

New Zealand Photographer of the Year gets "the edge" with Epson

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case study



Dean MacKenzie

In 2007, Dean MacKenzie took out the prestigious Epson NZIPP Photographer of the Year Award - barely three years after entering the world of professional photography.

Challenges

- Obtain a single print solution for colour and black-and-white
- Experiment with different textures and finishes without print lab costs
- Extend business into other areas of photography

Solution

Epson Stylus Pro 7800

Benefits

- Better results than can be achieved from using a print lab
- Greater opportunities through broad range of supported media
- Total control of the entire photographic production workflow

"I know that when I do a large format print on the [Epson Stylus Pro] 7800, provided I've set the colour profiles correctly, I can send it off to a client and know that it's better even than I could hope to get on a good day from the print lab."

Dean MacKenzie
NZIPP Photographer of the Year 2007

When Dean MacKenzie entered the world of professional photography in 2004, it took only a short time before the industry recognised his natural talent. Only two years later, he received three silver and two bronze medals in the 2006 New Zealand Institute of Professional Photography Awards. And in 2007 he took line honours, being named Photographer of the Year.

Total control

Like most professional photographers, total control over the entire photographic workflow is seen by MacKenzie as being fundamental to achieving optimum results; and it is precisely for that reason that he has a stated preference for digital photography. "With digital photography I'm able to manipulate the RAW data and fine tune everything so it's exactly the way it should be," he says. "Of course, the problem every photographer faces is losing control over quality once those files go to a third-party for printing."

Recognising the need early on for an in-house large format printer, MacKenzie purchased an A3+ Epson Stylus R2400 several years ago. But with increasing demands for larger print sizes and, importantly, print media diversity, the introduction to his business of a 24-inch Epson Stylus Pro 7800 is having a massive impact.

"The range of media I now have access to is brilliant," MacKenzie says. "And this is particularly valuable when I want to experiment with different textures and finishes."

With access to media types that include various canvases (matte and gloss), textured fine art, glossy and matte papers, MacKenzie believes that the Epson Stylus Pro 7800 opens up an entirely new world of opportunity. Previously, if he had wanted to experiment with different media types, it would mean expensive and time-consuming photo print lab jobs. Now, he can change media, send through a test job, and have a printed copy in his hands in a matter of minutes, and at barely a fraction of the cost.

Business flexibility

With wedding photography becoming a larger part of MacKenzie's work, and with the Epson Stylus Pro 7800 and its supported media range, he has a level of flexibility that was simply not available to him before. "Aside from the fact that I can now provide my clients with a much broader range of photographic finishes, I'm able to go beyond the traditional one photo per page model," he explains.

"If a client requests a large montage of photos, it's something I can now do without even having to think about the time and costs that it would involve if I had to do it through a lab," MacKenzie continues. "And in the photographic business, where it's becoming increasingly competitive, the ability to provide that level of value-add is nothing short of critical."

It is that level of flexibility now being afforded MacKenzie by means of the Epson Stylus Pro 7800 that is seeing him push more heavily into the studio portrait business. Without the constraints of media size and type, he is able to provide clients with an almost staggering range of options. "The fact is," he says, "people are now looking for photographic prints that go well beyond the traditional glossy finish."



Epson Australia

Tel: 1300 131 928

Visit our Web site

www.epson.com.au

Head Office

Sydney

3 Talavera Road

North Ryde NSW 2113

Tel: (02) 8899 3666

ABN 91 002 625 783

"Having the Epson Stylus Pro 7800 means I can do that and take a lead on those photographers who are still holding fast to the old ways."

A big impression

Studio and wedding photography, though, are only two of the areas in which MacKenzie is making his mark. Public relations consultancies and advertising agencies throughout New Zealand have been quick to jump on the Dean MacKenzie bandwagon, particularly when it comes to fashion and clothing photography.

While MacKenzie's standard practice is to provide his clients with the photographs in digital format on DVD, there is a growing number of cases where there is a need to deliver hard copy prints as well. And when it comes to the fashion industry, accuracy in colour and detail are the critical factors.

"When I deliver prints to fashion industry clients, I know full well that they will examine it in almost minute detail," MacKenzie says. The colours need to be exact, and the detail,

well, if it's not near perfect, then it simply isn't good enough – and this is where the 7800 is giving me the edge.

"I know that when I do a large format print on the 7800, provided I've set the colour profiles correctly, I can send it off to a client and know that it's better even than I could hope to get on a good day from the print lab."

It's simply black-and-white

Colour aside, MacKenzie is a strong advocate of black-and-white photography. "There is an enormous demand for black-and-white photography in portrait and wedding," he says. "And this is definitely one of strengths of the 7800 and, in particular, the UltraChrome K3 Ink."

Using Epson UltraChrome K3 Ink, MacKenzie's Epson Stylus Pro 7800 is able to generate black-and-white prints with a D-max level of 2.3, resulting in the ability to reproduce jet-black areas on glossy media. With the UltraChrome K3's three-level black ink technology (photo-black, light-black, and light-light-black) the printer addresses the key issues that have typically been confronting digital photographers for many years –

smooth gradation and reduced colour twist.

According to MacKenzie, with smooth gradation and reduced colour twisting in his black-and-white prints, he is able to achieve prints that exhibit high levels of detail in shadow and highlight areas. "It boils down to being able to deliver to my clients black-and-white prints that are every bit as good – if not better – than what I could hope to achieve from a photo lab.

"With the Epson Stylus Pro 7800, I have the flexibility and freedom to bring the entire digital photographic workflow under my total control," MacKenzie continues. "And for any professional photographer, that's what counts!"



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