

# EPSON PERFECTION 4870 PHOTO

## SCANNING BETTER – FASTER – CHEAPER

When we bought our first Agfa scanner it was reflective greyscale or line/art only – had an optical resolution of 800 dpi which was considered pretty flash 12 years ago – was a bargain at \$6,500 plus GST – and it was capable of scanning about half of the images we used in each issue. (The remainder were scanned at pre-press).

EPSON's latest offering handles colour tranny, negatives and reflective copy in optional 24 or 48 bit – greyscale in 8 or 16 bit – claims a maximum optical resolution of 4800 x 9600 dpi – is on the street at around \$999 plus GST (I believe deals have been done at this price including GST). My trials suggest it would be capable of doing all our reflective work and all but perhaps the most demanding trannies that we need scanned for publication. With an improved dynamic range of 3.8 Dmax, I am not even sure just what sort of trannies might beat it for our required quality of output.

And it's a speed machine. I used it for production this month and couldn't believe its speed and quietness. People in an adjacent room wouldn't hear it over normal office noises. The scan on the bottom of page 3 illustrating the Eye-One article, while admittedly small and in 8 bit greyscale, had a preview cycle time of about 5 seconds and a scan time of about 8 secs *while applying a corrected exposure adjustment by way of an altered histogram and a medium unsharp masking - which both slow down the scanning considerably!*

For routine reflective greyscale and RGB colour scanning I was very, very impressed.

We don't have the facilities to make precise analytical comparative assessment of scan quality, so will not be drawn into argument about flatbed versus dedicated film scanner performance. My gut feel is that *good* film scanners and most certainly *good* drum scanners well operated, will still win out when the reproduction of extremes in highlight or shadow detail is the deciding issue. But our trialing did



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indicate that for the vast majority of trannies, the PERFECTION 4870 PHOTO would do a very presentable job.

Have a look at the images on page 20. They are off a very old 35mm tranny shot by Editor Brian. The first is full frame and scanned at 300dpi at 300% enlargement to fit the space. There was some mechanical damage to the film surface which I thought was too severe to leave to the clever Digital ICE and Dust Removal technologies now incorporated in Epson's software (these do seem to be very effective though). I repaired this damage with Photoshop's Healing Brush. The second (lower) image was the full tranny also scanned at 300 dpi but an 800% enlargement which gave an output file-size and quality sufficient for a full A4 page in a glossy magazine. As we didn't have space to reproduce it at A4, we cropped a portion from that file as an indication of quality at the A4 enlargement size.

Both were scanned in 48 bit mode with no sharpening or tonal correction, initially into Photoshop 7 as I am unsure if Epson's software yet supports Photoshop CS. (I suspect not, because in the 'Scan to Application' mode in the very smart, Epson Smart Panel Software, it did not find Photoshop CS on my PC). The files were then transferred into

Adobe® Photoshop® CS so that I could keep them in 48 bit state through all processes until saving the final file. See *Hans's* article, pages 18/19 regarding the 48 bit advantage.

While Epson's software is vastly improved over earlier versions with regard to the corrections that can be applied during scanning (exposure both auto and manually set, sophisticated curve defined colour correction, unsharp masking, descreening at definable levels, Digital ICE, dust removal, 'colour restoration' etc), I chose to make only a minor correction for exposure during scanning as I believed I had more control processing post-scan in Photoshop - just a question of familiarity really.

As it transpired there was minimal post-scan processing required other than the Healing Brush. The image was converted to CMYK and no tonal correction was made other than the application of a small curve I often use to compensate for the minor change that takes place during the RGB to CMYK colour-space conversion on a dark, brownish image. A little un-sharp mask and a change back from 16 to 8 bit per channel then the final file save. If the printed image looks as good as I saw it, I think that you'll be impressed.

All this was pretty quick too. The