

ADVANCED

Epson Stylus Pro 3800

A LARGE-FORMAT DESKTOP PRINTER THAT DELIVERS TOP QUALITY COLOUR AND MONOCHROME PRINTS.



Filling the gap between high-end enthusiast and professional printers, Epson's Stylus Pro 3800 has the same print engine and ink set as the Stylus Pro 4800 but higher-capacity (80 ml) ink tanks than A3+ desktop printers like the R2400 and R1800. Features carried over from the R2400 include the UltraChrome K3 inks, automatic head alignment and cleaning technologies plus Epson's Advanced Black and White driver.

With the 3800 Epson has introduced a new halftoning technology that improves the placement of the ink droplets and produces smoother tonal transitions and better highlight and shadow detail. The inch-wide Advanced MicroPiezo AMC (Active Meniscus Control) print head has eight-channels and 180 nozzles. It can achieve resolutions of up to 2880 x 1440 dpi with variable-sized droplets as small as 3.5 picolitres.

What separates the 3800 from the 4800 model is its inability to use roll paper. Printing with the Stylus Pro 3800 is strictly sheets only. However, the 3800 is supplied with full professional connectivity options, including USB 2.0 and 10/100 BaseT Ethernet — but no Firewire connection for Mac users (who can manage with the USB 2.0 connection).

DESIGN AND SET-UP

Though small for an A2 printer, the Stylus Pro 3800 has a large footprint and weighs almost 20kg. But it also looks rather stylish on your desk. Attention has been paid to the key design parameters and it shares many features with the popular R2400 model.

Most of the 3800's front panel drops down and slides forward to become the out tray, which contains extensions to accommodate large sheets of paper. A panel on the top rear flips up to reveal the input feeder, while one on the left front side lifts to provide access to the ink cartridges. You can't lift this panel until the printer has been powered up and you've pressed the appropriate button. Installing the ink cartridges is straightforward and it's easy to make your first prints.

It takes roughly 7.5 minutes to charge the print head after the cartridges are installed. This one-off process consumes some of the ink, slightly reducing the number of prints you can make from the initial ink set — but not subsequent cartridges. Ink yields vary greatly, depending on the images printed, print settings, paper type, frequency of use and ambient temperature.

The 3800 provides three paper feeding paths: a standard top-loading feeder, a single-sheet rear feeder for fine art papers and a manual front feeder for paper stock up to 1.5mm thick. When the front feeder is used you must ensure there's enough space behind the printer for the paper to pass through (roughly 45cm for an A2 sheet).

The printer driver comes with pre-loaded ICC profiles for Epson's most popular photo printing papers and

profiles can be added for other manufacturers' media. ICC profiling on the 3800 has been refined to produce better print quality than previous models.

PERFORMANCE

It's impossible not to be impressed by the performance of the Stylus Pro 3800 and we feel it will be welcomed by all quality-conscious photographers, from serious enthusiasts to professionals. The driver interface was easy to use and contained all the controls you need to make top quality colour and monochrome prints. The 'canned' ICC profiles worked extremely well with all of the Epson papers we tested — including the fine art media.

Overall printing performance was outstanding. We found no evidence of banding in any of the prints we made and no significant metamerism (colour changing under different types of lighting). Blacks in both colour and monochrome prints were impressively deep, which is what you would expect from a printer that claims a DMax of 2.3D. The neutrality of whites varies according to the colour of the paper used but on truly white papers like Epson's Premium Glossy, Premium Semi-Gloss and Enhanced Matte Paper, all whites were clean and bright and delicate tonal nuances were preserved. Colour fidelity was also uniform across a wide range of Epson papers and the printer enabled us to reproduce the subtle skin tones in shots from top quality DSLR cameras.

For its size and resolution, the Stylus Pro 3800 is relatively fast. Average printing times for photo prints on various sizes of paper are as follows:

- A2 — just under 11 minutes;
- A3 — 6 minutes and 45 seconds;
- A4 — 4 minutes and 10 seconds.

Note: these figures are averages calculated across a series of prints using different resolution and speed settings. They are very close to the standard time to produce prints with the SuperFine — 1440dpi setting with High Speed unchecked and Finest Detail checked. (These settings will produce excellent prints at all paper sizes.)

We found little point in using the SuperPhoto 2880dpi setting as you could see little difference in the actual prints — although ink usage appeared to increase somewhat and printing times increased by about 50%.

The UltraChrome K3 pigment inks are highly stable. Preliminary lightfastness testing by Wilhelm Imaging Research has given prints on five Epson papers ratings of between 34 and 60 years when displayed without glass, 61 to 108 years when framed under glass and over 200 years when stored in albums or boxes in dark conditions. Details can be found at <http://wilhelm->



research.com/epson/3800.html. Colour stability is of particular relevance to professional photographers. As well as being able to offer long-lasting prints to clients, they can assure clients that the proofs they sign-off on will be identical to those they receive in the final run. Consistency of output across a wide range of Epson papers is normal with this printer. ■

IN SUMMARY

An affordable high-performance, large format inkjet printer for serious enthusiasts and professional photographers.

QUALITY RATING (OUT OF 10)

★ Build:	9.0
★ Features:	9.0
★ Print quality:	9.5
★ Print speed:	8.5
★ Overall:	9.0

RRP:

\$2195

DISTRIBUTOR:

Epson Australia; 1300 130 194; www.epson.com.au

SPECIFICATIONS

PRINTER TYPE: Pigment-based inkjet printer

MAX. RESOLUTION: 2880 x 1440 dpi

PAPER SIZES:

Cut-sheets from 10 x 15cm (4R) to 42 x 59.4cm (A2)

MAX. PAPER WEIGHT:

12lb bond, up to 1.5mm cardboard

INK CARTRIDGES:

80 mL cartridges of C, Lc, M, Lm, Y, Lk, LLk + PK or MK with Fully automatic switching between Black ink modes

INTERFACES:

Hi-Speed USB 2.0 (1.1 compatible) and 10/100Base-T Ethernet

POWER CONSUMPTION:

Operating: Approx. 25W; Standby: Less than 5.5 W

ACOUSTIC NOISE:

Approximately 47 dB(A) according to ISO 7779

DIMENSIONS (WXHXD):

684 x 257 x 376mm (minimum)

WEIGHT: Approx. 19.5kg (without ink and media)