As most of you know I have been using Memories Digital Photo Lab for the past several years. I assisted them with their calibration tasks and in the process was able to fine tune my color workflow to theirs with the bottom line being my being able to take them files and getting back prints that looked very much just like my monitor. And as those of you who do your own printing or send them out, getting prints to match your monitor is the real goal. Unfortunately, they decided to pack up and close. Bummer.

All of you know I don't like using on-line print services for a variety of reasons. I really like taking my print work to a lab where I can get to know the people actually doing the printing.

I won't bother you with all the details of which labs I sent test prints to and what results I got back. My point here is that at least for now, I have found a lab that I am currently using that is producing very good work and the prints match my monitor very nicely.

I am currently using Sam's Club at Walker Springs Rd. My friend Dee Pinckard has been using them for some time and has been bugging me to give them a try. I know some of you may laugh, but results are results. I took several test prints to them, not the black and white pattern prints but actually shot from one of my projects. They made prints from my files without any adjustments what-so-ever, and they also allowed their equipment to adjust the printing automatically as it saw fit.

When examining the final prints, they were almost identical and looked very good. The unadjusted prints were slightly more saturated than the auto adjusted print. I actually liked the auto adjusted print best. I gave them the complete order of several hundred 4x6s, 5x7s, and 8x10s. I got the prints the next day, actually they were done that afternoon, and as you can expect, the price was very low.

If you are looking for a local print lab, and you choose to try Sam's Club, here is the workflow I used and I'm confident it will work for you.

1. Make every attempt to take the best exposure you can in your camera. The best exposure being what you want the final print to look like.
2. Set a custom white balance when shooting
3. Calibrate your computer monitor to 6500°K and gamma of 2.2 (this is a must do)
4. Adjust your image on your calibrated monitor to look like you want it to look.
5. Use your eyedroppers in PS to set your white and black print points
6. Now you have three choices:
    a. Send your images on-line to Sam's Club (there is a limit to each upload)
    b. Walk in and punch the slot machine if that is fun for you
    c. Hand them a CD full of your files

7. If you give them a CD, they won't promise 1 hour turn around. Actually, I don't want one hour turn around.
8. If you give them a CD you need to organize your images on your CD in the following format. In my workflow, If an image is going to be a 5x7, I have already sized it to be a 5x7, or whatever other size I may want. I do not want to make that crop decision while standing at the slot machine and I don't want another person or an automatic machine doing the crop for me.
9. On the CD you make a separate folder for every different size you want.

10 On the CD, you make separate folder under each size for different quantities of that size. This organization just makes it easy for them to run the sizes and quantities. Example below:

Folder Examples on the CD:
4x6 1 copy each
4x6 2 copies each
4x6 5 copies each
5x7 1 copy each
5x7 4 copies each
8x10 1 copy each
8x10 3 copies each

Now you just move the image files into the appropriate folder. All files in a folder will get the same size/quantity treatment.

This may in no way be the best way for you. You may like to do all of this differently, and of course this is your world, you are the king, so you call the shots.

The first time, I suggest you walk in. Talk to George, tall bald man, or Rhonda, the only lady working there I think. Both are very nice and just tell them what you are doing, you are serious about your photography and your prints and that Tom Geisler suggested that you give them a try. My name will not get you a discount, but it will tell them that you most likely have been one of my students, you are a serious photographer, you know what you are doing and are aware of what a print should look like.

I know driving to Sam's is not convenient for most of you, and not for me either, but getting a good print and having consistency is important enough for me to do the drive.

I'm not pushing Sam's, I get no discount or kickback, I'm just frustrated that my lab went out of business and I know a lot of you are looking for a good place to get good prints. This is just my suggestion for now, it may change. Please let me know your experiences with Sam's or any other lab you want to talk about.

Thanks

tom