

APP

Output

## LaserSoft Imaging PrinTao 8

**Mac** IF YOU SPEND a lot of time printing photos, either in their final form or as proofs, you may well wish for software to help arrange and position images, reduce waste and get the most from your printer. LaserSoft PrinTao 8 is designed to do just that, and to handle all the setup options from one self-contained app.

The first step into PrinTao 8 is the Start-Pilot. It asks you to select a printer to work with – only Epson models are catered for so far – and the type of paper you'll be using: varieties from Canson, Epson, Hahnemühle, Ilford and Tecco are supported, and PrinTao's large database is continually updated online by the Media Manager feature. You also set print quality, paper source (cut sheet or roll) and paper size.

Then the main working screen opens. This is divided into four main sections, with venetian blind menu panels down the left and right, an icon bar across the top and the main preview panel in the middle.

The left-hand panel, known as the Mediathek (LaserSoft shares MacUser's fondness for German words ending in 'k'), offers a quick way to the folders you normally house your photos in. Their icons can be dragged and dropped here to build up a customised folder list. Below this is a scrolling thumbnail list from the current folder, and at the bottom is the metadata for the currently selected photo.

To build up a sheet for printing, you first select a template from the list in the right-hand panel. These include Pack Templates offering different sizes of image on the same sheet, as well as more conventional sheets with four, eight and more same-size images. The other sub-panels offer image overviews and a reminder of print settings.

There are also templates designed to give 'best cut' and 'best fit', fitting images of different sizes on the sheet to give either the fewest guillotine cuts or the best cover-

**Templates include 'best cut' and 'best fit'. Colour codes show if resolution is too low or too high**



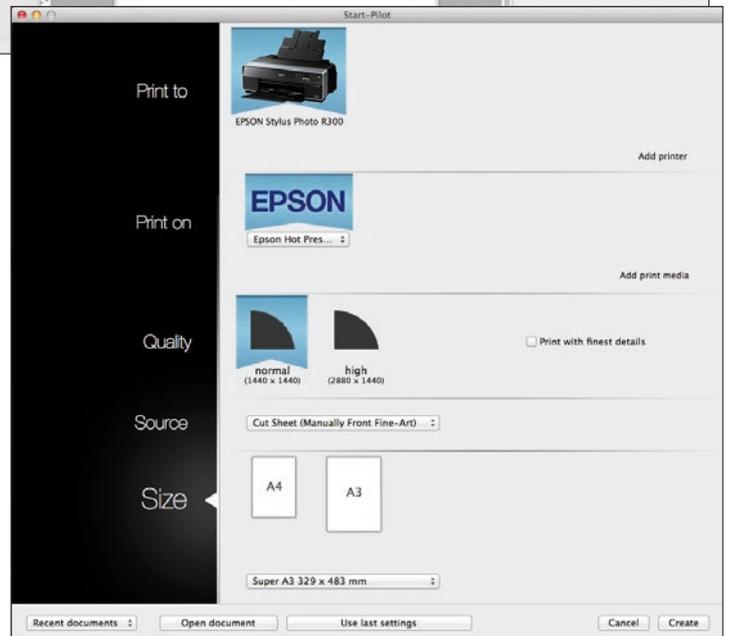
**What you see...**  
The neatly designed user interface makes print layout very straightforward



**Professional image printing software**  
LaserSoft Imaging

**+** Very convenient templates • Best Fit and Best Cut • Free-form alignment aids

**-** Starts at a low price, but could get expensive for multiple formats



age of the paper. If you decide to use free templates, PrinTao 8 provides guidelines so you can align images along the edges or centres. Once you've dragged images into position on the placeholders in a template – they're automatically rotated for portrait or landscape – you can add filenames and dates, which appear as strips down their edges. You can also check their resolution, with clear three-colour 'thermometer strips' that give an at-a-glance indication of whether the resolution is too high for the output size (yellow), in the right band (green) or too low (red), so you should have no trouble avoiding sampling artefacts.

The output we saw on Epson Hot Press Bright fine-art paper was very good. Printing four 7 x 5-inch images on A3+ on an Epson Stylus Photo R3000 gave surprisingly vivid reproduction where needed, while still han-

dling pastel shades smoothly and naturally. There are separate editions of the program for printers of different carriage widths. A3 or A3+ printers, like the Epson R3000, require the £82 Home Studio Edition, while 17in, 24in and 44in editions cost increasingly more, up to 64in at £579 (there's no page length limit). That makes sense, but if you use two machines of different widths, you'll need to buy two apps. You can install the software for printers with the same carriage width on any number of Macs, though only running one instance at a time.

LaserSoft's PrinTao 8 is a great utility for putting together printed sheets and getting the very best from your printer. The provision of a high-quality ICC engine and close ties to the printers it supports pays off in the results.

SIMON WILLIAMS

£82 inc VAT (sold at €99) for Home Studio version; other versions rising to £578 (€699) © printao8.com/store  
 Ⓜ OS X 10.7 or later • Supported printer (currently Epson only)

