

WORKS GREAT JUST DON'T SHUT IT OFF

FAST, CONSISTENT, AND EASY TO MAINTAIN, THE PHASER 840 DESIGNER EDITION COLOR PRINTER FITS INTO ANY DESIGN WORKGROUP

BY SHANE STEINMAN

WHENEVER I RECEIVE A PRODUCT FOR REVIEW, THE FIRST THING I do, is to check for signs of abuse.

Whether imparted by disgruntled shipping clerks, or previous reviewers, nothing takes the shine off that “new toy” experience like a scratch or (heaven forbid!) a dent. Not only was this Tektronix Phaser 840 Designer Edition solid ink color printer free of unseemly battle scars, it was still in the factory packaging. Virgin territory.



**TEKTRONIX PHASER 840
DESIGNER EDITION**
PostScript 3
Auto Duplex standard

Resolution/Speed:
Photo 600 x 1200 dpi/2ppm
Enhanced 491 x 982/3ppm
Standard 409 x 409/6ppm
Low 273 x 300/10ppm

Maximum image area: 8.1" x 10.6"

RAM: 128MB standard
Processor: 133 MHz RISC PowerPC

Interfaces: Bi-directional parallel,
10/100BaseT, USB, SCSI

Suggested list price: \$6,895 CDN

Tektronix Canada
Telephone: 416-747-5000
Web: www.tek.com

SPIFFY IMAC-LIKE EXTERIOR AND EASY FEEDING

I spent the obligatory five minutes with the User Guide, then dived headfirst into the world of Phaser color. Ten minutes later, the unit was warming up. That takes about twenty minutes.

The first thing you notice is the semi-translucent (iMac-like) exterior shell. Packaging, in this instance, goes much deeper than the reinforced cardboard in which the unit ships. It's definitely an attractive machine, but knowing better than to place my trust entirely in appearances, I resolved to give it a good workout.

My kids, on the other hand, weren't nearly so cynical.

“Aw, it's so cute!” they oozed, “Can we keep it? Huh? Can we?”

I joked that they would have to feed it if we did.

“So, how do you feed it?” they earnestly inquired.

I popped open the top-loading feeder, and let the kids deposit one solid ink stick for each of the four process colors. I didn't have to worry about them loading the wrong colors into the reservoirs because, like all Phaser printers, the 840 DE has specially shaped ink bars for each color that will only fit into the appropriate slot. Intelligent — and good looking. Hmmm.

One other thing you'll notice on the flashy exterior, is the colorful addition of an Apple ColorSync logo — the first non-Apple product to carry that mark.

TEN PER PAGES PER MINUTE ON ANY STOCK

After plugging the unit into my Ethernet hub (the device comes equipped with a built-in 10/100 BaseT Ethernet card) and installing the necessary print driver, I was ready for my test drive. The printer came up immediately in the Chooser window and beckoned me to print something. Anything.

Ten pages per minute (at base resolution of 273 x 300 dpi) doesn't sound terrifically fast, but as far as color printers go, it's wickedly quick. Helped along by 128 MB of onboard RAM and a generous helping of Adobe PostScript 3, the 840DE made quick work of my first test pages. Frankly, I was a little surprised to see my print queue empty when I got back from filling my coffee cup.

I loaded various paper stocks that had accrued in my personal inventory over the previous few months and was happy to hear no jamming or crunching sounds as the printer adjusted easily to everything from a 15 lb. ultralight stock, to Xerox laser bond, to 120 lb. Horizon dull coated. In the first day of testing, I ran about sixty pages in total.

BUT NEVER NEVER TURN IT OFF

Over the next five days, I only had the opportunity to run a few pages per day.

On the seventh day, instead of resting (since this wasn't extremely creative work) I decided to test out the duplex printing feature. However, the printer notified me through the print dialog on my monitor that it was feeding time once again. Doing a quick

calculation on the cost of ink (never mind that the Black ink sticks were free) divided by the number of pages I'd output, this was costing an astronomical two dollars per print!

Something had to be wrong.

I had heard that the new generation of Phasers rivaled laser technology for both speed and cost of consumables. Obviously, something was wrong with the seemingly pristine unit of which I'd taken delivery.

A few telephone calls cleared that up. There should be a big sign on the machine that says, "DO NOT SHUT OFF AT NIGHT!"

You see, every time the unit starts up and goes through its twenty minutes of stretching exercises, it consumes mass quantities of the precious solid ink as it prints its self-diagnostic test sheet. Don't worry about excessive power consumption while leaving the printer on overnight; it goes into a deep sleep to conserve hydro.

With that issue out of the way, I turned my attention to duplex printing. The automated two-sided printing worked very well, maintaining excellent front-to-back registration. At the maximum resolution of 600 x 1200 dpi, my most complicated duplex test landed in the print tray in about two minutes. This was good timing considering the number of scans I'd plopped onto the pages, and the heavy ink coverage.

The 840DE has an easy-to-use display so that the user can effectively communicate with the printer, and vice versa. You can also use the PhaserLink option included to oversee operations using a typical web browser.

LOOKS GOOD AND CONSISTENT, TOO

Overall, I'd rate performance on the Phaser 840DE (its official model description is Z840GP/A) as solid and robust (I give it 8 out of 10 on the Shane-o-Meter). It can be fairly color-accurate with a little fiddling (a solid 7 out of 10), although I think it would benefit greatly from having the same PhaserMatch ICC color management software that comes standard with the Phaser 780. Color consistency was flawless and registration from print to print was extremely tight (great for doing "supers" on previously printed material) — a full combined 10. Its detail rendering is as good as any in its class, which is to say about a 6, and for ease of installation, use and maintenance, it's excellent (give it a 9).

I was sad to see it go. So were my kids.

"It's too bad you have to feed it so much," they lamented.

"Yeah," I agreed. I didn't have the nerve to tell them that the 'problem' was actually resolved. Since I had started leaving the machine on all the time, the cost of consumables had dropped from dollars to cents. *

SHANE STEINMAN IS TECHNICAL DIRECTOR OF ARCHANGEL MEDIA INC. OF TORONTO AND PROJECT LEADER OF THE DMACS INITIATIVE (WWW.DMACS.ORG).



The Definitive Source for FULL COLOR

VISIT OUR
WEB SITE FOR
FULL DETAILS

BROCHURES

5,000
FOR ONLY

\$695⁰⁰

YOU SUPPLY "PRINT-READY" ARTWORK ON DISK

100# PREMIUM WEIGHT COATED GLOSS PAPER
8 1/2" x 11" • PRINTED 2 SIDES • FULL IMAGE BLEED
CMYK 4-COLOR PROCESS • 150 LINE SCREEN • 2,560 DPI

Akkrum Mississauga, ON
THE COLOR BROCHURE CENTER Canada L4Z 3K8

Phone: 416-410-3321 Toll Free: 1-877-410-3321
Web site: www.akkrum.com E-mail: mail@akkrum.com