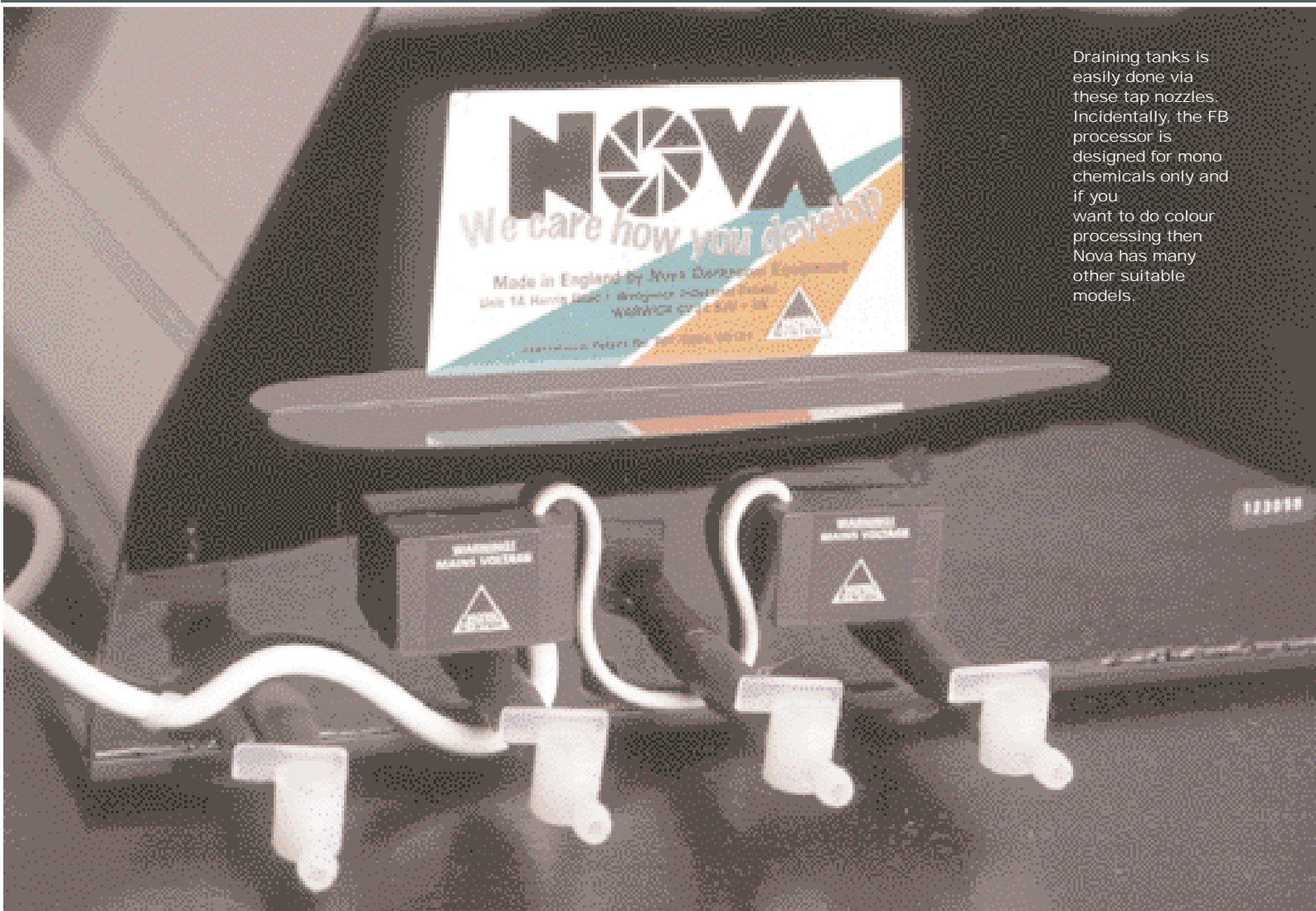


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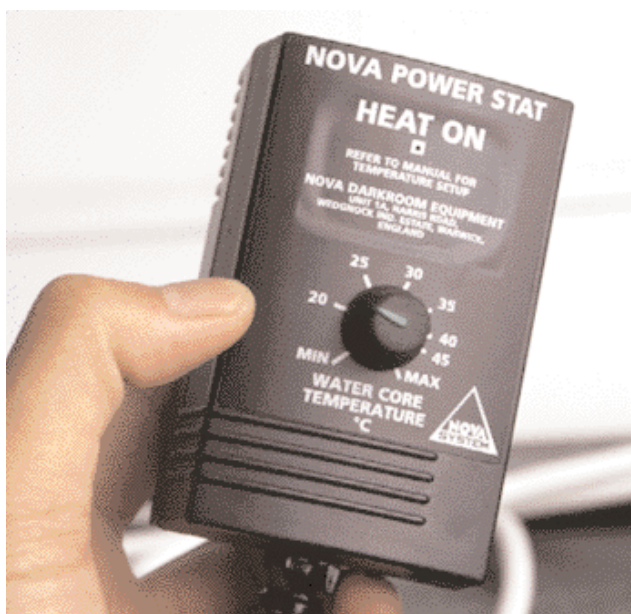


Draining tanks is easily done via these tap nozzles. Incidentally, the FB processor is designed for mono chemicals only and if you want to do colour processing then Nova has many other suitable models.



Nova 20x16in FB print processor

Type: Upright, slot tank print processor for fibre papers - Price: £699 - Features: Temperature controlled, clear front



For the ultimate mono print quality, fibre paper takes a lot of beating. Will Cheung checks out this space-saving, deep-tank processor designed specially for making fibre prints.

For numerous years Nova's slot processors have eased the space concerns of many photographers. This particular 20x16in unit has four chemical slots and takes up about one-quarter of the room of four 20x16in developing trays, so its appeal is obvious from the beginning.

As a die-hard user of fibre-based printing papers, I never got on with previous Nova processors because, in my view, they were better suited to resin-coated papers. My opinion has changed somewhat, however, since the clever chaps at Nova came out with the FB concept because it really works.

The key modifications are a transparent front so you can view the print 'coming up' in the developer, a special print holder to keep the paper flat during processing and the unit's whole profile has been changed. The slots are at a greater slant, which makes handling fibre papers easier.

Once you've unpacked the unit, setting up the Nova ready for use is straightforward. The first thing NOT to do is plug the thing in. The water jacket needs filling first and turning on the unit without doing so may break the glass heater tubes. The instructions are clear, concise and detailed about setting up and I had no problems at all.

Each slot in the 20x16in unit needs nearly 3.5 litres of solution so you can

imagine that this unit is very heavy fully loaded. Therefore, it's important to make sure that the processor is in the right place before filling it up.

Once filled, allow a couple of hours for the temperature to stabilise before use. I know some printers who leave their Novas on between sessions so the unit is always ready for use.

Once wet, fibre paper curls and easily buckles which would be a problem in a thin, deep tank. But Nova's print holders are designed to keep the paper flat while allowing chemistry onto the whole of the paper surface. They work well, but make sure each one is thoroughly washed before slipping in a fresh print.

Slipping the loaded print holder into the chemicals should be done gently, as should agitation. Too much vigour can be messy, but really the whole unit worked well. And remember to allow 15 seconds' draining time to minimise chemical carry-over into the next bath.

Temperature control was accurate, the holders did their job and I managed to get perfectly processed, stain-free and buckle-free prints time after time without fuss.

Compared to a few developing trays, obviously the Nova is expensive but you do save oodles of space, have accurate temperature control and increased economy. Sounds good to me.

Top left: The thermostat does a superb job of maintaining chemicals at the right temperature. The heater unit is proportional so running costs are low. Top right: The FB print holder is specially designed for keeping fibre-based printing papers flat during processing.

FACT FILE NOVA 20X16FB

Price: £699 for the 20x16in version and £495 for the 16x12in

Contact: Nova Darkroom Equipment, Phone 01926 403090, e-mail: sales@novadarkroom.com

Accuracy: +/- 0.20°C

Tank capacity: 3.2l each slot

Heating units: Two proportional 200W powerstats

Dimensions: 60cm(l)x39.5cm(h)x44cm(w)

RATINGS

PP marks products on five criteria, each out of 20 and making a possible maximum score of 100

● BUILD QUALITY 18
Solid, very solid.

● HANDLING 16
Handles well but remember to wash the print holders thoroughly.

● ECONOMY 19
Very good.

● PERFORMANCE 18
Err, it works... err, well.

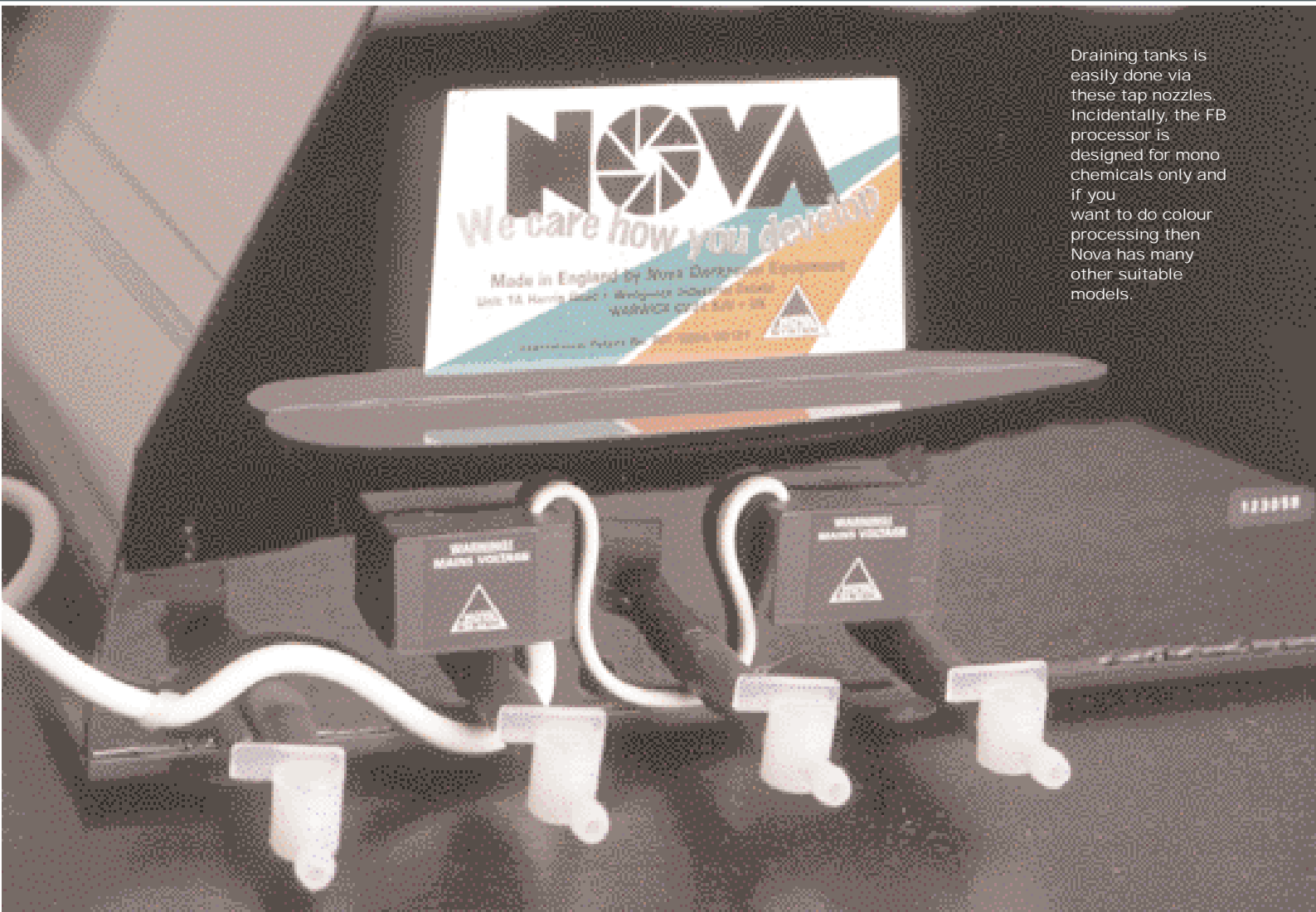
● VALUE FOR MONEY 14
Robust and built to last.

● TOTAL SCORE 85

PP VERDICT

If you love the image quality of fibre-paper prints, have a look at this space-saving processor.

tested darkroom gear



Draining tanks is easily done via these tap nozzles. Incidentally, the FB processor is designed for mono chemicals only and if you want to do colour processing then Nova has many other suitable models.

