Review Plustek OpticFilm 7600i: Affordable Slide Scanner

The market for high-resolution slide scanners for 35mm film has become thinner. The Nikon Coolscan 5000 ED as the former reference device is just barely available in remaining stocks. This niche is now advanced by Plustek's OpticFilm 7600i.

By Mike Schelhorn (02.11.2010)

The scanner offers a sampling rate of 7200 dpi, which is well above the sampling rates that better flatbed scanners like the Epson Perfection V700 can provide. According to the manufacturer, the 48 bit scanner features a dynamic range of 3.5 D. Included into delivery are a slide holder for four framed slides and a second holder for 35mm filmstrips with up to six images. The film holder's handling is just satisfactory in total, but especially the filmstrip holder could be improved. The OpticFilm 7600i features no auto-feed of the film holders, you have to move the holder by hand for every single original. This requires some sensitivity for the locking position, or otherwise the originals are cut in the prescan window.

Using SilverFast Ai Studio for Plustek's 35mm film slide scanner OpticFilm 7600i is half the battle. Especially the Multi-Exposure functionality improves the scan results significantly.

We use scanning software SilverFast Ai Studio 6.6, which is included as well as an IT8 target for scanner profiling, for testing the device. There is also an even lower priced version available that includes SilverFast SE Plus, which features a more limited range of functionality, e.g. no profiling. Our first action is to profile the scanner using the target. SilverFast has a profiling assistant for this task that works perfectly and almost automatically - the generated ICC profile gets activated right away.

The normal scan time is fast: A final scan of a 35mm film positive 400 percent increased is done in just about 20 seconds - as fast as a preview scan. At 3600 dpi, the OpticFilm 7600i requires quick 47 seconds, and it is busy for 175 seconds at full resolution of 7200 dpi. If you want to use the dust and scratch removal called iSRD, that performs a second scan with infrared light, a scan at 3600 dpi takes about 149 seconds and more than ten minutes at full resolution. Plustek has improved the hardware-based dust and scratch compared to the predecessor 7500i - but it should be further optimized, for it does not do the job completely.

For the most of our test originals we activate SilverFast's Multi-Exposure function in addition to iSRD. Multi-Exposure performs two scans of the same original with different exposure times, which are then combined to a single scan. We observe a visibly better differentiation of the image depths. In normal scan mode, the OpticFilm 7600i achives a just satisfactory image depth differentiation. Scan times are further extended, when iSRD and Multi-Exposure are combined: A 3600 dpi scans takes about 3 minutes and 45 seconds. The scanner is busy for 13 minutes and 20 seconds at full resolution. where a part of the scan time depends on the computer performance (test computer is an iMac Intel Core 2 Duo with 2.16 GHz and 2 GB RAM). Unlike other scanners, the Plustek scanner does not need much longer for negatives compared with positives. The optical resolution of the Plustek scanner is also a plus: 7200 dpi is the sampling rate of the OpticFilm 7600i, wherefrom it generates a detail differentiation of at least slightly above 3000 dpi, which is beyond optical resolutions of flatbed scanners with transparency units.

Recommendation
A high throughput is not a strength of the Plustek OpticFilm 7600i and the dust and scratch removal shortcomings of its predecessor are not completely eliminated so far. A clear advantage of this dedicated 35mm film scanner is its optical resolution. The device's dynamic range should be optimized using time-consuming Multi-Exposure that is a function of SilverFast Ai Studio, which is really a very good scanner software. Thus, the OpticFilm 7600i is less suited for the digitization of extensive amounts of slides, nevertheless, you can achieve really appealing results with this scanner and software.

OpticFilm 7600i

Affordable slide scanner with professional scan software

Plustek

Price: € 365 (incl. SilverFast Ai Studio), € 275 (incl. SilverFast SE Plus)

Overall Result: 2,1 good   (1 very good - 6 very poor)

Performance (40%) 1,8

Equipment (30%) 2,5

Handling (20%) 2,3

Ergonomics (10%) 1,4

Pros: Good scan quality for its price range, good optical resolution, very good scanning software

Cons: No auto-feeder for slide holder / no batch scanning, dust and scratch removal not perfect, longer scan times necessary for good quality

Alternative: Reflecta ProScan 7200

From Mac OS X 10.3.9, USB 2.0; Power Consumption: Operational 5,7 W, Standby 1,7 W, Off 0 W

www.plustek.com

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