

The quality is there in black and white. And color. And speed. And resolution.

BY BRYAN LINDEN

A new favorite

EPSON STYLUS PHOTO R2400

Epson has released the long-awaited Epson Stylus Photo R2400, the replacement for the Stylus Photo 2200 (up to 13x19-inch output). With a list price of \$849, the R2400 has some pretty big changes under the hood, most notably, the new Epson UltraChrome K3 inks in place of the UltraChrome inks used in the 2200.

But this puppy has much more than new ink. There's a huge improvement in speed, driver enhancements that allow for custom black-and-white toning, and much more.

The UltraChrome K3 pigment inkset comprises eight colors rather than the seven simultaneous colors used in the



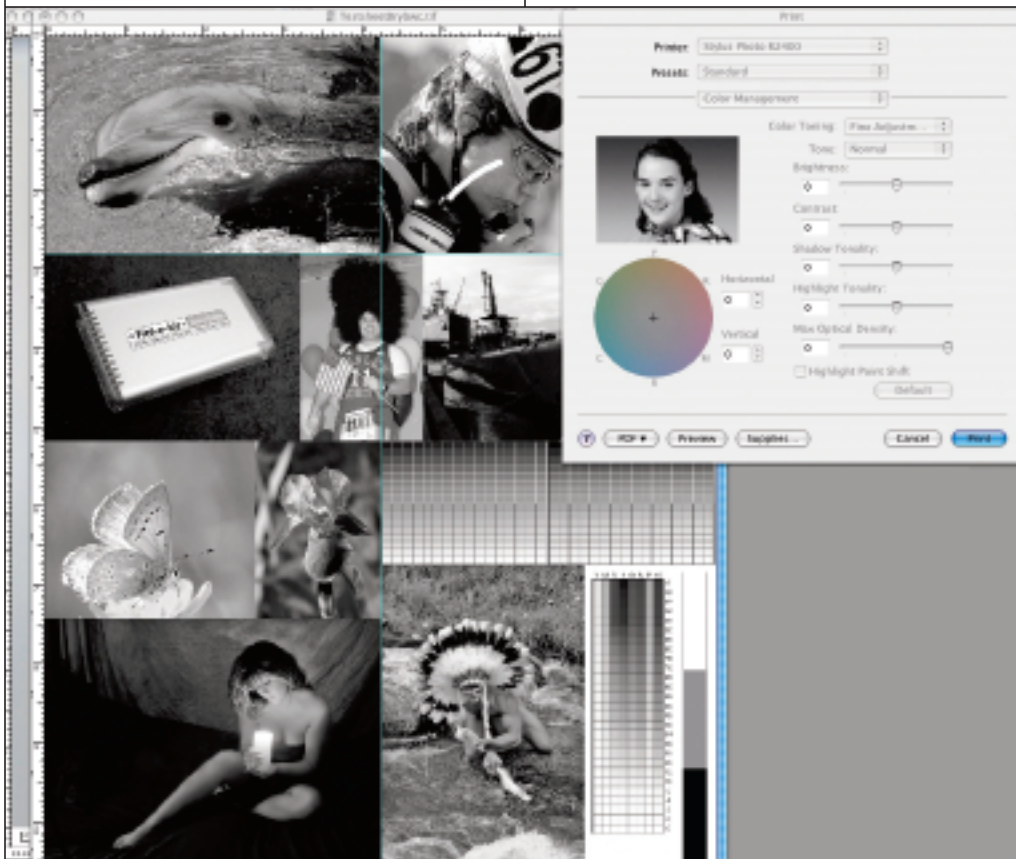
Epson Stylus Photo 2200 and Stylus Pro 4000, 7600, and 9600. The addition is the new color light-light black, which yields neutrality (including much richer shadow detail) better than I've seen produced on an inkjet printer.

Epson also introduced the Advanced Black and White printing mode to the printer driver. This setting allows users to convert images to black and white on the fly, and to further tone black-and-white images to be neutral, cool, warm or sepia (**Figure 1**). Now there's an easy way to get beautifully toned prints without expensive RIP software.

My only gripe about the new Advanced Printing Mode is that the image displayed to preview the effects of your changes is not the image you're converting. The preview window displays the image of the girl in **Figure 2** with the approximate tones you expect to see in the image you're converting. In addition to the color tone settings, there are also controls for tone density: light, normal, dark, darker, darkest.

In Windows systems, the Advanced

Figure 1: The Advanced Black and White printing mode allows for adjusting images to neutral, cool, warm or sepia tones.



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B&W Photo controls are located in the main interface of the print driver under the Color Management heading. To access more settings or to further adjust a black-and-white image, you use the Settings button directly under the Color Toning selection. Macintosh OS X users access the control from the Print Settings submenu of the driver, selecting Advanced B&W Photo from the Color pull-down menu. For access to more settings or to fine tune black-and-white settings, the Color Management setting in the driver needs to be selected. For optimum results, use the Same as Source feature in Photoshop rather than a custom profile. (This applies only to black and white conversions and toning with the Epson driver.)

You can continue to make black and white conversions by any method you've used in the past, then print in a traditional color managed workflow or use the driver's Advanced B&W controls. My black-and-white scans and converted color images printed beautifully even without the Advanced B&W controls, albeit without all the tonality controls, etc.

This new generation of Epson inkjet printers has the most welcome capacity to output prints comprising mixed color modes, such as collages, promos and wedding album pages. In the past, it's been nearly impossible for me to get both neutral black-and-white and eye-popping color in the same print with the supplied ICC color profiles. I'm happy to say that the profiles that ship with the R2400 are the best manufacturer-supplied, out-of-the-box profiles I've seen.

Available for free download, the Epson Premium Printer Profiles for the R2400 are the best manufacturer-supplied profiles I've seen in terms of color consistency across paper types, and the closest match to my calibrated display. It's a breakthrough to see printed images that

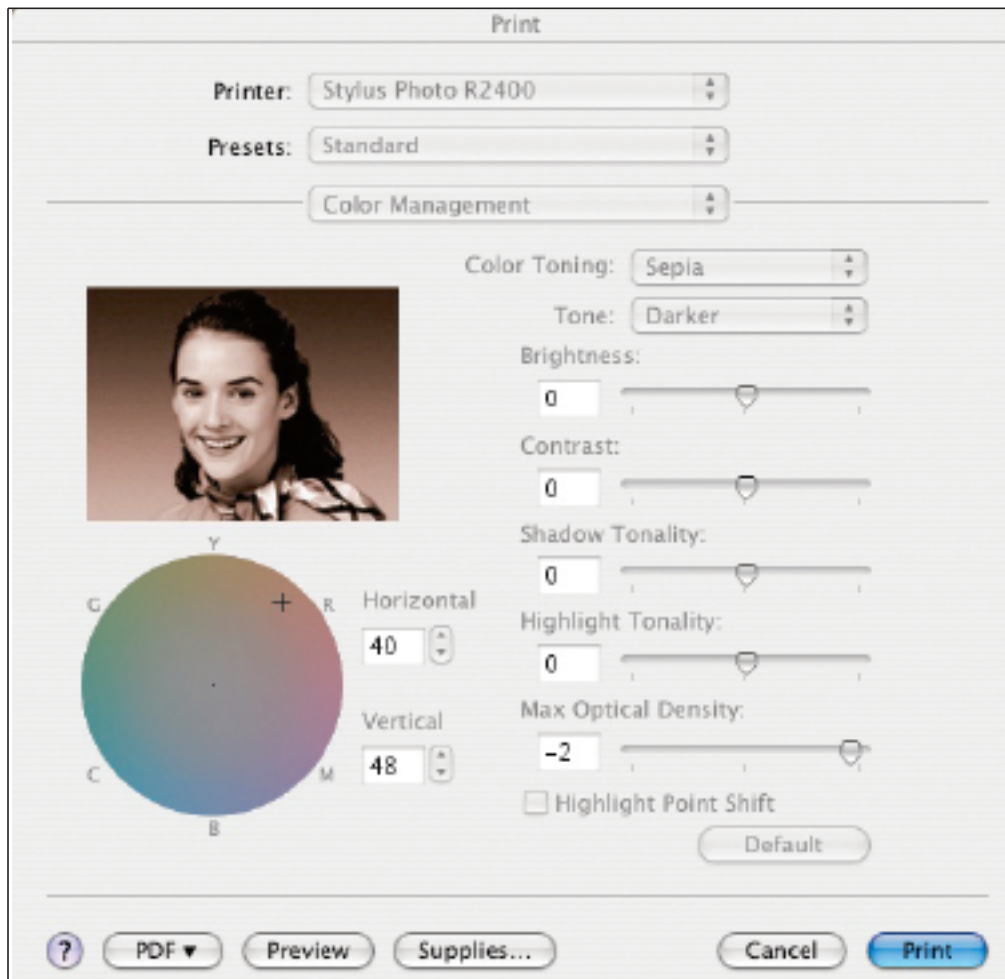


Figure 2: The Advanced Black and White Photo controls are accessed through the print driver interface.

look good whether they're output on Premium Glossy, Premium Luster, Enhanced Matte, or Velvet Fine Art paper.

The speed of the R2400 simply blows away the Stylus Photo 2200 and even the Stylus Pro 4000. Outputting an 11x14 photo takes as little as 01:47. Speed makes little difference if the print quality's not there, but the R2400 delivers that too. At resolution up to 5,760x1,440 dpi, prints look great, even viewed through a loupe. Gone are the problems of metamerism and noticeable gloss differential on high-gloss stock, and good riddance. To maintain high print quality, the R2400's auto nozzle check and cleaning system is much friendlier than the cycles of the 2200's.

The R2400 doesn't have an automatic

paper cutter, but I don't know of anyone who used the one on the 2200. For maximum black density, it's still necessary to switch ink cartridges from Photo Black to Matte Black to print on matte surfaces. Photo Black is compatible with matte surfaces, but the loss in D-max won't be acceptable to professionals, and switching just takes a couple of minutes.

All in all, this printer is super in so many ways. From print speed, to producing stunning black-and-white prints, to the bundled ICC profiles, the R2400 would be an excellent addition to your digital darkroom. ■

Photographer Bryan Linden is an educator and consultant. Learn more about his work at www.lindenphoto.net and www.ibryan.com.