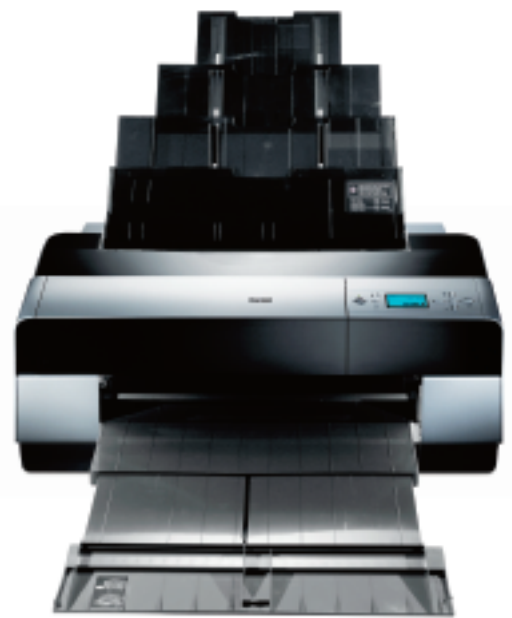


Epson's Stylus Pro 3800 tops the 4800, with better ink swapping, smarter screening, real borderless printing and less bulk.

BY BRYAN LINDEN

# Fit and *trimmed*

EPSON STYLUS PRO 3800



The Epson Stylus Pro 3800 with 17-inch output is not simply a scaled down 4800. In fact, it has many new technologies that are superior to the 4800's, such as Auto Sharing ink technology for automatic switching between matte black and photo black inks that makes switching faster and more cost effective. The Stylus Pro 3800 holds all nine of the UltraChrome K3 ink set cartridges, and the print driver automatically selects the proper black for the specified paper type.

With the Epson Stylus Pro 4800, 7800, 9800 and some older models, the lever-flipping black ink swapping process took up to 30 minutes to complete and wasted \$40 to \$88

worth of ink. In the Stylus Pro 3800, matte black and photo black share one ink channel, so switching takes just 2 to 3 minutes and consumes only \$1 to \$2.50 worth of ink.

The 3800's new screening technology compensates for the varying ink density among different resolutions, so each media type can be described with a single ICC profile, regardless of the print resolution. That saves time if you make your own profiles, and saves money if you purchase custom profiles.

The new screening technology combined with Advanced Meniscus Control (AMC) also improves the accuracy and quality of bi-directional printing, which can cut print

time in half and double productivity. However, the 3800 yields slight but appreciably better output quality, especially in the Advanced Black and White mode and bi-directional printing.

I really like the Stylus Pro 3800's compact size. At 10.28(h)x27.36(w)x14.88(d) inches and 43.2 pounds, it can sit on a desktop and be set up and transported by one person. In comparison, the Stylus Pro 4800 measures 14x34x30 at 83.7 pounds, and the other 17-inch output printer, the Canon iPF 5000, measures 13.5x39.3x31.9 at 108 pounds; both require at least two people for setup and transport. I do a lot of printing on location, usually with a 13-inch Epson Stylus Photo R1800 or R2400, and now I could also use the 3800—it's just a few inches wider and less than 10 pounds heavier.

The last of the 3800's big advantages for me is its ability to create borderless prints on a variety of sheet-fed media. The Epson Stylus Pro 4800 and Canon imagePROGRAF iPF 5000 can output borderless prints only on roll paper with trimming required at the top and bottom. The 3800 has no roll-paper feed. Many photographers cite the economy of roll media, and perceive a workflow advantage in being able to send print jobs in batches, then trimming later as necessary.

I find it much easier to send jobs in the size I need and get ready-to-deliver borderless

## specs: Epson Stylus Pro 3800

**PRINT METHOD:** Advanced MicroPiezo AMC print head technology; 8-channel, drop-on-demand, inkjet print head; auto head alignment and cleaning technology

**NOZZLES:** Color and monochrome heads, 180 nozzles x 8 configuration; Variable Droplet Technology, 3.5 picoliter minimum

**PRINT RESOLUTION:** 2,880x1,440dpi maximum

**PRINT ENGINE SPEED:** 8x10-inch prints from 2:03 to 7:47; normal is 4:08

**INK:** 9-color (C, Lc, M, Lm, Y, Lk, LLk + PK or MK); pigment-based Epson UltraChrome K3 Ink technology; 80mL ink tank capacity per color

**MEDIA:** Up to 17x22-inch sheets, greater length with custom cut sheets; front manual sheet feeder accepts cardboard up to 1.5mm thick

**BORDERLESS PRINTING:** 4x6, 5x7, 8x10, 11x14, 16x20, 17x22

**DIMENSIONS:** 27hx15wx10d inches; 43.2 pounds

**INTERFACE:** Hi-Speed USB 2.0 and one 10/100Base-T Ethernet port

**MSRP:** \$1,295

sheets in standard print sizes. I prefer using the sheet feeder with up to 20 sheets of 17x22-inch Epson Premium Luster Paper when I want to gang odd sizes or print picture packages. It's simpler for me to trim sheet stock than an unruly length of roll paper, which has a tendency to curl, and is easy to damage as it's cut from the roll and falls to the floor or into the paper catch. It's also easier to protect prints with spray finishes and laminations when they lie flat.

If you're interested in ganging images on sheet-fed media, you will likely benefit from the Epson Stylus Pro 3800 Portrait Edition (\$1,495), which includes the standard Stylus Pro 3800 and Express Digital Darkroom Core Edition software ([www.expressdigital.com](http://www.expressdigital.com)). Express Digital Darkroom facilitates printing portrait packages, and includes over 200 graphic templates, album layouts, senior

layouts, calendars, workflow management options and even e-commerce solutions.

If you want to print over 22 inches in length (such as 16x24s for native aspect ratio images), you can either purchase 17x25-inch paper (available from [www.inkjetart.com](http://www.inkjetart.com), [www.premierimagingproducts.com](http://www.premierimagingproducts.com) and others) or cut roll paper to the desired dimensions.

The Stylus Pro 3800 is not suitable for printing on canvas or for output longer than 37 inches. Some users report they've found reliable ways to print on canvas with the 3800—try at your own risk. Printing longer than 37 inches can be accomplished with the use of the Colorbyte ImagePrint RIP (\$895), which not only allows for printing up to 17x327 inches, but also has great layout features, package printing and a huge library of fantastic custom profiles for all Epson

media and most others.

In the few months I've used the Stylus Pro 3800 as my main printer, I'm happy to report a flawless performance. I've used it for at least 90 percent of the jobs I would otherwise have sent to a lab, and for me, printing in-house cuts costs and improves quality. I've had zero ink clogs, even when the printer sat idle for several days (likely due to new pressurized ink cartridges). The output and ICC profiles provided are as good as it gets.

If you've been considering buying an Epson R2400 and have a couple inches of desktop to spare, you might be better served by a 3800, especially when you factor in its larger capacity ink cartridges (80mL vs. 15mL) that come in a complete set. The extra cost of \$550 is nearly offset by the roughly \$495 worth of ink included, not to mention the lower per-mL cost of replacement ink. ■