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## Microtek ScanMaker 6800

by George Schaub

### A Flat-Bed Scanner With Digital Ice



We've been reporting on Digital ICE from Applied Science Fiction over the years, the software/hardware solution that cleans up damaged and marred scans from slides and negatives scanned in certain dedicated film scanners. In a nutshell, Digital ICE segregates and places in a separate channel the offending dust, scratches (non-emulsion side), and fingerprints from image information and then dumps the junk channel and delivers a much cleaner scan. This technology has helped many folks eliminate long clone and retouch times from their image post-processing and has been accepted as a standard in a number of film scanners to date. While we applauded Applied Science Fiction's efforts and the resultant timesavings, we always longed for this feature to be available in a flat-bed scanner as well. While there's enough film stored poorly to keep Digital ICE busy with film

scanning for years to come, many of the images that show the greatest damage are in print form, particularly those in the family and historical archives.

Now, with the new Microtek 6800 flat-bed scanner, we've gotten our wish. The claim for the 6800 is that it will help you accomplish "one-step" photo restoration and that it will remove surface defects that include dust, lint, scratches, cracks, wrinkles, creases, and minor tears. That might cover the gamut of things that can go wrong with a print, but there's also things it won't correct, like stains, mold, glue, and discoloration. For the last in the list you might want to use Applied Science Fiction's Digital ROC and SHO, but they are not included in this package (although trial versions are included). They can be bought as fully functional plug-ins separately.



#### Multifunction Scanner

Before we get into the nitty-gritty tests, a few words about the 6800 itself. The scanner

*This handcolored photo (A) was breaking up and in need of some quick first aid. The scan using Digital ICE did a remarkable job on the tears, although we didn't expect it to handle the large chunk from the top of the picture (B). Final retouch using the Clone tool in Photoshop made this a five-minute retouch job rather than one that might take an hour or more (C).*

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*This 1943 photo was very faded and cracked (A). When scanned the image was given more contrast using the Curves control and Digital ICE took care of the major break in the print surface (B). We did notice a slight amount of "smearing" where the software/hardware solution did its thing (C), but this was easily corrected and certainly was a better way to handle the image than if we worked without Digital ICE's aid.*

even though the Standard Control Panel can get you through basic scan work. It's in Advanced where you find the enabler for Digital ICE. The Advanced Control Panel lets you set white and black points, set tone curves, set up fixed scan sizes and percentages, and work with Color Correction, etc. You can also work with a very helpful Information Window to do things such as work with Color Meter options, sampling areas for critical control.

### To The Test

We chose two images to work with, although the scanner encourages you to want to work on many in your picture files. The first was a black and white snapshot made in 1943 with a crack right down the middle. The image was quite faded and dark, something we fixed easily enough using the Curves control. We scanned it with Digital ICE enabled and it cleared up a good deal of the crack and made final retouch a considerably quicker matter. We did notice some slight smearing where Digital ICE made the corrections, but these were much easier to fix than having to clone and match areas manually.

We also worked with an even older handcolored print that had some major tears and a chunk torn out of the top. The Digital ICE function didn't repair the hole (and we didn't expect it would) but it made short work of the other damage.

In short, having Digital ICE and a scanner with such excellent software controls can make restoration and repair a much easier and quicker task. True, Digital ICE does add considerably more time to the scan itself (five or six times as much, depending on file size, resolution, etc.) but if you're the one handling the family albums, the photo person at a historical society, or even the person who is working at a studio or lab that offers restoration and copy services, this scanner package does the trick.

For more information about the ScanMaker 6800, visit Microtek's web site at [www.microtekusa.com](http://www.microtekusa.com).

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is unremarkable with the form and fit common to its type. There are a number of easy scan buttons on the unit that make choosing one of its functions—scan, copy, e-mail, document (OCR), and scan to web—as easy as pushing a button and following the on-screen guides. Optical resolution tops out at 4800x2400dpi, with true 48-bit color bit depth and FireWire and USB 2.0 interface. The largest scanning area for prints and documents is letter size, and there's a 4x5 transparency adapter as well. Bundled software includes Adobe Elements, Digital ICE, Microtek ScanWizard, and Ulead Photo Explorer, among others. You need 128MB RAM for standard scans and 256MB is recommended for using the ICE function. The usual Windows programs will be fine, but those with Mac OS X in Native Mode will have to await a driver for using the Digital ICE feature; OS 9.X and OS X Classic are no problem. The list price is \$399.

Take note that this unit is designed primarily for applying Digital ICE to print work—in fact, if you try to use it for transparencies or negatives, it will not work. This also applies to magazines, books, and newspapers. Microtek advises scanning at about 600dpi when doing photo restoration scans and that you keep your prints as flat as

possible against the bed.

### Scan Times

Scan times do vary with equipment, resolution chosen, and RAM, with more RAM, less resolution, and higher speed always coming out ahead. And the scan times do jump exponentially with Digital ICE enabled. This increase is partly a result of the two-pass procedure used when Digital ICE is on, but, for example, scan times at 600dpi can be as much as 9-10 times longer when using the ICE application. Considering what ICE may save you in retouch time later this might be no big deal, but during a four-minute scan you probably don't want to be doing jumping jacks in the same room. Go out to the kitchen and brew a pot of coffee instead.

### Control Panels

We worked with the 6800 on a number of old family photos. We chose those with the recommended creases and dust and made scans at 300, 600, and 1200dpi with and without Digital ICE enabled. One of the real joys of working with this unit is the supplied ScanWizard 5 software. I strongly suggest that you work with the Advanced Control Panel,

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