



First Look at Colortrac Gx+ 56 Series of Wide-Format Scanners

Three years after Colortrac's previous 54" scanner model was discontinued in 2006, Colortrac finally revealed its sixth generation 56" CCD-based, wide-format scanner series in March 2009. With six different 56" models, Colortrac again makes a bold statement and shows that the company is a serious player in the extra-wide segment. The new Gx+ 56 scanners target the specialist reprographics, copy shop, graphic arts, GIS, and, of course, the AEC/CAD markets. The series also addresses needs of the aeronautical and automobile segments, which scan oversized documents. The market for 50"+ scanners is relatively small and represents 5%-8% of the total wide-format scanner market.



The Colortrac Gx+ 56 scanner is the widest amongst the "big 3" scanner manufactures.

The scanners are available in six different models — three Gx+ 56 and three Gx+ T56 models. All of the models are identical in specifications and performance;



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however the three T56 models can scan thick originals up to 0.8" while the three other models are limited to a 0.08" thickness. What is new is that Colortrac made the scanner 2" wider than the industry standard of 54" and also added white LED instead of the traditional fluorescent lamp used in Colortrac's other CCD-based scanners. Finally this series is the first to reach a true optical resolution of 600 dpi for the extra-wide scanner segment over 50".

Features – Models	Gx+ 56m Gx+ T56m	Gx+ 56c Gx+ T56c	Gx+ 56e Gx+ T56e
Scan Width	56"	56"	56"
Monochrome Speed @200dpi	9 ips	9 ips	9 ips
Color Speed @200dpi	N.A.	1.5 ips	3 ips
Optical Resolution	600 dpi	600 dpi	600 dpi
Scanning Technology	CCD	CCD	CCD
Max Media Thickness	0.08"/0.8"(T)	0.08"/0.8"(T)	0.08"/0.8"(T)
Field Upgradable	Yes to -c & -e	Yes to -e	No
Price*	\$18,950/20,450	\$20,950/22,450	\$22,450/23,950

*Price does not include optional stand (\$520) and optional ScanWorks scanning software (\$580).

Features and Technology

The new 56+ series breaks with the company's traditional use of a fluorescent lamp, instead using a bright white LED light as the illumination source. LED has a much longer lifetime and can typically work for 50,000 operational hours, compared to approximately 4,000 hours for a fluorescent lamp. This means less maintenance cost over the useful lifespan of a scanner. Another benefit in these environmentally friendly times is that LED lights use considerably less energy, and the Colortrac 56+ scanner is Energy Star certified, using less than 5W in standby mode and approximately 40W in normal operations.

Like its other models, the Colortrac Gx+ 56 series comes standard both a USB 2.0 interface and a 1 Gigabit Ethernet connection that allows for maximum flexibility in the deployment of the scanner. The 1 Gigabit Ethernet is faster than the USB 2.0 interface and will be beneficial for scanning color documents at the maximum width of 56" because of the vast amount of color data that needs to be transmitted to the computer.

The Gx+ 56 scanner series still uses face down scanning (where the document is fed into the scanner with the information on the bottom side). There is no quality difference when scanning face down or face up. The document still exits at the rear of the scanner.

Internally Colortrac uses 48-bit color capture and can deliver the best 24-bit color in either raw RGB or sRGB. To scan a 56" wide document, Colortrac uses eight



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CCD cameras across the scan width in a rigid monocoque camera chassis to minimize distortions and misalignment due to temperature variations and torsion.

The new Gx+ 56 is rated at 9 ips monochrome scanning speed and between 0-3 ips in color, depending on the scanner model, with an optical resolution of 600 dpi and a maximum interpolated resolution of 9,600 dpi — more than enough for any customer needs. The scanner comes in three different models that can be field upgraded.

Available Models

The entry model is the Gx+ 56m — a monochrome scanner for only \$18,950, which includes a 3-month, on-site warranty. The on-site warranty can be expanded for an additional annual fee. The Gx+ 56c is a color entry-level scanner priced at \$20,950, and finally the Gx+ 56e is \$23,950. The equivalent T models are capable of scanning thick media and cost an additional \$1,500 on top of the base price for these models.

The Gx+ 56 series is considerably faster for monochrome scanning than Colortrac's previous top model, the Gx 42 42" scanner. While 9"/sec is not the fastest time in the market, it is still more than adequate for the vast majority of customers. The difference between the m, c, and e models is no color scanning capability (m model), fast color scanning at 1.5"/sec (c model), and faster color scanning at 3"/sec (e model). The Gx+ 56 scanners come standard with the SmartLF scanning software for easy scan-to-file and scan-to-print operations. The SmartLF software is entry-level software, and more professional users will most likely add Colortrac ScanWorks software with added features and more control over the scanning process.

The Gx+ 56 series has an optional scanner stand for an additional \$520 and the optional professional scanning software, ScanWorks, for additional \$580.

Market Position

Colortrac now offers a full product line again with 25" to 56" wide scanners. The company follows the same strategy of offering six different models per scan width in the Gx+ 56 series. Three of the models can scan thick media, and the other three can scan thin media for \$1,500 less. Not all customers need thick media capability, and it is wise for Colortrac to give the customer a choice.

As has been a hallmark for Colortrac, the company is aggressively pricing the new scanners. The 56" wide series is priced \$5,500 to \$6,000 below a comparable competitor, and if a customer opts to go with a thin media scanner instead of the thick, the price gap widens an additional \$1,500.



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By offering six different 56" wide scanner models, Colortrac offers more choices than its competitors as well as the flexibility of an easy upgrade path between the different models. Furthermore Colortrac also leads in highest optical resolution, widest scanner capability, and a fast 1 Gigabit Ethernet connection among the class of 50"+ wide scanners.

Stanley Adams Group Recommendations

Colortrac set a new standard to lower the price level of 50"+ scanners, which has long been regarded as an overpriced segment. We certainly also welcome more competition in the 50"+ segment, and Colortrac Gx+ 56 models will clearly rock the boat. The new price level standard clearly benefits the buyers, giving them more value for their money.

The differences in a scanning width of 56" versus the industry standard of 54" and a 600 dpi optical resolution versus competitors' approximately 500 dpi are not significant for the majority of customers, since scanning needs are usually satisfied with a scanning resolution at or below 500 dpi. However the Colortrac Gx+ 56 series should have an extra edge in a very competitive market given the environmental benefits, low power consumption, 1 Gigabit Ethernet connection, and the use of a long-lasting LED illumination source.



The Stand is optional and the scanner fit easily onto a table.

Pro	Con
Least expensive 50"+ scanner available today	New scanner usually requires a ½ year to iron out all bugs.
Both Thick & Thin media scanning models	
New LED light source with 50,000+ operational hours and no warm-up time	
Energy Star compliant	
Gigabit interface	

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About the Author

Henrik Vestermark is an independent consultant and professional who has worked in the wide-format scanner and printer industry since 1988. His expertise includes all aspects of the wide-format digital capture market, and particularly focuses on the wide-format scanner industry.