

# harman FB Matt

From the company which manufactures Ilford Photo silver imaging products, Harman Photo is a new premium inkjet brand. Their first two papers, launched this year, are 310gsm fibre-based matt in white and warmtone baryta bases.

I am no longer equipped to measure d-max – at least for a while – and must therefore use my eyes to judge whether a print has amazingly good deep blacks or not.

The Epson 3800, with its four black inks (two greys, one gloss black and one matt black) produces about the richest and purest blacks and most neutral monochromes possible. The black content substitution is so good that even RGB monochrome images (as opposed to greyscale or duotones) end up with an impressive neutrality.

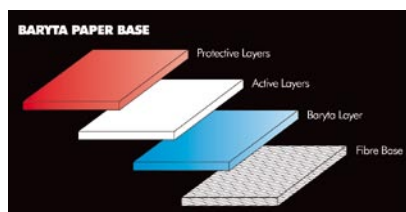
Changing paper type can prove to be problem. Epson's latest printer drivers for Mac OSX and *Photoshop CS2* or later are so foolproof if simple procedures are followed, it's very difficult to waste paper.

Even so, I managed to when *Photoshop CS3's* trial beta version stopped working on my Mac Powerbook. This was the program used for my initial tests of the Epson 3800. With upgrades costing an unjustified premium over USA/Canada prices, I would stick with CS2 for ever. But I have two installations running, and my laptop instead uses *Photoshop Elements 4*, an affordable and excellent program from Adobe even at British prices.

*Elements 4* just wouldn't give me the same print dialogs, and as a result, I ended up with my first few sheets of wasted paper when trying out Harman's new Photo Matt FB Mp and Photo Matt FB Mp Warmtone. FB stands for fibre-based and Mp for microporous.

Eventually I had to lug the 3800 to my very small office, install it on my main system as a networked printer, and try with *Photoshop CS2*. I can tell you from this experience that installing the 3800 on Ethernet is nothing like as a fast and user-friendly as installing it from USB direct connection, and the printing process is also much slower. If you can run a 3800 direct from your USB, do so rather than networking it.

The Harman papers need to be treated like Epson Radiant White Watercolor paper, even though



Top: getting the more Agfa Viradon-like brown tone of this image (by Richard Kilpatrick) always proves a little difficult on inkjet papers. The FB Warmtone/Harman Profile/Epson 3800 result is a little more yellow and traditional sepia in tone, but this is influenced also by the Epson Perfection 1660 Photo scanner using a SilverFast profile and ColorSync scanning. Left: the structure of the FB paper uses a crystalline baryta layer, which will crack if folded sharply.



Two wedding images by Ailsa Kilpatrick, again using the FB Warmtone paper. In theory the bright white original FB would be better for scanning, but we preferred the look of the output on the slightly ivory-tinted version.

Black and white from a RGB file (left) shifted a little towards yellow on the warmtone version, less so on the white. Neutrality was maintained very accurately with no tone breaks on unwanted effects. Bronzing and surface ink lay are completely absent. Drying was very rapid.

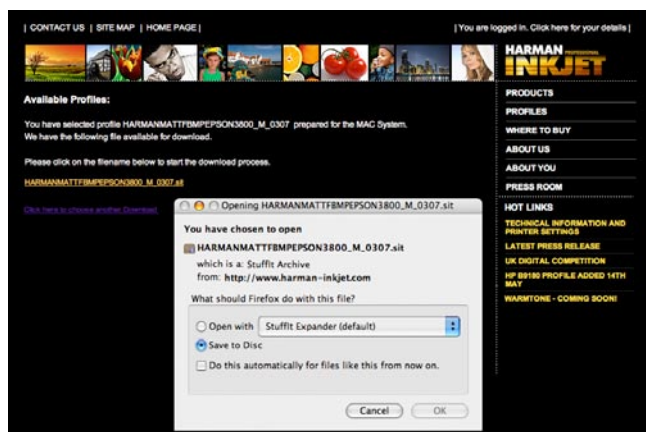
Colour again showed a slight warming, and generally didn't look as good as monochrome or toned effects. Harman market the paper as ideal for black and white work.



they look like a heavyweight (310gsm) archival matt. This means using the rear single sheet feeder, and that in turn means many rejections of an apparently straight sheet of paper as a misfeed by the 3800. No stack loading is possible. If you try to use the main sheet feeder, the option for Radiant White Watercolor paper is dimmed in the print menus so you can't select the paper type required by Harman's free downloadable ICC profile.

Following Harman's slightly inaccurate PDF instructions for using their profile (dialogs and commands are referred to by names other than those which appear on screen), the result is instantly perfect. Extremely crisp, rich shadow tones and precise control of highlight densities lines up with dead neutral greyscale or sepia rendering. This is a very good ICC profile and enabled a close match to our on-screen view of the images right from the start.

The paper comes in a bright white version, launched in February, and a warmtone version launched this month. Of course,



Harman's website requires registration – a very quick process with email password by return – after which you have unlimited access to ICC profiles and printing instruction PDFs for Canon iP4000, i9950, P9000; Epson 1280, 1290, 1400, 2100, 2200, 2400, 3800, 4000, 4800, R800, R1800; and HP 8750, B9180.

the warm tone does not affect the image colour, just the base colour. It is what we used to call 'Ivory' in real photo paper terminology.

To be honest, the difference is very slight under most light sources. By daylight, the pure white paper looks rather stark. Under artificial light you can hardly

see which is which. I concluded that for commercial subjects the pure white would be better, and for social or pictorial subjects, the warmtone.

I also tested the paper in our Lexmark pigment ink office printer, and it gave good results but with nothing like the fidelity and inten-

sity of the profiled output on the 3800.

In short, Harman baryta-based FB inkjet papers can be recommended without hesitation. They cost around £1 per A4 sheet, retail. New sizes and packings are on the way – an A2+ for the baryta paper, 17 x 25", is designed especially for the Epson 3800, to fit the full width. A 50 sheet A4 size box for large volume users is also to be released. Downloadable profiles for nearly all the major pro studio inkjet printers are already on line at [www.harman-inkjet.com](http://www.harman-inkjet.com).

The only problems with the papers re that they have an extremely perfect matt surface which can mark fairly easily depending on ink type, and the baryta layer means they will crack like a fibre-based real photo print if you try to fold them. The printing surface must be scored with a sharp knife before trying to fold a sheet of this paper as a card, for example.

For fidelity with ultra-fine detail and high visual impact, these papers are up there with the best. –DK

