

## A3 COLOUR LED PRINTER OKI C8800N



**Price** £1745.67 (£1487 ex VAT)

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[www.askoki.co.uk](http://www.askoki.co.uk)

**Pros** Compact and nippy A3 colour LED printer + good colour + reasonable running costs

**Cons** Default halftone screening is a little grainy

### When we agreed to look at OKI's new

A3 colour laser printer, the OKI C8800n, we thought we'd be dealing with a desk-busting monster. In fact, for an A3 colour laser, it is impressively compact. It isn't as small as an A4 printer, but we're inclined to accept OKI's claim that it is 'the world's most compact A3 business printer'. It uses the same product design as its A4 models; the top is hinged at the back and lifts up to reveal a neat array of toner and imaging units. The printer engine uses a single-pass colour imaging process, a faster and mechanically simpler approach than the old four-pass method. Also like OKI's other printers, this is actually an LED rather than a true laser printer. The difference doesn't actually matter to the end user, although it helps simplify the innards a little bit, which could in theory improve general long-term reliability.

Setting up the OKI C8800n was simple. A basic installer provided the Mac with the necessary printer descriptions, and the Printer Setup Utility was able to complete the process immediately. Thanks to the open-top design of the printer, the toner cartridge installation was equally simple. Each unit slots down and locks into place in a few seconds; this isn't a device that will require special instructions on hand when someone needs to swap toner cartridges.

Switching between paper sizes was also about as simple as it can get. Changing the displayed stock size on the front of the tray using a basic mechanical dial told the printer what paper size it had to work with. As long as the correct format was selected in the printing application's Page Setup dialog it all worked perfectly.

The printing speed was quite fast, even with hefty (100MB+) images and complex layouts. The printer's standard 256MB of installed Ram helps here, although this can be boosted up to 768MB if necessary. At A4 it is rated at 26 pages per minute for colour and 32 pages for mono output, and for A3 OKI claims 15 pages per minute for colour and 17 for mono. Of course, this is based on pure print engine speed without any page-by-page processing involved,



▲ The OKI C8800n is a reliable and uncomplicated printer.

but we found that it did actually come fairly close to these speeds in our real-world tests.

In terms of quality, as a business colour laser printer it is certainly more than adequate. This is exactly how OKI has marketed this printer, and it would serve very well in general office environments. As a graphics-oriented printer producing output for designers, this is still a reasonable choice, but the standard, unadjusted halftone dot screen is just a little more visible than some would care for. Okay, in fact the results look not too dissimilar to traditional four colour-process offset litho printing with a halftone of around 110lpi or so. In a sense, this gives a more realistic 'proof' than a printer that creates effectively dot-free tones, and it did an impressive job of reproducing colours, but the output did tend to feel a tad grainy and show a slight patterning in lighter blues. When printing with finer halftones things looked smoother, but, like all printers of this general kind, LED or laser, it tended to lose detail in the highlights.

There's a regular non-printing margin of approximately 5mm all around the page and it doesn't support oversized SRA3 stock, so if you need to print A4 spreads with bleed and crop marks you'll need a different printer. It can print on custom page lengths up to 1200mm using the multipurpose input tray, but the width is still 297mm; standard A3 width.

The maximum monthly duty cycle is 75,000 pages, which is an impressively large amount. The printer's specifications sheet does add that

the average duty cycle is 1,500 to 5000 pages a month, which is somewhat more conservative but still probably quite enough for most users. When you're not printing it goes into a power-saving idle mode that was impressively quiet and consumes less than 17 watts. Of course, like other large laser (or LED) printers, when operating it uses a fair amount of power; 200 watts average when on regular standby and running from over 500 watts to a peak of around 1kW when in use. This isn't unusual for this technology and this size of printer, but it is something to be aware of as you consider ways of conserving energy.

Customising the OKI C8800n's settings is done through the standard LCD panel on the front of the device. Although every manufacturer has its own approach to menu organisation, we didn't find it hard to use.

In short, we found that the OKI C8800n was a reliable and uncomplicated A3 colour LED printer that is well suited to fairly demanding business use and even some design environments. When used with finer halftone screens than its defaults and with good-quality stock it can be fairly impressive. It isn't necessarily something we'd recommend without reservation, but we did find it to be a nice printer to have around. And yes, while it isn't exactly light (at 40kg you really should get help moving into place), it is one of the most compact A3 business printers – LED or laser – that we've seen.

**Keith Martin**