

Wacom Cintiq 21UX

The Cintiq 21UX is the latest model from Wacom. We find out if it's worth the £1,799 asking price...

The Wacom Cintiq is a machine made to suit the needs of the modern day digital artist. Regardless of use, perhaps as a drawing area or even a painting canvas, this interactive pen display offers the creative in question maximum control matched with ultimate comfort, even after many hours of application.

At first glance, the Cintiq 21UX certainly seems expensive and, yes, it will probably take up a bit of space, but not as much as you would think. This beast of a machine truly utilises every square inch to its advantage, be it for practical or aesthetic purposes. It does, however, have a certain slimline, sexy façade. With 21.3 inches of high resolution, the LCD monitor demonstrates picture-perfect quality. Couple this with the control, comfort and productivity of Wacom's sophisticated patented cordless tablet technology and, well, you have one spectacular working area.

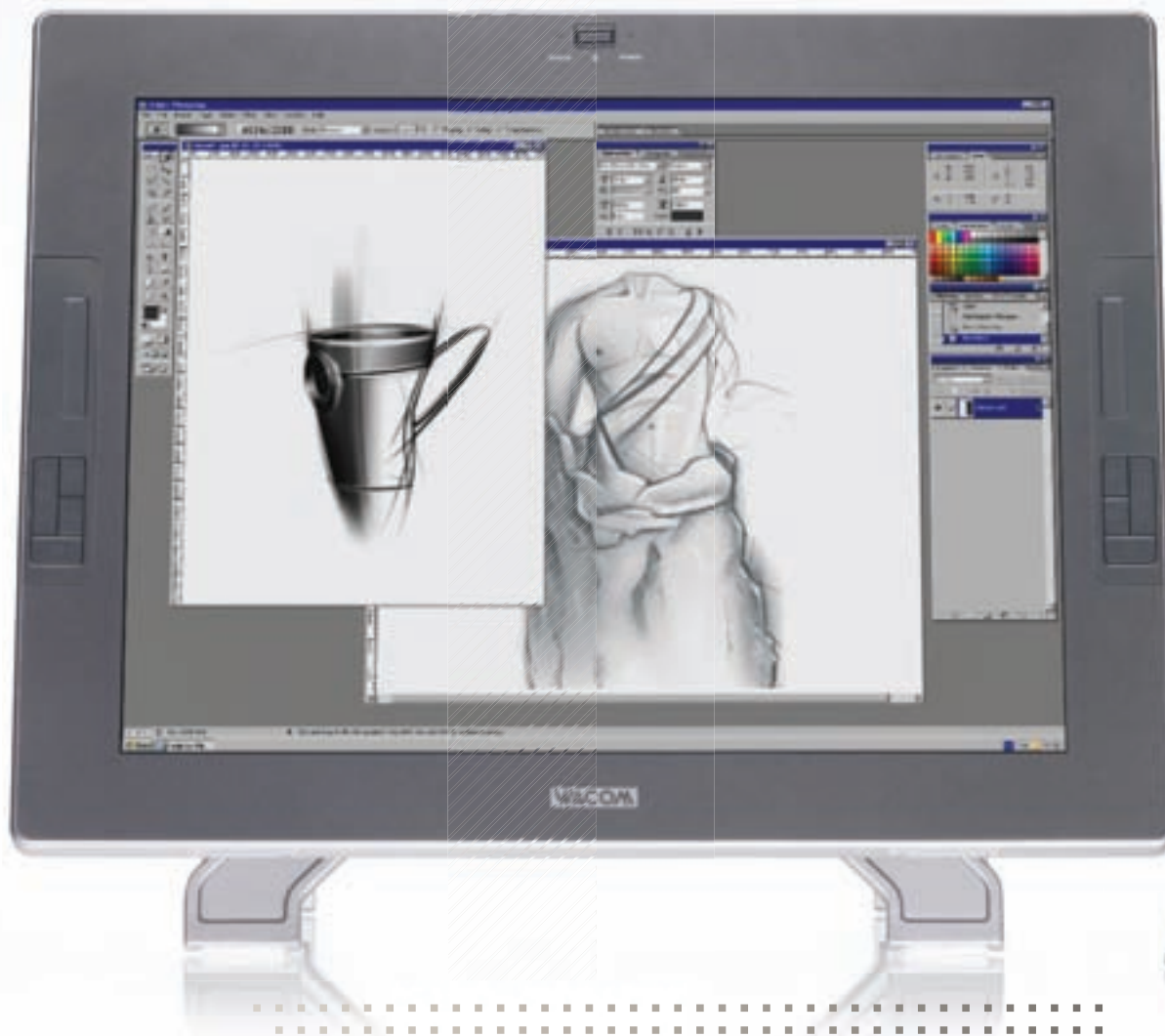
Weighing in at 22.4lbs, to be precise, it's surprising just how easy this heavy piece of equipment is to manoeuvre as well as assemble. To start with, installation is effortless and setting up the machine causes minimal fuss – you only have AC Outlet, USB and DVI-I connections to hook up. Fitting perfectly into the adjustable stand, dynamic control seems to be the name of the game when selecting your preferred monitor position. Customised with 180° rotation and the ability to incline between 10° and 65°, it leaves you with an extremely flexible and ergonomic working area that certainly minimises eye, arm and shoulder strain. The Cintiq can also be quickly manoeuvred and removed from the stand for use on your lap at any time.

Adding to this leisurely experience is the supplied pen, which comes with a secure cushioned grip as standard. The Grip pen allows you to apply brush strokes and pen lines in the most natural of ways.

With an active working area of 17 inches by 12.75 inches, there is more than enough space to create detailed natural media art and organic effects. The pen becomes instinctively active at 5mm from your monitor screen, and with the height and breadth of your working area, it handles like a dream. With the DuoSwitch found on the side of the pen, you can easily navigate through your workspace and desktop. Default settings are applied, with the Upper Switch set to Double-click, allowing you to instantly move and open documents and files, and even open Layer Options in Photoshop. The Lower Switch is set to Right-click, allowing you to access file options or apply layer styles in Photoshop, as well as access all other standard options instantaneously.

In the same way that the Wacom pen can be used on a standard tablet, the digital eraser at the opposite end can be used to correct details, for a truly authentic sketching experience. This works like any actual pencil eraser, with pressure dependent on your own applied weight. The monitor also comes equipped with ExpressKeys, with easily identifiable functions acting as essential commands to allow you to simulate keyboard commands. These include the Ctrl/Command modifier key (left button) for Windows, Shift modifier key (top right), Alt modifier key (bottom right) for Windows and the Space key (bottom). When using Photoshop, these keys are assigned to modify a tool or switch to complementary tools, such as the Move Tool and Color Picker, which makes for smooth application and creation. The ExpressKeys are also, however,

GET TO GRIPS: To further enhance your comfort, the Cintiq 21UX comes with a cushioned Grip pen for use directly on the screen, allowing you to create in the most natural way possible





TOTAL CONTROL: The Cintiq 21UX has an 21.3" high-resolution display and a dynamically adjustable stand that allows the display to be rotated, inclined and even quickly removed for in-lap use

fully customisable to fit every user's creative needs. For instance, you can set a pair of commonly used keystrokes, such as '[' and ']' to toggle through standard brush sizes.

The Touch Strips, above the ExpressKeys, are an innovative feature that we found very practical and they complemented the immersive working experience you find yourself in when using the Cintiq. They invite you to simply slide your finger across, allowing you to perform Scroll, Zoom or even custom keystroke actions. They serve as a Zoom function by default in graphic applications such as Photoshop, but, like the ExpressKeys, they can be customised to toggle through rush styles, sizes and other tool options. They can also be deactivated at any time, which is more practical than we first thought; we found out the hard way that it can be quite irritating when trying to design or illustrate, when your drawing arm accidentally activates functions. This feature also came in handy with other standard software, such as

word-formatting programs, as it operates a continuous function when you press and hold – seemingly ideal for scrolling through long documents or web pages.

All in all, using the Cintiq was a pleasurable experience. You find yourself comfortable at all times and the size and quality of the screen, with a 1600 x 1200 UXGA resolution, really allowed us to appreciate designing. All the associated keys speed up your workflow, once you're familiar with them. It also has an air of technological sophistication in appearance and purpose, which makes you feel like a real pro. A joy to use, even for the smallest design tasks. ■

Specifications

Manufacturer: Wacom
Web: www.wacom-europe.com
Price: £1,799
Spec: Cintiq 21UX interactive pen display
21.3" diagonal screen size
LCD screen with UXGA resolution (1600x1200)
Adjustable display stand
Cordless, battery-free Grip pen and pen stand
Replacement nibs (1 stroke nib, 1 felt nib, 3 standard nibs)
Pressure levels of 1,024
Apple Mac OS X 10.2.x/ Microsoft Windows 2000, Microsoft Windows XP

Summary: The Wacom Cintiq 21UX is another masterstroke from Wacom, offering not just another top-performing market alternative, but also a truly intuitive product that gives users further advanced options with heightened navigation, control and comfort. Makes creation a digital dream.

Rating: **5/5**

Similar products

Genius G-Pen560 Tablet

Manufacturer: Genius
Web: www.pctronix.co.nz
Price: \$101.25 (£49.85) (www.pctronix.co.nz)
Spec: 4.5" x 6" working area
Cordless pen
Pressure sensitivity 1024
Adjustable display stand
Resolution (LPI) 2000
Mac OS 10.2.5/ Win 2000/98SE/X

A standard product that seems a cost effective alternative to the Wacom family. Works as standard but only provides two-button control, which can be programmed as left and right mouse buttons. Appears very limited in comparison.

Rating: **2/5**



Symposium DT770 Interactive Pen Display

Manufacturer: Symposium
Web: www2.smarttech.com
Price: £2,333.55 (\$4,739.20) (www.shopuk.co.uk)
Spec: 17" (43.2cm) LCD screen with SXGA resolution
Any 100mm VESA mounting arm can be used
8.9kg weight
16.2 million Colour Emulation via FRC
Two operating angles, 30° or 45° from horizontal

This is a product for those that want effortless presentation. You can write over slides in digital ink, save your notes, access any website or multimedia files and project your work onto a large screen. You can also touch the screen with your finger to navigate the interface menus of your room-control system. Better with software such as Windows versions of Microsoft PowerPoint and Word.

Rating: **3/5**



"ALL THE ASSOCIATED KEYS SPEED UP YOUR WORKFLOW"

Resource reviews

Even the pros need a little helping hand now and again, so take a look at this little lot

Brilliant Adobe Photoshop CS3

Not quite as 'Brilliant' as the title would suggest unfortunately, but a good place to learn the basics of the latest version and to find out what's new in one fell swoop

Manufacturer: Pearson Prentice Hall

Web: www.pearson-books.com

Price: £16.99

Spec: n/a

To say that Brilliant Adobe Photoshop CS3 is an in-depth guide would probably be an understatement, as it really does cover everything you could think of! Literally starting from installing CS3, all the way to using Photoshop with other programs, the book offers a very comprehensive look at all CS3 related matters, so much so that it fully prepares you for taking the Adobe Certified Expert (ACE) exam!

The book helpfully identifies ACE objectives throughout its text, so it's easy to spot the important subjects to pay attention to. Written by Steve Johnson (the author of over 35 books) and graphics designer and illustrator Andy Anderson, *Brilliant Adobe Photoshop CS3* follows a logical progression that could seem a tad overwhelming if you tried to read it in one go. Fortunately, it's also designed as a reference guide. If you only need to know about one

topic, it's a simple matter of checking the index and skipping to the relevant section. Occasionally, the exploration of the content feels too extensive, and the book can get a bit heavy as a result. For example, does it really take seven steps to explain the Clone Stamp Tool?

We'd have liked less writing and a few more impressive images to accompany the explanations as some of them really do feel like they're there purely to fill up space. If you need a book to tell you to insert the CS3 DVD and follow the on-screen instructions to install the program, you're really not ready to use Photoshop! Ultimately, the book strangely reminds us of textbooks from school; the information is useful but the presentation could do with a little more style and a little less content to make it a truly worthwhile purchase. If you're looking for a decent reference guide, however, you could do a lot worse. ■

Summary: A good reference guide that unfortunately has a tendency to cover subjects laboriously, resulting in too much filler material.

Rating: **3/5**



BRILLIANT: It may be a tad too much like a school textbook, but this is a very good book that can help you solve problems quickly

Big book of fashion illustration

For all fashion enthusiasts out there, this is a must-read, offering some real design delights and showcasing an impressive variety of different styles and techniques

Publisher: Batsford

Web: www.anovabooks.com

Price: £19.99, \$29.95 (US), \$35.95 (Can)

Order at: www.anovabooks.com or many local booksellers

Very rarely do you get a book title that lives up to its name or reputation, but the *Big Book of Fashion Illustration* 'does exactly what it says on the tin'. It truly is big, with well over 380 pages packed with illustrative goodies. Then there's the fact that it's jammed with all kinds of fantastic fashion illustration.

A genuinely resourceful sourcebook, brought to you by Martin Dawber, this title has everything a fashion illustrator needs. Sporting over 1000 new innovative fashion illustration examples, supplied from over 250 artists from every corner of the globe, there is something to inspire all those working in the associated field of fashion design and illustration. Showing an appreciation for all styles, the examples of art display many ways of using diverse media and technique to achieve expressive composition. These pieces are brought to you by talents in the industry, such as Giulio Iurissevich, Meirav Shaul Karen Sentry and *Advanced Photoshop*-featured Christopher King.

The book's layout is dynamic and lets the images 'breathe' within the confines of the page. This allows you,

the readers, to soak up the visual delicacies at your leisure. From printmaking to digital, every section is clearly identified, enabling you to navigate easily and find what you're looking for instantly. Chapters include the major areas of fashion, including menswear, womenswear and children's clothing, along with accessories and, our personal favourite, Youth culture, offering some distinctive contemporary samples. At the back of the book, you'll find all contacts for contributing artists, so it acts as a network for clientele as well as inspiration for aspiring amateurs.

At an affordable cost of £19.99 (\$29.95) it is a must-have. As honest as the title itself, this really is the ultimate resource. ■

Summary: A great resource for those looking for inspiration and authentic entertaining examples of art. It will really get the creative juices flowing and all at an affordable price for the volume of work received.

Rating: **5/5**



GO BIG: This book stands testament to all the breathtaking contributions from the artists involved and the enthusiasm of producer, Martin Dawber. The 'big' book contains a 'big' range of artistic examples

Image Restoration, Repair & Enhancement

This DVD could well be the Holy Grail for all those who have stumbled upon some worn family treasures or who are interested in restoration

Manufacturer: Software Cinema
Web: www.software-cinema.com
Price: \$159.00 / £77.84
Spec: At least 512 MB RAM needed to use both Adobe Photoshop and this program.
Monitor set to a minimum size of 1024 x 768, (1280 x 1024 recommended)
Macintosh OS X and Windows 2000 or XP

A lot of digital users love nothing more than rolling up their sleeves and finding their own creative techniques and ways around design dilemmas. However, for those specialist practices it's great to be able to find a supportive resource.

If this specialist practice is the restoration and repair of old photography, using CS2, then surely there are few better resources than Katrin Eismann's *Adobe Photoshop Image Restoration, Repair & Enhancement* tutorial DVD, brought to you by Software Cinema. Katrin, a reliable artist and author, has already co-authored many other titles and taught digital image topics around the globe. Here, she shares the handy restoration tips she has learnt during her professional career.

Session videos are easy to locate on-screen and all are presented in accomplished detail and clarity. There is certainly plenty to learn and discover, from extreme colour correction and removing dust and texture to more

advanced options, such as toning and tinting and the power of lens correction. There are also tutorials on essential preparation that can enhance your workflow, but which can be frequently disregarded.

For example, Preferences are scrutinised and critical features preferable for enhancing efficiency are exposed. Specifically, preparing History States, which are important because, as a user, you will apply a lot of individual treatment. Such options allow you the luxury of backing out of your less favourable technique. Also, some unfamiliar, yet extremely useful, functions are unearthed. The History Log's Metadata, is one example. This allows you the luxury of seeing how file info can embed and display exact working application information.

Along with other essentials, such as expanding Histograms, reorganizing and customizing your workspace for comfortable workflow and maximum efficiency, users can also access project files on the disc. This provides practical education, following techniques step-by-step and all in a disciplined order. Yet another tutorial gem from Software Cinema. ■

Summary: Intensive but extremely thorough tutorials teach you everything you need to know and probably things you thought you would already know. Quite lengthy but at the same time detailed enough to impress and inspire those with interest in photo restoration.

Rating: **4/5**



MAKEOVER: This training disc will show you how to transform faded, damaged photographs into beautiful, crisp images as well as how to turn casual snapshots into great looking pictures

ArtRage 2.5

Entertaining and practical digital software at an affordable price

Manufacturer: Ambient Design
Web: www.artrage.com
Price: \$25 / £12.32 (www.artrage.com)
Spec: Layers Panel
TIFF, JPEG, PDF, PSD Image Formats
Resolution Support pixels and dpi
Layer Content Transformation
Toolbox Panel
Color Samples Panel
1024 x 768 graphics. 256MB RAM
Windows: Vista, WinXP or Win2K. Pentium 800MHz / Mac OSX 10.3 or 10.4, G4 or Intel Processor.

ArtRage 2.5 is a new, distinctive digital paint program developed by Ambient Design. It offers users a variety of digital techniques and processes that are unavailable in any Adobe app.

When you open a new file, you'll see a page to establish dpi and pixel per inch. You're then given ultimate control to create a painting surface, with options including basic canvas and blackboard. Individual adjustments can be

made by changing Roughness, Scale and Opacity values. After this, it's time to apply your media. With a multitude of media to choose from, including Oils, Chalk and Marker, all tools are designed to interact like their physical counterparts. The results are quite authentic and there's also the opportunity to apply stencils. Using the Metallic Paint option, you can even apply, spread and blend gold and silver tones.

Not only is ArtRage 2.5 entertaining, it's also extremely functional. Option icons are presented in a funky graphical fashion and values, including Pressure and Softness, can be revised by dragging your mouse across the dials and icons, which makes use easier and more fun for younger users. Professionals can take advantage of the Refs tools, allowing you to pin an image to your canvas as a reference. ■

Summary: Fun but, at times, can seem limited in options compared to Photoshop. However, its single-minded approach to application makes the applied media options and stylish working area a real pleasure to use.

Rating: **4/5**



EASY TO USE: Photoshop users will like ArtRage 2.5 as it uses similar functions. It has an intuitive interface and supports tif, jpeg, PSD and PDF files

Fluid Mask 3

For all first-time users, Fluid Mask 3 makes masking much more straightforward

Manufacturer: Vertus™
Web: www.vertustech.com
Price: £159
Spec: Faster initial image processing
Localised edge detection and blending
Intelligent Edge Blending
New tools for colour based selections
Microsoft® Windows® XP with Service
Pack 2 or Windows Vista™/Mac OS X v.10.3.9,
0.4.9 or later

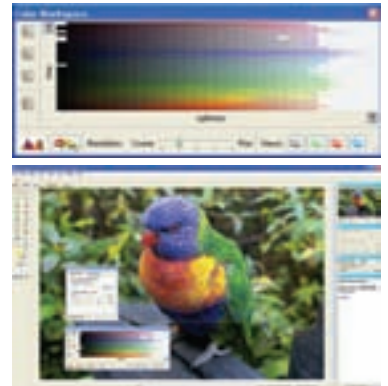
After sitting through several Fluid Mask 3 tutorials, we must admit we were flummoxed. To say it was less than inspiring would be an understatement. However, it did encourage us to go it alone and find that, thankfully, this software really is user-friendly.

Fluid Mask 3 options are simple to comprehend for new users of the software and the workspace layout is very similar to Photoshop's. Photoshop users should therefore be able to easily navigate the interface, accessing the floating tool bars and Options bar. There are inclusive brushes that allow you to apply, keep, delete or blend masks through specific application. Tools' sets are colour

coded according to their function, so the designated area is easily related to the tool used. This means you can see everything that you are doing on-screen at all times.

The Auto fill option is a nifty function for masking without fuss on those simple tasks, applying intuitive Blend masks that create a degree of transparency and soften edges. However, reapplying your Brush Tool at any time makes all applications instantly editable.

These are just a few advantages and since version 2, Vertus has made several new advanced options. Now included is the Color Sampler Tool and Patch functions (formerly known as regions), each with their own Edge-finding and Blending settings in the associated Patch Properties dialog box. This offers assistance for those hard to cut out edges. For example, use the Color Sampler to select a tone in the image, refine this definition in the Color Workspace dialog box and from here directly assign them to the appropriate masks. Even masking tricky elements, such as hair, has been made simple. With the Preview Cut Out Tool, you can monitor your outcomes before finalising anything. Mind-numbing tutorials aside, this attentive software relies on user ability above all else, offering a workflow that leaves little to chance. ■



ON THE EDGE: As a result of blending, natural edge-blur and contour is preserved

Summary: An all-inclusive plug-in, that allows first-time users minimal fuss. While it doesn't exactly revolutionise the market, the product does include some cool features. However, is it enough to justify its price? Perhaps try the 30-day free trial to make up your own mind.

Rating: **3/5**

Canon Media Storage M30

Modernise your many photo albums with this cool Canon storage device

Manufacturer: Canon
Web: www.canon.co.uk
Price: £359 / \$733.29 (www.justcanon.com)
Spec: 30GB HDD
139.5 x 80.5 x 33.5mm
3.7 inch screen
160 field of view
250:1 contrast
640x480px resolution

Are those old photos fading fast, sporting a washed out look with one to many tattered edges? Well, it's bound to happen eventually. You can always save to your home computer, but that's not so practical when you want to transport your pics around, is it? If these concerns sound all too familiar, then it's time to meet the Canon Media Storage M30.

With its slick contemporary look, this hand-held portable photo album offers users some cool perks. Most noticeable is its capacity to store imagery, video and audio. The device comes with both CF and SD card slots that support images in JPEG and RAW format, along with video and sound files. A robust magnesium alloy shell also securely protects your backed up files.

The ultra bright 3.7 inch TFT screen seems ideal for viewing all those magic moments clearly and crisply, with a 160° viewing angle so you can share them with friends in a

group. You can fit loads of photos on this handy little gadget if you take advantage of its 30GB capacity. Its intuitive navigation will be familiar to EOS owners, but those who are unfamiliar shouldn't worry, as it really is simple to use.

All storage types are divided into five sections and selection is simple, using the Direction, Set and Menu controls accordingly. Backing up files is easy; do so individually or collectively, simply by pressing the Backup button and following the on screen options. Erasing is just a click away, as is printing – just select the Easy Print button. Standard options are included; for example, the Zoom function and Album Slide Show, where you can apply effects, intervals and sound for an immersive visual experience. Everything is mapped out for you, without complication.

With the minor disadvantage that its approved robust magnesium alloy body slightly restricts portability, the Canon Media Storage M30 really does hammer the last nail in the coffin of photo albums, demonstrating that fiddly photo corners and tacky albums are fast becoming a thing of the past. Now it's all about digital storage. ■

Summary: With playback of a variety of multimedia files, a headphone jack for audio playback and USB 2.0 Hi-Speed interface, as well as mass storage, this is undeniably an innovative device for all digital photographers.

Rating: **4/5**

PORTABLE: Canon Media Storage will be popular with everyday photographers looking for new ways to store and display favourite shots

