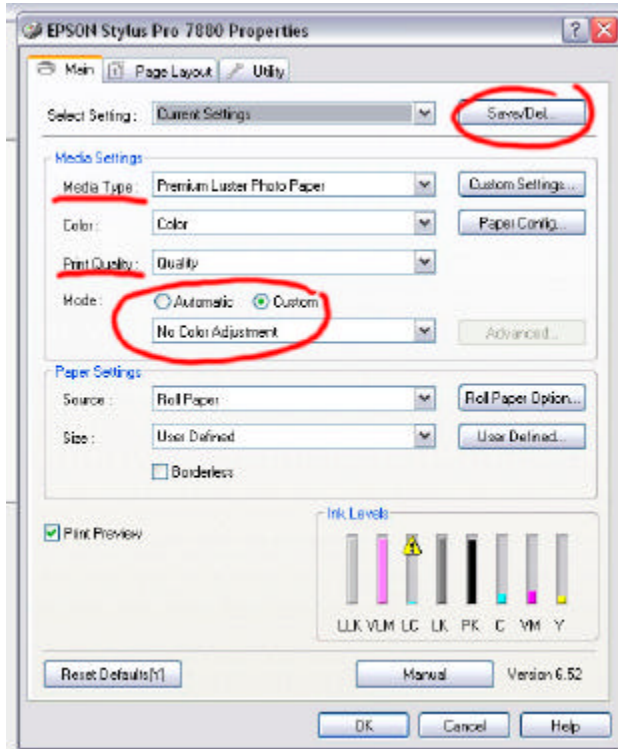


Digital Printing Insights #1: “What media and quality settings do I choose?”

© 2009 Michael E. Gordon



A custom profile client writes:
“I have an Epson 2400 and I’m having trouble figuring out the proper paper & quality options to use. It was much easier in earlier models/software, but now the paper choices and quality are confusing – especially if I am not using Epson paper. In the Print dialog there are 4 different matte papers and 3 different quality (dpi, I assume). I plan to be using Calumet’s Brilliant Matte. Does it matter which Media Type I choose? As far as the profile goes, does the quality or dpi I print the targets with make a difference? I will also be using Epson’s Watercolor RW paper, but again the question about the dpi. Or should I just choose the best or highest dpi available?”

You’ll need to check with Calumet to find out what media type they specify for their paper. The media type does matter, because this selection determines the overall ink density (how much ink gets laid down on the paper). ICC Profiles can only map COLOR from one device to another; it is the media selection that defines other characteristics such as ink density. The wrong paper selection may result in reduced dynamic range and/or weak/muddy prints, or may cause too much ink to be laid down. If Calumet does not specify a particular media type for their paper, it will be in your best interest to conduct tests with each of the available matte media settings. Pick the media that offers the richest print without bleeding any ink, especially black.

As for quality selection, most who have done this testing (myself included) have determined that the quality increase with BEST (2880 dpi) is not enough to warrant the slower print times and extra ink consumption. My advice is that you also test this for yourself. Take the same image and print it both with PHOTO (1440 dpi) and BEST PHOTO (2880 dpi), and examine the prints with and without a loupe. You will not likely see any gain by the naked eye, and possibly only minor gain under a loupe. If you find otherwise and determine BEST PHOTO to be better for your prints, then by all means!



Regardless of what settings you choose, be sure to save them as a uniquely named media setting for future use! Whatever settings you use to print the targets are also the same settings you will need to use when making prints with my custom profiles.”

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for future Printing Insights, I would love to hear them! Thanks for reading.

Michael E. Gordon is an award-winning fine art landscape photographer and respected digital print maker. Michael leads photographic workshops and tours and provides printing services and custom printer/paper profiles for photographers. He lives in Southern California with his wife Shauna and their menagerie of rescued animals.