

Sign

April 2016 - No.150

directions

SHIMMY SHIMMY SHAKE!

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THE ITALIAN JOB - DESIGN XPRESS BRINGS ITALY TO CONSETT

WHICH PRINTER - CONSIDERING THE OPTIONS

IT'S ALL IN THE FINISH - CUTTING, ROUTING AND LAMINATING

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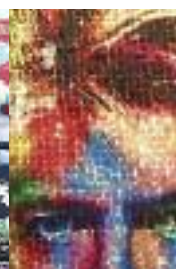
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Sign Directions Hotline:

If you would like the contact details of any of the companies featured in this issue of Sign Directions, please ring **Tel: 01636 819375** for full company information, or alternatively, e-mail signdirections@btconnect.com for a response by return

Coming Next:

The next issue of Sign Directions will be the July/August issue, which will explore all aspects of digital textile printing.



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Introduction

setting the scene

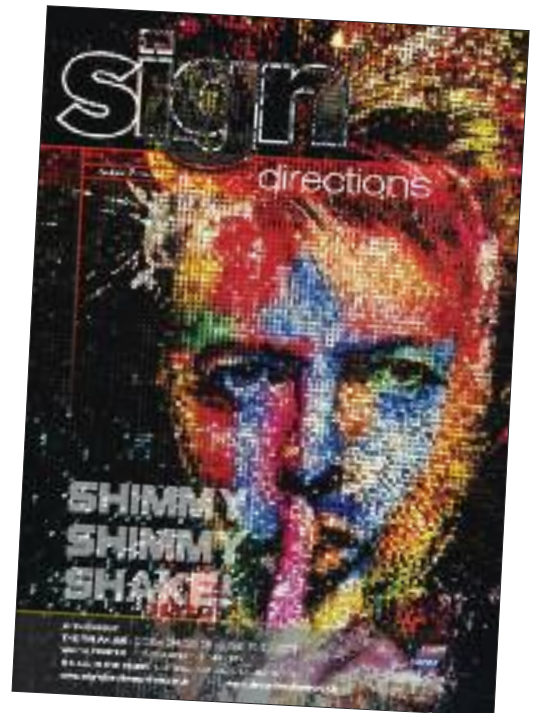
What's it to be – in or out? I'm referring, of course, to the forthcoming ill-judged referendum and, at the time of writing, it seems that the Remain and Brexit camps are currently running neck and neck amidst a campaign that is growing daily more rancorous.

My vote, in case anyone is interested, will be cast on the side of remain, firstly because I believe that the economic fall-out will be disastrous for the UK if we leave the EU and secondly, because leaving would also put the kibosh on my long held dream to eventually retire somewhere hot.

I'll admit that my resolve did falter slightly when I heard that the EU plans to reduce the wattage of small domestic appliances, but after due consideration, I decided that I simply couldn't find it within myself to associate with the Brexit crew. Leaving UKIP to one side (and that's precisely where they should be left!) the fact that the advantages of leaving are being eagerly espoused by the most loathsome of the current crop of Tories should be enough to persuade anyone that it's a bad idea.

Let's start with Boris, the priapic opportunist who obviously decided that he would have a better chance of becoming PM if he aligned himself with the Euro sceptics in the party and has since done his best to cobble together a selection of highly questionable arguments to justify his decision. Remember also, that this is a man with a properly clever and successful wife who wears the grimly resigned expression of a woman who knows that she has lumbered herself with a king-sized perve, but hasn't totally dismissed the possibility of engaging in a little DIY neutering procedure the next time she has a few spare minutes. Then there's Michael Gove, who assures us that if we leave the EU, he'll personally be dishing out £100 million a week to the NHS, whenever that is, he's not actually walking on water. One look at Gove's wife confirms that she looks permanently furious – well, you would wouldn't you? And what about IDS that scourge of the welfare state, who suddenly felt squeamish about finalising his plan to further penalise the disabled? Does he really expect us to believe that his sudden resignation was prompted by the late appearance of a conscience, rather than the desire to screw Dave and Boy George over?

And then we come to the Labour party and the covert Euro sceptic who is cowering in its midst. Yes, Jezza, I mean you! It was very telling that when the professional protester eventually took to the stage to reluctantly launch Labour's Remain campaign, he was accompanied by Alan Johnson, whose habitual geniality was somewhat challenged by the instruction he had doubtless received to give the gallant leader of the left a damn good kicking if he started to veer off piste. Frankly, there's nothing much more to be said for a man who, having attended a grammar school himself, was happy to sacrifice his own child's educational opportunities on the altar of his dubious principles.



So there we have it. Not a very edifying bunch, are they? As to what will happen once the whole ghastly bun fight is over – well it's anyone's guess, but one thing is certain – in or out, things will never be quite the same again!

Now, moving swiftly on to this month's issue, you'll notice that we've gone for a bit of bling on this month's cover. In all the years I've been attending Sign & Digital UK, (find the show review on pages 28/29), I don't think I've ever seen a product attract more attention than Shimmerdisc, a new innovation that combines digital printing and sequins to create literally show stopping displays. Learn all about it on page 30. If your visit to the show threw up a veritable plethora of choice as far as digital printers are concerned, our 'Which Printer' feature, on pages 34/39, will help you to narrow down your options, while 'It's all in the finish' on pages 42/48 highlights the latest advances in cutting, routing and laminating. This month's centre spread explains how one company used some imaginative decorative effects to bring Italy to Consett, while on page 51, Mark Godden explains why it a material world. Elsewhere, you'll find all of our regular news pages, including the latest update on the British Sign Awards. If you haven't already entered, now is the time to do it!

In our summer issue we will be turning our attention to all things textile – the machines, the fabrics, the printing methods and the applications – don't miss it!

And finally, I'm just going to dash off a quick email to Brussels – the EU might have my vote, but believe me if anyone starts to mess with the wattage of my hairdryer, I won't be answerable for the consequences!



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The common touch

Photocast was commissioned to design and manufacture all the components for a large scale project for the Commonwealth Walkways, which includes 5000 cast bronze markers, together with a Braille and tactile panoramic view of the principle cities of the Commonwealth.

Paul Waters, Photocast's Head of Illustration, had the honour of being presented to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth at the opening of the Windsor Walkway, when she unveiled the panoramic plaque during her 90th Birthday walkabout. ■



SDEA elects new president

The SDEA used the occasion of its recent AGM to elect Alan Pegram, the Managing Director of Global Displays, as President and Angus Morton, the Head of Sales and Marketing at B Brown Display Materials, as Vice President.

The AGM also saw three members re-elected to the Executive Council:

Ronald Cohen, the Managing Director of Foxbarn, Geoff Fairfield, the Managing Director of Fairfield Displays & Lighting and Bob Garton of Glencourt Associates, where they join existing Council members; Simon Olley, Managing Director of Stylo, Mark White, Sales Director of Solutions Acrylic & Display and Nick Wraith, Managing Director of Unibox. ■



EU receives SDEA seal of approval

A recent survey of SDEA members revealed that over three quarters of the respondents felt that remaining in the EU would be the best result for their businesses.

When members were asked what result would be in the best interests of their organisation with regard to the upcoming EU referendum, the answer was very decisive, with 80 per cent voting in favour of remaining in the EU, whilst only 12 percent voiced a desire to leave and eight percent were undecided.

When asked what result would be in the best interests of the UK economy with regard to the forthcoming EU referendum very little shift in opinion was registered, with 76 percent of SDEA members voting to remain in and just 12 per cent of companies indicating that leaving would be



better for the UK economy and a further 12 percent remaining undecided.

SDEA Director, Lawrence Cutler, reported: "This was an overwhelming result in favour of remaining in the EU. The comments received from our members clearly indicate the significant amount of business they conduct with companies in the EU, both importing and exporting.

"Our members clearly value these partnerships and the business they bring and believe that voting to stay in will secure those good trading relationships for the future." ■

Make a date with Euro Trophex

The only dedicated international show for the trophy, awards, engraving and personalisation sectors, Euro Trophex will take place from 15th-17th October at the PTA in the beautiful city of Amsterdam.

The show, which attracts visitors from across Europe, will include new exhibitors, such as the American company Rayzist which will be demonstrating its sand carving procedures and Pohary Bauer from the Czech Republic, which will be presenting its new range of acrylic and glass trophies. In addition, another newcomer to the event, the Swatkins Group, will be displaying its own range of trophies, all of which are handmade in the UK. Regular participants such as Trotec, which will be introducing the Speedy 100, the Speedy 360 Flexx and the entry-level Rayjet, will join them.



The conveniently situated PTA, which is just a short walk away from the centre of Amsterdam and all of its many attractions, can be easily reached by car, train or tram and is just a 20 minute car journey from Schiphol airport, thus ensuring that access to the show is easy and hassle free. ■

Living the dream

Ian Drinkwater, the Managing Director of Applelec, completed this year's London Marathon to raise over £4000 for Barnardo's, and in so doing, fulfilled a lifetime ambition.

The race, which took place at the end of April and featured 36,000 runners, marked the culmination of Ian's long-held dream to participate, which began when he watched the inaugural race on television in 1981.

The approach of a significant birthday, coupled with the desire to raise money for a charity that means a lot to Ian and his family provided the final motivation he needed.

He explained: "Barnardo's helps to transform the lives of the most vulnerable children across the UK and believes that all children deserve a chance to reach their full potential, so I really wanted to do something that would help them to continue with the incredible work that they do."



In preparation for the 26.2 mile run, Ian devised an intensive training plan involving long distance running three times a week, which began last December and saw him covering over 400 miles during the run-up to the race. It was certainly a regime that paid off, as Ian reached the halfway mark in just over two hours and finished the marathon with an impressive final time of four hours, 36 minutes and 53 seconds! ■

Appointments



PPB has appointed **Terry Pritchard** as Industrial Products Account Manager for the recently expanded

London and Home Counties regions, where he will be responsible for growing and supporting the sale of polycarbonates, Lumex G (PET-G), Lumex A (APET), Foam PVC, Priplak and the newly launched Westland Digital Media range for wide format printing.

Terry previously spent 16 years with Robert Horne, and subsequently PaperlinX, and thus brings his extensive knowledge of the industrial plastics market to his new role.



Aslan has appointed **Anja Falkenberg** to take on full responsibility for its sales and

marketing department.

Anja, who brings 19 years of expertise in the digital printing and sign making sectors gained with such companies as Colormy Ag, Euromedia and ComPlott PapiersUnion, will use her industry knowledge to advance the development of Aslan as a supplier of innovative specialty films.



Durst UK has appointed **Stuart Morrison** as a Technical Service Engineer, specialising in technical applications.

Having worked in the printing industries for 25 years, most recently with Domino Printing Sciences as a workflow and colour management engineer, Stuart will bring a wealth of experience to his new role. ■

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The Print Show ups the pace

Link Exhibitions, the organiser of The Print Show, which is scheduled to take place at the NEC, Birmingham on 11th-13th October, has reported that the show is now gathering momentum following a number of new signings.

During recent weeks, both Vivid Laminating Technologies and Premier Paper Group have confirmed that they will be returning to the show again this year, while another new signing, Spandex will be participating for the first time.

Leon Watson, The General Manager of Spandex UK described the event as providing the 'perfect platform' for its range of print solutions, which includes printers from HP, Epson, Roland and SwissQprint, plus materials from 3M, Avery Dennison, Orafol and MacTAC as well as its own Image Perfect brand.



Leon Watson added that as the exclusive UK distributor for SwissQprint, it would be using the occasion to debut the company's latest UV flatbed offering, which it expects to appeal to both commercial and wide format print companies. He said: "The machine has already proved very popular with litho printers, repro houses, photographic and retail and display companies and we are looking forward to driving more sales at the event." ■



Over the hill

When James Carpenter, Managing Director of Doro Tape and sign industry veteran celebrated his sixtieth birthday last March, he decided it was the ideal time to embrace a new challenge, which is why he has entered this year's Prudential Ride London-Surrey 100 mile cycle sportive!

Having already become a MAML (middle-aged man in Lycra) when he took up cycling two years ago, James is tackling the forthcoming race, part of the annual festival of cycling that will take place during the weekend of 30th-31st July, with some gusto.

Over 20,000 cyclists will participate in this gruelling event, which will include a steep climb up Box Hill, in a bid to raise funds for their various charities.

James explained: "Rather than entertaining morbid thoughts about growing older, I thought I would use this opportunity to raise funds for both the Alzheimer's Society who do such great work supporting sufferers and their families and a local charity 'AdamSmile', which was set up to improve a cycle path between Market Harborough and Lubenham in Leicestershire upon which Adam Mugridge tragically died after having

showtime

DIARY DATES FOR 2016

Viscom Paris 2016

6th-8th September

Port de Versailles Pavilion 7.1
Organiser: Reedexpo France
<http://www.viscom-paris.com>

The Print Show 2016

11th-13th October

NEC, Birmingham
Organiser: Link Exhibitions
www.theprintshow.co.uk

Viscom Italia 2016

13th-15th October

Fiera Milano, Milan
Organiser: Reedexpo Italy
www.viscomitalia.it

Viscom Frankfurt 2016

2nd - 4th November

Messe Frankfurt
Organiser: Reedexpo Germany
www.viscom-messe.com

InPrint 2016

15th - 17th November

MiCo, Milan
Organiser: FM Brooks
www.inprintshow.com

If you would like your event to feature on this page, please send full information via e-mail to Val Hirst at signdirections@btconnect.com

a cycle accident on his way to school."

He continued: "I would really appreciate the industry's support in helping me to raise £1,500 for these two worthy causes and to show my thanks I will print my Lycra cycle shirt with the name or logo of each company or individual who donates and display it with pride on the day. What's more, if I manage to complete the course I'll be more than happy to admit, that yes, I have gone well and truly over the hill!"



To support James in this venture simply visit:

www.virginmoneygiving.com and donate to James Carpenter ■

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new projects



▲ Cambridge-based **Iconic Signs** recently accepted the challenge to design and wrap campervans for the pioneering holiday rental company, **Wedubyou**, whose vans will be available for rental in France, Spain and New Zealand.

Having previously worked with the Burwell-based **Type 2 Detectives** agency, which specialises in the restoration of classic Volkswagens, Iconic signs was the natural choice for this commission, which extends to the wrapping of 60 vans in total.

Charged with designing, printing and applying the wraps, while also meeting the



client's brief to produce something as vibrantly eye-catching as possible, Iconic Signs spent sometime deliberating over the choice of materials before finally settling on **Arlon's DPF 6000XRP vinyl** and **Arlon's Ultimate PremiumPlus colour change**

films, supplied by **Spandex**, which combined the requisite levels of durability, printability and conformability, together with the matching **3210 laminate** series in order to ensure a perfect gloss finish. ■

▶ Having previously provided eye-catching and colourful facelifts for shopping centres in Runcorn and Birchwood, **Signs Express (Warrington)** was commissioned to provide new external signage for the **Cockhedge Shopping Centre**.

Working to the pre-ordained template created by Cockhedge's design agency, Signs Express produced and installed 15 double-sided illuminated fascia signs, three large illuminated fascia signs and six panel and post signs, as well as a selection of interior floor graphics.



In all, the project took 18 months to complete, with the installation taking place over a three-week period and requiring two sets of high access equipment. ■



▶ Working closely with arts programme, Artfelt at **Sheffield's Children's Hospital, Signs Express (Sheffield)** has helped to create a positive and relaxing environment for young patients requiring surgical procedures.

Taking the designs created by consultancy **Thomas Matthews**, which are based on the Chinese tangram, a traditional puzzle comprising flat shapes that are assembled to produce fiendishly complex geometric patterns, Signs Express used them to line the corridors leading to the theatres and treatment rooms, where they provide a welcome distraction for nervous young



patients during the anxious moments before they are



anaesthetised.

The tessellating shapes have also been used to create a Perspex mobile that is suspended from the ceiling of the double height corridor that leads to the MRI scanner. Especially designed to make the most of a large space with a lot of natural light, the



coloured, transparent shapes create patterns of rockets that move in and out of sight as patients walk below and culminate in the light boxes that are set into the ceiling of each new anaesthetic room, where they provide a calming focal point. ■



▼ **W&Co** was selected to produce the signage required by **Stock Brook Manor**, a country club based in the picturesque Essex village of Billericay, a popular wedding and conference venue, which offers its members the facility of a 250-acre estate and a golf course.

Tasked with providing new

external signage for the main entrance wall, W&Co paired the premium quality mirror finish of **Rimex's Prestige Polished Gold** stainless steel and welded brass rear locator fixings with a cost effective design that more than met the client's brief for something that was both classy and suitably impressive. ■



▶ **Allen Signs** has recently completed a signage and branding scheme at **Blackwood Court**, a new business development within **Teal Park**, the home of the giant engineering company **Siemens**.

North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) has invested £2 million in the new development, which comprises 19 workshop units that range in size from 500sq.ft to 2,000 sq.ft and will be occupied by small start-up businesses.

Following a competitive pitch, Allen Signs prepared initial design concepts for the signage, which



were modified once the construction of the site was underway to ensure that both the signs and the materials used enhanced the emerging architecture. ■

Supplier News

Perspex Distribution big it up in Leeds

Perspex Distribution celebrated the official opening of its largest branch last month with a successful customer open day in Leeds.

The new office was officially opened by Phil Bailey, Vice President EMEA at Lucite International alongside Councillor Richard Lewis of Leeds City Council, Perspex Distribution Managing Director Keith Piggott, and Roger Marsh OBE, Chair of Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership. Over 120 guests, including valued customers and suppliers, council representatives and Perspex Distribution employees joined to celebrate the event.

As the leading UK supplier of Perspex Cast Acrylic and other sheet products widely used in the sign, retail and printing sectors, the Perspex Distribution group has recently enjoyed major growth and

the new 30,225 sq.ft branch will serve customers in Yorkshire and Humberside.

The Leeds branch is the fifth Perspex Distribution branch and joins the existing distribution centres located in Blackburn, Tamworth, Chelmsford and Weybridge.

Keith Piggott, Managing Director of Perspex Distribution and Lucite International General Manager of European Sheet and Composites, commented: "Our expansion is a direct result of our need to meet customer demand across the region and since our name is synonymous with exceptional service and product knowledge, the opening of our largest operation in Leeds provides us with a strong foundation to grow both our product range and customer base in the years to come."

Leeds Branch Manager Jonathan



Marsden added "Ultimately our business is about availability and quick delivery and our two Holzma HPP500 saws, 500 tonnes of stock and fleet of five delivery vehicles will enable us to meet the growing demand for quality materials in this area."

The open day provided the company with an opportunity to demonstrate the full extent of its systems and services, together with



the full portfolio of products available, which were also represented through key manufacturing partners including SloanLED, Palram IPB and Multipanel UK. ■

Octink selects DIBONDdigital

3A Composites and Antalis UK have revealed that from July onwards, Octink, one of the country's leading producers of signage, graphics and decorated interiors will become an exclusive DIBONDdigital user in the UK.



Brad Candy (Operations Director, Octink), Tim Dance (Director Octink), Damien Clarke (Key Account Manager, Antalis UK), Mike Freely (Managing Director Octink), Tony Marshall (Divisional Director Antalis UK), Simon Philpott (Sales Team Leader UK & Ireland 3A Composites GmbH), James Griffiths (Supply Chain Manager, Octink)

Explaining his company's decision, Octink's Managing Director, Mike Freely, said: "DIBONDdigital is a high quality printing substrate, made in Germany, which has a lacquer system that is optimised especially for direct to substrate digital printing. This enables us to reproduce very fine structures and lines at an increased printing speed. In addition, it is UV-resistant and can be used with temperatures up to 80°C which means that firstly, our UV lamps don't cause any distortion and secondly, the material is outdoor durable."

DIBONDdigital, which is fully REACH and RoHS compliant, is widely specified for use in a vast range of internal and external sign and graphic applications where there is a need for high quality imaging and long service life, making it the ideal choice for Octink's varied projects. ■

Complete CNC Solutions is on the move

Following the significant expansion of its product portfolio, Complete CNC Solutions is relocating to larger premises located close to its current headquarters.

The company, which is perhaps best known as the UK distributor of Tekcel routing systems, now also handles Protek Digital Cutters and Routers in the UK and this, in addition to its growing service department and larger workforce had begun to put a strain on the resources available at its present home.

Since the launch of the Protek Unico TT Digital Cutter a little over a year ago, the number of visitors attending demonstrations at Complete CNC's showroom has increased, together with the demonstration space required to show the new hardware

to its best advantage.

Having initially taken over the neighbouring industrial unit to ease the congestion, the arrival of the Unico CNC production router has triggered a move into entirely new premises.

The new headquarters quadruples the showroom space available and doubles the office accommodation, while also providing extra space for an extended service workshop and warehousing for parts, stock routers and digital cutters.

Once the premises are fully occupied, services installed and the showroom operative, Complete CNC Solutions plans to host series of open days to celebrate its move, when it will be welcoming both current and potential customers. ■

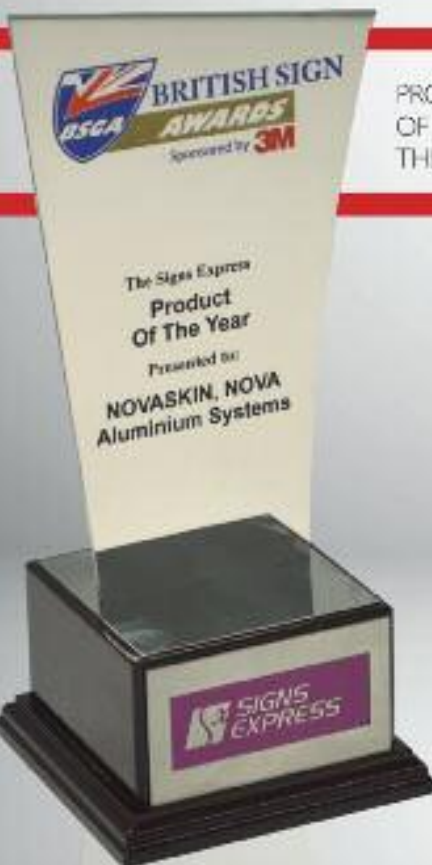


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Supplier News

Avery Dennison to acquire MACtac Europe

Avery Dennison has announced a definitive agreement to acquire the European business of MACtac from Platinum Equity, a California-based private equity firm, for the purchase price of €200 million, including assumed debt.

With 2015 year-end run-rate revenues of €147 million, or approximately \$170 million, and approximately 470 employees, the business is a leading manufacturer of high quality pressure-sensitive materials, serving several high-value segments, including graphics, specialty labels and industrial tapes. MACtac's core product lines complement Avery Dennison's existing graphics portfolio.

"The acquisition of MACtac Europe enhances our competitiveness in high-value graphics, where we have sustained above-average growth over the past few years," said Dean Scarborough, Avery Dennison Chairman and CEO. "Known for high product quality and outstanding service, MACtac complements our existing business with a strong brand and loyal customer base, thus expanding our product offering, capabilities, and distributor network."

With a manufacturing facility in Soignies, Belgium, along with sales offices and warehouses in Europe and Asia, the MACtac business expands Avery Dennison's global footprint and provides the capacity to support its growth.

Through export sales, MACtac Europe also serves customers in South America, Asia Pacific, the Middle East, and North Africa. The transaction excludes the MACtac business in the U.S., Canada and Mexico and its North American exports.

Avery Dennison will maintain the MACtac brand for graphic films and continue to operate MACtac's manufacturing facility in Soignies Belgium.

Avery Dennison will fund the acquisition with existing cash and credit facilities. The acquisition is expected to close within three months, subject to customary conditions and approvals. ■

Affairs of the heart

When someone's suffers a cardiac arrest, every minute that passes once their heart has stopped beating decreases their chance of survival by 10 percent, which is why Ashby Trade Signs Supplies has invested in two upgraded first aid stations and a fully automatic defibrillator.

Tim High, the manager who is responsible for the scheme observed: "Although the chances of any member of staff ever needing this type of assistance are small these things do happen, which is why we believe that it is a worthwhile exercise and we encourage any company that can afford it to do the same".

Whilst a defibrillator isn't a replacement for CPR by a qualified person, evidence shows that it will massively increase the chances of keeping the patient alive, which is why a number of businesses and communities have now begun to invest in them together with a greater number of first-aid trained staff. As a consequence, they are becoming more affordable; one can now be picked up for under a thousand pounds and will last for five-years without battery replacement. Some modern defibrillators are fully automated and can be operated by people with only the most basic training, as they use the patient's heart movement patterns to determine whether a shock is necessary and



instruct the user when to assist the casualty and when to stand clear.

The location of the nearest defibrillator can be found at <http://www.heartsafe.org.uk/AED-Locations>, while further information can be found at www.heartsafe.org.uk ■

Nth Degree Imaging relocates

Nth Degree Imaging, has recently relocated to new offices that are centrally located in Peterborough and provide more scope to house and demonstrate its wide portfolio of wide format print and finishing hardware, media and colour management and workflow solutions.

Nth Degree Imaging is a UK authorised dealer for Roland printers, an official Epson distributor and service partner for Epson's large format inkjet printers. More recently, it was also appointed as the distributor for the new flatbed and hybrid UV printer range from SignRacer GmbH. In addition, the business also offers ink and

consumables and colour management and software packages and services. Nth Degree is the UK's Premier Partner for EuroMedia wide format media for solvent, UV and latex inks.

The move to the modern industrial unit, which benefits from excellent connectivity to the A1(M), forms part of the company's strategic expansion plan. ■

Antalis picks up RoSPA Gold

Antalis, the leading European distributor of paper, packaging solutions and visual communication products, has achieved the Gold Award for the fifth year running in recognition for its approach to occupational safety and health in an awards scheme run by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA).

The RoSPA Awards is celebrating 60 years of presenting highly regarded and sought after accolades to businesses and organisations that have shown commitment



to accident and ill-health prevention.

Mike Hann, Antalis' UK Group Health

and Safety Manager, said: "Antalis is delighted to have been awarded 'Gold' for the fifth consecutive year and a gold medal in recognition of this. The RoSPA Awards are a fantastic acknowledgement of the efforts of all of our people in helping to improve health and safety in the workplace. We will, of course, be continuing in our commitment towards accident and ill health prevention."

The Gold award in the RoSPA Occupational Health and Safety Awards 2016 will be presented to Antalis in a ceremony at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole Hotel during July. ■

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Equipment & Material

Safety first

APA has expanded its Solar&Safety range with the addition of four new innovative new films.

SF/WI-550 and SF/WI-650 are designed to filter sunlight while also maintaining excellent visibility and illumination.

SF/WI-650, which is specifically designed for application on shop windows, features a special blue hue and high transparency that filters most UV rays,

whilst also maintaining excellent illumination inside the store and without distorting the colours of the goods on display.

SF/WI-550 is a light champagne coloured film that is also highly transparent and, in addition to filtering UV rays, it is also extremely efficient at reducing heat.



SF/WX-911 is a self-adhesive reflective film for use on glass, which improves privacy while also providing an aesthetically pleasing appearance. Thanks to its power of reflectivity, it significantly reduces heat transmission and blocks almost all of the UV rays.

SY/W2-175, which has a Class 1B1 certification, is designed to make glass safer by retaining fragments or splinters in the event of breakage. In addition to absorbing almost all of the UV rays, it also features an anti-scratch finish that facilitates cleaning and preserves its transparency over time. ■

Perfectly prestigious wraps

APA's cast range has been further enhanced with the addition of two new films, the Blue Ultra Matt anti-scratch self-adhesive film with a velvet effect, and Jaguar, which offers a realistic, yet extremely subtle animal effect print.

Particularly suitable for permanent



vehicle wrapping applications, both films are extremely easy to apply, thanks to the cutting-edge repositionable RepoTack-Air Free



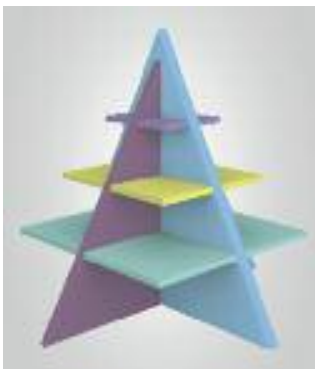
System adhesive, which aids

positioning and facilitates air ejection through micro-channels, without affecting ease of removal, even after a long time period.

In common with all cast films, these two new arrivals offer excellent covering power and high mechanical resistance. In addition they are (B-S2-D0 class) certified for resistance to fire. ■

Pick and Mix

Perspex Sweet Pastels is a newly developed collection of cast acrylic sheet which has been developed in the Perspex colour lab in Lancashire and manufactured in the UK.



Featuring eight unique colours, the sheets, which have been specially designed for use in the broad spectrum of sign and retail display applications, share all of the physical properties of Perspex's standard cast acrylic sheet materials, in as much as they are highly durable, hardwearing and lightweight enough to be used for pop-up displays.



Available in a standard 3m x 2m sheet size, with a 3mm thickness, and a range of mouth-watering delicious shades, including Lemon Bonbon and Parma Violet, each sheet also features a matt finish on one side and a gloss finish on the other, thus offering the maximum amount of versatility.

Perspex Sweet Pastels are available through Perspex Distribution, which will provide samples upon request. ■



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Equipment & Material

Cost-effective climate control

A new climate control film from 3M helps to ensure that occupants of domestic, commercial and historic buildings stay comfortable whatever the weather.

3M Thinsulate Window Film Climate Control 75 (CC75) has the capacity to both reflect heat in warmer weather and retain it when it's cold outside, thanks to the combination of Thinsulate invisible insulation and solar reflecting technologies. When

applied to a single pane, performance is close to that of a standard double-glazed pane, and application to double-glazing raises its performance close to that of a triple-glazed pane.

In addition to increased comfort for those in the building, benefits include savings in heating and air conditioning costs, plus protection from fading and prolonged life for furniture, carpets, upholstery and artwork. In addition, its shatterproof

qualities help to reduce the risk of injury in the event of a window being damaged.

3M Thinsulate Window Film CC75 offers a cost effective and more user-friendly alternative to double- or triple-glazing, while its virtually invisible appearance barely changes the appearance of the window, thus making it the ideal media for historic buildings where conservation requirements often forbid the removal of original glass.



3M Thinsulate Window Film CC75 is now available from William Smith with next day delivery available for full or part rolls on orders placed before 6pm. ■

It's a stick-up!

Eurobond Adhesives' wide range of tapes and adhesives provide the perfect bonding solution for the broad spectrum of sign and display applications.

The company's Penloc range of structural adhesives is already recognised by thousands of signmakers throughout Europe as a 'must have' adhesive. Successfully used in a diverse range of applications, ranging from simply bonding channel or stiffener bars to the back of Dibond, to fabricating built up letters, through to the

bonding together of many different materials, such as bonding locators and Big Head fasteners, it can also be used to fabricate back light boxes, lighting trays and monoliths.

The range includes a variety of different cure speeds and viscosities and is available in 12ml, 25ml 50ml and 400ml cartridges to suit the needs of a diverse range of applications.

The Eurobond high performance range of structural acrylic tapes rival those of competing products, with



the added benefit of a much lower price tag. Surface preparation prior to bonding is essential as it helps to promote adhesion, thus ensuring the integrity of the bonded joint.

Eurobond's low lint, heavy-duty surface cleaning wipes are specially designed for sign industry usage. They are easy to use, cost effective and safe. ■

The eco-option

3M's new non-PVC Envision Print Wrap Film SV480Cv3 was specified by Tamworth, Staffordshire-based Positive Design for the first UK vehicle wrapping project using this more environmentally aware film.

Positive Design used the film to wrap the latest addition to the fleet of vehicles at Wm. M Briers, a local waste management and recycling business, where a new refuse collection truck now sports a design that combines striking type and a vibrant leafy

graphical theme to reflect the environmental credentials of both the company and the 3M film.

3M Envision Print Wrap Film SV480Cv3 is a phthalate-free, non-PVC film with no added chlorine or halogens and 58 percent less solvents than conventional films. It is also recyclable. The tough, conformable and colour-fast film has been designed to withstand the harshest environmental conditions, including extremes of temperature, intense sunlight and general wear and tear. When used with



a recommended over-laminate, its has a life expectancy of seven years.

Whilst soft and compliant for vehicle wrapping applications, the film is also

ideal for use on textured surfaces, such as those found on interior and exterior walls and this is an area that will also be maximised by Positive Design using the Envision product. ■

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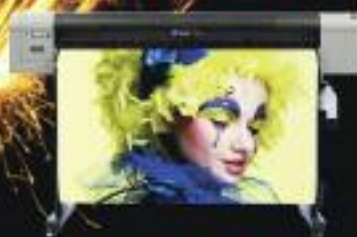
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Equipment & Material

The house of brands

Spandex has expanded its product portfolio with the addition of four new vehicle wrap films from Avery Dennison, 3M and Orafol, as well as an Avery Dennison wall film. All products are available for next day delivery.

The next generation of 3M wrap film, the 1380 series, offers a range of ultra conformable, long-term cast films



designed for solid colour vehicle wrapping, negating the need for additional graphic protection. Available in 14 colours and providing excellent conformability for applications on recesses and deep channels, the films are available in 1.52-metre wide rolls thus enabling almost any section of a vehicle to be seamlessly wrapped.

Spandex is also adding five new shades of the Orafol 970 Premium Shift Effect Cast films to its existing range of shift effect films. The films, which change colour depending on the viewing angle, have been specially developed for car wrapping. The new colours come in Pearl Symphony, Avocado, Amethyst, Aquamarine and Ultramarine Violet, in either a gloss or matt finish.

In addition, it is also stocking three new



transparent coloured overlaminates for use with Avery's Conform Chrome films, in orange, purple and green, which enable users to create exciting colour combinations and effects by combining with the existing Conform Chrome films in silver, gold, blue, red and black.

Avery Dennison's MPI 1105 wrapping series is Spandex's latest launch for vehicle wraps and other challenging applications, offering excellent printability and image quality. With 3D conformability that copes easily with the most demanding corrugations, the films are compatible with UV, solvent, eco-solvent and latex inks and make use of the Easy Apply RS adhesive

technology for easier installation.

Further enhancing the Spandex range of interior décor solutions is the new Avery Dennison MPI 8000 Wall Film Series. Available in six different options, including three textured films, which respectively simulate the finish of canvas, stone and stucco, this series enables signmakers to create custom wall graphics for short and long-term applications and combine the thickness that makes them so easy to apply with excellent opacity to ensure the underlying wall is completely concealed. ■

Better, brighter, cheaper!

In line with the trend for LED illumination in troughlight signage systems, Ashby Trade Sign Supplies has launched the new Stryder Troughlight, which features an all new curved lens to facilitate better light dispersion and thus maximise the impact of the LEDs' output.

Nowadays, signmakers are becoming more adept at educating their clients as to the long term benefits of LED when compared to more traditional methods of lighting, which include greater reliability, the capacity to be dimmed when used in conjunction with an appropriate power connection and noticeably lower running costs. In addition, since LEDs contain no mercury, they

are also more environmentally friendly.

Stryder Troughlight, which represents a £50,000 investment, in terms of the extensive design and testing process that Ashby has undertaken, comprises a custom, slim-line extrusion, with a diameter of less than 50mm, which offers a brightness of 1000 lumens per metre. It is also approximately 15 percent cheaper than competing products.

It is available in single piece lengths of up to six metres, or longer lengths with a join, and includes a single strip of powerful 24v LEDs, plus fully customisable brackets.

It can be mounted in a wide variety



of different ways, for example back to back, on a wall, as an up-lighter or at any angle the user requires and is available in a choice of black, white or mill finishes.

Stryder will be available from Ashby Trade Sign Supplies from 22nd June, 2016 ■



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Sign Directions sponsors 'Product of the Year'

Sign Directions is the sponsor of this year's 'Product of the Year' one of the most coveted prizes in the BSGA-organised industry awards scheme.

The Product award was introduced by the BSGA in recognition of the fact that the sign industry is constantly changing and moving forward thanks to the introduction of innovative new products, improved materials and advances in technology.

"This award highlights the role manufacturers and suppliers play in the sign industry and it is different to the other awards because the winner is selected by signmakers rather than by a panel of judges," said David Catanach of the BSGA. "Every signmaker member of the BSGA has a vote, so winning the award has a really special meaning and can give a new product a real lift."

Entries for the award are invited from any UK-based manufacturer or supplier of equipment, materials, machinery or services to the sign industry. The only criterion is that entries should have been introduced to the UK market after August 1st, 2015. In addition to direct entries, the BSGA will be asking industry experts to nominate their favourite new products and these will also be put forward for votes.

The winner will be unveiled at this year's Gala Awards Ceremony, which will take place at East Midlands Conference Centre in Nottingham on Thursday, November 3rd when broadcaster Bill Turnbull, who

kept the sofa warm on the BBC's Breakfast for 15 years, will be the Master of Ceremonies.

"The awards are now in their third year and they are going from strength to strength," observed David Catanach. "This year we have a full-house of sponsors, once again led by 3M as the main supporter of the whole awards scheme, plus a list of category sponsors (see opposite) which reads like a who's who of the leaders in the UK sign industry."

A total of 15 signmaker awards will be presented, reflecting every aspect of modern signmaking and providing the opportunity for signmakers of every type and size to gain recognition for outstanding work.

He continued: "The range of awards definitely shows the diversity of today's industry and we have once again made sure that smaller businesses, those employing five people or less, have a chance of winning an award. The Small Signmaker of the Year Award, sponsored this year by Pyramid Display Materials, is open only to businesses employing up to five people.

"The award enables smaller sign makers to showcase their work without having to compete against the big boys of the industry and they can enter either a single project or a body of work that demonstrates their skills.

"We also have a new Young Signmaker Award this year. Sponsored by Roland, it is a development of 2015's

Apprentice of the Year, but the scope has been broadened to allow more young people to be entered for the award."

Closing date for entries to the Young Signmaker category is Friday, August 5th as the plan is to draw up a shortlist of entrants who will then be visited at their place of work.

The closing date for entries to all other award categories is Friday, September 9th. Full details, entry criteria and entry forms for all the categories can be found on the awards website at www.britishsignawards.org

Tickets for the awards ceremony can also be ordered online. "We launched the awards ceremony as a day time affair to get the scheme off the ground, but the format has proved so successful we're sticking to it for this year," explained David Catanach. "With the central location in Nottingham, it means that people can travel from virtually anywhere in the country for the ceremony and be back home the same night. It keeps costs down and means people can be back at work first thing the following day.

"The awards are now one of the biggest events in the sign industry calendar, while the awards themselves are very serious, the event itself is great fun and provides a rare opportunity for the whole industry to come together. There isn't another occasion to match it.

"Last year over 320 people attended the awards, while our capacity this year is 450 and we hope we'll have a full house." ■

THE 2016 AWARDS

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HIGH BRIGHTNESS

Available exclusively from Perspex Distribution, the SloanLED range of signage LED modules offers an even light distribution, coupled with easy installation, low maintenance and energy efficiency.



The latest module is the V180 High Brightness (HB) Mini, the brightest and most versatile solution available in the V180 line up, which is designed to illuminate shallow to standard depth channel letters and sign boxes.

It shares the same innovative and efficient design as the V180 Mini, but is 56 percent brighter. The increased lumen output facilitates installation

into a wider range of sign depths, while using fewer modules, thus resulting in attractive signs that are less costly to build and operate.

In common with its Large, Standard, and Mini counterparts, V180 HB Mini features a patented LED array comprising three diodes placed in an optimal orientation to provide an 180-degree overall viewing angle. ■

ENVISION LIGHTS THE WAY

The Greenstock Lamp Company has just published a 120-page colour brochure covering its entire portfolio of LED lighting products, including its U-Connect plug and play system.

The comprehensive range of quality products covers many different types of LED lamps, tubes and shatterproof tubes, LED strip and tape, all the way through to LED luminaires such



as high performance LED flat panels, highbays, floodlights and non-corrosive fittings. ■

REDUCING INSTALLATION COSTS

A leading Continental Europe supplier of technically advanced LED lighting solutions to the sign industry, Germany-based Majert has announced two important developments to its popular third-generation Chiplite X-Series.

With the CL-XOL system, it is now possible to include up to 100 individual modules soldered in a continuous chain without the need for additional power input, thereby dramatically reducing installation costs. In a second and equally important development, the company has added two new LED systems to the X-Series (CL-EL3 and CL-EL4). These have been designed specifically for edge-lighting larger light box installations and bring the number of different systems in the series to 10.

Of special significance is the fact that Majert has now announced

that by using just nine CL-XOH4 modules x square metre it is possible to illuminate flexible-faced lightboxes up to a depth of 200mm.

Available as standard in white, warm white, red, green and yellow and with the option of special colours, the CL-XOL system is fitted with two 5050 SMD LEDs (including optic) and generates a luminous flux of 40 lumens. It has a compact size of 57 x 15.6mm and uses only 0.48W of power, making it suitable for use with virtually any size of light box or sign lettering requirement to a depth of 50mm.

Effectively illuminating the edges of both single- and double-sided light boxes, CL-EL3 and CL-EL4 have common as well as individual design characteristics. Measuring 100 x 26mm, CL-EL3 is fitted with three LED modules as well as a specially designed elliptical optic. It provides 240 lumens of luminous flux with a 2.8W power



requirement and is wired to form a 20-unit chain. CL-EL4 is suitable for light box installations up to a size of three metres square, attributable to the generous luminous flux of 400 lumens generated by 4.5W of power. The system measures 63 x 53mm and is wired to form a 15-unit chain and has to be installed in groups of three modules. In common with all systems in the X-Series, CL-EL3 and CL-EL4 are backed with a five-year performance warranty.

The CL-X Series has been tested

and approved for use in the most extreme temperature conditions (typically -40 up to +85 degrees C). The systems also carry the CE seal of approval, are RoHS-certified and incorporate an IP65-rated transparent housing for optimum safety and reliability.

The Chiplite X-Series is now widely specified by sign manufacturers throughout Continental Europe and is backed by a large stockholding capability and 24-hour delivery. ■

ENVISION LIGHTS THE WAY

The Envision range of Translucent and Diffuser films are enabling enhanced lighting to be achieved whilst using fewer light sources due to the high light transmission capabilities of the films.

As a result, sign and display companies and their customers can enjoy a huge reduction in maintenance and power usage costs.

The Diffuser films offer two levels of light transmission (50 and 60 per cent) to manage light more efficiently, contingent upon the application, while the Translucent films are available in both standard and customised colours and in an



inkjet-printable format.

Whilst optimised for use with LED lighting systems, the films can also be used with conventional fluorescent lighting systems.

A major success for the 3M Envision Translucent Films was their use in a major rebranding project for the giant Domino's Pizza franchise in



the US. Used in a series of different signage interpretations throughout over 1,000 outlets, the films enabled a huge reduction in the number of LED modules hitherto required and resulted in a

commensurate saving in maintenance and power usage costs. The 3M Envision films have now been adopted by Domino's Pizza to service all future sign lighting requirements. ■

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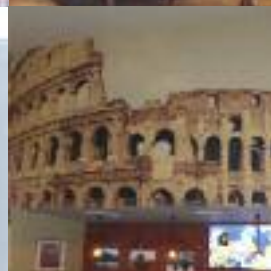
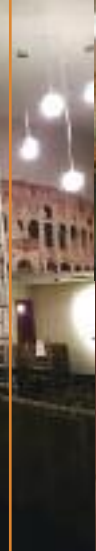
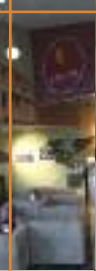
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The Italian Job

One of the most extensive views available in the North of England is from the top of Blackpool's famous and much-loved Tower. It has height on its side and, on a clear day does a good job of convincing those who make the trip to the top that the views go on forever.

Much the same experience can be found on the other side of the planet in Sydney, Australia. There, in return for exchanging a few Australian Dollars, anyone with the head, legs and stomach for the exercise, can walk over the imposing arches of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Views there are impressive too, and vertiginous if looking down to the car-deck all those feet below.

At first blush, Blackpool Tower and The Sydney Harbour Bridge might not appear to have a great deal in common. The facts differ. If the same feet that have walked the 'bridge also climbed the 'tower, they'd have benefitted on both occasions from the solid feel of steel beneath them. That steel was made in Consett.

Consett stands on foundations today that the stellar rise of the steel industry founded in the mid 1800s. At one time, 'a pall of red dust' is said to have hung over the town; airborne oxide from the steelmaking plants. Today, the Red Dust Consett is best known for is delivered in the shape of a pint or two from a local brewer, the steelworks having closed in the 80s.

A skyline once dotted with vast mills and all the other infrastructure trappings that branded the town are

no longer there. Today, other businesses have moved in and the complexion of the town is forever changed. That's not to say that Consett's lineage rooted in steel will ever be forgotten. With monuments as enduring as Blackpool's Tower and Sydney's harbour bridge, how could it be?

Standing today on the site of a former Consett steel works, or at least a small fraction of its immense footprint, is an Italian restaurant that answers to the name of Il Mulino - "The Mill," in English. The same brick-built premises also house a bar, Altoforno - Blast Furnace.

Il Mulino is the portent of altogether happier times for its premises. Clearly named with a respectful nod toward the industry which practically gave birth to Consett, Il Mulino has been very expertly and tastefully designed and decorated too in order to reflect both the nationality of the cuisine it promotes and to respect the very ground it's built on.

Turning the restaurant owner's aspirations and vision into reality is a job that was awarded to Carl Gerry and his team at Design Xpress, itself Consett based. Exterior signing was part of the project, but that represented a small part of the work overall - by far the biggest

component was transforming the interior.

Wallpaper was considered but didn't quite tick the right boxes. There was concern about its longevity in high-traffic areas and it just didn't present an expansive enough canvas for the soaring and inspiring themes percolating by this time in the heads of all involved.

Enter Metamark and its new DécorMark portfolio of digitally printable wall covering films. The messenger on this occasion was Andy Clay, Metamark's account manager for the region who was able to support Carl and his team with the application advice and technical support they needed to get up to speed with the new class of media quickly. Just as well, ... the restaurant opens in three weeks!

A Baptism of fire probably doesn't come much hotter and it's arguably just as well that Consett's blast furnaces are no longer there to provide it. Carl admits to some reservations about the scale of the job, and the fact that the applied décor solution in the shape of the Metamark DécorMark portfolio was new to him.

The designs used generally draw on Italian influences with colour-ways and other ambient design devices informed by steel and its warm, reddish oxides. The prints are large, and there are plenty of them so they surround diners in the intended ambience and set a tone for the way such exercises should be done in this day and age.

Metamark Etch Effect graphics lend

their accent to the overall impression the graphics communicate and expert advisors on Consett validated the design and its heritage - quite a job, when you consider it meant starting from scratch.

The DécorMark media presented no challenges in the printing. That's no accident. Metamark's development team set out to create an experience with the new media that closely approximates to printing on the long established Metamark MD5. Design Xpress used an HP Latex printer, but the media works equally well with all modern digital ink species.

The revelation came when it was time to apply the materials. Having lost a night's sleep before the event, Carl Gerry admits to being absolutely convinced and very pleasantly surprised by his experience with the MD-WA textured covering from the DécorMark portfolio, declaring: "It went up like a dream!"

Thanks to the adhesive formulation used, the DécorMark materials stay up too. They're as enduring as the ambience they and Design Xpress have together succeeded in creating for Il Mulino and the powerful echoes of Consett past but not forgotten.

The client is delighted with the result and Consett and her visitors are delighted to have a new place to meet, eat and enjoy the surroundings. The experience has also given Design Xpress added impetus. The company is now actively encouraging both designers and businesses to undertake similarly thrilling Décor projects. ■

Another stellar show!

Sign & Digital UK delivered another stellar show experience with the 2016 edition of the event, which attracted 6,240 unique visitors from across the UK and Ireland as well as farther afield.

As well as the products displayed on over 200 stands, visitors were also able to enjoy a host of exclusive product launches and live demonstrations, together with more than 35 daily seminars and workshops, plus two new features, the Digital Signage Theatre and the 'Become a Wrap Expert' workshop.

With most exhibitors reporting brisk business, it's not surprising that 42 percent of the floor space has already been booked for the 2017 exhibition, which the organisers, Faversham House Group, promise will be a real ringer-dinger of a show, as befits an event that will be celebrating its 30th anniversary.

Companies already booked for 2017 include Blackman & White, Biese, CMYUK, Complete CNC Solutions, Digital Blanks, Fairfield Displays, Graphic Printing Technologies (GPT), Inktec/Jetrix, Innotech, Perfect Colours,

PrintMAX, Resolute DTG, Rollroller, Signmaster Systems, Signwaves, Soyang Europe, Ultima Displays and Your Print Specialists (YPS).

Commenting on the 2016 show, Event Director Rudi Blackett, said: "We were overwhelmed by the fantastic response we had from exhibitors and visitors. Strong sales were reported across the board and the footfall was impressive, creating a real buzz across all three- days.

"Now we are already planning for next year and look forward to celebrating both 30 years of Sign & Digital UK plus all the exciting visual delights that our top lineup of exhibitors have to offer!"

Within hours of the show opening, Robin East, Director at **CMYUK** shook hands with industry expert Rob Harrison, the founder of **The Handsome Prints Company** to seal the sale of a **Mimaki JFX200-**



2513 UV flatbed printer.

The Handsome Prints Company, which works with advertising and design agencies and also provides third party support to specialist large format printers, operates in East Anglia, London and the South

East and will use its new acquisition to further expand its business.



Dublin-based **W.C. O'Brien Sign & Print** placed the first Irish order for the first **UVJ55-320** grand-format, roll-to-roll, UV printer, a new offering from **Mimaki** that certainly attracted plenty of attention.

The company's Director, Andrew O'Brien explained: "We flew in specifically to have a demonstration, having previously seen the printer at FESPA Digital and, when Mimaki reseller, **Reprocentre** confirmed that it was priced at just £60k, we knew that



we had to take a closer look!"

Mimaki distributor, **Hybrid Services**, used W.C. O'Brien's own print files to demonstrate the machine's efficacy and Andrew O'Brien was convinced! He said: "This purchase will enable us to bring our own grand-format print work in-house, which will speed up our workflow and give us greater control, but we'll also be providing a trade service too, working with independent exhibition companies and sign and graphics installers throughout Ireland to deliver a high-quality printed output."



Perspex Distribution enjoyed a very busy show, and subsequently reported that it had generated 10 percent more leads than at the previous year's show.

Cementing its position as a leading supplier of UK produced substrates for the wide format print sector, the company combined the usual flurry of activity on the Perspex stand alongside live product demonstrations on the latest printers from **Agfa Graphics** and **Canon**.

Alupanel A-Lite Digital aluminium composite and **Palfam Anti-Static PVC foam** were the ideal substrates to demonstrate the print capability of the new **Agfa Jeti Mira 2716**, which was making its UK debut at the show. Visitors to the Perspex stand were impressed by the precision print and accurate colour output from the Jeti Mira, while the **Canon Océ Arizona** was used to output stunning images on both **Perspex clear acrylic** and **Alupanel black aluminium composite**.

With more and more sign and digital printing businesses now installing



CNC digital cutting tables, as supplied by companies such as **AGCAD, Zund** and **Esiko**, and thus requiring the precision balanced cutting tools that are the obvious accompaniment for machines that run at high spindle speeds, the **Industrial Tooling Corporation (ITC)** stand, with its eye-catching new design and attractive colour scheme, was an obvious first port of call. As well as being able to benefit from the technical expertise of the ITC team lead by Sally Hunt, visitors were also able to learn more about the latest additions to the 2016 edition of the company's Folio catalogue, which includes an impressive range of flat drag knife blades, round shank drag knife blades, oscillating blades, tool holders and collets, drills, hand taps, bed skimming tools, coolant and even sacrificial sheets to protect machine beds.

William Smith used the show to introduce its **Quick Stand** signage display system that is available in three different formats and features a fully customisable LED-illuminated display to provide maximum impact. Made from a combination of aluminium and steel, the system is



quick and easy to assemble and can be transported by a single person, using the specially designed case.

The **Fairfield Displays** stand, which was divided into three clear sections, featured the company's popular and fast growing **LED Light Pocket** range that has been further expanded to include colour changing, free standing and LED options. A further attraction was Fairfield's brand new take on digital signage in the form of a large tablet style screen with a built in operating system that offers plug and play operation, together with high

brightness screens, which are fully legible even when viewed in bright sunlight and are supplied with an inbuilt software package that can be used as a media player or as a complete network system.



Five new machines provided the main point of focus on the **Roland DG** stand, where visitors had the chance to experience the next generation of print technology in person, while this year's 'Scratch & Win' prize draw competition offered them the chance to win a wide variety of exciting items, ranging from caps and mugs through to the latest **ECO-SOL MAX 3** inks and their choice of a **SOLJET EJ-640** printer or **TrueVIS VG-640** printer/cutter.

The response was overwhelming, with an unprecedented number of entries, but the winner was Axyia Signs, which selected as its prize Roland's newly launched TrueVIS VG Series print and cut device.

Commenting on his prize, Lloyd Yates, Director at **Axiya Signs**, declared: "I was in complete shock when I found out that I had won! The addition of the **TrueVIS VG-540** to our business will enable us to bring more production in-house and help to cut our overhead costs dramatically - it's going to be so well used and looked after!" ■



THE SHIMMY SHIMMY SHAKE!

Of all the many interesting and novel products that were on display at Sign & Digital UK, the one that undoubtedly attracted the most attention was on one of the smallest stands. Val Hirst investigates.

During all of the sign related exhibitions that I've attended over the last 25 years, I've witnessed some pretty important product launches, some of which it would be fair to say, have proved to be real game changers that have significantly aided the evolution of the sign and print sectors. However, I don't think that I've ever seen anything that has charmed me half as much as Shimmerdisc, which made its industry debut at this year's show.

This might just be because I spent most of my formative years in Essex, where glamour and glitter is both ubiquitous and obligatory, so whenever I see a bit of sparkle I automatically reach for my white stilettos and gravitate towards it, like a moth to a flame. But I have to say, that on this occasion at least, I was far from alone. During the course of the show I think that almost all of the exhibitors, as well as a goodly proportion of the visitors, found themselves in front of the be-sequined face of David Bowie, which provided the Shimmerdisc stand with its stunning centrepiece.

The company, which was formed by digital print veteran Andrew Ainge, specialises in the production of the

shimmering sequined displays that use thousands of light-reflecting discs to produce photographic quality graphics that appear to move as the light catches them. Unsurprisingly, Shimmerdisc has already captured the imagination of some of the UK's most discerning brands and retailers who are using it to produce captivating window and point of purchase displays and architects and designers who have been equally quick to appreciate how it can be imaginatively used to add a little extra pizzazz to any restaurant, bar, reception area or exhibition stand, or to create a stand alone piece of original artwork.

Andrew Ainge explained that each disc is individually printed on a UV flatbed digital printer to create pixel perfect images, providing designers with a full colour palette, including white for depth, which transforms a plain foil sequin into something quite magical. Each module is reverse printed and optically clear to provide an animated display that offers a very convincing 3D effect.

The smallest display Shimmerdisc produces measures 1000 x 1000mm - which uses 5625 discs - while large wall installations typically use 100,000 plus discs. Displays are



ordered in 200 x 200mm modules, with 225 printed 13mm discs per module and are scalable from one square metre up to billboard size. The company can produce virtual 3D proofs of any required design, plus an animated video that will provide some idea of how the finished display will appear, although, in actual fact, the reality is far, far better.

Recognising that he has something of a winner on his hands, and that demand is likely to far outstrip his own capacity for supply, Andrew is now offering suitably equipped print companies an opportunity to manufacture the patent protected Shimmerdisc displays under license and offers three different options, which are structured to suit

companies of various sizes.

As might be imagined with a product that is so immediately covetable, the rewards for those who participate, are expected to prove highly lucrative.

Further details, plus lots of photographic and video examples are available on the Shimmerdisc website, but I'd urge any interested parties who didn't make it to the show, to catch up on the action immediately on Youtube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VX1Gi88_Y&feature=youtu.be) as something tells me that Andrew can expect a veritable avalanche of response!

For further information visit:
www.shimmerdisc.com ■

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Winner of Top Product Award in America!



- 10 metres a minute
- Intelligent pneumatic technology sets height and pressure automatically
- Patented 'floating' rollers
- Up to 30mm mounting thickness

The award-winning Easymount Air laminates stunning wide format graphics and board mounts, on one of the most advanced concepts ever seen in a wide format laminator.

Pneumatic air pressure controls the laminating rollers, allowing you to mount and laminate with incredible accuracy and speed. Rollers can be locked in place at the exact thickness of the board to prevent crushing the front edge and giving rollers a longer life. The roller 'floats' down to sit on the board without damage.

The revolutionary Easymount Air features 30mm mounting thickness for even more applications and at 10m a minute, is over 50% faster than most other wide format laminating systems.

Worthwhile Investments

Companies explain why they chose the equipment they use

When the **Red Bull Fox Hunt** mountain bike event was scheduled to return to the Pentland Hills outside Edinburgh recently, the organiser was looking for something a bit different in terms of event signage, which is why it turned to Axminster-based **Creative Solutions**.

Operations Manager and Co-Director of Creative Solutions; Jedd Whittington explained: "We've been fortunate enough to work with Red Bull on a number of interesting projects and we're delighted that it continues to trust us to deliver signs and graphics for its major high profile events."

The Fox Hunt format has been running for several years in Northern Ireland and, in 2014, Downhill World Champion Rachel Atherton decided to launch a women-only version, which pits her, as the Fox, against the Hounds, more than 100 female mountain bikers, in a mass-start race that turns the traditional concept of a fox hunt on its head, with the Fox chasing down the pack, attempting to pass as many riders as possible before reaching the end of the course.

Digital Plus, the award winning Leeds based company, has recently installed a **Jeti Mira flatbed** from Agfa just 18 months after investing in an **Anapurna M3200i** roll-to-roll machine.

Founded nearly 20 years ago, Digital Plus, which operates from a smart purpose-built facility and employs a staff of 20 people as well as a team of installers, counts amongst its clients many of the famous brand names in the beauty and fashion markets together with major companies in the financial, insurance, legal, consumer and municipal sectors. It also reports that office refurbishment is becoming one of the mainstays of its business

Rachel elaborated: "I thought it would be so cool if we could get more women racing and I wanted it to be a really welcoming way to introduce them to competitive cycling as for a lot of women it will be the first race that they have ever attempted."

Taking up the story from Creative Solutions' perspective, Jedd Whittington commented: "One of the key requirements was to print over 40 life-sized images of a beagle dog onto rigid PVC boards, which were to be used as way-markers around the course, while also serving as a tongue-in-cheek reference to a real fox hunt. Fortunately, our recently installed **Mimaki JFX200-2513 LED UV** flatbed printer was the perfect machine for the job, coping easily with the demand for high quality, high volume print."

The company, which originally started out in 1999, producing relatively simple vinyl banners from its modest premises in Lyme Regis, has continued to grow and develop by expanding its service offering to include an increasingly wide range of signage, exhibition graphics and other



and thus it is increasingly using a wide variety of different substrates and finishes, which has further refuelled its requirement for a machine that combines impressive print quality, versatility and productivity.

Explaining the rationale behind his company's latest investment, Digital Plus Director Chris Stringwell explained: "We had decided that it



was time to look for a replacement for our existing flatbed printers and, based on our very positive experience with the Anapurna, we were delighted to discover that the Jeti Mira was just what we were looking for."

A six-colour plus white UV-inkjet printer that offers output speeds of up to 227m²/hr, Digital Plus selected

He is also appreciative of the support he's had from both **Hybrid Services**, Mimaki's exclusive UK distributor and reseller **CMYUK**, adding that service from both companies has been 'superb'.

As for the Red Bull Fox Hunt, the event sold out in hours and was proclaimed to be a complete success. Jedd concluded: "Thanks to the efficacy of the Mimaki printers, we are confident that we can deliver the kind of quality signs and graphics that brands such as Red Bull demand and we can't as tackle the next commission!" ■

the 3.2 x 2.7m larger format with both the primer and bolt-on roll-to-roll options, which Chris believes will provide the company with the scope to meet all of the challenges that it is likely to face within the foreseeable future.

He continued: "We find dealing with Agfa very refreshing as it goes to a great deal of trouble to ensure that we are happy and its service and support is first class. What's more we have recently employed a new production manager who will use **Agfa's Asanti workflow** to drive our printers and cutter, so that we can take maximum advantage of the printers' capabilities." ■

"May 31st marks the beginning of a whole new era for cutting technology, where Zünd users can multiply cutting productivity with no additional effort on their part."



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For further information you can visit our website at zund.co.uk, or call us now on Tel: +44 (0)1727 833 003 to arrange a full one-on-one demonstration.

special feature – digital printing

Which printer?

Following the recent flurry of spring shows, any company reviewing its options when it comes to selecting a new digital printer could be excused for feeling a mite confused. To help simplify the decision process we've asked some of the industry's foremost suppliers to tell us which of their machines they believe are worthy of further consideration and why. This was their response.

Mimaki

John de la Roche – National Sales Manager, Sign & Graphics at Hybrid Services, Mimaki's exclusive UK distributor for the UK and Ireland says:

Mimaki CJV150 Series

"Starting at just £5,995, Mimaki's 'entry level' range of integrated printer/cutters is available in four widths, ranging from the 80cm CJV150-75 right up to the 1.6m CJV150-160. The ideal signmaker's tool, the CJV150 automates the design, print and cut process, delivering a quality result, whether it's producing stickers, labels, vehicle graphics, signage, point of sale, posters, canvas, backlit, banners and more!"

"Offered with a choice of inks, the low solvent SS21 ink is the most popular option and white, silver and even orange can be added to extend the gamut and offer alternative special finishes.

Other special features include:

"One thing that can give signmakers a real competitive edge is the CJV150's die-cut capability, which enables graphics professionals to

deliver stickers cut out on a shaped backing sheet, thanks to Mimaki's unique technology that uses a special cutting strip so that a cut can be made right through the vinyl and backing, whilst leaving tiny tabs to hold the print in place. This provides customers with a value-adding pile of shaped stickers

rather than having to peel them off a sheet! ■

Mimaki JV300 Series

"The Mimaki JV300 is the ultimate wide format printer that offers print speeds in excess of 100sq

metres/hour, whilst delivering quality more often associated with fine art printers. Available in 1.3m and 1.6m print widths, it uses Mimaki's latest print head technology to achieve the normally challenging combination of speed and quality.

"Building on Mimaki's solvent printing heritage, the JV300 is intelligent, low maintenance and highly productive. Mimaki's easy-to-use RasterLink RIP software is bundled with every new printer and seamlessly automates the design to print process from popular artwork creation software such as Adobe Illustrator or Corel DRAW.

Other special features include:

"Mimaki's latest bulk ink system is available as an option on a range of Mimaki sign and graphics printers and significantly reduces ink costs, thanks to larger two litre sacks. Fully warrantied and using exactly the same ink as the standard 440ml cartridges, the Mimaki Bulk Ink System (MBIS) is an ideal investment for higher volume print users." ■





Stuart Cole – National Sales Manager, Industrial Products at Hybrid Services says:

Mimaki UJF-3042FX

“Considered the industry standard for small format, direct-to-object printing, the A3 sized UJF-3042FX is the best-selling UV printer in the world. With an almost limitless number of potential applications, it can add revenue generating product lines to any business. For the signmaker though, it opens up a number of opportunities, such as direct to substrate signage on metal or wood, and short runs or one-offs of full colour

photographic prints on any promotional item.

“Equally, higher end products, such as photo blocks, printed slate coasters or branded phone covers can be produced on the same machine – it really is ideal for opening up new product lines and offerings to customers.

Other special features include:

“The Mimaki UJF range includes



printers that feature white ink, a printable primer and even a clear varnish to facilitate the generation of myriad creative effects and ensure

that a completely bespoke end product can be produced for discerning customers.” ■

Mimaki UJV55-320

“Launched at the recent Sign & Digital UK 2016 exhibition, Mimaki’s brand new, 3.2m wide, roll fed, UJV55-320 LED UV printer is aimed at the grand format display market for applications such as retail point of sale, exhibition graphics, backlit and front lit banners.

“Its highly competitive price means it delivers a solution for graphics companies that may have traditionally outsourced this work to invest and bring in house. By utilising

the latest, low energy consuming LED UV lamps to cure the print, the output is dry immediately after printing, enabling it to be finished straight away. With production speeds of up to 110sq metres/hour and using Mimaki’s latest, low cost



LUS-120 inks, it combines ease of use and productivity in a unique platform.

Other special features include:

“The machine’s innovative built-in

lightbox enables the operator to check backlit output on the machine by simulating an installed environment to ensure density and quality are correct, thus potentially saving time, materials and money.” ■

Epson

Phil McMullin, Sales Manager, ProGraphics, Epson UK, says:



“Ideal for signage and high-level POS, the latest range of 64-inch SureColor SC-S

printers feature Epson’s latest-generation PrecisionCore TFP printheads and enables users to produce a wide range of products with maximum productivity and professional-quality results.

“The range uses Epson’s new formulation UltraChrome GS3 inkset, which is quick drying and has a low odour, as well as considerably cheaper. Users can also expect to see average ink consumption reduce by 15 percent as a result of improved ink chemistry.

“Set up is quick and simple, with the large clear panel offering a view of the printing area, while internal LED lights facilitate easy inspection at the point of printing. In addition, the

range features a sophisticated substrate handling system and a highly advanced auto-tension control (AD-ATC) system, plus wide-diameter feed rollers and anti-static flexible pressure rollers to optimise grip feed and accuracy.

“Working in tandem with new formulation inks, users can produce a wide range of highly accurate colours on a wide range of substrates, thanks to the printers’ Precision Dot high-quality mode. The automated printhead maintenance and ink mist collection system is designed to deliver continuous printing for maximum uptime.

“With three models in the SureColor SC-S range, there is an option to suit a variety of production needs and applications, including everything from outdoor signage to high-end interior displays such as exhibition graphics, posters and backlit panels, POS materials, vehicle wraps, wallpaper, and window manifestations.

The SureColor SC-S80600



“This flexible top-of-the-range printer combines performance and application flexibility. It features dual PrecisionCore TFP printheads and 9/10 colours, CMYKLCmLk + red and orange and can also be configured to use white or metallic silver. Users can

easily switch between white and metallic ink to suit job requirements. It delivers print speeds up to 95.1sqm/hr in single-pass banner mode, and up to 12.5sqm/hr in eight-pass film mode.

The SureColor SC-S60600

“This machine is ideal for fast turnaround, high print volume environments. Featuring dual PrecisionCore TFP printheads (CMYKx2), it produces high quality vinyl output at 29.4sqm/hr, banners at 52.3sqm/hr and can print up to 95.3sqm/hr for single-pass applications.



The SureColor SC-S40600



“An entry-level machine, it’s perfect for high-quality POS graphics and signage. This affordable, four-colour printer features a single PrecisionCore printhead and delivers up to 58.4sqm/hr productivity.”

HP

John Telling, Sales Director at Perfect Colours, an HP reseller says:



“These are the latest iteration of the popular HP Latex range. Essentially they are the same machine with two different ink options, the Latex 560 with standard 775ml sized cartridges which is particularly suited to the needs of the sign sector and the Latex 570 with three-litre tanks for companies requiring higher volume production.

The HP Latex 560 and 570

“The Latex series is incredibly versatile, with the Latex ink set making it particularly well suited to the production of display graphics and with its ‘green’ credentials fitting in with many larger companies’ corporate social responsibility policies (CSR). However, it also delivers outdoor durable print that enables it to be used for banners, vehicle graphics and other popular signage applications, as well as the means to tap into the increasingly lucrative indoor décor market with the production of wallpapers, home

furnishings and floor graphics.

“The machines are built to function particularly well in environments with space constraints as all media and ink loading is handled from the front of the printer and new media rolls can be loaded in less than one minute thanks to a new spindle-less media loader. Prints are dry to the touch and resistant to scratching straight off the machine, thus they can be applied immediately, whilst their excellent stretchability and conformability, makes them very popular for use in both traditional vehicle wrapping and the new more novel wrap applications such as furniture and furnishings.



Other special features include:

- Simplified colour management, via an on-board spectrophotometer
- An in-built wiper roller facilitating the use of lower-cost vinyls and banner materials
- HP matched media options
- Print speeds ranging from 91m²/hr (980 ft²/hr) for one pass printing to 5m²/hr for High Saturation Textiles (20-pass printing)
- Print resolution up to 1200 x 1200 dpi “



Roland DG

Mark Elvidge, Business Development Manager at Roland DG says:



“With the digital print sector going from strength to strength it’s now easier than ever

for sign and display companies to exploit emerging market trends. At Roland DG, we have a vast range of easy-to-use machines designed to support profit-driven ventures for sign businesses of all sizes, requirements and skill levels.

The TrueVIS VG-640

“This is the most advanced print and cut machine yet and is ideal for those working to meet high production levels with a quality output. It offers a number of new features, including the new TrueVis eco-solvent ink available in seven colours, more cutting force and mobile device integration to guarantee a high quality output and maximum productivity.

“Ideal for the production of outdoor and indoor applications such signs, banners, vehicle graphics, window and floor graphics, labels, POS displays and heat transfer apparel, it is 64 inches wide, and features four all new

VersaUV LEF-300

“In a competitive market, the key to business growth is flexibility and versatility so that a machine can be used to exploit emerging trends. The LEF-300 UV prints directly onto virtually any media or object enabling users to benefit from the new and lucrative customisation trend.

“It is Roland DG’s largest, fastest and most productive desktop flatbed UV printer yet, with production-boosting features that include a 770mmx330mm printing area, vacuum table for media placement, four printheads and two UV-LED

SOLJET EJ-640

“Another 64” wide machine that is ideal for the broad gamut of sign and display applications it combines productivity, quality and reliability and features dual staggered printheads, an advanced media feed and a stable new industrial design.

“It can also offer savings of up to 50 percent on running costs via Roland DG’s quick-drying EJ inks that offer low consumption and are available in



FlexFire printheads that facilitate faster firing frequency to print with multi-droplet patterns at up to 900 dpi. Each droplet of ink falls with ultimate precision and uniformity, allowing printers to produce highly detailed and intricate designs at a faster speed to maximise productivity levels.

“The newly developed contour cutting system has been equipped with a new cut carriage, blade and blade holder which allows for increased down force of up to 500g. In addition, a new and rigid industrial

lamps for fast bi-directional printing. It also comes complete with the new VersaWorks Dual RIP software that enables special colour generation from CMYK data simplifying the use of white or gloss inks in artworks. Built

one litre cartridges. A number of advanced time effective features such as easy media handling, an integrated tri-heater system and VersaWorks DUAL RIP software all aid cost effective productivity.

Other special features include:

- NEW VersaWorks Dual RIP software
- Choice of two ink configurations:

design ensures optimum printing and cutting performance enabling users to guarantee a high quality finish every time at premium pricing, which increases their profit margins.

Other special features include:

- A choice of two ink configurations: Dual CMYK, 7seven colour (CMYKLcLmLk) and white.
- Cost efficient 500cc pouches with reusable holders

to meet high production demands it prints on a huge variety of substrates or objects such as acrylic, wood, metal, glass, plastic, phone cases, bus keys and pens.

Dual CMYK or seven colour (CMYKLcLmLk)

- Staggered printheads for increased production
- Roland OnSupport
- Roland Printer Assist iPad app
- RolandCare Silver Warranty

- New LED lighting to illuminate the print carriage and maintenance area

- New Roland DG Mobile Panel for remote operation from a smart phone or tablet

- NEW VersaWorks Dual RIP software

- A take-up system for automated media collection

- Roland OnSupport for remote monitoring of status and production

- RolandCare Silver Warranty

Other special features include:

- Personalises virtually any substrate or item up to 100mm in height and 8kg in weight

- CMYK + White + Gloss ECO-UV ink for outstanding print quality

- NEW VersaWorks Dual RIP software

- Includes Roland OnSupport

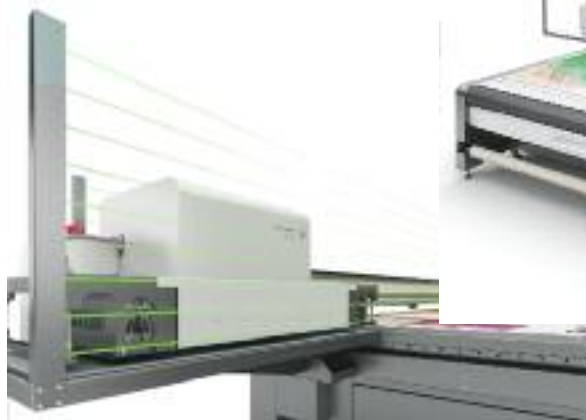
- RolandCare Silver Warranty “

SwissQprint

Steve Pridham, SwissQprint and Zund Sales Manager at Spandex, which distributes SwissQprint systems within the UK, says:

“Fully developed and manufactured in Switzerland, SwissQPrint printers are characterised by high precision engineering, extra-long service life and robust build quality down to the very last detail.

“Featuring a modular design, they are all based on a solid flatbed solution, thus enabling users to create the machine they need with optional add-ons such



as roll-to-roll and board options, as well as nine freely configurable colour channels. Indeed, a fully-equipped SwissQprint machine is rather like a Swiss army knife in that it can be precisely tailored to include all of the required tools in one unit!

“Depending on the configuration, the range, which now includes three different models, can print anything from the smallest panels, through to roll material and oversize media of any kind, with the highest accurate precision.

Nyala 2

“This high performance model features a 6.5 sq.m printing table which offers the freedom to print onto all formats at a maximum print speed of 206 m²/h. It offers a flatbed print area of 3.2m x 2.0m (edge to edge printable) and a maximum roll-to-roll media width of 3.2m and 180kg in roll weight.

Mutoh

Melanie Enser, Marketing Manager at Colourgen, the authorised UK distributor for Mutoh, says:

“The latest range of Mutoh ValueJet printers incorporate high performance micro piezo head technology to deliver unmatched print quality plus a high level of print automation for the sign and display sector. Designed to deliver long term outdoor and interior applications such as posters, banner, backlit signage, wall coverings, point of sale displays, fine art reproductions, vehicle graphics and more, they combine high print speeds, with great quality and high resolutions very cost effectively.

Mutoh ValueJet 1638X



“This 64” Dual Head Production printer uses Mutoh Eco-Ultra or Universal Mild Solvent Inks to deliver dual-head set-up with the latest generation 1440 nozzle piezo heads delivering top quality output at typical production speeds of 36sq.m/hr and top speeds of 94 sq.m/hr.

It also features Drop Master print technology, a revolutionary print automation technique that eliminates the need for cumbersome

and time consuming media dependent printer adjustments. Knowing the media thickness and consequently the drop-throw distance between printhead and media surface, DropMaster automatically recalculates and adjusts the uni/bi-directional fire timings regardless of resolution and print speed, leading to an overall increase of image definition and smoothness and significant time savings for the operator.

“In addition, it offers Mutoh’s

Intelligent Interweaving together with simplified installation, setup and calibration and excellent print quality and clarity at all production speeds and with all media thicknesses.

There has also been a huge improvement in the overall dot control, leading to better image definition at all speeds and finally and perhaps most importantly, the VJ 1638X has an excellent cost per print performance.

Other special features include:

- Inks available in both 220ml cartridges and one-litre packs for long runs
- Optional 3M Matched System Warranty with 3M Mutoh Universal Mild Solvent inks
- ValueJet Status Monitor
- Handles rolls up to 100kg
- High precision Y-Rail

Impala 2

"This compact model is so upgradeable that it can end up doing the work of two machines, while occupying the space of just one, as

Its performance, both in terms of printing and format can effectively be doubled. The top of the range Impala 2 offers an impressive maximum print speed of 180 m²/h and a flatbed print area of 2.5m x 2.0m."



Oryx 2

"This extra-capable entry-level model offers outstanding print quality and versatility, being freely configurable to offer up to nine colour printing, a 2.5m roll-to-roll option for continuous

flexible media printing and a board option for oversized panels. It has a maximum print speed of 65 m²/h and a print area of 2.5m x 2.0m.

Mutoh ValueJet 1604X

"This attractively priced 64"-wide printer is the ideal start-up machine, which enjoys all of the proven ValueJet advantages in terms of machine build and quality and can be used for general signage purposes with Mutoh's Eco-Ultra or Universal Mild Solvent Inks to deliver single head, CMYK printing at speeds of up to 15sq.m/h

"It can be used to produce the broad spectrum of banners, billboards,

building wraps, posters, POS displays, wayfinding signage, plus pop-ups and roll-ups, as well as vehicle graphic applications.

Other special features include:

- Uses both 220ml cartridges and one litre ink packs for long runs
- Ideal for volume sticker production
- Introduced as an alternative



machine to Mutoh's faster ValueJet 1624X in terms of speed and price for entry-level users or those

looking for an additional machine for frequent material changes



Mutoh ValueJet 426UF

"This desktop A3+ Flatbed LED UV printer uses Mutoh LED UV Ink in a CMYK configuration, plus white, plus varnish and is ideally suited for use with short run items or one off designs/prototypes, awards, customised gadgets, packaging and labels on boards, acrylics and glass

Other special features include:

- Excellent print/gloss preservation

- An integrated vacuum table
- UV inks that eliminate the need for costly extraction methods
- Wide distance between the printhead and UV lamp facilitates the printing of reflective materials

- Low energy and low temperatures facilitate the use of heat sensitive substrates"

special feature – cutting, routing and laminating

It's all in the finish

Cutting, routing and laminating remain key sign manufacturing paradigms but in addition have now enabled diversification from core manufacturing activities into new markets. These include the thriving digital print and cut, print wear and promotional products, labelling and packaging sectors that help create new revenue streams and lead to increased business and commensurate profitability for sign and display companies. Mike Connolly reports on some of the more impressive applications for cutting, routing and finishing systems as well as reviewing the latest product innovations.

Boosting business growth at B2B

Following installation of an AXYZ 6010 CNC router, Waltham Abbey, Essex-based B2B Exhibitions has been able to take on a huge amount of additional work that has contributed significantly to the company's future growth prospects.

Established seven years ago as a single-person business by owner Greg Shire operating initially out of his garage, the rapid development of the company led to its relocation at a 3,500 square foot facility employing a full-time staff of five and using 20 additional part-time employees as business grew. B2B Exhibitions specialises in the bespoke production of exhibition stands, special event promotional signs and displays and shop fitting units. The AXYZ router is used for virtually all of the company's output that includes, for example, melamine-faced boards for high-end exhibition stand elements and fabricated acrylic sheets for signs and displays.

Greg Shire commented: "Since installation of the AXYZ router we have been able to increase considerably the volume of work undertaken to the extent that it has been possible to set up a separate company to fully maximise the router's huge potential."

The AXYZ 6010 router has a processing area of 2159mm (width) x 3048mm (length). It incorporates the AXYZ Automatic Tool Change (ATC) facility and AXYZ Vision System (AVS) for optimum routing/cutting accuracy. Greg Shire added: "The router also includes special pop up pins on either side of the machine bed to ensure that successive sheets of material are always located in the same position on the bed."

In common with all AXYZ routers, the 6010 can be supplied with additional machining options. These include the AXYZ Auto Zone Management facility that ensures the material being processed is always held securely



during the routing/cutting cycle and the latest A2MC machine control system. The A2MC has a massive 16GB of memory for program storage as well as providing network connectivity for error-free program transfer. A further optional production tool enhancement is the latest helical rack and pinion drive system featuring a multiple gear teeth configuration. This helps spread the workload more evenly and leads to greater cutting accuracy, faster throughput speeds, reduced material wastage and, ultimately, a longer than normal machine life.

Included in a number of high-end projects for which the AXYZ 6010 router played a major part was the construction of a special pop-up shop created for optics specialist Leica. Greg Shire concluded: "The entire structure was made from plywood cut by the router and featured a MDF-based frontage painted to simulate the appearance of brick. The router was also used to build the B2B Exhibitions' main office that is also made of wood. It involved the processing of 150 sheets of 18mm hardwood ply over a period of five days." ■



Making a stand

A DYSS X7 digital cutting table supplied by AG/CAD has enabled exhibition stand construction specialist Stand Innovations to set up a separate large-format printing company, which has resulted in new business and increased profitability.

Called StandOut Graphics, the new company specialises in the provision of bespoke digitally printed graphics and advertising solutions to support the exhibition stand construction work undertaken by Stand Innovations. Director Tom Noon commented: "We weren't geared up for creating graphics for our stand designs so these had to be contracted out at some considerable cost. So to solve the problem, we invested over £350,000 in specialist equipment including a large-format Jetrix printer and the DYSS X7 2230T digital cutting table and refurbished an adjacent unit so that we could reclaim the business being contracted out and target the



business we were losing because we did not have the capacity to handle it. A year later, both objectives have been achieved, thanks in no small part to the new kit."

Having opted for this particular cutting table and the Jetrix printer, StandOut Graphics is now able to undertake large-scale printing and cutting of a wide range of materials, including MDF, foamed board, aluminium composite sheet, Perspex, vinyl and glass.

Tom Noon added: "The ability of the DYSS machine to precisely cut large non-uniform shapes with a perfect finish, based on a wide range of materials, has been a major benefit to both businesses."



Key design features of the DYSS X7 include the K-Cut Vision system that intuitively identifies datum marks on each job and automatically calculates the required tool path. The machine claims 100 percent precision of cut on materials, even if their orientation to the machine bed is not parallel. Furthermore, the robust Superhead cutting head has the ability to accommodate six millimetre-diameter routing tools that can handle the thickest of materials. The cutting head also provides a threefold interchangeable production capability covering routing, knife cutting and creasing, thus reducing production and lead times on large projects.



Tom Noon concluded "The flexibility of the combined DYSS and Jetrix machines has yielded a healthy year one profit and helped to bring in new business whilst also reducing the amount of work contracted out by Stand Innovations. As a stand-alone operation, StandOut Graphics has a bright future and has enabled us to enter new markets, such as the point-of-sale display sector." ■

The ace performer

Having installed a Zund S3 digital cutting table at its Northampton facility, Nene Packaging has greatly speeded up production with a commensurate increase in business growth and profitability.

The company is an approved supplier of point-of-sale and floor display material to major supermarkets such as Tesco and other retail outlets.

Commenting on the reason for installing the Zund digital cutting table, Nene Packaging's owner Rob Lugmeyer said: "Our two existing CAD tables were slow and antiquated and limited to cutting out plain cardboard. To produce low-volume runs our customers needed



to spend up to £200 on tooling costs, which made it impossible for smaller businesses.

"We needed to upgrade in order to drive the company forward in the marketplace and, in March of this year, Zund UK distributor CMYUK supplied an ex-demonstration Zund S3 to replace one of the CAD tables. We also installed a new EFI VUTEK wide-format printer. This investment alleviated prohibitive tooling costs as well as speeding up the sample-



making process and enabling short production runs."

The Zund S3 includes a camera system that reads registration marks outside the main printing area and helps reduce material wastage. Like all Zund cutting tables, the S3 offers a modular tooling facility that enables automated processing of a wide range of materials up to a thickness

of 25mm. This makes the machine ideal for the company's point-of-sale and display sample production and its general brown-box work for engineering parts.

According to Rob Lugmeyer, it is likely that at a future date the remaining CAD cutter will also be replaced with a second Zund digital cutting table ■

special feature – cutting, routing and laminating

Rolling success

The Rollroller Flatbed Applicator supplied by William Smith continues to provide one of the most efficient and cost-effective methods of applying self-adhesive vinyl, cut vinyl graphics, digital prints and application tapes to a wide range of disparate rigid and flexible substrates.

Available in a choice of four formats (Entry, Regular, Premium and a dedicated Traffic option for traffic and road sign applications involving rigid substrates) and in different sizes, the super-fast Rollroller has enabled sign and graphics producers to eliminate time-consuming and labour-intensive print finishing, pre-masking and laminating processes associated with traditional methods of application. Production is now far higher and much easier and quicker by comparison with these methods and this has led to a huge reduction in time and labour costs and provided a fast return on investment with increased profitability for all owners of the

machine

For example, many sign and graphics companies that have installed the Rollroller have benefited from faster production times that have been as high as 80 percent by comparison with traditional methods of application. In addition, the applicator can be operated by a single person, leading to huge savings in labour costs, as well as enabling a radical reduction in material wastage.

Following installation of a Rollroller, Vaughan Allcock, Founder and Director of Birmingham-based Eventsigns, commented: "The Rollroller has considerably reduced the time it takes to mount large graphics and has enabled us to eliminate the presence of air bubbles and creases that occur frequently when using the more traditional methods of application that invariably require two people to complete. Having used the machine for a large exhibition graphics project, we were



impressed by its speed, single-person operational capability and the quality of finish achieved, plus the incredibly short time it took to complete the project with none of the aforementioned problems."

Managing Director of Bedfordshire-based Paramount Imagination & Creation was equally enthusiastic about the performance of the Rollroller and commented: "The result of the investment in this machine has enabled us to produce visually stunning graphics that met the critical quality guidelines of a leading fragrance and cosmetics manufacturer for which we do work and has enabled huge savings in production costs and commensurate overall profitability."

Print Studio Manager at Paramount, Jane White added: "We used it for a large promotional campaign across 21 airports on behalf of Burberry Body, having undertaken the same promotion in the year prior to installation of the machine. However, this year we completed the project in a 30 percent faster time and 25 percent more cost effectively, due to a huge reduction in material wastage, far less errors and a better finished product."

William Smith will shortly announce the availability of the new ROLL-X machine, which will be comparable to the existing regular machine, both in terms of design and price point. ■

Back in-house

Investment in a Versa Tech cutter has enabled retail design and printing specialist Practical Minds to bring in-house the cutting and finishing processes that previously were contracted out.



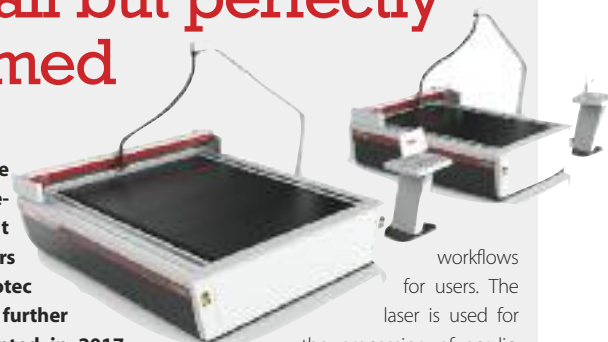
Established in 2008 by Managing Director Andy Winstanley, Practical Minds creates displays for the retail and exhibition markets, and serves leading brands including Harrods, Nike and Timberland. The company works collaboratively with brand owners, retailers, designers, architects and marketers, undertaking everything from initial design concepts through to development, manufacture and installation.

The Versa Tech cutter supplied by reseller Blackman and White features a 3000 x 2000mm processing bed and incorporates a multi-head cutter that can handle a wide range of disparate materials, including self-adhesive vinyl, foamed and aluminium composite sheets, acrylic and plastics, textiles, card and paper. The cutter is available in a choice of three different formats comprising flatbed, conveyor and laser-equipped models. ■

Small but perfectly formed

The range of large-format laser cutters from Trotec will be further supplemented in 2017 with the addition of the SP2000 model, a smaller version of the award-winning SP3000 machine that is the largest in the Trotec family.

The SP2000 will have a processing area of 1680 x 2510mm compared with the larger SP3000, which has a processing area of 2210 x 3210mm. The SP3000 also boasts a faster operating speed of two metres per second and incorporates enhanced ergonomics to create more efficient



workflows for users. The laser is used for the processing of acrylic, wood and textiles.

Notable features of the 1500 x 1250mm SP1500 laser cutter include the motion system, working head and laser source, in addition to InPack Technology that ensures long-term reliability. Trotec also supplies an extensive range of flatbed laser cutters for precision cutting, engraving and marking, based on CO₂, Fiber and Flex technologies, as well as a range of Galvo marking systems. ■

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special feature – cutting, routing and laminating

A steep learning experience

Back in the late 1990's, Peter Wilby and Max Wright, both seasoned professionals with vast experience in printing, were facing the realisation that, with advancing technology, their combined futures were looking extremely bleak.

Following a visit to the Franchise Show at the NEC, they decided to join a national franchise in the sign industry as this appeared to relate most closely to their past experience and enabled them to work out of a

van and from home.

A couple of years later and with the franchisor unable to provide the promised support, Peter and Max opted to become independent, which is when they established Instant Image and took up residence in their first unit on the present site. Peter Wilby explained: "In those early years, it was a steep learning curve but we have been able to build up sufficient local business and have never needed to advertise to secure this. Having seen a vertical panel saw

in operation in one of the DIY sheds, our first machine acquisition was the new KF16 vertical panel saw from Sagetech that is designed primarily for the smaller business. The saw is used by the partnership to cut acrylic and aluminium composite sheets that hitherto would be on several days' lead times from a sub-contractor, as well as timber-based materials.

The KF16 is just one of the four ranges of machines that are available from Sagetech. The Zapkut ZM range of saws is designed for lighter duties and



starts with the budget-priced ZK8 portable unit. The saw handles a range of commonly used signmaking materials, while the heavier-duty Koolcut range of machines handle the thickest of materials, including the widely specified three by two-metre sheets. ■

The complete package

Best known for the Tekcel brand of routers for which it is the exclusive UK distributor, Complete CNC Solutions also distributes the relatively new Protek Unico TT digital cutter.

Key features of the Protek Unico TT include static and reciprocating knives housed in a twin-tool bay and an ultra-accurate print/cut registration system. The machine's steered knives and V cutters will process virtually any rigid or flexible material likely to encounter ink and

many more that will not. Exceedingly fast in operation, the machine cuts, creases and grooves to precisely controlled depths.

In common with other flatbed digital cutters, the Unico TT also incorporates a router that claims to outperform dedicated machines. According to Complete CNC Solutions, whilst the 3.6kW routing spindle would be considered an over-specification on any other digital cutter it has proved ideal for the Unico TT. The machine also

includes a powerful vacuum bed, waste extraction unit and helical rack and pinion drive system.

Complementing the Protek Unico TT is the latest Unico CNC heavy-duty and high-volume router. It is equipped to handle the thickest and most resistant materials, including plastics,



metals, solid woods and composites. The router incorporates an automatic tool change facility, flatness sensor, vacuum bed hold-down system and waste extraction unit. ■



Available from Leopold Professional Imaging, the Colex Sharpcut Conveyor flatbed cutter, which is said to be the company's most productive solution for automated finishing of wide-format media can be used for a wide range of applications, including POP/POS displays,



labels, decals, boxes and textile/fabric constructions.

Sharp solutions

The machine incorporates an interchangeable triple tool head station that selects the appropriate tool for each job, as well as a six-zone vacuum system with the Optiscout vision registration system. The package provided includes a fixed knife, oscillating knife and router, with the new and improved oscillating knife cutting at 14,000 strokes per minute to enable a 50 per cent increase in cutting speed.

A wide range of specialist cutting tools is also available from Colex to accommodate specific applications and workflow requirements. ■

Digital or die

Leading supplier of flatbed plotter/cutters, Graphtec GB has now added the i-Mark automatic digital die cutter to its product portfolio.

The i-Mark die cutter is based on the popular Graphtec CE6000-40 plotter/cutter and dedicated i-Mark software. It can be used for a range of cutting applications, including short-run label production, digital prints and packaging and will handle printed sheets of varying thicknesses and sizes ranging from A4 up to Super A3 at 330 x 483mm. It is especially ideal for short-run label production, since all the die cutting is performed digitally by the i-Mark die cutter and thus eliminates the need to purchase expensive dies.

One of the unique features of the

cutter is that, depending on the thickness of the substrate being processed, it can handle up to 120 sheets of material in a continuous cycle, but with the ability to add further sheets as required without interruption of the cutting process. This is a capability that Graphtec GB considers sets the i-Mark apart from any other comparable sheet-fed system.

The desktop-mounted die cutter comprises three main machine components: sheet feeder, cutting unit and collection tray. The compact footprint of the cutter means that it can be mounted onto a table as small as 60 x 67cm. It facilitates the contour-cutting of printed sheets on cardboard without operator intervention and, since it is equipped with an internal vacuum compressor,



no external air supply connection is required.

Perfect sheet alignment is achieved via a crop mark reading for each individual sheet, with a camera equipped with i-Mark technology performing the crop mark adjustments in a fraction of a second. Software algorithms compensate for any distortion from the printing process to achieve accurate cutting with minimal bleed. There is also an option to cut perforated lines during the file creation, while the cutting parameters set by the i-Mark software program enable the use of crop marks as small as four

millimetres. This enables maximisation of the sheet size and minimal material wastage. Contingent upon the material being processed and the complexity of the image outline, the average cutting speed of the i-Mark is 30-40 seconds for each sheet.

In addition to the kiss-cut cutting option for self-adhesive sheets, heavier material cutting is possible on board up to 350gsm. The cutting blade is designed to accommodate two different cutting modes and works by an opening that protects the blade from wear during the cutting process. ■

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special feature – cutting, routing and laminating

Digital Deadline has it covered

A specialist in signmaking, vehicle wrapping and wide-format digital printing, Leicestershire-based Digital Deadline has been in business since 2004. Included in the hardware installed at its premises is an Easymount Air laminator supplied by Vivid Lamination that replaced the previous GBC machine.

Having researched the marketplace for this replacement, Director Mark Brooks commented: "During research we were impressed by the frequent positive reviews of the Easymount Air laminator and the decision to purchase this particular machine was encouraged by our close links with Vivid Lamination. The GBC machine was not meeting our large-volume requirements and it needed to be replaced."

In addition to the new laminator, Digital Deadline also installed two Mimaki JV33 printers to support its wide-format work and to partner with the Easymount Air laminator. Mark Brooks continued: "We were given a demonstration of the laminator by the team at Vivid Lamination and



were impressed by its performance and, in particular, by the fact that the laminator's rollers can automatically detect the amount of pressure required for the laminating process. In addition to this, the rollers also stay completely level, regardless of the type of substrate being laminated."

Mark Brooks was also impressed by the Easymount's faster speed of 10 metres per minute and this was also a deciding factor in the purchase. He concluded: "For much of the time, we are laminating with full rolls of vinyl. With our previous laminator this would be a much slower process, but because the Easymount Air has the extra roll-to-roll unit, the whole process has become much easier and



quicker and this has helped increase both our production levels and our profitability." ■

Increasing profits

Creative cardboard engineering and print specialist, Anytech has recently installed a DYSS X5 digital cutter, supplied by AG/CAD, at its Swindon headquarters in order to enhance its in-house capabilities and to expand the large format part of its business.

The new X5 machine is now working in-line with Anytech's Xerox and Roland digital print devices to produce large format graphics and POS work, while also processing short-runs of digitally printed packaging without the need for the lengthy lead-times, set-up and other costs associated with conventional die-cutting. With innovative bespoke design a key part of its services, the company is also

using the DYSS X5 to prototype new creations for its customers and to further extend its own product portfolio.

AG/CAD's KASEMAKE CAD software was acquired as part of the same

investment, enabling Anytech to produce imaginative structural designs speedily and efficiently and, in addition, the company has also found KASEMAKE's 3D visualisation features to be invaluable when pitching to new clients and servicing existing customers, as, in a matter of moments, the software is able to render proposed designs as interactive 3D mock-ups, which can then be emailed



for approval or proofing purposes.

Chin Williams, the owner of Anytech, considered a variety of flatbed cutters before selecting the DYSS X5, which, he declared, was the clear winner, with the KASEMAKE package also adding a host of extra benefits.

Anytech has been growing steadily since its formation and, following the

Get tiger vision!



UK manufacturer of flatbed knife and laser cutters, Blackman & White, has announced the arrival of Tiger Vision its new software for advanced graphic cutting, without the need for pre-printed registration points.

Especially designed to enable users to cut what they see, including unusual shapes and off-key graphics, without the need for registration marks, Tiger Vision also enables the operator to intervene in the cut file to compensate for stretched materials, such as fabrics or digitally printed textiles. The software works by using the actual graphics file as the cut file.

Tiger Vision software by Blackman & White is now available with all of its latest models ■

arrival of the DYSS X5, all of the company's print finishing is now being handled automatically in-house, providing it with a real competitive edge when it comes to turnaround times and price.

Chin Williams concluded: "I am confident that our investment in equipment and software will enable us to increase company profits substantially, and don't think that it's unreasonable to aim for at least doubling our turnover within the next 12 months." ■

STYLISH SIGN ACCESSORIES



Following the 'big reveal' at the recent Sign & Digital UK 2016 exhibition, Signwaves has introduced Stand-Off Sign Fixings for trade customers.

The fixings, which can hold sign-panel thicknesses ranging from 2mm to 12mm and are available in diameters of either 13mm or 19mm, come in a variety of different materials and finishes, including stainless steel, aluminium and brass, with the stainless steel options being suitable for both internal and external use.



Each individual unit is protectively sealed in twin polythene sleeves to eliminate the possibility of any surface abrasion prior to installation.

For further information:
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co.uk or visit:
www.signwaves.co.uk

COLOURED CHROME COMBINATIONS



Avery Dennison Graphics Solutions has launched a new range of Transparent Coloured Overlaminates for Conform Chrome films, which are available in three distinct colours, orange, green and purple, to complement the five existing Conform Chrome colours and further multiply the creative colour possibilities.

When used in tandem with Conform Chrome films, the overlaminates

offer a multi-layer functionality that protects the chrome film from being scratched or damaged, while also providing the opportunity to introduce even more dazzling colour combinations.

For further information visit:
graphics.averydennison.eu/col or
find an Avery distributor at:
<http://graphics.averydennison.eu/en/home/about-us/locations/distributor-finder.html>

LONG TERM WRAPPING



APA has launched CW/R00-FX, a top quality white gloss cast film, which can be used in conjunction with solvent, eco-solvent, UV and Latex ink technologies and is formulated for long-term digital prints such as those used for wrapping applications.

A latest generation film that combines high-quality materials

and cutting-edge technology, CW/R00-FX features APA's "Air Free System" technology that enables repositioning, thus making it extremely easy to apply and also carries B-S2-D0 reaction to fire certification.

For further information visit:
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PRETTY PASTELS



ORAFOL is adding six new pastel shades to its ORACAL 631 Exhibition Cal and ORACAL 638 Wall Art ranges, which feature a matt finish.

These new additions further extend the scope of these popular ranges,

which already offer an extensive choice of colours and thus provide users with the opportunity to enhance any decorative theme.

For further information visit:
www.orafol.com

BRILLIANT BACKLIT GRAPHICS



Drytac Europe has announced ViziPrint Illuminate, a 100µ (4mil) translucent matte PET film for brilliant backlit window graphics and vibrant backlit display applications for use in high-end retail advertising applications.

Reverse printable, its bright white base colour diffuses light, thus creating more vivid window graphics, backlit displays, decals and

stickers with a wider colour gamut.

Suitable for both indoor and short-term outdoor applications, ViziPrint Illuminate, which can be used with UV and Latex printing technologies, is available in roll widths up to 1524mm (60").

For further information visit:
<http://www.drytac.com/viziprint-illuminate.html>

special feature – cutting, routing and laminating

Run the marathon

WXYZ International, a leading supplier of CNC routing, cutting and engraving solutions, via its online CNCRouterShop division, has introduced a specially designed tool for the processing of the solid and particle woods and laminates that are used in the production of outdoor signs and, in particular, those installed at country parks and rural areas where natural materials are both the preferred and more environmentally aware choice. Called the Marathon Compression Tool, it is supplied in a choice of diameters and lengths to accommodate varying material

processing requirements. The tool has an advanced cutting geometry and a unique coating that has been specially formulated to protect the cutting head from the high temperatures generated during the routing/cutting process. The combined upwards and downwards spiral geometry of the tool ensures a clean edge finish on both the top and bottom surfaces of the material being processed. This is of special significance if chipping of double-sided laminates is to be avoided, or when processing natural woods where edge-finishing could prove problematical if alternative standard spiral tools are used.

The Marathon Compression Tool further extends the range of routing/cutting tools, spare parts and accessories that are available on next-day delivery 24/7 via the WXYZ CNCRouterShop online facility. These tools are continually supplemented through sourcing by WXYZ International of the most advanced products from the leading European suppliers. They include high-quality router bits, collets and cones, all of which are compatible with various spindle types, oscillating and tangential knife blades and special-purpose tools.



These routing/cutting production tools accommodate not only the requirements of WXYZ and Pacer machines but also any other machine, regardless of type and country of origin. ■

New enhancements

A new family of high-capacity sheet feeders for the Kongsberg C and X series of digital cutting tables is about to be introduced by Esko.

Called the iBF range, the feeders have been designed to handle the widest range of rigid board substrates, both now and in the

future. The feeders handle pallets of rigid materials with multiple stacks at high speed. They can also be used in conjunction with a roll feeder for handling flexible materials without having to exchange the board feeder.

Esko has also introduced the new Device Manager for precise production planning and prioritisation in digital finishing operations. The

system facilitates absolute control over all aspects of the finishing process, while the supporting dedicated software determines optimal sheet nesting and increases production levels. Operators of the Device Manager use an intuitive drag-and-drop interface to prioritise workflow, insert rush jobs and even balance workloads between tables. The system can also be connected to Esko's Automation Engine workflow solution. ■



Folio 4 wraps it up

At the recent Sign & Digital UK exhibition, Industrial Tooling Corporation (ITC) introduced the latest Issue 4 of its Folio catalogue. A paradigm shift from the previous Issue 3 catalogue, it is packed with new product innovations that will benefit sign manufacturers and digital printers.

Key products featured in the catalogue include an expanded range of balanced routing tools for a diverse collection of material types and applications and a new line of knife tools. An extensive selection of flat drag knives, round shank drag knives, oscillating and rotating blades in a huge range of sizes, geometrics and cutting angles is also

featured. Adding to the product mix are high-quality drills, hand-taps, tool-holders, collets, MQL coolant and even sacrificial sheets for protecting machine processing beds. ■



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This month, **Mark Godden** explains why



It's a material world

There was a time, when weeding was a truly excruciating experience - but it's a long time ago. Weeding, or rather reducing that very simple idea to practice, was always my weak spot. Back in the day when I sold early signmaking computers, my pee-poor weeding skills came between many a deposit cheque and me.

I was saved, and so was my income, you'll all be glad to learn, and I managed to put meat back on the menu. It was thanks to the intervention of materials manufacturers who spotted the opportunity to improve their products and make them more tolerant of people with my kind of fat-fingered failings.

I've never said thank you.

For the benefit of anyone who has never had to engage a sea of fiddly looking type and 'weed it out', weeding, in this context, is the art of removing all of the background matter from your neatly cut text, plus the middle of the letters that aren't needed. It sounds easy and it is now, but it wasn't then. One slip and you would have been done for.

What's changed? Materials have.

Let's start with the liner. Liners at one time were a means to protect the 'glue or 'pressure sensitive adhesive' on the back of the vinyl you'd have been working with and little more than that. The willingness of the vinyl to let go of the liner back then was highly variable, but when signmaking computers came along, it suddenly became very important.

Material that was too tight on its liner was absolute purgatory to try and weed. Any element of labour saved by the signmaking computer was promptly spent on the time needed to get the waste matter off the clingy liner without losing the good stuff.

Material that was too loose had its own problems. The smaller parts of things that were being cut would shift under the influence of the knife doing the cutting and get mashed into the machine. Not so much a sign as bin-fodder.

Finding the sweet spot demanded the efforts of white-coated individuals who

went and did just that. The result is a measure of performance that's simply taken for granted today.

A tight liner wasn't the only thing that kept lettering hanging on for grim death. In my experience, the nastiest of all traps set by weeding was cut-through detail that resolutely refused to be separated from the surrounding material. How can that happen? You cut through a face film and the shape you're cutting is isolated. No!

Pressure sensitive adhesives have, and had, a rheology associated with them. That's to say they have characteristics that make them flow. So as the knife passes and cuts through the face film and the adhesive underneath, the adhesive flows back in the kerf or void and knits back together. When you try to weed, the lettering lifts right out with the background matter.

It took the skills of a micro-surgeon to separate attached detail once it started to lift. In my case the end game came quickly and the waste bin filled even faster.

Adhesive reformulation sorted the issue and, in hand with other developments, heralded the day the best of us could literally rip the weed off the liner leaving perfectly spaced lettering behind just waiting for the centres to be popped out.

Thanks to material manufacturers' innovations we have materials that lay flat and stay flat. Performance tuned weeding characteristics that save hours and thousands and we have output that adheres reliably in all sorts of conditions. Those innovations happened at quite a pace and had to. Thousands were lining up to make signs with computers.

That was then.

Today, there's little or no incentive to

invent a workable weeding machine because most of you print what most of you produce. You can print finer detail than you could ever hope to cut and weed - so that's what you do.

That hasn't let materials manufacturers off the hook though. Such is your love for vinyl, you wanted it to work with print hardware, or, more to the point, with digital ink species. Some vinyl did work. Some vinyl almost worked. Some vinyl didn't and never would.

Materials manufacturers have again responded to market need and we today have a whole raft of so-called 'digital' media. Not all of it has been expressly developed for the new world though, some works more by accident than by design.

Brilliantly performing digital media has quite a range of talents that, like good weeding performance, are somewhat taken for granted. It holds ink without complaint, it dries readily and despite the assault of solvent, heat and the laminating regimes, it sits there and takes it all yielding results you can apply and not lose sleep over.

I never said thanks for that either.

One of the most remarkable improvements materials have delivered in recent years traces to the internal formulation and manufacturing practices that mean you can take them and wrap complex surfaces. That really has taken some thinking about. Once again, it's implied need from the market that has spurred the biggest advances.

Today, you can stretch printed material to within millimetres of spectacular failure and it's you that'll be credited with spectacular success. The material took it all though: the stretching, the heat, the chemical assault and the endless repositioning. All it did was work. And there it sits, unshaken and

ready to perform for years. It's only fifty or so microns of modern plastic. You ask a lot and all it does is gives.

Thanks are due there too.

The industry's latest tangential departure from business as usual sees us sticking all of these precisely targeted materials on, of all things, walls. We comprise the signing and applied Décor industries these days.

Thanks to the materials manufacturers, we have a growing range of substrates that we can now use to produce printed Décor. At least some of those products print in a manner surprisingly akin to the way our signing staples print. We barely have to change a setting. Despite that, they have lovely textures and feel. They go on the wall easily. They stay there looking brilliant. It all seems so easy.

The fact is, the scope of applications and performance that enables so much business today was delivered by innovation at the cutting edge of materials development. I'd like to emphasize the 'fact' there if I may.

I've something to ask of you too. You work very hard to make sure that you have the very latest and highest performing hardware in your shop and you'd probably love to upgrade it. That performance upgrade may be delivered simply by using a state-of-the-art material rather than the one you use out of habit.

Next time your material rep rings or comes knocking, pause. When he or she pops up in your inbox, give the e-mail the time of day. These guys have a habit of doing great things. Say thanks by giving them the time to show you and explain what's possible today - if you're using the right materials.

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