

THE COMPUTER CORNER

No. 313: A Good HP Printer Value?

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Here is a value that may well be of interest to you. At Amazon.com, I spotted a Hewlett-Packard Printer for \$42.19. Now, just about anything under \$100 is a really good price for an HP wireless/USB/color/inkjet printer that prints and scans and claims easy setup and other virtues. From the outset I did not believe the easy setup claim. Why? Because I feel that while HP makes about the best printer hardware in the world, it also makes just about the worst software in the world, so the setup programs just cannot be that good. But the rest of the purported virtues were really attractive, especially so since my only current scanner/printer is beginning to make weird noises. So I decided to order one.

As I expected, the setup procedures were somewhat of a pain. But having become familiar with the relatively poor logic of HP software, I muddled through the installation without too many scars, and eventually got it installed and working properly. Thereafter, printing worked without a hitch and the quality of the output was excellent. Even scanning seemed perfect on its full-sized flatbed scan surface and produced good quality scan files that printed nicely. So, what was HP's goal with these really inexpensive printers?

It turns out that HP is trying to be quite competitive by providing low priced printers that will work only with HP cartridges, either new HP or remanufactured HP, for the life of the printer. That way, you are locked in to their ink renewals. Well, that really did not seem so bad if the prices were OK. It came, and seems to work perfectly, with good clean printing and simple, accurate scanning, as mentioned previously. On the other hand, you are required to setup the printer through an HP account, which you must create if you do not have one already. Nevertheless, even with slightly more expensive HP cartridges, costs seem reasonable and in line with most other brand offerings. And, their offer of 3 months free instant ink seems true. They have already sent me two new cartridges – tri-color and black – to be installed when the machine reports the old ones are really empty.

The pricing has been bouncing around. At first, there was a \$10 increase since I purchase my model (HP 2734e). Then, the current offering (Deskjet 2755e, \$54.00 at Amazon) bounced to only \$5.00 more than my original purchase, although it seems to have the same specifications and virtues as my earlier purchase. So look carefully at the Amazon price if you are buying there. Three months of instant ink are included with the purchase, and other virtues and limitations should be carefully scanned by you in the offering. Nevertheless, it all looks pretty good at this point, and it is my belief that

you can't go too far wrong with this purchase. Well under \$100 for a color printer, scanner, wireless or USB, and so on does not seem like a bad deal at all, especially if this machine lasts as long as most HP printers have in past years. Happy Computing!