



Oki C3100

PRICE £299 (£351 inc VAT)

VERDICT Fast and cheap to buy, the Oki is ideal for those who don't want to spend much, can do without network capabilities and won't be printing many pages per month.

Oki's C3100 is the cheapest printer in this month's Labs, but you wouldn't guess that from its performance. £299 for a single-pass colour printer is a fantastic deal, and while it lacks optional networking, a duplex unit and remote management software, it's good value if you don't require those functions.

The C3100 employs LEDs to write to its four image drums, a much cheaper technology than laser – there are fewer moving parts. LED printers have been criticised for being lower-quality than lasers, but our results show that nothing was so bad that you'd be put off buying the Oki for everyday use.

Our Excel spreadsheet, the best indicator of business graphics quality, was more than acceptable. There was some noticeable grain on grey areas, but yellow shading and text quality was fine. But, if you want to print lots of images, the C3100 isn't the best. Its composite greyscale images were poor, while colours in the photo montage weren't accurate enough. Of course, this makes it okay for internal documents and business documents that don't require colour accuracy.

Speed is the main bonus at this price though. The Oki averaged 20.1ppm in the mono 50-page test and about 12ppm for the Excel, Word DTP and colour letter tests. Considering that most other printers were slower in the Excel test, had more memory and were more expensive than the C3100, it adds yet another reason to why it wins the Best Value award. If you mainly print short documents, the first page will appear in 26 seconds whether mono or colour. This is slightly below average on test, but nothing major to worry about.



Running costs were mixed. Mono prints cost 1.5p per page, while colour pages were higher than average at 8.8p. Essentially, though, if printing levels aren't too high, the £299 price means you'll end up spending less than if you bought the Labs-winning Kyocera.

The high colour price is partly due to the fact that there are four drums, meaning you need an entirely new set (at a total cost of £262) every 14,000 pages. Fortunately, Oki includes full toner cartridges with the C3100, so you'll be able to print at least 3,000 pages straight out of the box.

Overall, if you're certain you'll be printing less than 500 pages per month, whether they be in mono or colour, the Oki is an excellent choice.

PC PRO RATINGS	
QUALITY	★★★★★
SPEED	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
RUNNING COSTS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★