


TOP 10 FLATBED SCANNERS

Details	Last month's position	First reviewed	Price (ex VAT)	Warranty	Maximum scanning area	True colour depth	Interface connection	Optical resolution	Software interpolated resolution	Graphics software
 1 Visioneer OneTouch 8700 USB 01483 445 480 www.visioneer-europw.com	1	Jan 02	£83	1-year	A4 (216x297mm)	48bit	USB	1,200x 4,800dpi	1,200x 4,800dpi	MGI PhotoSuite
 2 Microtek ScanMaker 3800 01327 844 880 www.microtekeurope.com	2	Jan 02	£66	1-year	A4 (216x297mm)	48bit	USB	1,200x 600dpi	9,600x 9,600dpi	Adobe PhotoDeluxe
 3 Mustek BearPaw 2400TA 0870 870 4457 www.mustek-europe.com	NEW	Mar 02	£65	1-year	A4 (216x297mm)	48bit	USB	1,200x 2,400dpi	19,200x 19,200dpi	Ulead PhotoExpress
 4 Acer S2W 5300U 01633 628 600 www.acercm.co.uk	3	Nov 01	£82	1-year	A4 (216x297mm)	48bit	USB	1,200x 2,400dpi	19,200x 19,200dpi	Ulead PhotoExpress
 5 Canon CanoScan N670U 0800 252 223 www.canon.co.uk/canoscan	4	Dec 01	£579	1-year	A4 (216x297mm)	48bit	USB	600x 1,200dpi	9,600x 9,600dpi	ArcSoft PhotoStudio 2000
 6 Visioneer OneTouch 5600 USB 01483 445 480 www.visioneer-europe.com	5	Jun 01	£60	1-year	A4 (216x297mm)	42bit	USB	600x 1,200dpi	2,400x 2,400dpi	MGI PhotoSuite III, PhotoEnhancer
 7 PrimaScan Colorado 2600U 01483 445 480 www.visioneer-europe.com	6	Sept 01	£50	1-year	A4 (216x297mm)	42bit	USB	600x 1,200dpi	2,400x 2,400dpi	MGI PhotoSuite
 8 Visioneer OneTouch 8100 USB 01483 445 480 www.visioneer-europe.com	7	Jul 01	£85	1-year	A4 (216x297mm)	42bit	USB or parallel	600x 1,200dpi	2,400x 2,400dpi	MGI PhotoSuite II SE
 9 Canon CanoScan N650U 0800 252 223 www.canon.co.uk/canoscan	8	Jul 01	£59	1-year	A4 (216x297mm)	42bit	USB	600x 1,200dpi	9,600x 9,600dpi	ArcSoft PhotoStudio 2000
 10 Epson Expression 1680 0800 220 546 www.epson.co.uk	9	Sept 01	£649	1-year	A4 (216x297mm)	48bit	USB/SCSI	1,600x 3,200dpi	12,800x 12,800dpi	Adobe Photoshop 5.0, SilverFast Ai5

1 Visioneer OneTouch 8700 USB

 The sub-£100 scanner market is highly competitive, with a whole raft of manufacturers fighting one another to win a bigger slice of the market. The response from the likes of Visioneer is to introduce an aggressive pricing policy to stay on top, which results in ever-better low-cost scanners. Visioneer's latest assault on the market is the OneTouch 8700 USB. The optical resolution on the 8700 is a remarkable 1,200x4,800dpi (dots per inch) which, coupled with a 48bit colour depth, gives fantastic results. Our tests showed not only crisp quality across all scan jobs, but speedy delivery as well.

Our only word of warning regards file size. An A4 file scanned at the highest resolution takes up a huge 1.5GB, so you need plenty of storage space. The OneTouch's advanced settings require some patience, but novices can always go back to the detailed paper manual for advice. Fortunately the Visioneer's great software bundle – which includes MGI PhotoSuite – comes with an excellent scan manager, making the 8700 simpler than ever to use. It's a shame Visioneer has dropped its warranty from

two years to one, but the OneTouch is good value for money and produces great results. Just

make sure your PC is powerful enough to cope with the high resolutions.

2 Microtek ScanMaker 3800

 The ScanMaker 3800 from Microtek offers a great combination of a reasonable price and plenty of features. Low hardware specifications kept it from the Best Buy spot, but the ScanMaker is a speedy scanner backed up by a good software bundle.

An optical resolution of 1,200x600dpi (dots per inch) is par for the course these days, though Microtek has improved matters with 48bit colour depth, ensuring colours are vibrant. And, while the resolution will never produce the same results as Acer's 5300U or Visioneer's OneTouch 8700, it did well enough in our tests.

In fact, anyone with a slightly older computer may well prefer the ScanMaker 3800 because the file sizes it produces are smaller and its speed compensates for slower PCs. Scanning at a lower resolution than other entrants in our chart naturally meant faster scan jobs. However, the ScanMaker 3800 still proved to be a bit of a speed demon compared to the rest of the competition when scanning at the heights of 300x300dpi and 600x600dpi. For example, an A4 full-colour magazine spread at 600x600dpi only took two minutes and 18 seconds to scan and save – a superb time that beats almost all of the other scanners in this month's chart.



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3 Mustek BearPaw 2400TA

 The BearPaw 2400TA is a huge improvement on Mustek's previous models, yet its cost remains remarkably low. The 1,200x2,400dpi (dots per inch) optical resolution doesn't improve on what was previously on offer from Mustek, but it is more than enough for everyday scan jobs. We berated the last model, the 2400 (reviewed May 01), because the 48bit colour depth was interpolated and the resultant scans were suffused with too much artificial colour. But this time round Mustek has opted for a true 48bit colour depth and the difference is marked. The detail shines through and the colour palette is much more realistic.

**4** Acer S2W 5300U

 Acer's S2W 5300U sports a low price tag for its specifications and offers good results. The rounded contours, five hot keys and simple software interface give the impression this scanner is for novices, but don't let the user-friendly feel belie the quality and versatility within. The optical resolution of 1,200x2,400dpi (dots per inch) and 48bit colour depth mean it can cope with most scan jobs. The Acer S2W 5300U is a good choice for anyone looking to upgrade from a low-end model to something that offers higher performance. It's not a speed demon but the results are worth waiting for.

**5** Canon CanoScan N670U

The CanoScan loses its Recommended award after the Mustek BearPaw slots in at number three, but it's still an impressive model. It may not be speedy, but it's faster than its predecessor – the N650U – and offers an impressive array of specifications for an attractive price. The N670U is also extremely easy to use. The optical resolution of 600x1,200dpi (dots per inch) is combined with a 48bit colour depth. These ratings translate into good results: colour photo scans are detailed and vivid. If you want a simple scanner at a good price that's easy to use, looks good and provides excellent photo scanning, we'd recommend the N670U.

**6** Visioneer OneTouch 5600 USB

The enticing £60 price tag makes the 5600 an attractive deal. The hardware specifications aren't astounding but, as the Top 10 chart reveals, they're no worse than those of most sub-£100 models. The optical scan resolution of 600x1,200dpi (dots per inch) can be stretched to 2,400dpi through



software interpolation. Most other scanners beat this figure, but there's little benefit to be had from going beyond the native 600dpi. The 5600 takes just under 50 seconds to zip through an A4 scan at 300dpi, while a 5x7in photograph is captured in less than half a minute. Scan quality is reasonable, although the Visioneer OneTouch 8100 in eighth position is slightly superior.

7 PrimaScan Colorado 2600U

The PrimaScan 2600U offers an excellent combination of price, ease of use and quality. It may never live up to the quality settings of the more expensive models, but it performs well enough given its hardware specifications. The 42bit colour depth is impressive and the 600x1,200dpi (dots per inch) optical resolution ensures detailed scanned images, although colours can be a little washed out. Another advantage is high-speed scanning – we scanned a colour A4 image at 600dpi in just 58 seconds.

**8** Visioneer OneTouch 8100 USB

The 8100 is targeted at the lower end of the scanner market, but the OneTouch's affordable price tag doesn't stop it providing high-speed scans and good image quality. Ultimately, we felt the 8100 USB didn't exhibit the same all-round value for money as the 5600, but it's still worth serious consideration. The OneTouch 8100 is a smooth performer at lower resolutions, and can comfortably scan an A4 page at 300dpi (dots per inch) in under 40 seconds. However, it struggles with more complex workloads.

**9** Canon CanoScan N650U

You could be forgiven for thinking that the Canon would struggle on hardware specifications, but its optical resolution of 600x1,200dpi (dots per inch) matches that of its rivals. We also found Canon's Lide technology resulted in bright and realistically coloured scans. If the CanoScan has a failing, it's a lack of speed. The N650U is no slouch when it comes to scanning photos, but it takes almost two minutes to scan an A4 page at 300dpi.

**10** Epson Expression 1680

The Expression 1680 matches the impeccable performance levels we've come to expect from Epson, resulting in picture-perfect scans even in tricky areas like shadow reproduction and at high resolutions. Resolution support is first class, with an optical resolution of 1,600x3,200dpi (dots per inch). Speed is unsurpassed, too – try and beat 30 seconds for a 600dpi photograph, or three and a half minutes for the full 1,600x3,200dpi treatment. Overall, though, the Expression's high price keeps it at the bottom of the chart.

