EPSON

Epson Stylus Photo

April 1997

Printing method: On-demand inkjet
Nozzle configuration: Black: 32 nozzles;
Color: 32 nozzles x 5 colors
Resolution: 720 dpi
Printing direction: Bidirectional printing with logic seeking
Paper feed method: ASF-type friction feed
Ink: Black ink cartridge; color ink cartridge (5 colors integrated into one tank)
Power supply voltage: AC 100 V ± 10%,120V, 220-240V
Dimensions: (W) 429 x (D) 282 x (H) 165 mm
Weight: Approx. 5.2 kg

Product Features

The Epson Stylus Photo (known in Japan as the PM-700C) combined fast printing with unprecedented image quality. This printer was issued with an original set of six inks, which were known as QuickDry. In addition to the four basic colors that had hitherto been used, light cyan and light magenta were added, making possible beautiful gradations with minimized graininess.

The Epson Stylus Photo was also filled with Epson's best imaging technologies, such as the Micro Piezo print head. This newly developed print head allowed the printer to fire Super Micro Dots of ink representing only 1/3 the size of the ink of droplets fired from previous print heads. In addition, new image processing techniques (particularly setting and active use of binarized process tables) and a highly accurate paper feed mechanism resulted in superb-photo quality. Finally, a newly designed print head improved the ability of the Epson Stylus Photo to produce images of photographic quality.

Apart from these attributes, the printer driver was equipped with the Epson PhotoEnhance function that made it possible to correct brightness, contrast, and saturation of image data with just a single mouse click. The printer also came bundled with software applications on a CD-ROM making it possible to easily print photographs. These and other features made the printer extremely easy to use.

Various print mechanisms were also accelerated in the Epson Stylus Photo, including printer drivers, data transfer, printer controllers, and the printer engine. Using the newly developed Micro Piezo print head with a higher nozzle count, the printer produced 720 dpi output at roughly twice the speed of previous printers.

Background

At the time that the Epson Stylus Color went on sale in 1994, color inkjet printers had achieved household status around the world, riding largely on the coattails of the growth in the personal computing market. Although image quality was improving, dissatisfaction with inkjet printers remained because image quality was not as good as that of traditional photography, and because speeds slower than laser printers. Accordingly, in a quest for faster printing with quality that rivaled traditional photography, Epson started to redesign the printer including components such as print heads and ink, alongside hardware and image-processing software. Thus, in 1997*, three years after the arrival of the Epson Stylus Color on the market, the Epson Stylus Photo was born, offering both high image quality and fast printing speeds.

Impact

With unrivaled photo-quality output and printing speed, the Epson Stylus Photo was a blast of fresh air in the world of printers and was eagerly received by trade journals and professional photographers alike; the Epson name became indelibly linked with photo printing. Further, the arrival of this printer, with its unprecedented high image quality and print speed, brought the fun of casual color printing to the home and office for the first time, with color printing becoming increasingly used in applications ranging from birthday cards to business materials. The Epson Stylus Photo won a variety of awards both within and outside of Japan, including Nikkei Business Daily Award for Excellence (Nikkei Awards for Superior Products & Services) in 1997. Beyond that, this printer had considerable influence on the direction of subsequent color inkjet printers arriving to market, driving forward the quest for photographic image quality.

*PM-700C was launched in November 1996.