
bachrome chemicals. It is not
necessary to work outdoors with
a face-mask! Once again, sequen-
tial solution of the components is
very rapid and total at 25-30°C so
that a litre very close to final
required temperature can be pre-
pared in a minute or two.
The fixer is simply diluted from
concentrate, being careful to note
that you add it to 600ml of water
not 800ml as for the powders -
it's all too easy to measure out a
third 800ml, which would be too
much. If anything, the fixer has a
slightly stronger smell than the
bleach.
In use, the working solutions
have absolutely none of the un-
pleasant effects of former Ci-
bachrome chemistry. If you were
put off the process a few years
ago by the acrid fumes, try again.
That side of it has gone for good.

THE PAPERS
The three paper packs provided
all had colour filter corrections
(relative, naturally) for yellow and
magenta, and no speed correc-
tion. As the colour filter figures
bore no relationship to each other
or to the actual filter values
needed whatsoever, they proved
redundant. That's weaselspeak for
useless.
However, the standard Ci-
bachrome method of sticking a
slide in the carrier, guessing the
time and dialling 20 yellow on the
Fujimoto enlarger (diffusion illu-
mination) worked fine for Ko-
dachrome. Using the low-contrast
gloss paper, I had a decent print
out first time, needing only a little
fine-tuning. The process was car-
ried out at 25°C using a Jobo
CPA-2 processor and 12 x 16
drum to accept two 10 x 8 prints,
with 120ml of chemistry. With a
good rate of agitation, 60ml per
print proved fine. At this tempera-
ture each main process step takes
exactly three minutes, so the sim-
plicity of the original Cibachrome
process timing has not been lost.
There is a thirty-second water
rinse between dev and bleach,
and the final wash is two minutes.
You can cut the times to two
minutes per bath by working at
29°C, or cut the temperature to
20°C and give four minutes. The
optimism would seem to be higher
temperatures and shorter times
where possible. When I got the
Jobo out of lumber and set it up,
the pump motor had given up (it's
an old machine) and I must record
that Introphoto were able to ship
a new one out for £25 same day -
it took half an hour to fit, and
worked perfectly.

The Jobo is not, however, the
ideal processor for Ilfochrome
unless you can afford two or
more drums. The developer is
extremely sensitive to trace
residues of fixer and very, very
thorough washing of the drum is
needed. I would recommend a
five-minute wash for the drum
while the prints wash.
After getting a decent print off
a Kodachrome slide, the proper
test involved making an 8 x 8
print off a 6 x 6cm Fujichrome
RDP to match a Graham Nash
Fujichrome reversal print, which
is as far I'm concerned the 'me-
dia' industry standard for a de-
cent, low-cost machine R-type.

I'm used to scanning pix for
computer input, and in this con-
text little correction is needed to
move from any one make of slide
to another. Ilfochrome is very
different. Printing Fujichrome
needed a filtration of 50 cyan,
while Kodachrome had needed
20Y. The material is very sensi-
tive to film type, and you really
have to set up and test for each
film make you use.
The 'medium' contrast paper
was out. Forget it, except for 20 x
16' or larger prints where the
extra contrast will be beneficial.
The shadows really block up or
the highlights go on leave. The
'low' contrast paper was infinitely
preferable. The final print is not
identical to the Fujichrome R-
type, as the dyes are different.
The saturation is slightly lower,
but in exchange there is much
more detail at both ends of the
scale and the midtones are espe-
cially open. Greens are brighter
and sharpness is naturally higher,
as you expect from a hand print.
The D-max was about 2% less
than the Fujichrome but the
whites were a similar amount
brighter, making for a nearly iden-
tical overall tonal range.

This result was obtained on the
third sheet of paper - one totally
wrong at the 20Y setting, one not
fully corrected at 20C, and the
final print perfect at 50C - using
drum processing and no kind of
colour analyser or exposure me-
ter. With a benchtop roller proc-
cessor, a few advance tests and
setting-up the exposure probe of
the Fuji moto, high levels of pro-
ductivity with results better than
commercial machine R-types can
easily be achieved using Ilfo-
ochrome Classic.

Drying the Melinex-based pa-
er in a Durst FRC400 rack-type
machine called for the high tem-
perature setting and a long wait,
but gave perfect results. The RC
pearl paper dried with difficulty
and far from flat. It really needs
a feed-through roller dryer.
My only caveat is this. The
Ilfochrome dyes respond to dif-
ferent light sources far more than
the Fujichrome colours. Viewing
the prints side-by-side under fluo-
rescent light, tungsten light and
daylight showed considerable de-
grees of difference. They look
nearly identical by daylight, but
not by fluorescent. If making Ilfo-
chromes, set up viewing condi-
tions to match the final use, or
work with a northlight blue bulb.

CONCLUSION
With the availability of a first-rate
small chemical kit mixable in min-
utes, and the low contrast paper
in convenient sheet sizes and
packs, Ilfochrome Classic offers
the darkroom worker a direct
route to very high quality reversal
prints without special contrast re-
duction techniques.
The process calls for clean
working, and the super gloss sur-
fice is fragile and easily finger-
marked. Use cotton gloves when
handling the dry prints, and put
them in glassine bags - no proc-
ess produces a better-looking
print, so keep them that way.