

● INKJET PRINTER

PC PRO
A LIST

Canon Pixma iP3000

PRICE £69 (£81 inc VAT)

DELIVERY £4 (£5 inc VAT)

INTERNET www.canon.co.uk

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com/uk

VERDICT Built-in duplexing, multiple paper sources and CD printing for an unprecedented low price, but print quality is below par.



The design and shape of the Canon allow it to be placed flush against a wall.

Canon has evidently paid a lot of attention to the design of the iP3000. Not only is it good-looking, but it's also cleverly engineered: you can tuck all its trays away and slide it back flush to a wall, with cables coming out of the side of the unit rather than pointing backwards.

Extending the sheet-feed paper support scuppers this, but the iP3000 has a trick up its sleeve. Below the printer sits a second paper tray. Its inclusion means you can keep the sheetfeed support closed, double your paper capacity to 300 sheets in total, or keep different types of media in each paper source. You can switch between the two sources using the driver or, as is set by default, the toggle button on the printer itself. This ability to flick easily between paper sources is a blessing for users who may want to keep both headed paper and envelopes to hand, or plain paper and photo paper.

This is an unusually high-end feature in a printer at this price, and there's something even better: built-in duplexing. All you have to do is check a box in the Print window and the iP3000 will obligingly print your document using both sides of the paper; a great financial and ecological saving. The only problem is that double-sided printing significantly adds to the print time. This is due to some astonishing pauses between printing the first side and the paper being retracted for the second side.

Averaging 28 seconds, this hiatus is more irritating than catastrophic for home users, but can seriously dent its usefulness.

Printing on one side at the default quality, our 25-page mixed text and graphics document took five minutes, 43 seconds to complete; a page rate of 4.4ppm. Much of this time was taken up with the printer pausing to let the ink dry, according to the status monitor. Decreasing the ink-drying time increased the page rate to 6.5ppm – much better than our previous favourite, the HP Deskjet 5150 (see *issue 112, p139*). Going down to draft left the output still readable, while increasing the page rate to a 10ppm – satisfactory, if still some way off the 22ppm claimed speed. The print time of one minute, nine seconds for a 6in x 4in photo is good, especially at this price, with an A4 photo emerging after just two-and-a-half minutes.

In terms of quality, text is certainly dense and black, although we noticed an occasional ink spread on standard office paper. Since it's a standard four-colour (CMYK) ink system, photos also lack the smoothness that printers with more cartridges can achieve – albeit for significantly more cash. The small, 2-picoulitre droplet size helps to maintain quality, although photos still demonstrate noticeable graininess. But colour reproduction is generally excellent, and aside from an occasional tendency towards banding, few will be disappointed.

All in all, this is an incredibly versatile

printer for the money. A port on the front panel will accept PictBridge- and Bubble Jet Direct-compatible cameras, and a tray is included for printing onto compatible CDs. There's also a good software bundle, including PhotoRecord for building photo albums, as well as some improvements to Canon's already excellent printer driver interface. Given the iP3000's fine design and impressive feature list, we have no hesitation in placing it onto the A List.

CHRISTOPHER PHIN

PC PRO RATINGS

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES & DESIGN	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★

SPECIFICATIONS 4,800 x 1,200dpi four-colour A4 inkjet; 150-sheet input tray, 150-sheet cassette; CD media holder; USB 1.1 interface; drivers for Windows 98 onwards.

RUNNING COSTS Mono cartridge (330 pages), £11; each colour cartridge (460 pages), £9. Overall cost per A4 page: mono, 3.4p; colour, 5.7p.