



Amateur Photographer UK magazine Review by Chris Gatum, AP Editor (9th October 2004)

Plustek OpticFilm 7200

'I have to confess that the OpticFilm 7200 has not so much exceeded my expectations as shattered them'

'Whether you are looking for a quick way of producing massive prints from 35mm film or an economical dedicated film scanner, Plustek has achieved this with OpticFilm 7200'

'For perhaps the first time we are seeing an eminently usable scanner at a price that the consumer can genuinely afford, and for this, Plustek should receive a standing ovation.'

Summary Highlights

'OpticFilm 7200 boasts an optical resolution exceeding that of any other product on the consumer market at a price that undercuts most of the 'major manufacturers' by several hundred pounds'.

'OpticFilm 7200 boasts a groundbreaking 7200dpi optical resolution mathematically capable of transforming a 35mm frame into a 300ppi image measuring 34"x22.5" (86x57cm) - A1 in paper sizes - or a small section enlarged to fit an A3 print'

Speed

'the ease & speed with which the OpticFilm 7200 produces a scan is appealing'

'in use the OpticFilm 7200 is very fast especially given the maximum (7200dpi) available'

'a preview of your frame takes about 20 seconds to appear on screen'

'I was most impressed that a full frame scan at the maximum 7200dpi resolution only takes four minutes to complete'

'a full frame scan at a more modest 2100dpi (to provide a 9.5" x 6.5" print at 300dpi) is completed in a little over 60 seconds'

Software

'SilverFast Ai option provides true 48-bit output and advanced colour management tools'

'SilverFast SE option gives 8 bit image output won't allow LAB or CMYK scans but saves £50'

Build

'a very quiet unit when scanning'

'the film holders are actually better than some I've seen with the strip holder particularly well designed.. perfectly adequate for ensuring the film is held flat'

Image Quality

'with shots that could be described as 'average' in terms of exposure or contrast, the OpticFilm 7200 consistently delivers a full range of tones, sometimes exceeding my expectations'

'OpticFilm 7200 delivered enough information in a 8-bit scan to prevent highlights from 'burning out' despite heavy manipulation of the contrast. As a result I could extract far more detail than I anticipated being able to and achieve the result I was after"

The Verdict

'I am very pleased indeed with the results I have achieved'

'I have to confess that the OpticFilm 7200 has not so much exceeded my expectations as shattered them'

'Whether you are looking for a quick way of producing massive prints from 35mm film or an economical dedicated film scanner, Plustek has achieved this with OpticFilm 7200'

'For perhaps the first time we are seeing an eminently usable scanner at a price that the consumer can genuinely afford, and for this, they should receive a standing ovation.'



Specification 26/30

Build 16/20

Handling 17/20

Performance 26/30

Plustek OpticFilm 7200

Available from DataMind www.datamind.co.uk

Free Postage & Packing if ordered online

Tel: 0870 770 0848



AMATEUR

Photographer

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FIVE-MILLION-PIXEL TWIN TEST

ZOOM RANGERS



THE WORLD AT HIS FEET
The story of how one reader turned pro in the travel market

CATCHING THE MOMENT
Harry Benson was there when Bobby Kennedy was shot in '68



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The **HP Photosmart 945** and the **Kodak EasyShare DX7590** – two digital models with a great zoom range



TWIN TEST

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE?

The **Plustek OpticFilm** scanner gives 7200dpi for £170! See inside



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WHEN A COMPANY called DataMind phoned the AP office to invite us to review a 'revolutionary' new film scanner, I was more than a little sceptical. This probably came across on the phone and, sensing my ambivalence, the caller tried to clinch the deal: 'It is got an optical resolution of 7200dpi', he informed me.

'Don't you mean optimised resolution?' I replied, anticipating a mini-review of a couple of hundred words or so on a low-end scanner in AP's *Viewfinder* section.

'Er, no, it has a 7200dpi optical resolution...'

That single point changed things dramatically. Here we were being offered a scanner boasting an optical resolution exceeding that of any other product on the consumer market, at a price that undercuts most of the 'major manufacturers' by several hundred pounds.

With this sort of resolution, a 35mm frame can be transformed into a giant poster-sized print, or a small section enlarged to fit an A3 page, without having to resort to interpolation or decreasing the file resolution.

Call me a cynic, but the contradiction of this remarkable specification coupled with what can only be described as a

Big ideas

Offering an unrivalled resolution and a very attractive price, **Plustek's OpticFilm 7200** sounds too good to be true. **Chris Gatum** sees if it lives up to its promise

'pocket-money' price tag, set alarm bells ringing. This was compounded by the fact that the product is from an 'unknown' manufacturer – in this case, Plustek. Is it surprising, then, that my initial expectations were not exactly high?

However, the scanner arrived and has now been tested. All I will say to the other cynics out there is read on, as you might be pleasantly surprised.

Specification

Plustek's OpticFilm 7200 is a dedicated 35mm film scanner, boasting a

groundbreaking 7200dpi optical resolution. This is the highest resolution seen on any 'consumer' scanner currently available, and mathematically speaking it is capable of transforming a 35mm frame into a 300ppi image measuring 34x22.5in (86x57cm) – approximately 'A1' in paper sizes.

The OpticFilm 7200 allows both mounted and unmounted 35mm film to be scanned, with a pair of plastic holders accommodating four mounted slides or an unmounted strip of six frames. To allow you to check quickly which frame

you want to scan, the unit has a small illuminated window on the top, which is a neat – and useful – touch.

With a DMax of 3.4, the OpticFilm 7200 shouldn't have too much trouble dealing with most negatives. However, we will have to see how it copes with transparency film, which can typically have a DMax of up to 3.8, depending on the contrast within the image.

Scans are made with a single pass of the scanning head, and if you choose to buy the scanner with SilverFast Ai you can take advantage of

Scanned at 7200dpi, the grain in this image (Fuji Provia 400F pushed two stops to ISO 1600) is clear to see, but adds to the atmosphere of the shot



'The ease and speed with which the OpticFilm 7200 produces a scan is appealing'

← the 7200's 48-bit colour depth to create 16-bit image files. Alternatively, the OpticFilm 7200 can be bought with SilverFast SE – a pared-down version of this popular high-end scanning software. This will limit you to an 8-bit image output and won't allow LAB and CMYK scans, but will save you £50. To speed up the scanning process, the 7200 has a pair of 'one-touch' buttons that immediately open up the scanner driver to perform a scan 'on the fly'.

As a full-frame scan at the highest resolution will generate a file size a shade under 200MB, the OpticFilm 7200 uses the fast USB 2.0 interface to minimise the data transfer time, with the relevant cable supplied in the box. In terms of what you can connect this scanner to, Mac users should turn away now as the OpticFilm 7200 is a 'PC only' unit running on Windows 98, 2000, Me and XP only. Even running a Mac with a PC emulator failed to provide a Mac-based solution.

Handling

The OpticFilm 7200 is a fairly unassuming lightweight plastic box, which comes

complete with a pair of plastic film holders. Despite its budget price the holders are actually better than some that I've seen, with the strip holder being particularly well designed. Plastic bars separate each of the six frames and mean that every frame is held on four sides. In testing, this proved to be perfectly adequate for ensuring the film is held flat.

The holders can be inserted into either side of the scanner, with indents in them that 'click' each frame into place. This makes selecting a frame a manual process that is quite straightforward, although as it is not an automated system you are limited to scanning a single frame at a time.

With the Windows operating system, installing software is no longer a chore and once it is installed you are ready to go, with SilverFast (both SE and Ai) providing all the tools most consumers will need. This includes grain and noise elimination (GANE) and dust and scratch removal (SRD), as well as 'NegaFix' for optimising scans from negative film. For the more demanding user, SilverFast Ai provides 'true' 48-bit output and advanced colour management tools, along with other, lesser-used tools.

In use, the OpticFilm 7200 is very fast, especially given the maximum resolution available. A preview of your frame takes around 20 seconds to appear on screen, from which point you can select a crop, the resolution and/or enlargement, as well as applying any adjustments to exposure, contrast and so on. All this is done 'live' on-screen, without the need to make

This shot was taken on a Centon camera. The price of the camera and scanner combined is far less than the cheapest DSLR, and the combination can deliver much bigger pictures



Plustek OpticFilm 7200 £169.99 (with SilverFast SE)

DATA FILE

● DataMind.co.uk, 1 Kingsburys Lane, Ringwood, Hampshire BH24 1EL.
Tel: 0870 770 0848. Website www.datamind.co.uk

Format	Dedicated 35mm film scanner
Max resolution	7200dpi (optical)
DMax	3.4
Bit depth	48-bit
Compatibility	Windows 98, 2000, Me, XP
Connectivity	USB 2.0
Weight	1.35kg
Dimensions	272x120x119mm

further previews, which again helps the process move quickly along.

When you hit 'scan' the OpticFilm 7200 works briskly, with only the occasional whirr of a motor reminding you that this very quiet unit is operating. I am most impressed that a full-frame scan at the maximum 7200dpi resolution takes only four minutes to complete, including about a minute during which time the OpticFilm 7200 appears to do nothing.

This hesitation appears to affect only the highest resolution scans, as at resolutions lower than 7200dpi the scanner kicks into life immediately. As a result, a full-frame scan at a more modest 2100dpi (to provide a 9.5x6.5in print at

300ppi) is completed in a little over 60 seconds.

Performance

The ease and speed with which the OpticFilm 7200 produces a scan is appealing, but it will always be the image quality at its maximum resolution that is going to be its most attractive and important selling point. The cynic within me was expecting this to be the OpticFilm 7200's undoing, yet while the results are not 'perfect' they are far from disappointing.

As I had initially anticipated, the 7200's 3.4 DMax isn't quite a match for contrasty transparencies. Faced with the particularly tricky task of scanning a slide

of guardsmen wearing polished helmets under the midday sun while mounted on black horses, the OpticFilm 7200 has been unable to retain the full tonal range. As a result, some highlight information and shadow detail have been sacrificed to keep the mid-tones at their original density. However, this is to be expected and this image would prove difficult to reproduce 'perfectly' on all but a few high-end scanners.

When faced with lower-contrast slides or negatives (be it black & white or colour), the OpticFilm 7200 copes far better. With shots that could be best described as 'average' in terms of exposure and contrast, the 7200 consistently delivers a full range of tones, sometimes exceeding my expectations.

One such shot was a low-contrast photograph of the lighthouse at Beachy Head, taken at the start of the year. I scanned the centre of the 35mm frame to produce a generous 80x30cm-sized 300ppi file, which I then imported into Photoshop. Using the levels tool I found that the OpticFilm 7200 had delivered enough information in the 8-bit scan

to prevent the highlights from 'burning out', despite heavy manipulation of the contrast. As a result, I could extract far more detail from the sky than I anticipated being able to and achieve the result I was after.

The OpticFilm 7200 is also capable of delivering all the detail within such an image, with a 7200dpi scan revealing the actual grain structure of the film when it is resized to deliver a 300ppi print. Beneath the grain, there is another texture creeping into these huge images, though, especially in darker tones. This is not as obvious as the film grain itself, and will go unnoticed in most instances. However, if you look closely at a 7200dpi scan it is evident that this resolution, coupled with a single pass of the scanning head, results in a 'base layer' of ever-so-slight digital noise. It should be noted that this would only be evident when you begin to produce prints of the largest size. If you stick to 'reasonable' scans that deliver 300ppi prints in the region of an A3 size it won't be an issue and, overall, I am very pleased indeed with the results I have achieved. **AP**

The verdict



Ultimately, two things are going to sell the OpticFilm 7200 – the groundbreaking resolution and a price that looks like a misprint. It is also this combination that will raise doubts in the mind of the cautious buyer, as the specification and cost simply don't add up. It was for this very reason that even before I had begun this test I anticipated having to find numerous ways of saying, 'It's a shame that...' or 'It's unfortunate, but...'

However, this simply hasn't been necessary and I have to confess that the Plustek OpticFilm 7200 has not so much exceeded my expectations as shattered them. It may not be 'perfect', with scans of the highest resolution suffering slightly from noise and contrasty slides proving problematic, but it is by no means bad, either. And let's not forget that these are sentiments that can be applied equally to some scanners that cost two or three times as much and deliver scans of only half the size.

Whether you are looking for a quick way of producing massive prints from your 35mm film or an economical dedicated film scanner, Plustek has achieved this with the OpticFilm 7200. For perhaps the first time we are seeing an eminently usable scanner at a price that the consumer can genuinely afford, and for this, they should receive a standing ovation. I am only disappointed that – as a Mac user – I can't have one.

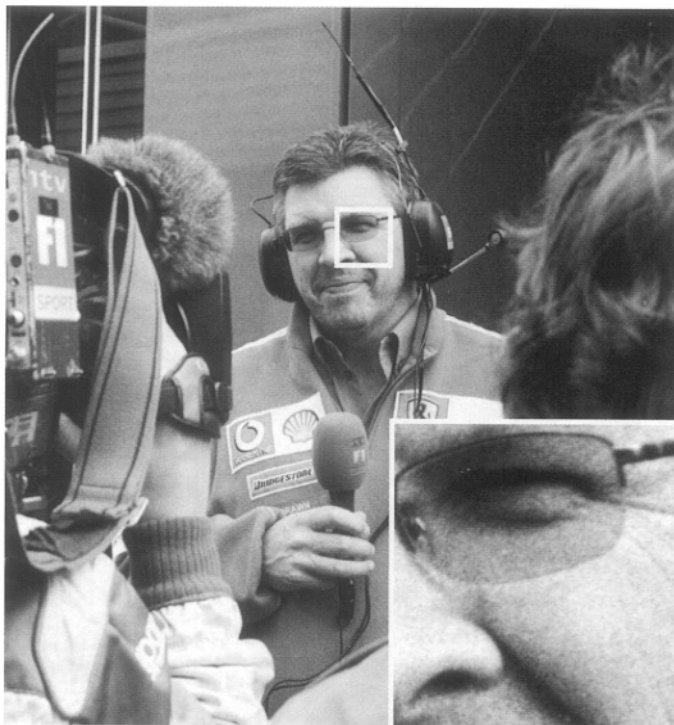
FOR

- 7200dpi optical resolution
- High-end SilverFast software
- Fast scan times
- Price

AGAINST

- 3.4 DMax struggles with high-contrast slides
- No batch scanning
- Slight 'noise' at higher resolutions
- Not Mac compatible

SPECIFICATION	26/30
BUILD	16/20
HANDLING	17/20
PERFORMANCE	26/30

85%
**AP'S
RATING**


Although I cropped this shot, the OpticFilm 7200 still delivered a 60cm square image. The section shows how it would appear 'actual size'