

EPSON'S STYLUS PRO R2400 (WINNER OF THIS

category in 2005) was the best desktop inkjet printer in the world... until the Pro 3800 came along. For all its great qualities – including great image quality – the R2400's one failing is that it can get very expensive to run. Epson has addressed this issue with the 3800 and moved up a print size into the bargain... but the printer will still sit happily on the desktop. The big deal is the 80 ml ink cartridges which balance the initial purchase price with the long-term economies better than any other capacity. Thus, the 3800 'works' for a wide range of users, doing everything the wonderful 2400 does, but for a lower print cost over time. It'll function quite happily as an A3+ printer... with the promise of an A2+ output for those truly special images. Plus there's the convenience of automatic switching between the photo and matte blacks. And despite the arrival of inksets with more colours from its rivals, Epson's UltraChrome K3 eight-colour pigmented system remains the bench mark for image quality and archival characteristics... both for colour and B&W work. In fact, we've still yet to see a B&W output from any other pro-level inkjet printer which quite matches UltraChrome K3 (on Epson Archival media) for tonality, smoothness, depth and sheer character. Does it beat a skilfully-made darkroom print? It's close... oh so close.

Backing all this up is the sheer ease with which the Stylus Pro 3800 lets you get on with the job. It's not just the mechanics that Epson gets right, but the processing which drives it. As with the R2400, you just load up the paper, pick the profile (13 are 'built in'), press 'print' and, provided you've done all the right things with the image file, you'll get a great print first time... and you'll go on getting them every time too.

Digital Printer Of The Year

Epson Stylus Pro 3800



Epson has packed a fair amount of technology into the 3800 – a new print head design with automatic cleaning, new half-toning techniques, new algorithms to handle dot placement and screening, and extremely precise monitoring of ink usage. But all of this works quietly behind the scenes, and the real beauty of the 3800 is that it doesn't place any great demands on the user – it just does its 'thing' quietly, efficiently and, of course, economically. And despite the fact that you don't have to put in very much effort at all, you'll still be rewarded with magnificent prints. So because you can't help but win with the Epson Stylus Pro 3800, it wins too.