



STEVE VS. THE PRINTER

A META ONESHOT



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First just what is a “meta” oneshot? Well it’s a oneshot about another oneshot. In this case the bimonthly oneshot produced by Toni, Hank, Suzanne and myself. Humm..is a regularly scheduled publication done by the same people truly a oneshot? That’s a very interesting question the answer to which I will leave to the discerning reader. In this case I’m talking about “Marching Through Oneshot”, the zine which appears earlier in this mailing. In and of itself the oneshot is nothing out of the ordinary, considering the quality of the talented staff that put it together. Nor is the subject matter all that out of the ordinary for Fans, what is a little abnormal is the way in which it was printed: With great pain and suffering.

You see I used to own an HP printer that could do 11x17 and I used it to do center fold zines. It’s fun being able to put color wherever you want to and the centerfold tabloid format allows a lot of freedom in layout and design. Unfortunately the printer died and I just couldn’t bring myself to buy another one. The problem with 11x17 printers is that they are either very low quality or very high quality. In the first case the output is lousy and in the second they usually cost too much to print on. My favorite 11x17 printer is an Epson and it does a really nice job as long as you’re only printing on one side of the paper. If you try to print on both sides, in high quality photo mode, there’s too much bleed though.

Bleed though is a big problem with photo quality inkjet printers. They all use highly absorbent inks and those inks bleed though non-coated paper. I’ve done a survey of several printers and decided that the Canon actually did the best job of double sided printing. So when I saw a Canon BJC-5100 printer on sale at one of my favorite Internet sites and it’s specs said it could do 11x17, I got real interested. The rest of its tech specs looked pretty good.

Its neatest feature is dual ink cartridge technology that allows for either high speed, 10 ppm, black and white printing using two black cartridges or very nice color photos using a regular color cartridge and a special photo cartridge to give 6 color printing. It can also print on a wide range of paper sizes including tabloid. Sounds pretty good? That’s what I thought so I ordered one.

When it came in we were pretty busy but I took the time to take it out of its box and set it up. I pulled a couple of sample sheets, using letter-sized paper, and the print quality looked pretty good. Since we were busy, I then put it up and forgot about it for a while.

Then it was time to do mailing comments and I thought it would be fun to use the new printer. I had some neat color SF related clip art, robots in this case. I could use so I layed out the zine in tabloid format. Then I went to print a sample copy. It worked but it looked a little strange and took a little longer then expected.

Seems the printer has a few limitations when it’s printing in 11x17 format. First it will only use one print cartridge, the one in holder one, so you can’t print photo quality. Second the print speed drops a little. It took 10 minutes to print the front of the oneshot and 11 minutes to print the backside. Third ink consumption is rather poor. I ran through one complete black ink tank and most of a second one printing the oneshot. This makes the 5100 pretty expensive to print on. Finally there is no paper feeder for 11x17 paper. You have to hand feed each sheet one at a time!



Normally I would have returned the printer but I had set on it long enough for the 'satisfaction guaranteed' clause to expire. So I'm stuck with it. But wait there's more. Now lets talk about actually using the printer.

Average print speed, including paper-loading time, is about 5 11x17 pages an hour. That doesn't include the time needed to clean the print heads, which has to be done about every 10 pages if you don't want a lot of banding. Then there's the way the printer miss feeds the paper every few sheets resulting in margins that vary by a quarter inch or more. Of course the pages with odd margins are not nearly as bad as when the printer fails to feed the paper but goes right on printing the page.

I should point out that none of these problems show up when you print normal letter size sheets. Then it's a pretty well behaved printer with very decent output quality. Unfortunately I wasn't printing on letter-sized paper.

It took an average of 23 minutes a copy to print the oneshot. That's right at 10 hours of sitting here watching, and much worse listening to, the printer just to print a 4-page zine. Are you going to see more like it in SFPA? Now that's a silly question!!!!

The only reason this one made it into the mailing is that I'm really stubborn and once I start a project I very seldom give up on it. I'm looking forward to next mailings oneshot session but I have no plans to print it on the Canon!

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Are you planning on going to DSC this year? We will be there and I'm looking forward to seeing other SFPA members. I have heard several people asking for data on the con so here it is:

Hotel – The Radisson Hotel, 808 20th St South, Birmingham, AL 35205 (205) 933-9000 rate is \$81 plus the usual taxes.

Membership is \$30 at the door.

Contact for the convention is: DSC 39/Tenacity 1, 279 Cheshire Rd, Harpersville, AL 35078
Paulette.baker@mindspring.com

