

Epson delivers an appealing package of print excellence and longevity, dead-on neutral tones, speedy output, and media options.

BY BRYAN LINDEN

# Prime prints

EPSON STYLUS PHOTO R1800

Epson's new Stylus Photo R1800 is a pigment-based printer with 13x19-inch single sheet or 13x44 roll stock output capacity. It's engineered for the Epson UltraChrome Hi-Gloss inks, which were introduced last year with the smaller-format Stylus Photo R800. The gloss optimizer cartridge in this ink set ensures uniform glossiness across the print, even on high-gloss stock, and protects against fingerprinting and smudging.

The Stylus Photo R1800 can output full-bleed pages at 12x12 inches, the size used in many scrapbook and photo albums, so photographers can produce albums in-house. Direct CD/DVD printing, print speed, and resolution up to 5,760x1,440 dpi are also improved

with this model. But is it good enough to replace the Stylus Photo 2200?

I've always liked the 2200, but with reservations. First, it's slow as molasses compared to other Epson printers since released. Second, it's prone to produce gloss differential flashing on high-gloss media. (Gloss differential occurs when the ink output is less reflective than the surface of the medium. Especially apparent in high-contrast areas, it can make images look like they've been spot varnished—quite distracting.)

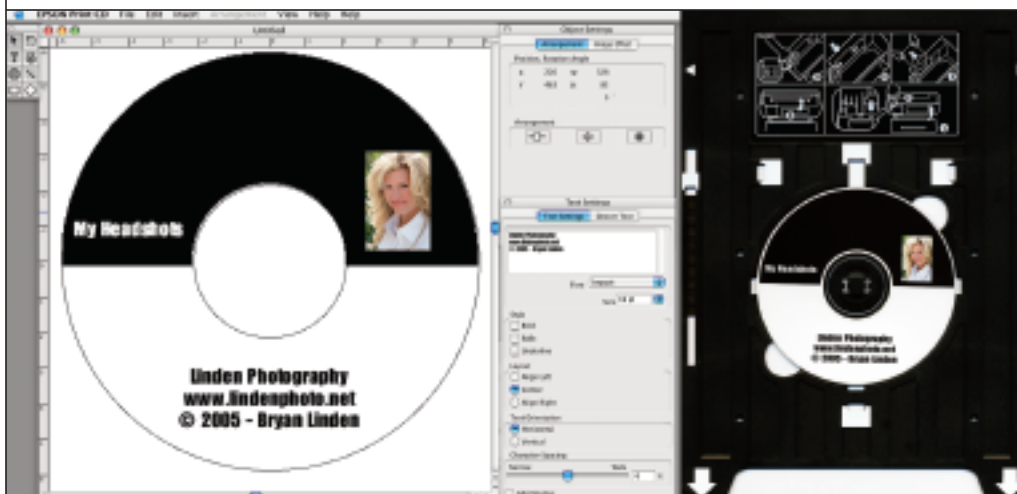
The Epson R1800 fixes the problem by automatically activating the gloss optimizer cartridge when printing to glossy media. The optimizer is evenly applied to coat the surface of the print.



In addition to delivering uniform gloss, the coating protects against the fingerprint buildup and bronzing that glossy prints are typically subject to. The gloss optimizer can be turned off in the print driver if you don't want to use it.

The UltraChrome Hi-Gloss ink set used in the R1800 is different from the UltraChrome inks used in the Epson Stylus Photo 2200 and the Stylus Pro 7600, 9600 and 4000. The standard UltraChrome ink set comprises photo black, matte black, light black, magenta, light magenta, cyan, light cyan and yellow. The Hi-Gloss ink set comprises the gloss optimizer, photo black, matte black, cyan, magenta, yellow, red and blue. Epson claims the Hi-Gloss ink set produces more brilliant reds and blues and a wider overall gamut than the other ink set, but without the light black cartridge, a lesser gamut of gray. Yet in my tests, I found the black-and-white output of the R1800 with the Hi-Gloss inks to be superior to those from the Stylus Photo 2200, as implausible as it seems.

I'm guessing it's owing to a combination of factors, including the size of the



Printing to CD or DVD is easy with Print CD software. Images and text on CD/DVD media are crisp, with excellent detail.

droplets (smaller is better) and the resolution. The R1800's minimum droplet size is 1.5 picoliters with maximum resolution of 5,760x1,440 versus 4 picoliter droplets and maximum resolution of 2,880x1,440 with the 2200. The R1800 also ships with better profiles, so the black-and-white prints came out neutral from the start. The 2200's black-and-white prints came out with a slight green shift, despite my using the proper ink-paper profile combinations. The shift could be easily corrected by using a custom print profile, but not having to with the R1800 is a selling point.

I was surprised to find no banding across entire swaths of the gray ramp on my black-and-white R1800 test image. I had anticipated finding at least visible dot evidence due to the missing light black ink, but evidently the high resolution and tiny droplets took care of it. Even

examined under a loupe, the prints exhibited no banding when output with resolution set to Best Photo or Photo RPM, but even at the lower resolution settings, the banding was minimal.

The black-and-white R1800 output looked similar on glossy and matte media, and the prints on Epson Premium Photo Glossy paper had none of the nasty bronzing that showed up in the prints from the 2200.

With color output, the print quality of the R1800 is fantastic. The addition of the gloss optimizer especially improves print quality on Premium Photo Glossy paper. In my tests, the colors were well-matched to those on my monitor, and across different media. In color prints as well, you'd be hard-pressed to find shifting or bronzing on output from the R1800.

Wilhelm Imaging Research assigns greater print longevity ratings to the

## specs: Epson Stylus Photo R1800

**INK SET:** Epson UltraChrome Hi-Gloss pigment ink, 8-color (cyan, magenta, yellow, photo black or matte black, red, blue, and Gloss Optimizer)

**PRINT TECHNOLOGY:** Advanced Micro Piezo 8-color pigment ink jet, 180 nozzles

**MAXIMUM RESOLUTION:** 5,760x1,440 dpi

**PAPER SIZES:** 4x6, 5x7, 8x10, letter, 11x14, 12x12, 13x19, 11x17, A3+, 13x19, user definable, panoramic rolls 4-, 8.3- and 13-inch wide

**DIRECT CD/DVD PRINTING:** yes

**LIGHT RESISTANCE/PRINT LONGEVITY:** Fade resistance 104 years for Epson Premium Glossy Paper, 150 years for Epson Matte Paper Heavyweight, and 200 years for Epson Watercolor Radiant Matte Paper ([www.wilhelm-research.com](http://www.wilhelm-research.com) for test details)

**PRINTER DIMENSIONS:** 24.2x12.6x9.1 inches; weight 33 pounds

**PRICE:** \$549

## THE GOODS: PRO REVIEW

Stylus Photo R1800 than to the 2200, too. Depending on the medium, prints from the R1800 are rated to last up to 200 years when stored properly, versus 108 years for the 2200.

Scrapbookers and photographers who want to print albums will love the R1800's 12x12-inch full-bleed printing capability, and Epson has released PremierArt Matte Scrapbook Photo Paper just for this purpose. The paper can be printed on both sides, is acid free, buffered, and rated for up to 200 years.

On the road, the R1800 is a great event printer. I was shocked at how fast this model was, and how closely it matched Epson's claims for print speed at the Photo Resolution setting: borderless—4x6-inch prints, 41 seconds; 8x10s, 75 seconds; 11x14s, 112 seconds. Borderless sizes and media add flexibility, and I don't miss dye sub prints' very limited options one bit.

Don't underestimate the good impression it makes when you can print your images and information directly onto your CD and DVD products. The bundled CD/DVD printing software is so easy to use as to be a no-brainer. Both text and images came out crisp, and with fantastic detail.

The Epson Stylus Photo R1800 also features auto nozzle cleaning and alignment. Software included: Epson Raw Print, Epson Print CD, nikon multimedia Color Efex Pro 2 (sample), Print Image Matching Photoshop Plug-In, Premium ICC/ICM Profiles. For more info visit [www.epson.com](http://www.epson.com). ■

*Bryan Linden is a consultant to leading technology companies in the areas of color management, product development and workflow. His photographic work encompasses entertainment, events, fine art and more ([www.lindenphoto.net](http://www.lindenphoto.net)).*