

Wacom One pen display review: is Wacom's own 'cheap Cintiq' any good for artists and designers?

After last year's Wacom Cintiq, the famous tablet manufacturer has had another go at an even-more-budget offering. The Wacom One is smaller, uncomplicated and – perhaps more importantly – the cheapest display tablet the brand has introduced to date at £360/US\$400/€400.

With a 13" screen – as big as my own Cintiq Pro 13, which cost a lot more a few years ago – I was curious to see how it would measure up.

The packaging is sleek, and despite the lower price point, it's clear that Wacom strives to make it feel like a quality purchase. All the components are neatly organised, and with clear instructions and diagrams printed on the actual box, everything feels user friendly from the moment you start unboxing. Setup was easy – all I had to do was plug everything in and download the driver.

The Wacom One doesn't offer much in the realm of extra features but it does offer one I didn't get to try – it allows you to connect to certain Android devices via a 3rd party cable, which you may then presumably use with a drawing app (you'll still need to be able to connect the tablet to a power socket). This is restricted to only a few recent models (Samsung Galaxy/OneNote, and Huawei P/Mate), but it does sound impressive in the right situation.

The essentials are all there, though. The iconic cloth tag is present, which you can use to secure your pen in, and the built-in flip-out legs offer a second position to draw in at a 19-degree inclination.

Replacement nibs for the pen are included in a discreet compartment under the right leg (*below*), and the port for the single connector is at the top edge of the screen, safe from accidental bumps by wandering hands. Solid, simple design – but how does it fare once it's turned on?

Wacom One drawing experience

All in all, drawing on the Wacom One felt fairly comfortable and straightforward. I didn't need to calibrate the pen stylus (a good sign), and it was easy to dive right in. For this review, I used both Photoshop and in Clip Studio Paint, which performed similarly.

The stylus is uncomplicated, requires no battery and felt fairly comfortable. Its only button (by default set to Right Click, but customisable) is a step down from the usual two buttons offered, but not a problem for me. I couldn't, however, get around the decision to not include an Eraser tip – it's become a key part of my workflow and it felt very

strange to use a Wacom without that feature. This may not be something that some users would take umbrage at, but oddly enough it may have been the feature I missed the most. (Yes, I did try the Pro Pen from my own Cintiq, and no, it's unfortunately not compatible).

The screen felt like the right balance between clear durable surface and smooth drawing texture, and as the nib skated across the screen it offered no noticeable parallax or lag. However, while the pen pressure levels felt competent enough, there was a subtle but noticeable consideration regarding the line variation. The Wacom One offers 4,096 pen pressure levels (half the 8,192 levels that higher-end models usually boast), and while this might mean little to some users, it was certainly something that jumped out at me. Not an actual issue, but something to take note, specially as I tried doing some quick sketching with fast hand movements.

How good is the Wacom One's screen?

The colours on the screen are vivid but, as expected, a little tricky to adjust with a computer monitor. The colour range is serviceable, but noticeably less accurate than that of a higher-end tablet – the Wacom One can output about 72% of the Adobe RGB colour space, compared to the Cintiq Pro and MobileStudio Pro outputting upwards of 83%. It's important to keep this in mind if you produce colour-rich work – I've grown accustomed to having a second window on my computer monitor to check my colours as I work, which seems like an essential habit with this model.

Overall, preferences and extra features aside, the drawing experience felt pleasant and precise – with one exception. I did find that, while doing repeated quick movements, a stroke line would occasionally not happen, resulting in a dot appearing instead where the nib had first touched the screen. This wasn't a huge problem (it only happened a handful of time in a solid hour of drawing), and one could easily think

whether it might be an issue with my machine. But having tried a few different tablets on my 2-year-old iMac, this is the first time I've seen this specific issue – so I wonder whether there's some tinkering to be done with the driver.

Verdict

One thing is obvious: Wacom One sticks to the very essentials. The design choices are solid and very smart, and certainly provide enough for anyone purely looking for a quality drawing experience. However, a closer examination will reveal the ways in which this device gets its lower price tags – reduced colour range and pen pressure levels being the main factors. I certainly also missed a few features which, while ultimately

optional, really contribute to the comfort and quality of life of anyone who hopes to use it daily as a work tool.

All in all, at less than 400 Pounds, Dollars or Euros, this finally feels like a truly low cost offering from Wacom. Art students have lot to be excited about here, as well as casual users and enthusiasts – the quality is there and this is likely to prove a worthy tool. As for professionals, they might want to weigh their options – perhaps the features offered here are enough for some (at a very good price), but if they're anything like me they may find themselves yearning for a quick undo shortcut or that precious, valuable eraser.

And if it's not for you, see our guides to the Best Wacom tablet and Best Cintiq alternatives.

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