

PAPER CHASE

Outputting your crafted images on to cheap inkjet paper simply does not make sense and it certainly will not show off your work in the best light. In this two-part test we look at eight papers that will make the most of your images

WORDS & PICTURES WILL CHEUNG

The majority of photographs make it no further than the computer screen. Quite a number get output as prints via online printing services or at those kiosks you see at photography retailers. Many images get made into canvases, jigsaws, printed on T-shirts and other photo gifts. And a few get printed out at home on photographic quality inkjet printers. If you're reading *Advanced Photographer*, you're very likely to belong to the last-named group. You're also likely to consider carefully the choice of media. The brand, weight, finish and feel are all points to ponder.

There's also the significant factor of price and good inkjet media does not come cheap. The investment, however, is generally worthwhile.

In this second part we conclude our review of eight papers that have the look and feel of fibre-based glossy darkroom papers. Such papers have a sheen rather than a mirror-like gloss and have a lovely tactile feel.

By the way, just in case you're wondering, the division between the

four brands last month – Canson, Chau Digital, Epson and Fotospeed – and the four this month was done purely on alphabetical grounds.

We're only covering eight papers, but there is a bewildering choice out there at all sorts of price levels.

In this two-part review we look at a range of papers ideally suited for exhibition-quality prints. To be honest, defining what's 'exhibition-quality' is nigh on impossible because every photographer has their own idea of how they want their pictures to look.

Our chosen papers rate highly in terms of heft, weight or thickness. They all weigh in around the 300gsm mark. Paper weight is expressed as GSM or grams per square metre, so the higher the number, the heavier the paper.

For our test we used the Epson R3000 and the Stylus Pro 3880. Both printers have a nine-colour inkset including three for monochrome – there are four black inks but only three are in use at a time, ie light black, light light black and photo black or matt black. The other inks are

cyan, vivid magenta, light cyan, vivid light magenta and yellow.

Our cross section of images included portraits, landscapes, fine-toned monochrome, contrasty monochrome, natural history and so on. The images started life as Raw files and were processed in Lightroom 3 with Adobe RGB colour space. Paper profiles were downloaded from the website or bespoke profiles requested where a free profiling service is offered, ie Fotospeed and Permajet. A profiled 24in iMac and Photoshop CS5 were used for outputting.

Prints were assessed in natural daylight and in daylight-balanced artificial lighting, after letting them dry for 24 hours. We've grouped images together to make comparison easier.

One aspect of the paper's qualities we could not check is longevity. For more on this complex subject check out www.wilhelm-research.com. Essentially, prints on these papers will outlive their producers given favourable storage conditions, but displaying in bright light will have a negative impact.



HAHNEMÜHLE
GLOSSY FINEART
325GSM **£1.41 PER**
A4 SHEET



ILFORD GOLD
FIBRE SILK
310GSM **£1.66**
PER A4 SHEET



INNOVA FIBAPRINT
ULTRA SMOOTH
GLOSS 285GSM **£1.17**
PER A4 SHEET



PERMAJET FIBRE
BASE DISTINCTION
360GSM **£1.01 PER**
A4 SHEET

Flesh tones and colour test chart

Accurate reproduction of flesh tones is crucial and it's the first characteristic to consider if you major on people pictures. Our model, Katie Green has a nice tan so the papers all did well here. Looking at the reproduction of the ColorChecker test chart reveals more.

HAHNEMÜHLE GLOSSY FINEART 325GSM



Lovely deep colours from this material and skin tones appear accurate. Background looks good too with a marginal hint of magenta.

ILFORD GOLD FIBRE SILK 310GSM



Generally sound performance but flesh tones and greys are faintly yellowish so look rather warm. Colours are not as rich as those of its rivals.

INNOVA FIBAPRINT ULTRA SMOOTH GLOSS 285GSM



Produced lovely flesh tones and colours nicely saturated too and that includes the more subtle hues. Background stayed neutral.

PERMAJET FIBRE BASE DISTINCTION 360GSM



A solid performance from this paper and the colours are rich although the background has picked up a slight magenta tinge.

Black & white

Some papers can be quite muted and subtle in their rendition of monochrome images. Others can be quite contrasty and aggressive. Both approaches work, depending on your tastes and the image in question. Focusing on fine art monochrome, we used a smooth-toned studio image here and tried grittier images too.

HAHNEMÜHLE GLOSSY FINEART 325GSM



Has a tendency towards warmth but that's not a bad thing. Highlights are creamy while the midtones are smooth too.

ILFORD GOLD FIBRE SILK 310GSM



The warmth of this mono print is gorgeous, reminiscent of warm tone darkroom materials. It suits portrait work very nicely.

INNOVA FIBAPRINT ULTRA SMOOTH GLOSS 285GSM



The print is neutral but seems to lack a little punch for monochrome, namely the highlights look a tad flat although they are detail-rich.

PERMAJET FIBRE BASE DISTINCTION 360GSM



The Permajet material is quite possibly the coolest tone mono print among our eight papers and the smooth highlights are glorious. Contrast is impressive too.

Foliage and natural history

With natural history subjects, accurate reproduction is more of a concern, so a neutral paper is often desirable. To be honest, our eight papers all did well with this image and the main difference between them was that some prints were fractionally warmer than others.

HAHNEMÜHLE GLOSSY FINEART 325GSM



There's plenty of zip to this image and a marginal leaning towards the warm side, but the result still looks impressive.

ILFORD GOLD FIBRE SILK 310GSM



This is a lively, warm-looking print and the flowerhead looks accurate.

INNOVA FIBAPRINT ULTRA SMOOTH GLOSS 285GSM



No complaints with the colour reproduction here and it's up there with the best of this group of eight.

PERMAJET FIBRE BASE DISTINCTION 360GSM



A richly saturated, great-looking print from Permajet and the paper's slight inherent coolness is not apparent.

andscape

With most *Advanced Photographer* readers enjoying the great outdoors, a paper that responds well to scenics is crucial. We printed a variety of landscape images. The late evening shot taken in the Norfolk Broads shown here has some challenging shadow detail that can go murky on some papers.

ILFORD GLOSSY FINEART 325GSM



It's to like here – there's some warmth in the print, shadow detail looks good and the highlights are punchy too.

ILFORD GOLD FIBRE SILK 310GSM



The Ilford's warm leaning is immediately apparent in this print and it's the most yellow-looking print here – but it's not unpleasant at all.

INNNOVA FIBAPRINT ULTRA SMOOTH GLOSS 285GSM



Shadow detail in this Innova print is okay, but the highlights appear to be very slightly flat and not as crisp as the other papers.

PERMAJET FIBRE BASE DISTINCTION 360GSM



The Distinction's pure white base is lovely and you can see how neutral the sky is in this print.



SPECIFICATIONS

Hahnemühle Glossy FineArt Baryta 325gsm

PRICES: 25 SHEETS A3: £68.38
25 SHEETS A4: £35.21
PER A3 SHEET: £2.73
PER A4 SHEET: £1.41
SIZES AVAILABLE: A4, A3, A3+,
A2, 17in, 24in, 36in, 44in, 60in and
64in rolls
CONTACT: www.hahnemuehle.com
WEIGHT: 325gsm
KEY FEATURES: High gloss baryta
paper compatible with pigment
and dye inkjet printers.

Ilford Galerie Prestige Gold Fibre Silk 310gsm

PRICES: 50 SHEETS A3+: £119.81,
£46.68 (10 sheet pack)
50 SHEETS A4: £56.88, £16.66 (10)
PER A3+ SHEET: £2.40/£4.67
PER A4 SHEET: £1.13/£1.66
SIZES AVAILABLE: A4, Letter
21.6x27.9cm, A3+, A2, 43.2x55.9cm,
17in, 24in, 44in, 50in rolls
CONTACT: www.ilford.com
WEIGHT: 310gsm
KEY FEATURES: Features an inkjet
layer coated on a baryta layer.

Innova Fibaprint Ultra Smooth Gloss 285gsm

PRICES: 25 SHEETS A3: £57.38
25 SHEETS A4: £29.28
PER A3 SHEET: £2.29
PER A4 SHEET: £1.17
SIZES AVAILABLE: A4, A3+, A2,
17in, 24in, 36in, 44in, 60in rolls
CONTACT: www.innovaart.com
WEIGHT: 285gsm
KEY FEATURES: Crystal layer
technology offers extremely wide
colour gamut, enhanced tonal
range and a D-Max of up to 2.7.

Permajet Fibre Base Distinction 360gsm

PRICES: 25 SHEETS A3: £48.45
25 SHEETS A4: £25.18
PER A3 SHEET: £1.93
PER A4 SHEET: £1.01
SIZES AVAILABLE: A4, A3, A3+,
A2, 17in, 24in, 44in, 60in rolls
CONTACT: www.permajet.com
WEIGHT: 360gsm
KEY FEATURES: Triple weight
acid-free base, baryta paper with
smooth gloss finish.

THE VERDICT

Eight great papers later

The first thing to say is that our chosen eight papers all rate highly. If you missed last month's issue, back issues (paper and digital versions) are available from our website. In fact they are amazingly good and it's very unlikely you would be unhappy with the results when you view each one in isolation. They all showed themselves to be highly capable for critical colour and black & white output.

Not only that, but as you'll appreciate, personal preferences regarding colour reproduction as well as tactility play massive parts too. On the subject of feel, my favourites were Permajet for its weight, Fotospeed and Ilford for their smoothness.

To be honest, there was no paper here I'd reject because of finish or weight. Without exception they all look and feel great.

A more objective measure is price. On

that basis, the papers from Canson and Chau (96p per A4 sheet) featured last month are best value followed by Permajet (£1.01). The Hahnemühle (£1.41) is pricey and very good. The Ilford paper was my favourite but its price is only competitive if you buy 50-sheet packs – buy 10-sheet packs and it's expensive. Of course, buying in bulk offers savings for all the papers featured – and you should shop around.