

If your slides and negatives are gathering dust, perhaps it's time to buy a scanner? Rob Clarke finds out if the Epson Perfection 4990 is up to the task

# SCAN IT!



**T**he first thing you notice about the Epson Perfection 4990 Photo Scanner is that it is big. Because I'm so used to cheap, low-end scanners so small you almost lose them on your desk, this one came as quite a surprise.

There is just one push button at the front and the default allows you to scan to a file, copy (direct to a printer), or to email or place on a website.

## DIGITAL ICE

The Digital Ice function is really useful for those planning to scan lots of negatives and prints as it automatically removes surface defects from scanned images. This may not sound like much, but for those who have worked in the darkrooms of old will know how annoying it is to have dust particles, hairs, creases and scratches that then show up on prints and therefore ruin an otherwise perfect photo.

Without going into too much detail, the scanning process itself picks up the imperfections, not the software adjusting the photo afterwards. Theoretically, this means your scan is of a better quality than the print you started with.

Other options while scanning include colour restoration, grain reduction and dust removal.

## LONG TIME COMING

The 4990 also has a dazzling array of holders for film and mounted slides.

The problem with scanning in very high resolution is that it takes a lot of time to plough through so much data. This is a true 4800 x 4800dpi scanner, with the ability to do 9600dpi. We scanned a set of 14 colour film slides at maximum resolution and the elapsed time was nearly three hours. On a lower resolution, it produced the equivalent of 2-megapixel images of the same 14 slides in about 30 minutes.

The 4990 has an optical density of 4.0, which is quite high for a scanner. It is recommended that a photo scanner has an optical density of 3.0 or higher. The higher the number, the better range of tones, the

more detail in shadows, and the smoother your colour transitions will be in things like the sea and sky.

## MULTI-TASKING

We placed a wide range of items in the scanner and found the Epson 4990 performed extremely well on all tasks. This included:

- Colour photos, which is bread and butter for any flatbed scanner
- A page of photo proofs – the scanner separated each photo automatically from the one page
- A laminated photo. Sometimes scanners can produce shiny reflections, but not the 4990
- Colour film negatives, using the holder.



**The 4990 comes with a dazzling array of holders for film and mounted slides.**



## GOOD SUPPORT

This Epson scanner comes with a range of software, including Adobe Photoshop Elements 2.0 (for photo editing) and SilverFast 6 (scanning software). To turn scanned documents into text, it also includes Fine Reader 5. The 4990 has both USB 2.0 and FireWire interfaces with drivers for Macintosh and PC.

## CONCLUSION

There is little doubt that the images from the Epson are far superior to those of a cheaper scanner. Apart from the resolution being considerably higher, the colour of the images is much richer and more faithful to the original.

This scanner is a good option for a small or home office, for serious home photographers, and those trying to archive a lifetime collection of colour film.

(For more information on scanning, please go to our feature on pages 64-66.)

## QUICK VIEW

- Manufacturer: Epson
- RRP: \$999
- Scanner Type: Flatbed
- Optical Resolution: 4800dpi
- Other: 48-bit colour, film adaptor

## PROFILE



## OTHER OPTIONS

- Canon cs9950F \$999
- Hewlett Packard SJ8200 \$1199
- Microtek i700 \$838



## CONTACT

- [www.epson.co.nz](http://www.epson.co.nz)

## RATING

**PROS** Near professional results, easy to use, plenty of software with lots of features

**CONS** Very big, high resolution comes at a cost in speed

|                 |    |
|-----------------|----|
| Design          | 18 |
| Features        | 16 |
| Image Quality   | 20 |
| Performance     | 16 |
| Value for Money | 16 |

**TOTAL** **86/100**