

Labels & Labeling

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Analysis



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Leader



A wave of price rises is hitting label converters, driven by the rising cost of a range of raw materials, and particularly by the steep increase in the cost of oil. Increases of up to 10 per cent in the cost of base materials such as release papers, silicone, adhesives and film will feed through to the prices converters pay for their materials, further squeezing margins. It is hardly necessary to point out that these cost increases will not be acknowledged by the end users of labels, since they themselves are involved in a price war with competing brands and with the private, or own brands of the retailers.

Vast logistics chains – often spread across continents – battle with each other to move new products on and off the shelf in a desperate attempt to minimize casualties from 'dead' stock and to hit the moving target of changing consumer tastes and lifestyles.

Ultimately the Western consumer's desire for ever cheaper food and goods and for an ever greater choice to suit rapidly changing lifestyles (more single households, more adventurous eating habits, ethical food choice etc), will pile further pressure on the logistics chains which underpin brands and will continue to crush converter margins.

Given that these pressures can only get worse, what can we do as an industry? Instead of fighting end users over cost, understand their strategies. Understand what drives their brands. How are they positioned? How will they develop and how you can use your expertise to promote that strategy?

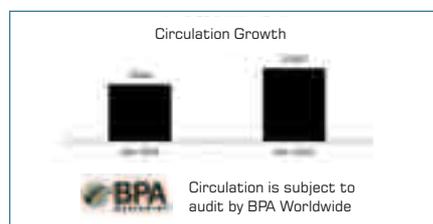
“Ever greater choice will pile further pressure on the logistics chains which underpin brands and will continue to crush converter margins”

Perhaps offering test marketing, or bringing to the brand manager's attention the latest technical offerings of key suppliers to create that unique 'edge'?

In this issue of L&L, for example, we look at the exciting possibilities opened up by adding gravure modules to a narrow web press in terms of new inks and coatings. We see how the wine industry is utilizing cutting edge decoration techniques to take its product into new markets; how sheet-fed converters are now offering full shrink sleeving services; and how others are developing complex multi-web products, in-line.

These projects are always more successful if you draw on the experience of your suppliers rather than going to war on price. I speak to many engineers who have seen both failed and successful attempts to move to monofoils or to combination printing, or to inlaying RFID chips. Drawing on that experience can dramatically reduce your learning curve and give the end user those decisive victories in the brand war.

Andy Thomas
 Group Managing Editor



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Message on a bottle

The beverage industry is seeing a shift from wet-glue to more value-added labeling solutions as beer, wine and spirit brands gear up their offensive for the market share war.

Katy Wight reports

The landscape of the brewing industry has undergone drastic changes in the past twenty years. Large scale consolidation and the acquisition of local breweries by global giants such as Interbrew, SABMiller and Anheuser-Busch, has shifted the relationship with suppliers. These companies have become a major international force, dominating the market and affecting cost control. It's great that the consumer can buy the beer he loves in 22 different countries around the world – but what price have label converters had to pay?

Reacting to tighter margins and having to reduce costs is not a new phenomenon for converters. Globalization means that it's happening in every sector of the label industry. End users want the same quality, but they want it at a lower price.

'We expect all of our suppliers to be superior in the areas of quality, cost, service and innovation,' says Todd Jones, purchasing manager for Milwaukee-based Miller Brewing Company, the North American hub of SABMiller. SABMiller is one of the world's largest brewers producing in excess of

11.5 billion liters of lager annually. It has a brewing presence in over 40 countries, across four continents and generated a turnover of US\$9.1 billion throughout 2003. The American operation alone owns and produces over 50 brands of beer.

NorthStar Print Group has been printing labels for Miller Brewing for more than 50 years and is its sole label supplier. It provides labels Miller's trademark brands Miller Lite, Miller Genuine Draft, Miller High Life, and other Miller brands such as Leinenkugel's, Henry Weinhard's and Milwaukee's Best. It also produces labels for contract brands such as Skyy Blue, a flavored malt beverage. NorthStar may have built a long term relationship with Miller, but it can't afford to sit back and rest on its laurels.

'We have always placed high expectations on our suppliers and this will not change,' says Jones. 'NorthStar has been one of our Partners in Excellence award winners for the last seven years and for two of those years they were actually supplier of the year. This is in recognition of the results that they have delivered in the key areas of quality, cost, service and innovation.'

NorthStar can produce up to 80 million labels on a good day. It is a leading producer of glue-applied, in-mold and pressure sensitive labels. While beverages are a major part of their business, they also print for the automotive and household chemical sectors. NorthStar has three facilities – a flexo plant in Green Bay, Wisconsin; a roll-to-roll high speed rotogravure plant in Norway, Michigan; and a finishing plant, plus its corporate headquarters, in Watertown, Wisconsin.

'Our rotogravure operation is perfect for customers that require high volumes and top quality. The beauty of gravure printing is that we can use the same printing cylinders for run after run, which keeps costs down,' explains Fowler. 'Labels are printed roll-to-roll in the Norway facility and shipped to Watertown for cutting, packaging and shipping. The label needs of a company like Miller Brewing fit our capabilities perfectly.'

With negative growth in wet-glue and overcapacity in the industry, quality and service are assumed and converters are increasingly competing with one another over price. NorthStar has ensured that it is positioned well to give its clients the best possible value for money, by consistently reviewing materials and processes. Projects have included looking into thinner substrates and careful price comparison between solvent and water-based inks, but at the end of the day, brand owners have to weigh price with their product's perception.

'Decisions about which substrates are going to be used are based on balancing marketing needs against cost and operational issues,' says Todd Jones, Miller Brewing purchasing director. 'Decisions can also be dependent on the brand positioning – premium brand vs. budget brand for example. I prefer to standardize on a single substrate, but we have to balance the various requirements. We currently only use wet glue applied labels.'

'If you compare wet glue metalized paper and PS labels, pressure sensitive labels are more expensive,' adds NorthStar's Fowler. 'A company has to determine whether that price increase is justified by the brand. Anheuser-Busch obviously think that in the case of Bud Light, clear film PS labels enhance the brand's image, which justifies the cost.'

Maintaining brand position obviously means keeping an eye on the competition. Jones of Miller Brewing explains how he

relies on suppliers to keep him informed of labeling innovations. NorthStar has a structured new product development process that guides its research and development. It also works with technical experts and its suppliers to stay on top of the latest product developments.

'For example, we were the first company in the US to produce glue-applied labels for high speed application,' says Fowler. 'These were originally developed to address the issue of recycling PET beer bottles. During the recycling process, the PET sinks and separates out from the film labels, which float. The substrate was developed to replace metalized paper labels, which tended to break down during recycling and contaminate the process. In addition to beer in PET, our AquaStar film labels are now being used on SKYY Blue, SKYY Sport and some Coors' products, which are all glass. Aquastar metalized polypropylene labels have a high gloss finish and are produced using a patented process that allows them to be applied on standard labeling equipment at speeds comparable to paper labels.'

NorthStar is keen to get involved in projects at root level. They consult brand owners at the initial stages of label development to find out application requirements and prevent problems further down the tracks, as Terry Fowler highlights: 'When we worked with Miller Brewing to develop a clear film promotional label for Miller Genuine Draft (MGD) they didn't have any pressure sensitive application equipment. The clear film PS labels were added to the bottle by a third party and then shipped to Miller. We had to design the labels so that they could survive a very rugged environment. The pre-decorated bottles were cleaned and pushed around a lot at the bottling plant, and the labels had to stay pristine.'

Bottle labeling's legacy is in wet glue labels, applied on dedicated label application lines. Sleeves, wraparound film and patch film had always required their own dedicated labeling lines, which meant bottling operations – like Miller Brewing – had to decide which areas they wanted to invest in. The emergence of modular label applicators which could handle cold glue, hot melt cut and stack, hot melt roll-fed and pressure sensitive all on one line, not only simplified investment decisions, but broadened possibilities for designers and brand owners. Realizing the potential – now a single product line could have any number of labeling solutions – bottling plants have been quick on the





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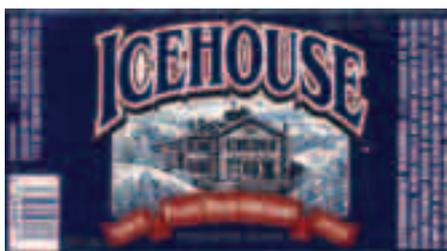
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Metalized film labels by Northstar (from left to right): Canadian lager Coors Original; local Milwaukee brew Icehouse; and the recently revamped SKYY Sport label

Is it the real thing?

The maker of one of the world's great wines, the Italian cabernet sauvignon Sassicaia, has been forced to redesign its bottles and introduce security labels to stem counterfeiting. Twelve people were arrested in connection with the fraudulent sale of wine designed to look like the 'super Tuscan' red. The 20,000 bogus bottles could have retailed for a total of about GBP1 million. Sassicaia's producer, the Marchese Nicolo Incisa della Rocchetta is considering using RFID technology or 'a label designed like a banknote, which would contain certain tell-tale details which the counterfeiter wouldn't know how to spot.'

This echoes a project that is in the pipeline at the French champagne house Louis Roederer where each bottle is given an individual code number, only readable using special equipment. The number allows the owner to check the history of the bottle, where each component wine in the blend originated and when it was harvested and the distribution channels the bottle has gone through. According to Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon, cellar manager at Louis Roederer, customers will be able to run these checks online by the end of the year.

uptake. Krones introduced its first modular applicator in 2000 and in 2003 it constituted 10 per cent of applicator sales.

'We provide our clients with technical services support when they reach the application stage,' says Fowler, 'Our technical managers help qualify new label products and are present for the first run. Clients can call on us for advice for application and gluing issues. With Miller Brewing, we make regularly scheduled visits to all of their breweries.'

Wine

Unfortunately for Miller and its competitors, 2003 marked the US beer market's worst sales for a decade, but the buoyant wine and spirits market was untouched. Fowler explains that NorthStar has been focusing on diversification for many years and has been exploring opportunities with other labels like wine. He says that there is a lot more diversity in the US wine industry in comparison to beer, which has seen far more consolidation. According to the American Vintners Association, during the 1990s, the number of US wineries nearly doubled, from 1,608 in 1990 to 3,182 in 2002. Despite roughly 90 per cent of US-produced wine originating from California, Fowler explains that there is a lot of activity around the Great Lakes, and NorthStar has secured some local winery customers.

'The short to medium runs for regional wineries are printed flexo and we have helped some of these customers make the transition away from glue-applied labels to pressure sensitive labels,' explains Fowler. 'There have been lots of advances in high speed wet glue application, but a small vineyard may not necessarily need that kind of capacity and most don't have access to adhesive experts. Often, they buy an older wet glue applicator, which needs to be cleaned after every run – and they're never easy to clean. We suggest that they move to PS and we can then advise them on an adhesive that will work – no fuss and no mess – and if they have an application issue, we are there to help them resolve it.'

The State of California produces roughly three million tons of wine grapes annually, making it a lucrative area for converters to tap into. NorthStar has been exploring the market and feels it has a lot to offer wineries using long-run labels.

'Wine is a unique industry. It has volumes that are similar to other mass produced beverages, but the people that run the wineries have a very different attitude regarding their labels,' says Fowler. 'We have targeted large volume wines that are good fits for our capabilities. For those wines, we can produce high quality labels at substantial savings. We have generated some interest, but it remains to be seen if wine will become a major market for Northstar.' Quality is everything when it comes to a wine label and it seems like the east coast vineyards are suspicious about saving money.

The wineries want very high quality, value-added labels with embossing and hot foil stamping. In the US – as in the rest of the New World wine growing regions – there has been a trend towards innovative design, tricky die-cutting and special effects, whereas wine labeling in Europe tends to be more traditional, utilizing vintage-style papers and age-old designs that rely on the appellation and reputation of the wine.

As the Old and New Worlds fight for market share, label design has never been so important. To a greater extent than ever before, brand perception is based on aesthetic appearance, which is primarily responsible for a brand's image advantage and a huge portion of every single market share point it gains. A survey commissioned last year by UK drinks company Threshers Group found that almost one quarter of wine consumers are influenced by imagery and make their purchase





decision according to label design. Over one third of consumers polled felt confused about which type of wine is best to buy.

Australia, Chile and South Africa are all using aggressive marketing strategies to attract the new generation of wine drinker – definitely not a connoisseur, but armed with a disposable income. All wines are required to have a certain amount of information on each bottle. Traditionally this information was placed on the front of the label, but many wineries – especially in the New World – have decided to put the required data on the back label of the bottle so that the front can then be used to attract the consumer with attractive graphics and recognizable brand logos, like Australia's Jacob's Creek.

In Europe, vineyards have been slow to realize the importance of marketing and investment in research, and as a result exports are falling. 'When a company has a long history and has achieved a certain level of renown and prestige, normally it is unwilling to make a lot of changes,' says Juan Gil, marketing director at Manter, a Spanish producer of self-adhesive paper and film specifically catering to wine and spirit labels. 'Other modern companies are in a good position to make changes and adapt products to new developments in the market. Labeling in the European wine market has come a long way in the past ten years. Self-adhesive labels are gaining ground on wet glue labels and 30 per cent are now pressure sensitive due to their versatility, speed, ease of application and the variety of optional materials.'

In the New World there are only a small number of influential operators, each with substantial capital to conduct market research. In South Africa one company is responsible for distributing 80 per cent of the country's entire wine production, while in Australia four companies distribute all of the country's wines. Fowler of NorthStar thinks that the corporate mentality will eventually filter through to vineyards in the US.

'The big consumer brands are well aware of the economic trends in the wine industry,' he says, 'and eventually the wineries will change their attitudes.'

Not all US wineries have been slow on the uptake of new market opportunities and technology. Draper & Esquin Wine & Spirits, LLC, is a San Francisco Bay area wine negociant that blends, bottles and sells its wines under the Draper & Esquin brand. It purchases overage from local and international wine growers – wine the growers themselves can't move under their own labels – bottles it, and markets it under the Draper &

Esquin name. It also produces limited edition wines and custom wines for special events. The company invested in a VIPColor Technologies VP2020 digital color label press to print small

runs cost-effectively itself.

'It was fall 2002 after Oakland Athletics' 20-game record-breaking winning streak. We just happened to be

talking to a representative from VIP Color about our idea for

creating a commemorative wine to honor the team's achievement,' says president and owner Barbara Fortini Medwadowski. 'I had already received five quotes from outside printers to print 1,000 labels, and as I found, producing these limited edition labels on a color press would be horrendously expensive. Not to mention, if the wine doesn't sell, the label printing would become a sunk cost.'

'Just printing these labels on the VP2020 we realized a return on investment. The cost of buying the printer was equivalent to what it would've cost us to outsource the printing to another company – and we continue to get much more use out of the investment.'

Medwadowski explains that it is difficult to predict how much a commemorative wine will sell before launching it, but now the company is able to print labels on an as-ordered basis.

Spirits

The spirits industry is another sector experiencing the surge away from wet glue to more added-value formats. With product decoration and on-shelf presence the priority of every brand, sleeve technology is growing in popularity. Spirits and pre-blended spirit drinks in particular have exploited the benefits of 360° labeling. The technology is ideal for limited period promotions where the sleeve can be applied on top of an existing pack – like the Malibu winter sports special edition – or for new product launches with maximum impact and a modern feel, such as Baileys Glide or Baileys Minis.

'Many packs are now distinctively and individually shaped and these are not always easy to print or label effectively,' says Dale Hambilton, managing director of Decorative Sleeves in the UK. 'A sleeve offers a large decoration area and because it fits closely around the contours of the pack, the impact and effectiveness of the design is retained.'

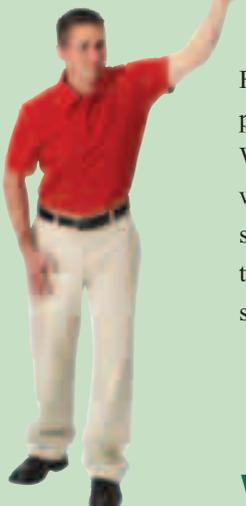
'The beauty of a shrink sleeve is that it can be tailored to each product's requirements, not just in terms of its design, but also the material and application technology used,' he adds. 'Bottle material and design, the filling technology, the type of decoration effect, all have an influence on the development of the sleeve. The earlier we become involved in the project, the quicker and smoother the path to launch becomes.'

Decorative Sleeves offers a range of specialist inks such as glow in the dark, glitter and thermochromic on PVC, OPS or PET. Reverse printing on clear films ensures that print is resistant to scratching and scuffing, despite the rigors of the distribution system. The company also offers steam shrinking, which is particularly suited to irregularly shaped bottles and instances where pre-filled bottles will be sensitive to excessive heat.

To further adapt to converter and market demands, research is underway to print sleeves digitally. Once mastered, this will open the market up to economically viable short runs of sleeves. Sleever International Ltd has entered into a joint project with digital printing experts Digital Packaging to produce digitally printed sleeves. The partnership is currently beta-testing on an HP Indigo ws4000. It's planned that the upgraded digital press, with modified substrate handling for sleeves, will be launched at Labelexpo in September. ■



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Know a good French wine?

There is nothing but gloom and despondency in the hard-hit French wine industry. But some label printers in the Bordeaux region manage to remain buoyant even in a battered and declining market

The boom days of wine exports from the Bordeaux region date back to the 13th century when Aquitaine was under English rule and oaken casks of 'claret' were shipped over to England to slake the thirst of King Henry V and his wine-loving nobles.

Since then one or two things have changed. Throughout the last thirty years of the 20th century, world demand for wine boomed. Australian, North American and other wines jostled with the French for a share of world markets. France's market share declined (in the USA it went from 60 per cent in 1985 to 30 per cent at the end of the century), but on a rising market, who cared? The makers of chateau-bottled, quality wines pushed up their prices, and still the public on both sides of the Atlantic went on buying. New markets opened up in the Far East where the newly-rich discovered a taste for French wine. Nowhere was this feel-good factor more pronounced than in the Bordeaux region, and many a château added an extra wing or a bigger cellar on the strength of it. Then came Nemesis.

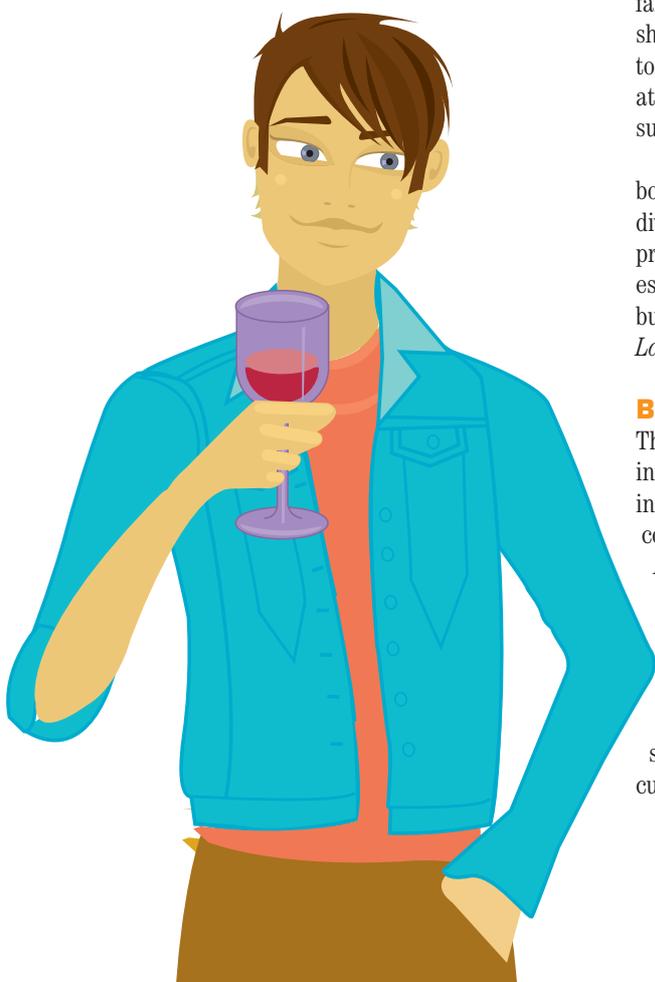
The French government in 2002 banned most forms of advertising for alcohol and stepped up its 'don't drink and drive' campaign. Domestic sales of wine fell even faster than in previous years. To cap it all, in early 2003 the falling dollar and the Iraq war sent exports tumbling. After the initial pain and shock, the French wine industry resolved to beef up its marketing effort – and to realise that the wine label is a key element in drawing the consumer's attention as he (or increasingly, she) surveys the off-licence or supermarket shelves.

A dozen or more local label converters supply the labels for the 750 million bottles of Bordeaux produced annually. The wine bottlers themselves are sharply divided into the growers, more properly called 'Propriétaires récoltants' who produce, bottle and sell their own wine, and the shippers or 'Négociants' who are essentially traders, buying, transporting and reselling wine either in bottles or in bulk. For the label printer, these two groups are as different as chalk and cheese. *Labels & Labeling* visited several print shops in the region to find out more.

Belloc – Quality and Tradition

The place where Imprimerie Belloc has its print shop is better known internationally for a rather different product, but the town of Cadillac is in fact in the heart of the wine-growing region, without a car factory in sight. The company's owner and General Manager Philippe Belloc took time to tell *Labels & Labeling* about his region and his company.

'When I took over the business from my father in 1991, we were already doing a large part of our business in traditional wine labels. I decided to concentrate on this market niche, and in 1995 we got our first roll-to-roll label presses, two letterpress machines from Gallus. Today something like 95 per cent of our business is in wine labels, and two out of three labels are self-adhesive. We print around half a million square meters per year, and our customers, over a thousand of them, are nearly all propriétaires récoltants who





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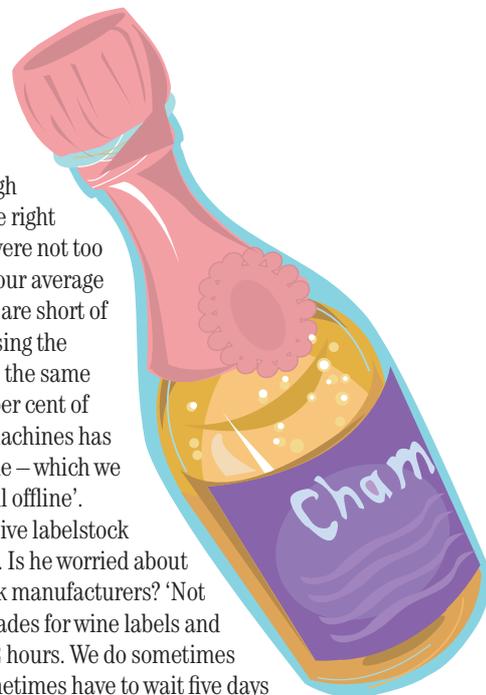
bottle and sell their own wine. It's all rather expensive wine, and so our average order size for labels is pretty small, but the quality requirements are high. I could certainly sell twice or three times the volume by selling to wine shippers but it doesn't interest me. For a start I have never – well, hardly ever – lost a customer because of price. How many label printers today can claim that? Most of my customers are personal friends, many of them did business with my father. They know they can rely on me for delivery and quality, and they're not going to go to another supplier just to save a centime or two.'

Imprimerie Belloc prints and converts traditional wet labels as well as some of the smaller orders for self-adhesives on half a dozen venerable Heidelberg machines, many of them ingeniously modified. But the greater part of the self-adhesive business is run on two newly acquired Edale Alphas. Philippe Belloc explains the reasons for this latest investment. 'We first went into flexo five years ago with an Edale press, but flexo technology has come a long way since then, and when we were at Labelexpo Brussels in 2001 we looked around to compare the various flexo presses

which were within our budget. We wanted a high performance machine, which would give us the right quality and very quick make ready times. We were not too worried about high running speeds, in view of our average order size of around 20 to 30,000 units, but we are short of space so the footprint was important. By choosing the Edale Alpha we were able to get two presses at the same time without going over our budget. Some 70 per cent of our labels carry gold foil, and one of the new machines has a cold foil unit. We also have a Newfoil machine – which we also first saw at Labelexpo – for printing hotfoil offline'.

Philippe Belloc gets nearly all his self-adhesive labelstock from just two suppliers – Manter and Raflatac. Is he worried about the increasing concentration among labelstock manufacturers? 'Not in the least, both our suppliers have special grades for wine labels and we generally get our orders delivered within 72 hours. We do sometimes have supply problems with inks, where we sometimes have to wait five days or more'.

And how does this label converter view the future of his company and his region? 'Everyone around here is worried about the falling consumption of wine not just in France but in other major export markets. This, combined with fierce competition from Southern hemisphere producers in particular is making life difficult for many people in the wine business here. But you have to remember that most of these problems concern the lower-priced wines, so our customers are not so much affected. And then there is the increasing popularity of half-bottles, which has to be good news for the label printer. The whole Bordeaux region is steadily going over to self-adhesive wine labels; in my view, roll-to-roll flexo is the up and coming



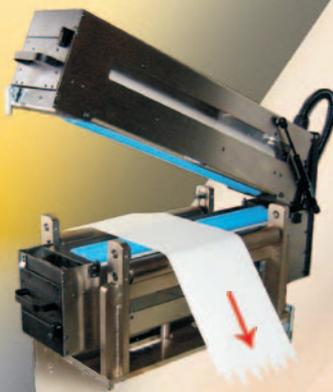
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Wine facts

'Self-adhesive labels have become the most popular as they provide the greatest precision, convenience and versatility, far superior to systems that require wet glue or a primer coat. It is very easy to stick these labels on the bottles, without having to wait for the glue to dry, as they are self-adhesive. And on the other hand, as well as being able to be permanent or removable, they stick to all kinds of surface. They are versatile because the labels and the ingredients of the glue can be customised, i.e. they can be adapted to different temperatures and humidity levels and changing natural and artificial environments. In addition, when the labels come off the press, they can undergo further printing up until the time they are used.'

Manter - The Wine Book

technology, now that we can produce the same quality as offset but at half the cost'.

LIS-33 – The label as an art form

Not far from Cadillac is Libourne. The town itself would never win a beauty prize, but around it lies some of the world's most prestigious vineyards: Château Haut Brion, Pétrus, Yquem....and a dozen more names to set the connoisseur's nose twitching. But economically, this region's total dependence on one product makes it highly vulnerable.

Here, we visited another label printer, LIS-33 and met Serge Desport, founder and president of the company, and his general manager Philippe Vermynck.

'There's no question that all the label printers around here are dependent on wine' says Philippe Vermynck. 'In our case wine labels are close to 70 per cent of our business.'

LIS-33 started making self-adhesive labels in 1997, and now converts over 2 million m² of pressure-sensitive materials (out of a total annual production of just over 5 million m²).

'The wine growers are generally small family-run businesses run on traditional lines' explains Philippe Vermynck. 'They are faithful to the 'Bordeaux Style' of label. On the other hand they are the ones who have 'migrated' away from wet glue and into self-adhesives. They like to be able to apply a few hundred labels at a time and that's not easy with wet glue. Wine shippers on the other hand with their much higher volumes, are still mostly using lower-cost conventional labels for the bulk of their bottling'.

When it comes to substrates, explains Philippe Vermynck, LIS-33's customers are very demanding, and the range of special face papers and laminates now available is frighteningly large. Suppliers like Fasson, Manter, Ritrama and Raflatac have

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Vineyards in the Bordeaux region are beginning to realize that the wine label is a key element in gaining the consumer's attention and the traditional styles are changing

invested in research to come up with hundreds of options, although the main trend is towards synthetic face papers and laid surfaces.

'The French wine exporters have learned their lesson and today they look long and hard at what style of label will best suit consumers in UK and North America, which are the two main export markets. It has taken them a while to figure out that there is a whole generation of wine drinkers out there who know little and care even less about our glorious traditions'.

For its wet glue labels LIS-33 mainly uses a 4-color MAN Roland press, and for its self-adhesives, two Viva 340s from French press manufacturer Codimag. What prompted the decision to go for these semi-rotary waterless offset presses, we asked Serge Desport. 'Our aim is to give top print quality' he replied, 'And for us that means offset. Right from the start we used offset for our conventional labels, so we were familiar with the technology. I don't deny that letterpress and flexo have their advantages; we use both processes ourselves for certain jobs but you need offset to get really good quality, particularly on a laid substrate. We have a lot of very short runs, so the quick make ready time on the Vivas is an enormous advantage. But essentially we chose the Vivas for their print quality.'

Both managers stress the importance of creativity. 'The label is the most important element in the wine industry's marketing mix' says Serge Desport, 'I was in the art business before setting up as a label converter. We employ seven professional designers and artists, and our print quality has to

match up to their talent, and to our customers' expectations. Both our Vivas have hotfoil and embossing units which we frequently need for our wine labels, as any wine drinker will know. And we are also now a certified ISO 9002 company so both our customers and our suppliers know that any problem or imperfection in a label can be traced right back to its origin.'

In Vino Securitas

A Bordeaux 'Grand Cru' frequently retails at several hundred pounds per bottle. The problems of brand protection and tamper proofing are the same as for many other luxury goods. LIS-33 uses holograms and a range of hard-to-copy printing techniques of the kind usually reserved for banknotes and other high-security documents. These security labels are often low-volume items, but LIS-33 see them as vitally important for its reputation. 'We must be seen to be defending our customers' interests' says Monsieur Desport.

LIS-33 today employs 120 people, with its production working two or three shifts depending on the season. While its customers are mostly local, it also exports its wine labels to South Africa, Australia, Lebanon and Italy.

Serge Desport suggests Bordeaux wines will probably never recover their share of export markets for the middle-quality AOC wines. For the premium wines and Grands Crus however the future looks brighter. 'I have confidence in this region's long-term future' he says 'But we're not out of the wood yet'.

Bouchon – Bulging at the seams

Also in Libourne is the aptly named Imprimerie Bouchon (bouchon means 'cork' in French), and it is also in the business of making wine labels. With a dozen employees and some 500 customers, Frédéric Bouchon is typical of many small label printers who over the past few years have moved into the roll label business. Three years ago the company installed a rotary letterpress machine from Iwasaki, but the slow running speed and absence of any hotfoil unit





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Wine facts

'In 2003, total sales of french wine fell by only per cent, but exports of AOC wines were 9per cent down'

Source - ONIVINS

'In 1960 the average Frenchman put away 100 litres of wine per year. By 2002 this had fallen to 58 litres'

Source - ONIVINS

made further investment a priority. 'I set out to buy an offset press,' Frédéric Bouchon explained, 'because we are familiar with that technology which is generally reckoned to give the top quality. But after going the rounds of the various rotary and semi-rotary offset label presses on the French market, I found most of the presses on offer took up too much room for our rather cramped production area. So I finally decided to go for an 'Alpha', a very compact four-color Flexo press made by Edale. With UV drying, a hot foil unit and an ink jet sequential numbering unit I print at up to 60 m/minute and the whole press takes up only 2,5 m² (6 1/2 sq ft). It's a good job the Alpha is so compact because even so we had to demolish a section of wall and bring it into the print shop through the main office'.

Meanwhile, in another part of the vineyard...

Just up the road from Libourne is the little town of Sainte Foy-la-Grande. The snow lay thick on the vines when we visited Barat Etiquettes, but owner and general manager Mr Letellier gave us a warm welcome. Barat has four production sites and covers all the wine-growing regions of Southern France. The group's most recent move was to acquire the assets of the packaging and label converter Wetterwald in Bordeaux. 'It is not generally known,' Letellier tells us, 'that the founder of Wetterwald, a certain Mr Golon, has his place in the Hall of Fame of the label business. It was he who, in the year 1815, tired of the little strips of handwritten tissue which the vintners tied around the neck of each bottle to identify it, invented the wine label. So you might say that Barat Group is today the adopted son and heir to nearly two centuries of wine labels'.

Barat Etiquettes has annual sales of 15 million Euros and 150 employees. It makes both wet glue and

self-adhesive labels, almost exclusively for the wine business. Letellier has seen the market share of pressure-sensitive wine labels increase steadily over the years, to stabilize today at around 50 per cent for the whole of Southern France's wine labeling. 'Most of the wine growers have already switched to self-adhesives, and the wine shippers use both types,' he says.

For self-adhesives, Barat uses mainly Gallus offset presses. 'Wet offset gives us the quality edge over our competitors who have opted for flexo,' explains Mr Letellier, 'and for all our prepress work the CTP process is essentially the same for both our wet glue and our self-adhesive orders. There is just one problem with our Gallus machines – the web width of 265 maximum. Sometimes we really need a wider web than that, which is why we installed a Codimag Viva 340 waterless. The Viva's print quality is excellent as well, but of course the plates are not interchangeable between the two types of press.'

When discussing the crisis in the French wine sector Mr Letellier makes no secret of his concern. 'The French wine grower has made remarkable progress these past years, both in the quality of his product and in his marketing. But too often he has been over-confident. New World and Australian producers have long been used to adapting their wine to suit the consumer's taste. They are just starting to do that in Languedoc, but not here in the Bordeaux region. Of course we should not sacrifice the typical and unique qualities of our French wine, but that's no reason for the vintners to rest on their faded laurels'.

Bad times just around the corner?

The general conclusion is that the French wine business had it too good for too long. The prices of premium wines were allowed to go up and up, and still the customers came flocking. The banks were offering cheap loans, and everyone invested in new equipment. When the downturn hit, a lot of companies in the business were financially overextended.

What was true of the wine business is to some extent true of label printers as well, says Mr Letellier: 'A lot of printers moved into the wine label business to get a slice of the action, and now that there's not so much action some of them resort to cutting prices. Believe me, there will be some mergers and disappearances in the wine label business before we're through. In the long term the industry will be healthier, but in the short term it will be survival of the fittest. But don't worry about us, we're pretty fit'. ■





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Wine labels on demand

A Canadian wine importer has taken full advantage of the possibilities presented by outsourced digital printing to fulfill its complex labeling requirements. **Andy Thomas** reports

Located in Toronto, Rogers and Company, Chateau, Villa and Estate Wines is a privately owned business engaged in the distribution of fine wines in Ontario. It deals with producers from around the world.

'As exciting as this can be, it can be quite challenging in terms of language barriers and differing business practices,' says Heather Parker, winery liaison and purchasing co-coordinator at Rogers & Co.

In order to import wine into Ontario, the company must work with the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) monopoly and comply with all federal and provincial legislation.

'The companies we generally deal with are small family-owned wineries, not prepared to cope with the requirements involved to bring their product into the Ontario market,' says Heather Parker. As an agent, the company has to decipher the list of requirements and sometimes even provide paperwork and labels on the producers' behalf. For retail stores, the imported wine must contain bar codes on the bottles and cases. Without these, the LCBO won't even consider an order. If there is any problem with the quality of the labels, the winery is fined.

Not all small producers want to invest in the systems required to create the labels.

'We used to recommend a European bar code company they could contact,' says Heather Parker. 'However, for the winery, that just felt like one more hassle. We even lost some very prestigious producers because they felt dealing with the LCBO was too complicated.'

The solution was provided by Label Image Industries, based out of Ontario, Canada and run by entrepreneur Mike Samson.

'We had to find a solution that kept things simple for both parties and Mike's service does just that,' says Parker. 'The LCBO cuts an order, I contact Mike, give him the numbers and he takes care of everything, including shipping. His price is very reasonable; he looks for the least expensive (but secure) way to ship, ensures the labels arrive in plenty of time at the winery, and sends us a bill. The winery gets a package in the mail a few weeks prior to shipping and all they do is stick them on the cases. That's it.

'I never worry about compliance problems. The winery doesn't have any guesswork, the LCBO is happy.'

Heather Parker concludes, 'this is the perfect solution to something that used to be a time-consuming headache that often resulted in fines levied by the LCBO and/or lost business. Above and beyond all the above, Mike is someone we as a company can trust. We are a very happy customer.'

Label Image Industries has a battery of digital printing equipment including a Hewlett Packard VIP VP2020 inkjet system, a range of TEC and Datamax thermal transfer printers, PSC Quick Check verifier and HP IT5600 linear scanner. 'With the various face stock, adhesive and ribbon combinations available, I am able to fulfill pretty much every request sent to me. I am working towards providing an electronic 'sign-off' and I am very close to having that completed,' says Mike Sampson, who uses Trade Only printers/converters for more elaborate configurations and specialty items.

Sampson is now looking to exploit the capabilities of digital printing in areas where such a service does not typically advertise or market itself.

'Since I am not limited to just 'barcodes' I have started to approach music/record directories as well as sporting web sites – especially cycling, skateboarding and other extreme sports,' he says. 'Because of the printing technology I use, it is transferable for

producing stickers for clubs and organizations, bands or consumer products. I had discovered that small to medium groups or organizations were not in a position to purchase 10,000 stickers when they only needed a few hundred. Because my customers tend to be not too familiar with barcodes, they discuss openly what was asked of them by their customer or what they intend to use the labels for. I typically produce the labels and the customers apply them themselves. Some request that the labels be finished on certain core sizes for hand applicators others don't care and will hire half a dozen temporary workers for a day to apply the labels manually.' ■



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The hunt for a commercially viable liner-free label has been the holy grail of the industry for the past twenty-five years. Now UK company Catchpoint has developed a liner-free labelstock and dedicated applicator that show real promise.

Katy Wight reports



The last of the label liners

Backing liner is bad news for the pressure sensitive industry. Each meter of self-adhesive labels printed requires an equivalent meterage of waste silicone backing liner. In the UK alone this equates to around 104,200 tonnes of waste a year. And there are growing legislative pressures. In the UK release liner is now treated as packaging waste which has to be recovered, and the wider European industry is nervously awaiting the EU's forthcoming revision to its Packaging Waste regulations to see how release liner will be classified.

The industry has been slow to react to the threat. Although incineration of liner waste has yielded good calorific results, there is still only limited capacity for recycling, which requires separating the silicone from the liner.

'One major retailer that we have been in discussions with tells us that they spend over £1M in packaging waste per year – per store,' says Henry Stone, Catchpoint's managing director. 'The retailers can see the cost advantage of a liner-free label, but the emphasis of most interest at the moment is on the environment.'

This was a key reason for the UK government's interest in the Catchpoint linerless project. The company was awarded a SMART award (small firms merit award for research and technology) from the Department of Trade and Industry and funding to support its development. The project has attracted

“One major retailer that we have been in discussions with tells us that they spend over £1M in packaging waste per year – per store”

keen government interest especially given the pressure to meet the EU waste reduction deadlines currently being espoused by Elliott Morley, Minister for the Environment.

Catchpoint technical director Richard Wade points out that there are sound reasons for label printers to welcome a liner-free solution. 'Label converters can double the number of labels on a roll, which can lower your transportation and freight cost, and in production it means that you will have less changeovers.'

Catchpoint in action

For the converter, the Catchpoint solution involves no more than applying a special release coating and adhesive using a standard narrow web flexo press.



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Catchpoint technical director Richard Wade, left, and managing director Henry Stone

‘The cost of the adhesive is equivalent to a hot melt adhesive,’ explains Wade. ‘The release coating is more expensive, but it is not a prohibitive cost and you have to remember that this will be offset by the savings you make on the liner-free labelstock.’ Catchpoint can be implemented on any substrate, of any thickness – paper or synthetic – that’s available in the marketplace now.

In trials, Catchpoint worked with Mark Andy, printing UV-curable inks on a Scout, 4150 and 4120, as well as Nilpeter and Arsoma presses. After printing, the web is coated in-line with the release agent specially developed by Advanced Coatings Limited (ACL). It contains silicone wash and uses cationic chemicals that don’t react with the ink.

On a coated substrate, the release lacquer is effective from about 1.3gsm, dependent on the porosity of the surface and the speed of printing. Uncoated surfaces may need 5gsm or more, but in all instances, the entire surface must be covered – any gaps will allow the adhesive to bleed and cause blocking in the reel. A gloss surface finish is currently available, but satin and matt finishes will be available later this year.

On top of the release agent, the adhesive is applied by flexo, UV-cured and then the web is die-cut into the shape of the label. In some cases a standard adhesive can be used, dependent on the configuration of the press. If the equipment has suitable printheads and drying units are attached in the right places then it is likely that you will be able to use it, but ACL is happy to advise. However, pilot results have shown that fast-drying products are most suitable and Catchpoint is promoting the use of a UV-cured adhesive. Non-stick rollers or turner bars are required between the adhesive unit and the reel point. The press needs at least six stations to allow for four colors, plus the release coat and application of the adhesive.

Rotometrics, another partner in the project, designed the Catchpoint rotary die so that it applies micro-perforations

“One of the major failings of linerless labels in the past – take the Waddington’s Monoweb system introduced in the mid-eighties – has been the inability to overprint and add variable data. Catchpoint has overcome this”

between the labels – these perforations being the namesake ‘catch-points’. The perforations mean that the labels remain attached to one another whilst being rewound onto the roll, but can be easily separated by the dedicated label applicator. The rotary die-cutter has had the bearer bars removed to allow the web to move through easily, whilst also maintaining accurate cutting. In the past linerless labels have been restricted to a rectangular shape, but Catchpoint allows for any shape, as long as there is a minimum length of flat edge with ‘catch-points’ connecting each label to the next.

‘Each substrate has different needs,’ says Wade. ‘We have done trials with PE and PP for example, and because PE is tougher, it needs less catch points. Paper needs more catch points because of all the fibers in the material.’

The substrate is finally wound back on to the reel using a turret rewind. When the reel of labels is unwound again for application, the adhesive is offset on the reverse of the label face – it peels straight off the release coating, which also forms a barrier to protect the print. The UV coating and adhesive will have a guaranteed shelf-life of six months and the finished construction should be stable for 12 months or more.

A large part of Catchpoint’s potential comes from the dedicated applicator, revealed for the first time at the 2004 TOTAL Processing and Packaging show in Birmingham, UK. Historically they have been very complicated and an expensive investment.

‘We have always maintained that the system needs to be economically viable,’ says Wade. ‘We worked with Sessions of York to develop a new head for an existing applicator. Some of the label companies that we talked to thought that it couldn’t be done.’ The web feeds through the applicator – which can have a print station if required – and a vacuum holds the label before the applicator snaps the Catchpoints with a shearing effect. Catchpoint claims that the applicator can reach typical self-



Stone receives the SMART award from the DTI

adhesive label application speeds.

'The applicator is amazing,' Wade adds. 'The registration that it achieves is unbelievable and it makes adjustments in four directions to sense where the pack is.' The applicator is seemingly so innovative that at TOTAL, Sessions of York developed a special cover to keep their design under wraps. The whole Catchpoint system is patent pending, but with the applicator, they're not taking any risks.

One of the major failings of linerless labels in the past – take the Waddington's Monoweb system introduced in the mid-eighties – has been the inability to overprint and add variable data. Catchpoint has overcome this.

'There are essentially two ways of adding variable data to the Catchpoint labels,' explains Wade. 'Using flexo plates to apply the adhesive gives you the freedom to apply it in patterns. If you relieve the release coating and adhesive in a linear line across the entire web, then thermal transfer variable data can be added before label application. The Catchpoint applicator can also feature a print station if required. Alternatively, inkjet will adhere straight on to the release coating.'

Relieving the coating for variable data is evident on the label as the coated area is slightly glossier, but since it is uniform across the label, it could actually be used as a subtle effect. Although high-end users might worry about the appearance, for many applications, such as weigh-price, logistics and shipping for example, the disparity would be inconsequential.

Will it stick around?

There were clear aims for the Catchpoint project – the labels needed to be as good as, if not better than, existing labels and the process needed to be simple and reliable. So, has Catchpoint achieved this?

Printing the labelstock should be straightforward for any

“We are looking to develop the product outside the traditional self-adhesive market and in the future we will be looking to bring in someone for R&D alone”

flexo printer used to working with UV and requires minimum investment. The system can use any commercially-available substrate, so the print quality achieved is the same as it would be printed flexo in any other situation. In fact, the visible 'teeth-marks' of the micro-perforations could be the only limiting factor when trying to penetrate the prime label market, but the product is set to make a significant impact in the weigh-price and logistics markets. However, development is ongoing with the product and L&L was shown two generations of labelstock, already showing significant improvements in the micro-perforations. And it's only going to get better.

The product is gaining interest amongst converters and end users alike. 'We are very excited about the reaction that the system is getting,' says managing director Stone. 'We're not actually manufacturing anything ourselves. Sessions of York is the first licensee to be manufacturing with Catchpoint and they have a contract with a major retailer impending. We have also had interest from a brewery as they believe that Catchpoint SA labels will be more environmentally friendly than the wet glue labels they are currently using.'

'We want licensees with their own R&D capabilities so that they will be able to develop their own solutions for the markets that they service, for example pharmaceuticals. All the end users have different needs.'

Stone adds: 'We are looking to develop the product outside the traditional self-adhesive market and in the future we will be looking to bring in someone for R&D alone. As part of the licensee process, Catchpoint will be able to offer technical support, along with our sponsors – ACL, Rotometrics, Mark Andy and Sessions.'

Catchpoint hails its technology as 'a licence to a labeling revolution'. The concept certainly removes the financial, environmental and production burden that traditional pressure-sensitive labels incur. It's definitely the start of some kind of big change. ■

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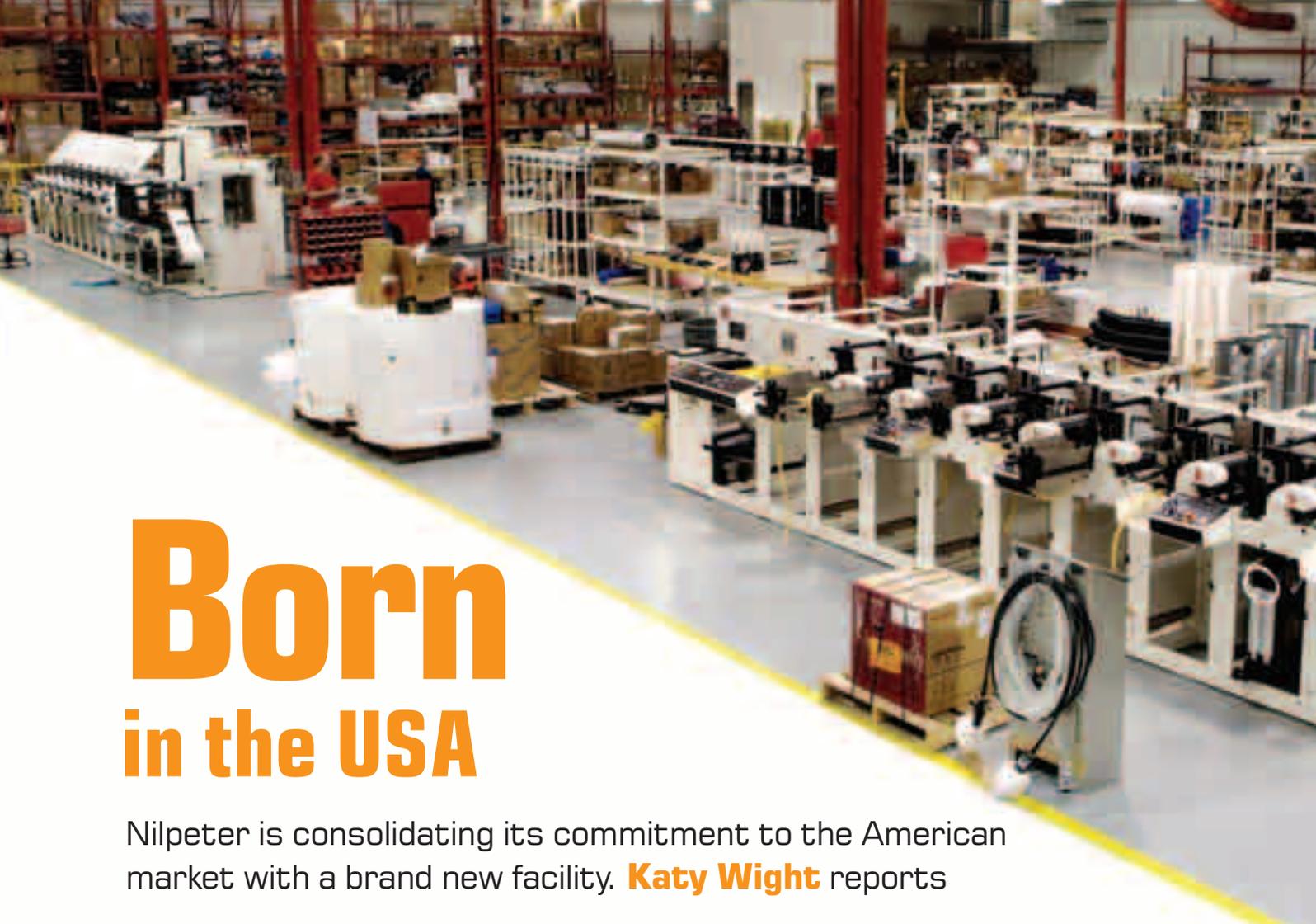
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Born in the USA

Nilpeter is consolidating its commitment to the American market with a brand new facility. **Katy Wight** reports

There's a buzz in the air at Nilpeter's newly opened production facility in Cincinnati, Ohio. Pride in the building is so high, that the American team has just invited all of the company's sales reps – from all over the world – for a sales meeting to check out the new US headquarters and focus on combining the European and American product lines.

'Everybody is so thrilled with the new building,' says Andy Colletta, president and CEO of Nilpeter in the US. 'It's a really great place to work now and a totally different environment. There's more space, it's brighter and you can tell the difference between day and night! We're proud of it and pleased that we can give this to our employees.'

Nilpeter found the site a year ago and moved into the new premises last month. The new building is 150 per cent larger, standing at 60,000 square feet. From a space standpoint, Nilpeter could potentially assemble about 100 presses a year from the Cincinnati site. It's based on the same structural philosophy as Nilpeter's Danish plant, and not only is the site layout centered around workflow, but it also uses the latest lighting, temperature control and airflow technology to make the environment as pleasant and productive as possible for its 120 employees.

It's also the perfect environment to showcase and reinvigorate interest in the American-built FB-line of presses. The showroom currently features an FB flexo press, but plans are to rotate models and demonstrate the full Nilpeter press portfolio.

'The new facility is more inline with the image that we want to present and now we can't wait to bring people from all over the world here,' says global sales director Jakob Landberg. 'We're expecting it to fuel growth. Sales have been very good since we

joined up with Rotopress in 2001 and we have gone from 30 annual press sales to 50 in the past year – I'm terrified about what's going to happen this year!'

Ninety-five per cent of Rotopress' sales used to be domestic. The Nilpeter FB range has increased international sales to 40 per cent. 'South America is a big market for us and we are also selling presses into Asia, South Africa, Russia, Sri Lanka and Eastern Europe. We have representation in 65 countries now – we're a truly global company,' adds Landberg.

'We are going to reintroduce the FB line at Labelexpo Chicago, where we will be showing the best technology from both worlds – Europe and the US. It is a great benefit to be combining both economies, especially as the value of the dollar falls against the Euro. It means that it doesn't put us out of any markets.'

The new plant is all part of a strategic growth plan for the press supplier. With a target to build a further production facility in Asia in the near future, Nilpeter will have the three key markets covered – by a comprehensive range of presses and global support staff. ■

"The new facility is more inline with the image that we want to present and now we can't wait to bring people from all over the world here"

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Stamping out variables and improving predictability were recurrent issues at the Foundation of Flexographic Technical Association's (FFTA) annual forum in Dallas.

Katy Wight reports

Vanishing variability

Mavericks and cowboys – the usual Dallas crowd – had to make room for the 1,300 flexographers who descended on the Wyndham Anatole hotel for the 46th FFTA annual forum and INFO*FLEX exhibition. The theme of the four-day event was ‘think BIG, think flexo’ – a rally cry to printers to harness new opportunities being opened up to the market.

Forum chairman Ken Lowden, DuPont Imaging Technologies, opened the conference program by highlighting the prime objectives of the association – to promote, develop and maintain the advancement of flexo.

‘The current trends are favoring flexo,’ he said, ‘but price pressures and foreign competition have not helped us. That is why it is even more important to understand the trends that we will be facing in the future.’

At the same time, a lack of understanding of the basic principles of flexography prevents label converters optimizing their print process and delivering a consistent product. This theme was prevalent in the following panel discussion, *Insights 2004, the future view of flexo for packaging and labeling*.

‘There are more variables in flexo than in any other print process,’ said Hans Deamer, president of Windmoeller & Holscher Corporation. ‘Compared to offset and gravure, flexo is a nightmare. The industry needs to have pride in its work, but the process has to be tightened.’

‘It’s great to have plates ready in two hours, but it’s pointless if you are going to have to spend another couple of hours fiddling with the inks to get the right color on your press. We need to take all of this ‘tweaking’ out of the hands of the operator – the technology is available.’

Frank Cost, associate dean, College of Imaging Arts and Sciences, Rochester Institute of Technology, agreed with this viewpoint, taking a more mathematical approach: ‘We need to find a process that removes the decision making for individuals and makes it more of an algorithm. We need to remove the craft element in order for the industry to move forward.’

The idea of flexographers as craftsmen is sentimental and not necessarily good for the industry’s reputation. And the pride of the craftsman doesn’t necessarily have value for the customer, as Marianna McSweeney, regional vice president of Southern Graphic Systems points out: ‘Our clients just want to see the end

result, they don’t want to know how we got there. They don’t want to come and see our amazing new equipment and presses, they just want to know what it will mean for them. Will it mean that we can provide their products faster or cheaper?’

Removing the variables – what’s the solution?

Deamer of Windmoeller & Holscher believes that further automation at press-side will be the answer to the current lack of competitiveness. ‘Soon we’ll have presses in place that calibrate everything automatically – and this will also see the recruitment and training crisis resolved,’ he adds.

Without exception, converters in the US and Europe are suffering from a lack of qualified press operators. The complexity of mastering flexo limits the number of suitably experienced operators and is a barrier to recruitment, but suppliers are working hard to streamline production for the future. John Fulcoly, senior group manager strategic sourcing, PepsiCo Food Flexible Packaging, argues that education about flexo shouldn’t necessarily be limited to operators. If end users are aware of the capabilities and parameters of working with flexo, time and money can be saved.

‘When a design is created within the parameters of your printing capabilities you get a more productive print job,’ he says. ‘Smart designs allow you to get more for less.’

McSweeney of Southern Graphic Systems adds: ‘There is a big problem in that, for the most part, designers are not up-to-date

Are end users over the rainbow?

Jeff Brall, creative director, Unilever Bestfoods, North America

‘Color is still very critical in the marketplace. All of the brands are screaming for shelf presence and how we use color to communicate is important. I think that we are going to see increased press capabilities, moving up to 10 or 12-color print stations. There is technology available in Europe that isn’t yet available here and we need to start looking at what’s going on elsewhere. If it was up to me, I’d like a 20-color press – and maybe it could play hardball as well!’

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FFTA Forum chairman Ken Lowden opens the conference program



with all of the developments in flexo printing technology and they need to have experts on hand to let them know. There needs to be more communication.

'It's their work of art and if by the time it gets to the shelf it isn't what they were expecting, you're going to have one disappointed customer on your hands.' Paul Brauss, president of Mark Andy also adds that buyers aren't as technically oriented as they used to be, so education of end users should be all-encompassing.

What does the end user want?

'Three years ago we were talking about capability and now the issue is consistency,' says John Fulcoly, senior group manager strategic sourcing, PepsiCo Food Flexible Packaging, 'and how is flexo's consistency? I would say that it is much better – in fact I would award it an A- – but soon, new processes will mean that our number one priority will be predictability.

'Tie-in promotions are on the increase – for example, we just had a project where after a ball game we had labels available featuring the winning team,' he adds. 'Not only is speed to market crucial, but we need to have a predictable, stable process and a supporting design element to provide reliable color separations and a first time execution.

'New channel requirements such as different flavors, ethnic, urban or regional varieties mean smaller runs and more frequent changeovers, but we must maintain the quality and consistency. My hope is to see a closed-loop process and self correction to remove the re-approval stage and the need for someone to be at the press side.'

The answer is clearly further control of operation processes and increasing automation. The aim is to reduce or remove the variables that prevent flexo from becoming an exact science. This theme was prevalent throughout the conference. In the prepress session, Brendan Pollard, managing director of Applied Laser Engineering, discussed how dot gain is a heavy burden on the industry: 'There is nothing to be 'gained' from dot gain,' he said. 'It shouldn't be called 'gain' at all and should actually be called 'print loss'. If we are going to look at a smarter way to make dots smaller, we need fundamental changes. We should find a way of printing at the right size!'

Then, in the Tag & Label session, David Lanska, narrow web sales manager of Stork Cellaramic talked about how to 'Focus on make-ready to improve profitability'. He showed how a mathematical variable gauge R&R (repetition and reproduction) study could identify whether your working practice is consistent and repeatable, where problems lie

Sessions in brief

■ On-press color management for flexo pitted an RGB camera against a spectrodensitometer and digital against conventional plate technologies as a team of Forum presenters weighed the value and benefits of on-press adjustments as compared to offline alternatives. John DuPont of Paper Converting Machine Co. spearheaded the project and led the on-site Forum briefing team. Conclusions indicated that the camera detected changes in 70 per cent of the samples, while the spectrodensitometer picked up 77 percent.

■ Denny McGee, Mark Andy/COMCO, encouraged narrow-web printers to get on the flexible packaging and films bandwagon. Afterwards, Michael Harris, Innovative Equipment Ltd, delivered a piece on the basics of RIFD (Radio Frequency Identification).

■ Dr. Sam Ingram, Clemson University and Steve Smiley, Vertis Inc., likened the processes of learning to print to learning to play the guitar. In their view, tuning a guitar equates to characterizing a press. The objective of both processes is the same: consistency—note after note and song after song, and print after print, job after job. FTA's Flexographic Image Reproduction Specifications and Tolerances (FIRST) were defined as facilitators in effectively linking expectations with printed results. Craig Woolley, Banner Packaging spoke from experience: 'FIRST makes printers more effective in meeting customer standards and delivering better product. It requires us to prioritize the mechanical taming of the process through base setting, slur targets, tonal scales, etc.'

■ Graphic designer Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Shikatani Lacroix Brandesign, identified 'disruptive technology' as a technology that 'changes the game.' Individualism, he went on to say, is a trend among CPCs.

■ 'Digital printing: friend or foe?' was the first-ever webinar conducted at an FFTA Forum. Rick Mix, who moderated, reported that 40 people logged on. 'Feelings are dramatically different running on both sides of the issue,' summarized Mix. 'Some see it as a critical component of flexo in the future. Others are afraid of it.'

(operators or equipment) and how they need to be resolved. In the case study he used, the converter was wasting large amounts of time and money due to unrepeatable measurement techniques used on anilox rolls – an issue that can be devastating for color predictability. ■



TW Parker was the first label printer to use offset in the UK. After a return to flexo, it has just achieved another UK first by implementing the DuPont CyrelFAST CTP system.

Katy Wight reports

Banishing the prepress bottleneck

Established in 1952, Parker's, a third generation family business, has become one of the largest independent label converters in the UK. Consistently adapting to changes within the food market has allowed the company to maintain its foothold in the industry and a recent investment in new CTP technology and a label application plant ensures they will stay one step ahead of the game.

Parker's provides labels to the major food producers supplying the UK supermarkets, including Marks and Spencer, Tesco, Waitrose and Wal-Mart ASDA. The need for premium quality labels and a consequent investment in offset in 1996 was directly related to the caliber of Parker's customers. However, two years ago, the company's strategy underwent a complete U-turn, replacing its offset presses with flexo equivalents. What brought on the change?

'We bought two offset presses initially and we needed another press, so we decided to buy a flexo press – a Nilpeter FA3300,' explains director Toby Parker. 'After six months, the production quality that we were achieving from the flexo press was equal to litho. This was two years ago when flexo was coming on in leaps and bounds. Inks, drying systems and plates – they were all getting better, so I thought that I'd get rid of our litho presses while I could still get a good price for them.'

With customers frequently requesting minor, last-minute changes, the turnaround and cost of producing offset plates offsite was a major drawback, says Parker. Flexo was a more cost-effective solution, prompting the purchase of two more Nilpeter FA3300s, making a total of three, and a Mark Andy 4200.

'I think that there is still a place for litho in the market, but

"After six months, the production quality that we were achieving from the flexo press was equal to litho, so I thought that I would get rid of our litho presses while I could get a good price for them"

it's not entirely suited to our operation. It's ideal for very long run, high quality labels such as shampoo bottles, detergent or beer bottle labels. We tend to work on small to medium runs, but to make offset profitable, you need to be printing SKUs in their millions.'

Parker's has 80 employees based in two facilities in Liverpool – the second opened last month in Knowsley and is devoted entirely to label application. Parker's has always been able to offer application as a service to its customers, but Toby Parker believes that this expanded facility will be a vital string to its bow – exemplified by the fact that other label printers seem to be following suit. The business has a turnover of GBP7.2 million, but the management is not complacent. Despite already investing in the Knowsley site, it responded to its clients'

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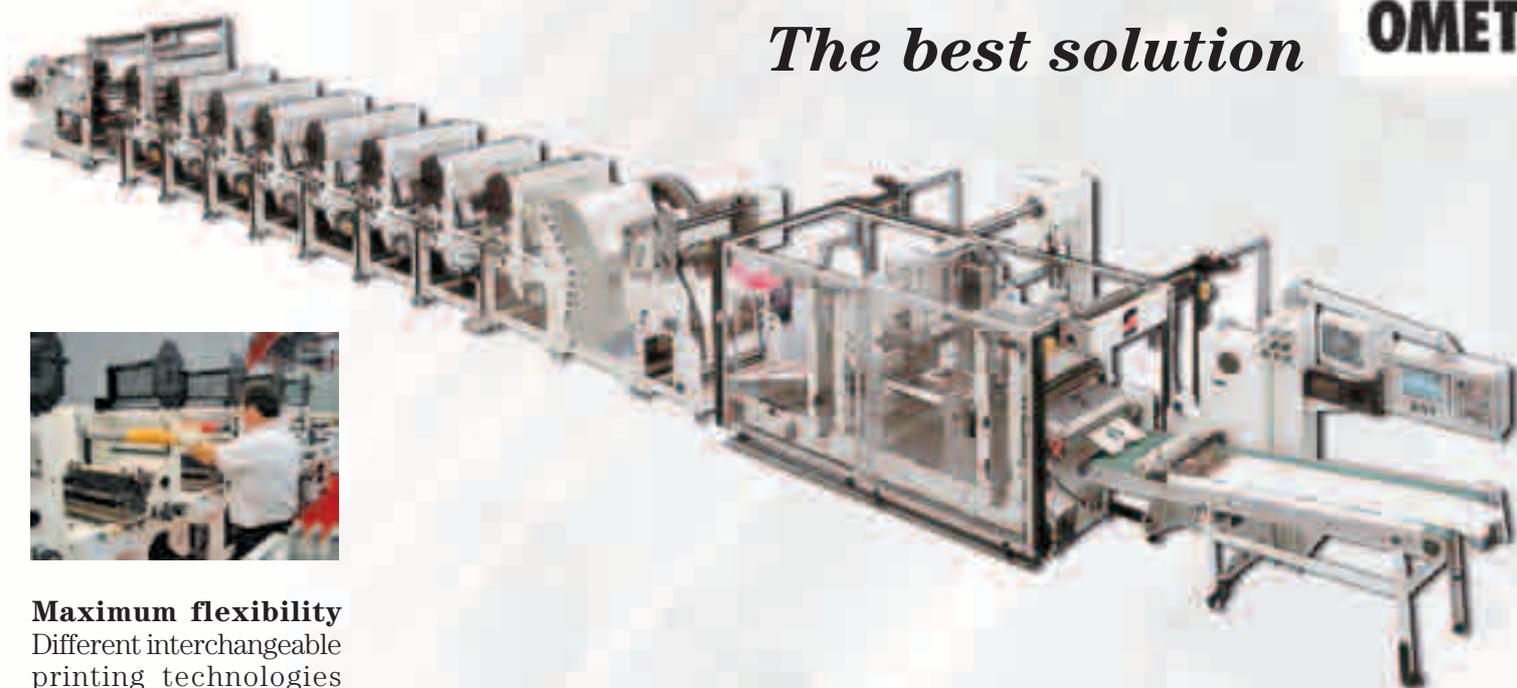
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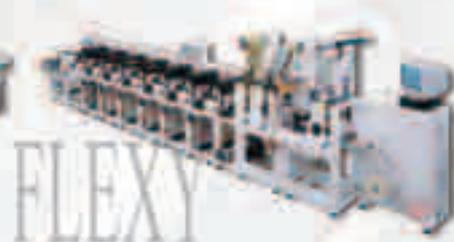
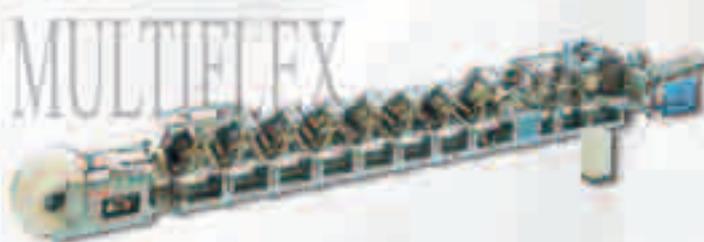
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Parkers' facility in Aintree, Liverpool, houses three Nilpeter flexo presses and a Mark Andy 4200

“What put us off investing in platemaking was the problem with solvents. The FAST system is already big in Germany so we went over to check it out”

demands by investing in the latest Cyrel thermal CTP technology.

‘Our customers were asking for a faster turnaround,’ says Parker. ‘We were at a stage where a designer did the artwork for a client, this was then sent to the repro house, then to the platemaker and then the plates were sent to us. Our clients were sick of being billed for bikes going up and down the country from London to Liverpool.’

‘It meant that there was a greater risk of hiccups occurring, not to mention all of the time that was wasted. We decided to invest in CTP so that we could make our own digital plates in house. Now we can turn around plates in forty minutes and we couldn’t do without it.’

CyrelFAST, allows the operator to make flexo plates without liquid solvents or a drying stage. Images are formed on the flexo plate through thermal mass transfer technology. The CyrelFAST plate contains a formulation that can be heat-processed. With a precisely controlled heat source, and a little contact pressure from the CyrelFAST developer roll, unexposed portions of the relief layer are removed.

Once developed, the plate is ready for post exposure and finishing – the same steps used to finish conventional solvent-processed plates. The plates can be exchanged quickly with traditional plates with no changes to the plate cylinder undercuts, plate distortions or mounting tape, and they are compatible with standard solvent, UV and water-based inks.

‘I always thought that DuPont was the best and we have always used Cyrel plates,’ says Parker. ‘What put us off investing in platemaking systems in the past was the problem with

solvents. The FAST system is already big in Germany, so we went over to check out a couple of converters and how they were getting on. We liked what we saw. The quality is better than solvent platemaking – it’s absolutely superb.’

Catering to the market

Parkers offers pressure-sensitive labels, cut and stack film labels, foil and PET lids, shrink sleeves, label application, dairy packaging and design capabilities. It has a unique strategy in that it almost exclusively prints for the food industry, but has diversified to cater for a wide range of food-relevant applications.

‘There is too much capacity in the market right now. You need to be innovative all of the time,’ adds Parker. ‘You’ve got to look for different ways to make revenue, which is why we have moved into flexible packaging and sleeves. I think it would be very difficult to scrape together a living from pressure-sensitive alone these days.’

The ratio of film to pressure sensitive paper labels that Parker’s produces is roughly a 50:50 split. A particularly prolific application for the company are PET lids for yogurt pots, salads and desserts and they are tapping into a growing market for shrink sleeves. It has contracts with several vendors already and has invested in its own seaming, slitting and inspection units.

‘I think sleeves are definitely a sustainable technology. Take any label – you’ve already got so much information on it – and that is only going to multiply as legislation increases. There’s lots of growth there,’ says Parker. ‘Hopefully we’ll be back at overcapacity again soon and we’ll have to get another press in!’ ■



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New at Drupa

Amid the vast spaces dedicated to commercial printing at this year's Drupa, there was much of interest to label converters prepared to walk long distances! **Andy Thomas** reports from Düsseldorf, Germany, on the world's biggest graphic arts show

New narrow and mid-web presses of interest to the label and package converting communities were on-show at Drupa.

Werner Kammann Maschinenfabrik GmbH, best known up to now as a manufacturer of screen presses, introduced an intriguing hybrid screen/waterless offset press complete with press-side direct imaging units for offset plates and flatbed screens. The servo-driven K61-OS press was configured with a flat screen print station followed by four waterless UV offset printing stations. Optional modular components include foil hot-stamping, laminating, lacquering, and rotogravure stations for printing metallic inks.

Kammann developed the K26-O offset CTP system and the K26-S CTS computer-to-screen system specifically for this press, along with RIP software for converting either PostScript or PDF files. This information sets up the computer-assisted inking controls on the press via motorized fountain keys. The offset plates are imaged on the print cylinder, which is then inserted directly into the print unit through the side frame

The press is designed with centralized input of data such as print image length, screen stroke, squeegee movement, kiss cutting length, material tension, material thickness etc. This information can be saved and recalled for rapid make-ready on repeat jobs.

The screen unit utilizes counter-pressure cylinders for optimized ink transfer, with the material moving continuously. The aluminum screen frames can be re-used multiple times.

The waterless offset print stations incorporate a single, servo-driven plate cylinder for all print lengths. Similarly the rotary die-cut unit features a fixed-diameter magnetic cylinder for the entire repeat length range.

The press can handle materials down to 25 microns with chill rollers on the UV units. Maximum print width is 340mm for offset and 350mm for screen printing, with print length infinitely adjustable between 7-14ins (177.8mm – 355.6mm).

Maximum speed is 35 meters/minute at maximum repeat length.

RDP Marathon Inc. gave the first European outing to its offset sleeve technology, which, as with Drent-Goebel's VSOP technology – also on view at the show – provides printers with the ability to print any size without the restrictions of conventional gearing.

Engineered with a single servo drive per insert, the RDP 'SOLID' sleeve inserts provide infinitely variable repeat sizes from 24" to 36" (610 mm – 910 mm), and are interchangeable with other RDP inserts in the base print carrier, which include flexo inserts, conventional three-cylinder inserts and dry offset inserts.

The first SOLID sale – announced at the show – was to wet glue specialist Illochroma Labeling Group in France. Illochroma's press is a 38.5"/978 mm wide machine and will be installed at the Croix industrial site in northern France.

Dutch company AV Flexologic b.v. introduced an entry level flexo press with a show price of just 160,000 Euros. Produced in co-operation with Color Control b.v., the CC10 is a 10 inch 4-colour press with UV/IR drying. The press has a maximum speed of 500 ft/min (152 m/min) and can handle label substrates from 80-150 gsm. It comes in a standard configuration complete with two rewind shafts, turnover bar, electronic tension control on the unwind and across the web path, 360° register adjustment and two die stations. More details in a future issue of L&L.

Ko-Pack International introduced a 12-color Euroflex 250 press dedicated to non-stop printing of polyamide food casing – for sausages and cheese etc – at speeds of up to 150m/min. Although not directly applicable to label converting, the press showed the possibilities of using twelve print units located on two temperature-controlled central impression drums to print 360° with six colors on each side.

The Euroflex demonstrations marked the first use of Mirage Inks' Quartz Ultra range of cationic UV flexo inks, developed

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Karlville showcased the shrink sleeve machine it will introduce to the American market at Labelexpo Americas in September. The machine seams at 300 meters per minute with a fully adjustable forming plate. Size change can be accomplished within five minutes without the need of a forming plate. The Seamer has been designed for continuous operation with turret unwinds and rewinds.

jointly with Ko-Pack. They are designed to be FDA compliant, resist high temperature and moisture and to exhibit low odor.

Also shown was a 12-color 650 Film Press. Using hot air drying and water based inks, the press is configured for high speed (300m/minute) non-stop printing.

Labelmen showed for the first time a cold foil unit on its CI letterpress machines, as well as the results of a project with Eckart to develop a special set of metalized letterpress inks. There was big news on the future development of an 8-color CI flexo press with a 330-500mm web width and in-line UV screen unit, which is being built at Labelmen's newly completed production and R&D factory in Taiwan.

Rotatek introduced its new shaftless, servo-driven RK Perfect NT press. This 520mm wide machine was equipped with five offset and one flexo printing unit, auto-register, an automatic ink and register control system and job memory. The company also showed a Combi hybrid offset-flexo press with automatic ink and register control system.

Digital printing

HP Indigo announced partnerships with Esko Graphics and Artwork Systems to provide a direct link to the workflow software on its ws4000 digital label press.

Another important announcement was a dedicated 'Pharma Validation' report for the ws4000 which contains all the necessary FDA compliance documents, test reports and guidelines to support a validation of the press for the pharmaceutical industry. To further aid approval, HP Indigo has partnered with AVT web inspection systems to provide a watertight proofing system.

Running in-line with the ws4000 was an interesting looking laser die-cutting system supplied by ABG International, shown operating at maximum press speed. More details on this system – which will be available from Labelexpo Americas in September – in the next issue of L&L.

Drupa gave converters a chance to re-visit digital systems first seen at Labelexpo Europe in Brussels last year, including Domino Printing Sciences' On-Demand inkjet system for narrow web presses and Matan's Spring thermal transfer digital printing system. VIPColor Technologies exhibited its VP8020 digital print engine with 'cool fusion' micro-toner system, while GRE Engineering introduced its Digital Converter, a complete tag and label short run system for converting digitally printed stock. Options include sheeting, foil stamping, UV coating and curing.

Agfa company Dotrix demonstrated a roll-to-roll version of its dot factory press with an integrated jumbo unwinder and sheet cutter.

German company inc.jet showed a system built around HP inkjet technology called

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Pressing on

Focus Machinery showed for the first time a 6-color Proflex flexo press in a full UV configuration, as well as a Centraflex and textile label printing equipment

Those wanting to see GiDue's much anticipated Unipro flexible packaging press in action will have to wait for Labelexpo of the Americas in Chicago in September.

However, a non-stop carton production line was demonstrated running flip-top cigarette boxes and food and pharmaceutical cartons, printed UV flexo with in-line screen and hot foil stamping then automatically stacked. Partners in this project included Martin Automatic, I Matho GmbH, Stork b.v. and Gannicot Inc.

Edale was demonstrating its servo-driven Sigma packaging press running a UV flexo shrink sleeve application assisted by a water-cooled UV drying system supplied by IST.

Rotocolor – part of the Pago group – showcased its Rotova narrow web hybrid gravure-flexo press, available in 300 and 500mm versions, along with a newly developed matrix rewind unit that changes reels automatically.

Codimag had a Viva 340 waterless offset/screen press on the Stork stand, demonstrating Stork's screen unit technology designed specifically for semi-rotary presses.

Gallus demonstrated a KM 410/510 narrow web flexographic carton press in-line with an FSM 410 flatbed die cutter. This was aimed squarely at sheetfed carton printers to produce shorter run, high added value pieces.

the jet.engine, which is compact enough to provide high-speed, high resolution variable data virtually anywhere in a printing or packaging production line. The system prints multiple colors at high print resolutions with configurable print widths and lengths.

Plates and sleeves

Of great interest to label printers using flexo-screen combination presses, Stork introduced an engraver which images both flexo plates and rotary screens. The Morpheus 611X Direct Engraver incorporates a single laser-beam that burns away unwanted material to form the image without the need for exposing, washing and drying. The machine can engrave rubber and polymer flexo plates and sleeves, as well as Stork's RotaMesh screens.

Stork's specially developed flexoPOWER image-processing software allows the operator unprecedented levels of control in forming the dot shape and sharpness. Adjustable parameters include the plateau (image area), shoulder steepness – to higher degrees than possible with UV exposure, according to Stork – relief depth and base size.

The Morpheus currently achieves resolutions of 80 dots per mm (2032 dpi) at engraving speeds up to 14 meters per minute. The steep dot shoulders increase edge sharpness in linework and make it harder for ink and paper dust to settle on the floor (non-image area).

Stork also announced a dedicated direct engraving system for flexographic plates. Developed in collaboration with BASF, the Agrios 413X uses triple-beam laser technology to burn rubber and polymer at up to 18 meters per second. Three lasers pass along the plate in quick succession to create the printing dot in stages, driven by the same image-processing software as found on the Morpheus.

The Agrios 413X – sold by BASF under the Infinity brand name – achieves up to 80 dots per mm (2032 dpi) resolution, with rasters up to 60 lpc. In recent tests, the Agrios engraved a 1m² plate with a 6 mm relief depth and 1270 dpi resolution, in 50 minutes.

Stork also launched a range of seamless nickel sleeves and a smaller RSI (Rotary Screen Integration) unit claimed light enough to be fitted manually in just ten minutes. Adjustable support bearings allow fast repeat-size changeover within a restricted environment, without the need for recalibration.

Other big firsts at drupa were the debut on the Creo stand of the Exactus gravure cylinder imaging system (for full report, see PLGA report on pg52) and a technology demonstration of Kodak Polychrome Graphics' first CTP flexo plate, the Flexcel NX plate.

Inks and holograms

Flint Ink introduced 'Rub'nSmell' scented inks, which are applied directly over printed graphics and activate only when rubbed. The inks can be run in-line in either spot or full coverage, for offset, flexo, gravure or screen-printing applications. They will withstand heat, pressure, humidity and other printing and converting stresses, says Flint, and do not permeate the pressroom environment.

Flint-Schmidt announced new UV flexo inks to complement its UV offset product range. Cureflex is a free-radical curing UV flexo ink, and Ultraflex a cationic curing UV flexo ink. Flint says these products have shown excellent results for aluminum converting, shrink labeling, carton and board, and general label applications.

'We are presently developing UV gravure solutions to expand our offerings for our customers still further,' says Dr Stefan Eder, product manager UV, Flint-Schmidt Liquid Packaging Division. 'This will open new horizons for the application of UV inks for packaging and labeling.'

Zeller + Gmelin completed its narrow web inks series with the introduction of Optiscreen UV-screen inks for rotary and flat bed screen-printing. Optiscreen is designed for use on papers, transparent and opaque plastic substrates and to be overprinted in-line with Zeller + Gmelin UV curing products whether UV-flexo, UV-letterpress or UV-offset. The company has also developed a new ink series for UV-waterless applications, called Toracure, and recently optimized its existing Uvalux U2 and Labelcure EUF series inks for offset and letterpress printing on plastic films, synthetic papers and foil.

Wolstenholme International's free Inkantation calculating tool was being demonstrated. It helps printers select the most cost-effective metallic finish for a variety of printing applications. The calculation formulae are based solely on



Morpheus 611X Direct Engraver

application comparisons between different metallic effects, such as inks, metalized substrates and hot and cold foil stamping. The tool enables the operator to key in over 150 printing variables, such as print quantity, paper selection and the process and finish most appropriate for carton and label printing.

Light Impressions International introduced a range of machine-readable hologram systems. Optocode is a pressure sensitive holographic label which incorporates Flying Null technology for authentication and track and trace requirements; Magdot is a new technology from the USA that uses the unique characteristics of magnetic ink to provide unique identities to holographic labels or hot stamping foil; and Smartmark is a holographic hot stamping foil and label incorporating structured magnetics for both track and trace and authentication.

Flint company Precisia LLC was promoting its ability to produce fully functional radio frequency identification (RFID) tags with high-speed printed antennas in one location. Its tag production system assembles the individual components of an RFID label as the first step toward complete high-speed antenna printing and chip attachment in a single production process.

Commented Jim Rohrkemper, president of Precisia. "Today, we can formulate and manufacture conductive materials, print hundreds of thousands of antennae per hour, and attach RFID chips or straps at a rate of a few thousand per hour. We are working to attach straps at high speeds by the end of the year."

Coatings and adhesives

Ciba Specialty Chemicals demonstrated its commitment to the narrow web market with a live demonstration of its PrimeIT coating applied in-line on a GiDue E-Combat UV flexo press.

As regular readers will recall, PrimeIT is a novel surface modification technology which greatly improves keying of inks, and bonding of adhesives and coatings on all types of film, including metallics. By applying PrimeIT at the first print station, label printers can create the same predictable and highly receptive print surface across the full range of substrates they use. Prime IT has virtually unlimited storage stability and does not affect the appearance or physical properties of the film.

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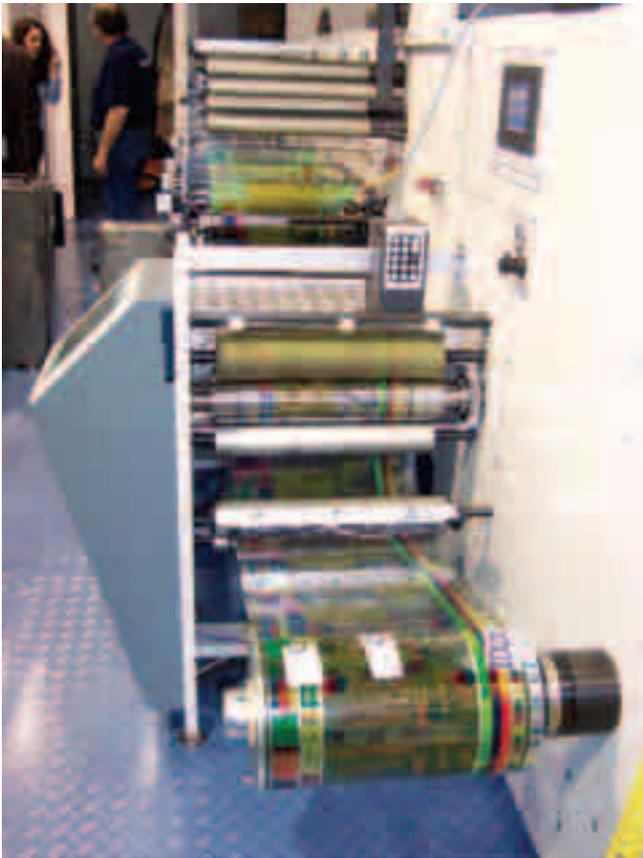
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GiDue E-Combat UV flexo press applying Prime IT inline

Combat press on the stand – printing BOPP film from RadiciFilm – had been specially modified to accept the application system and will be used for further testing at Ciba's laboratories. GiDue engineers are working on making the application system more compact – currently it takes up the space of two print units.

Ciba also launched an addition to its program of advanced color matching systems. Colibri QuickMatch Pro is designed for matching effect shades as well as printing inks applied onto metallic surfaces without the use of a multi-angle spectrophotometer. Conventional shades can also be matched. The company has developed multi-user systems to share color data inside companies and between suppliers and customers.

Converting and finishing systems

Omet introduced its patented Twin-Cut die-cutting system, which allows infinite repeats to be achieved using just two sets of magnetic cylinders. This saves the cost of replacement cylinders, downtime changing cylinders and removes the need for hoists to lift cylinders into the press.

The material travels at a constant pace through the unit, while the die-cutting cylinders rotate at a constant speed during the cutting phase, then decelerate and accelerate in the rest phase. The thickness of the material does not affect register performance. The Twin-Cut unit incorporates automatic register control and a traditional waste removal with controlled tension.

The unit can work in the traditional way with only one

Web inspection and treatment

Advanced Vision Technology Ltd (AVT) introduced SpectraLink, an in-line color measurement solution developed in cooperation with X-Rite. The system can be installed as an optional module to the AVT PrintVision/Jupiter Process Control platform. See L&L issue 4 for a more detailed review

eltromat previewed its modular 3000 series web video insector, together with expansion modules including SIS inspection, CI register control, and BC bar-code verification equipment.

Futec Europe unveiled the Kaleido Eye colour navigation system, which provides color reference information around the whole print pattern, inline, and continually throughout the job. It can be used in conjunction with narrow, medium and wide web width printing equipment including web fed offset, flexographic and rotogravure.

Meech's new 986 DC Feedback System automatically optimizes the level of static charge removal by sensing the residual charge on the target material and reacting to it.

BST International introduced the compact ekrPro Com 60 system for the accurate guiding, control and automated management of moving webs, with a controller available in both stand alone or panel mount units.

Prime UV introduced its UV FLEXfilm UV processor, designed specifically for heat sensitive substrates. It features an open base UV lamp facing a water-cooled chill roll. The system can be installed after the coating station on a CI flexo press or between stations on in-line flexo web presses.

The newly developed Inline Process Control (IPC) system from Arcure 'learns' UV performance required by the system for an optimum curing result and adjusts lamp output to suit the requirements of the inks and lacquers used.

Erhardt + Leimer introduced a motorized version of its Elscan micro manual digital print image monitoring system – already well established in the label printing industry. The motorized system is retrofittable. E&L also presented a high resolution digital camera with the same functions as the standard Elscan and based on the same hardware platform.

interchangeable magnetic cylinder or with the Twin-Cut's double alternate cylinder configuration.

The Twin-Cut was shown running in-line with Omet's Varyflex narrow-web gearless rotary press converting folding cartons using Xynatech male/female dies. The Twin-Cut unit is equally applicable to PS label converting, however.

Schober introduced a laser cut and perforating system which can be installed either on or off-line. Powered by a



Omet twin-Cut die-cutting system

carbon dioxide laser, it can convert films, laminates, cartons, pressure-sensitive and multi-layer papers. Schober also introduced its servo-driven Vector Cut on a roll-to-roll converting machine.

On the Rotatek stand was a multifunctional label slitter rewinder. The RTK 330 has a maximum web width of 330 mm and can be configured with unwind-rewind and inspection equipment, with a rotary die-cutter or with a letterpress printing unit. A head for variable data printing can also be incorporated.

There were also significant developments on the wet-glue finishing side of the business. Kugler-Womako has a long history of manufacturing dedicated roll-to-sheet systems for wet glue labels, and at drupa showed for the first time its LabelCut 102 system. This cuts strips from the printed paper roll individually with tight tolerances and with just a few handling steps. The cut tolerances are +/- 0.1 millimeters for the longitudinal cutter and +/- 0.15 millimeters for the transverse cutter. The cut length and the side trim are controlled electronically by reading of printed marks. The machine is equipped with a spoilage detection system so that faulty strips are rejected from the stack.

The LabelCut 102 can be adjusted for new formats in just a few minutes. Production speed reaches up to 200 meters, or 2,000 cuts per minute. As an option, the LabelCut 102 can be fitted with an embossing calander and an in-line connection to the de-stacker, to die cutters or to an in-line guillotine for square labels. The machine was demonstrated under production conditions producing in-line from the printed paper roll to the finished, shaped labels in maxi packs.

Polar introduced a new series of high speed cutters, the X and XT (a higher spec version with touch screen technology). These guillotines are sturdier in design, have a new knife changing facility and have extensive artificial intelligence built in.

Connectivity was a key issue and the guillotines will be retrofittable with the 'P-Net' networking option. Related materials handling equipment was also shown, including an automated jogging system.

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John Watson confirms order for Polar DC 12, including automatic die-cutting, waste extraction, label counting and banding

estimates including sales prices in a project.

Shuttleworth demonstrated a wide range of MIS software including its dedicated offering for roll label converters. See full report in next issue of L&L.

Pre-press

Esko-Graphics introduced its Scope packaging workflow system at Drupa and tied up workflow alliances with Agfa and HP Indigo. Scope covers a wide range of functions, from job and product specification, through graphic and structural design and automated pre-production operations, to platemaking and tool-making for converting. Scope adds capabilities for project coordination, digital asset management and distributed proofing and approval, enabling stakeholders across the supply chain to communicate and collaborate globally, in real time.

A demo showed Scope's DeskPack being used for one-up creation of an image, moving to Plato for step-and-repeat, then outputting through Agfa's ApogeeX.

Artwork Systems released version 8 of ArtPro and Nexus, which now integrate extensive PDF/JDF functionality. They support editability for transparency and blend modes, incorporate a new 4Stage trapping technology, a native PDF 1.4 RIP, flattening technology and JDF-driven step and repeat solutions. Enfocus Certified PDF technology is now incorporated within ArtPro and Nexus 8.0 for sophisticated automated pre-flighting. The company also showed an asset management system, Mnemo, which keeps track of pre-press production files, and Symphony, which harmonizes output devices through device calibration and press compensation technologies.

For the packaging and labels industry Creo showed its new Magnus VLF CTP and Mirus PN negative thermal plates for offset printing, the ThermoFlex CTP with HyperFlex-ready imaging for flexo printing and the new Exactus thermal gravure system for gravure printing. New versions of the Prinergy Powerpack and Brisque Pack workflow systems, Pandora step-and-repeat tool, and the new Prinergy Evo workflow system were demonstrated. Creo also showcased its Staccato screening software and new Spotless printing, which softens the 'hard edge' of a flexo vignette by selectively removing printing dots.

Ancillary equipment

There was significant interest in the narrow web drum flexo proof press exhibited on the JM Heaford stand. This machine, specifically developed for the label and carton industry, uses production inks, plates, anilox and substrate and this can be used for customer approvals. ■

Management Information Solutions

DiMSI' demonstrated its 640 MIS system dedicated to multi-site operations. In multifaceted transactions involving multiple plants, contact persons, shipping addresses, or inventory items – such as changes in stock quantities or prices – the appropriate information will be extracted and linked to the relevant profit center. In addition, profit and loss sheets can be split for several profit centers within one company.

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Gravure out of the shadows

Although gravure is firmly established in high volume, high quality sectors of the labels market, the development of modular narrow web gravure units makes advances in pre-press and cylinder technology of growing interest to all label converters. **Andy Thomas** reports

The 7th technical conference of the Packaging and Labeling Gravure Association (PLGA), which took place in Jacksonville Florida earlier this year, provided an excellent window on current state-of-the-art gravure and some exciting future developments.

Consider first the sheer breadth of labeling applications covered in the PLGA print award categories, ranging from sleeves to non-PSA papers and films, in-mold and heat transfer, glue-applied, prime PSA and No-Label-Look.

Although this work is being done almost exclusively on wide web machines, there is a growing interest among the narrow/mid web press manufacturers in offering gravure printing modules on their machines. Visitors to the Brussels Labelexpo show last year will have noted that Nilpeter, Mark Andy and Gallus-Heidelberg were all showing gravure units. The most likely use of add-on gravure units is for the application of metallics or functional coatings, where gravure has unique advantages over other print processes.

New inks and coatings

Oliver Crowhurst, director of North American business development at Eckart, said solvent gravure is the ideal process for its VMP (Vacuum Metalized Pigment) ink technology, which aims to match the reflectance of hot and cold foils and metallized substrates. 'Using solvent gravure, we can now achieve a mirror-like reverse print or a very high reflectance surface print in a full range of colors, including golds,' said Crowhurst. The company's UV flexo VMP inks by contrast, exhibit only two thirds of this gloss level. The commercial viability of replacing foil and metallic substrates with ink depends upon the percent coverage. Solvent gravure VMP inks cost around \$0.03 per msi at 10 per cent coverage on a 200 line, 30 micron engraving filmweight, which equates to around 20-40 per cent the cost of foil stamping at this coverage.

Dr Chris Patterson at Flint Ink told delegates that fluorescent

inks remain largely the domain of the gravure printer, delivering hi-intensity colors and effective security solutions. He noted that caution needs to be exercised when using spectrophotometers for press-side color control, since fluorescents emit more light than falls upon them. Visual inspection therefore remains very important.

In a survey of brand protection and enhancement tools, SunChemical Security's Pat Polazzo threw doubt on currently available conductive flexo and gravure inks for printing RFID antennae. 'We are not yet attaining 99.99+ per cent antennae efficiencies from the mainstream print processes,' said Polazzo.

But Steve Ludmerer, president at Parelec Inc, said that gravure converters – and gravure converters alone – will lead the charge to commercially viable printed RFID antennae. The company is the developer of the Parmod range of conductive inks, which consist of metal particles and a reactive organic carrier which burns off on curing to leave essentially pure metal trace with high conductivity remains.

Ludmerer conceded that gravure and flexo are not suitable for 13.56mhz HF tags, which require a crossover (multiple layer) antenna. However, 915mhz UHF tags, require a planar (flat) antenna which can be printed in a single pass at a relatively low coating weight.

'We need the graphic arts industry to help us push this technology forward to the end user, and the gravure industry will be the biggest beneficiary,' said Ludmerer. The faster the print speed, the lower the cost per chip, and gravure can lay down antennae at up to 500 feet/minute, compared to 200 for flexography and 180 for rotary screen. Thus for a 45 x 75mm HF antenna, 46,000/minute could be printed gravure against 400/min for rotary screen. Drying/curing temperatures are critical in defining the weight of metal particles layed down, and as these are higher than typical gravure temperatures (between 130-150°C), this area still requires work.

Ludmerer said the read distance of a printed antenna is equivalent to copper on a 915mhz UHF antennae: 10-11 feet on a

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3 micron film thickness. The final cost of the printed antenna is dependent on factors including ink volume, active antenna area multiplied by print thickness and design.

Pre-press

Important advances are taking place in gravure pre-press with the launch by Creo, in partnership with Acigraf, of a thermally-imaged computer-to-cylinder system. This is being beta tested by Southern Graphic Systems in Richmond, VA, a company in the giant Alcoa group, and Denis Wilcox, regional vice president for SGS was on hand to give an enthusiastic user's assessment.

The system is based around a thermal resist developed by Creo and Acigraf's reverse plating copper removal process. 'This is a fully integrated system with the potential for automation in a 'lights out' scenario,' said Wilcox, who pointed out that the system uses copper chloride not ferric chloride, which is one of the chemical components that drove the industry away from 'chemical' engraving. Among the imaging advantages is a unique cell profile achieved by removing copper in a consistent, well-defined direction with minimal undercut. This also allows extensive customization of cell shape. 'As well as increased quality, we have seen excellent process control, consistency and predictability with better ink coverage and improved ink release, so less missing dots in the highlights,' said Wilcox. Different screen rulings – including FM screening – can be achieved on the same cylinder.

At the same time, SGS Richmond has been proving Daetwyler's Trans-Cell technology, now used in 10 per cent of all cylinder production and found to improve edge sharpness and CT detail. It does require 'significant changes' to engraving bed, head and software.

SGS has also pioneered the Super E/Super X system it developed with Keating Gravure, a combination of software, tooling and engraving head technology using existing OEE machines. Wilcox said SGS has achieved 300 line-edge quality with 175-line ink volume 'with the potential to produce smaller text than has historically been possible with enough volume to attain coverage and brilliance required when using metallic inks.' Smoothing of transitions in difficult vignettes has been noted.

'In the longer term, we are aiming to reduce engraving cycle time from four hours to just 45 minutes, build an engraving system that is totally automated from copper plating through chrome plating, and produce image carriers for gravure that are cost-competitive with flexo,' concluded Wilcox.

Lightweight Sleeves and Cylinders

Peter Byam from Stork Prints America looked at developments in lightweight rotogravure sleeves. Advantages include significant reduction of cylinder bases, halving of storage requirements and reduced shipping costs. On press, the same repeat and width can be moved easily between presses with different journal configurations and the lightweight sleeves – weighing in at around 10-15lbs and mounted on airshafts – revolutionize the ergonomics of press changeovers. Byam sought to reassure converters worried about on-press performance: 'There is no slippage, with speeds up to 1,200 ft/min at nip pressures up to 80psi. Add to that 9,000ft without De & Re and no abnormal doctor blade wear. Sleeves can be used with solvent or water-based inks and can be laser engraved.'

Mike Keating – who was awarded the PLGA's lifetime achievement award during the conference – looked at new lightweight cylinder technologies such as the company's



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Narrow web press photo courtesy of Rhode Island Label Works, Inc.

Starbase, which weighs in at around 150-180lb, typically 1/3 to 1/4 the weight of conventional bases. 'And we have seen no problems with re-use and re-engraves,' said Keating, who noted that there has only been a minimal take-up of shafted cylinders.

Flexo vs. Gravure

This proved one of the most contentious areas under discussion, with a general feeling among delegates that gravure was not promoting itself sufficiently.

But as Dan Nolan, project manager for the consumer packaging division at Smurfit Stone pointed out, making sensible cost comparisons between flexo and gravure is extraordinarily difficult. The PLGA has developed an initial model which puts numbers to fixed and variable costs of both processes. But still there are 'wildcards' such as the life expectancy of flexo sleeves and plates and gravure cylinder life expectancy before re-chrome and re-engraving.

The flexo-gravure comparison was illuminated by Bill Disney, manager graphics and printing technology at Diversapack, with a real-life case study regarding the label for Coca-Cola's Dasani water brand. 'Coca-Cola initially assumed we would do the job flexo, but we achieved superior quality at a lower price with gravure,' noted Disney. The annualized cost of flexo graphics worked out at \$23,168 and total gravure cylinder costs at \$8,500.

The Dasani label was printed out of five colors gravure against seven colors flexo. Three flexo stations are required just to print the blue which can be handled on one gravure station. 'With flexo we would have to double bump and separate out the vignette as a separate plate,' said Disney. 'In reality we would have to produce 11 sets of flexo plates, because the Dasani job represents around 25 million feet a year and we reckon flexo plate life to be around 2 million feet. We finally ran the job on one set of re-engraved cylinders.'

Because the Dasani job was originated for flexo, the vignette was designed to finish on a three per cent dot. 'We actually had to redo our gravure separations to mimic this minimum flexo dot size with a 60 – 3 per cent vignette,' recalls Disney.

Coca-Cola were extremely happy with the result: 'On the trial run they were not seeing broken type, salt & pepper or fill-in artifacts, and their bottlers were reporting increased efficiency because operators were not having to adjust for repeat variation.'

Environmental issues

Because of its extensive use of solvents, gravure is facing the toughest environmental regulation of any print process. Fred Shapiro of P-F Technical Services urged converters to be proactive in setting up an Environmental Management Program, including re-use of inks where possible and demanding to know the exact makeup of the inks they are supplied.

Steven Rach at Megtec Systems looked at selecting the right oxidizer type. Rach pointed out that where an existing press

Bill Klein, left, hands Randy Butler of Printpack, Inc. a PLGA Leadership Award



has to be controlled, reducing exhaust provides many advantages in oxidizer costs and energy requirements. 'If you have an existing oxidizer and presses that can be optimized, you can potentially add a new press without adding another oxidizer.' The economics of heat recovery from VOC oxidizer exhaust systems were then examined by Dale Borchardt of TANN Corporation.

For those considering the move from solvent to water-based systems, Jon Reavis, VP process improvement at Inland Printing had an instructive case study. Inland and its strategic partner Northstar Print Group print Molson Lager and Miller Lite body labels both with solvent and water-based ink systems, providing the opportunity for a detailed cost comparison.

On the water-based job the cost of ink was higher – albeit by single digit percentages – as was the cylinder cost per impression and the oven temperature on the gas dryers. Solvent was more expensive only in its requirement for an oxidizer.

However, when the environmental and materials handling costs of solvent systems – insurance, explosion-proofing, ink storage and waste disposal for example – are taken into account, there is very little difference in costs. 'Both alternatives are economically viable and it is corporate philosophy which is driving selection,' concluded Reavis. 'Ink cost differences are minimized by good practices.'

Asked by this writer about the development of UV gravure systems, Reavis said that viscosity issues, higher costs and residual VOCs in UV systems, as well as the difficulty of completely cleaning cylinders, are major barriers to adoption. ■

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India takes off

With the second India Label show approaching in New Delhi between 3-6 December 2004, **Andy Thomas** reviews the last show in Mumbai and looks at the potential of India as an outsourcing hub

Labels & Labeling expands in India

Labels & Labeling has entered into a joint venture to support the booming label industry in India. The magazine will host the Labels & Labeling International Pavilion at the exhibition in December 2004, featuring the key international suppliers. It will also organize the three-day Infolabel conference running alongside the show. From this issue, *Labels & Labeling* will increase its Indian circulation to almost 2,000 copies, giving Indian label printers access to international label news, features and case studies. While the population size of India has the potential of developing into a major market on its own, Indian printers are also looking at the global market, following the devaluation of the rupee. This could result in India becoming a major exporter of printed goods. *Labels & Labeling* will be an important partner to these label printers, providing information on how to take advantage of the lucrative international label and product decoration market.

The first India Label show was a great success, and demonstrated the potential for growth in the labeling industry in this vast country. Held at the Nehru Center in Mumbai, it attracted nearly 6,600 visitors over a period of three days, including label printers and label buyers from all over the country and abroad, with significant representation from as far afield as Sri Lanka, Nepal, the Middle East and North Africa. That's a pretty good attendance from an industry roughly reckoned to consist of 5,000 companies printing labels of some description.

The exhibition was a mix of the indigenous and the international. International exhibitors included Gidue Spa and Prix International from Italy, Koehler + Beck, Stork Prints B V from Holland, International Paper from France, Maratech International from the USA, Kimoha Entrepreneurs Limited from Dubai, As New Printing Machinery Company from

Australia, Carltek Industries and Link Label from Taiwan.

Others were exhibiting through their offices and subsidiaries in India. These included BST, Domino Printech, Erhardt + Leimer, Flexo (India), Gerhardt, Heidelberg, Intergrafica Print & Pack, Kodak Polychrome, Reifenhäuser, Dupont, Esko Graphics, K Laser Technology, Kurz, Sicpa and Tesa Tapes.

'India is an important market for us and we are glad to have this platform to reach out to more Indian customers,' said John Huang of Orthotec, Taiwan, who was demonstrating a flat bed label-printing machine at the stand of its agents, Sheth Graphics. Orthotec has an installation base of 45 machines in India.

Gidue has already underlined its commitment to the Indian market by opening a sales and service office. Its live demonstration of the Combat flexo label printing machine was a popular feature of the exhibition, and Cristina Toffolo, joint MD at GiDue, said the quality of the visitors was 'very high' during the three days of the show.

The company was introducing its Combat Quadra press to India, an entry-level configuration of the established Combat press system well suited to this market.

The GiDue India operation is run by Vijay Pareek, who formerly sold Gallus presses throughout the country. At the time of the show, GiDue had already sold two fully specified 7-color Combat presses in India, a UV machine in the North and a 7-color Combat 280 to a printer in Mumbai.

Pareek believes that shrink labeling is growing at an even faster rate than self-adhesives – between 30-40 per cent – and was emphasizing the Combat's ability to print heat-sensitive filmic using a special technical package.

Mark Andy was running live demonstrations on an 8-unit Scout press on the stand of local agent, Flexo (India) Graphics Pvt.

Nilpeter did not have a machine on the stand of distributor IPP, but were ferrying visitors to top Mumbai print house Meena Printech Pvt to see the company's 8-color FA-2500 UV flexo press in action. Nilpeter's director of Asian Operations Kim-Regin Sustmann says the India market today is where the East



European market was ten years ago – in transition between a highly regulated economy and economic liberalization – and it will take time to get the infrastructure of multiple retailers and supermarkets who will drive mass quality forward. He reckons the labels market is growing some 15-20 per cent, but from a low base in terms of volume and quality which means lower price machines will get the market moving upwards to the point where more printers could consider buying a Nilpeter press.

On the consumables side, Sicpa vice-president, Commercial Inks' Vijay K Gupta, said many printers visiting his stand were looking to shift from sheetfed offset to water-based and UV flexo, particularly in the pharmaceutical and cosmetics sectors. "They want to get a foothold before the market becomes saturated. End users are here looking for label printers who can offer beyond what they are currently offered, including promotional options, not just primary branding. They are looking for thermochromic and scratch-off, although mostly for product for export. In India these are wanted for festivals." Sicpa has an ink production plant in Bhiwadi.

"The move from offset to flexo is happening, but slowly, mainly because of the high cost of imported machines due to high import taxes"

Gupta points out that much label consumption today is in small lots, and where pressure sensitive is paper sheets, stuck on by hand or by semi-automatic applicators. But there is a trend towards fully automated applicators. The trend is being enhanced by the transition from a state-dominated ownership to an explosion of competition and the growth of truly national companies, so volumes are increasing and margins decreasing.

Environmental issues are becoming important in India, for example the abolition of toluene in ink.

Indian manufacturers

As much as the show was a reflection of the arrival of the latest technologies and materials from all over the globe into the country, it also showed that Indian machinery manufacturers are gearing up to take on the best on their home turf. The exhibition saw several product launches, including a 6-color flexo label-printing machine from Graphic Technologies – sold at the show to an Iranian printer – and the launch by Kohli Industries of a narrow web roto gravure label printing machine.

Multitec's Ultraflex UFO (Ultimate Flexo Option) flexo press is the result of a joint venture with UV coating machinery specialist Graphic Technologies – previously the Aquaflex/Chromas agency in India. It is the first flexo press to be designed and built by an Indian company, so represents an important milestone. Multitec previously manufactured Forms presses, but became interested in flexo as the quality levels improved. Multitec's Amit Ahuja says that there is now better support in India for high quality flexo printing, including plate making, but local rotary stamping dies, for example, are still chemically etched rather than CNC manufactured.

"The move from offset to flexo is happening, but slowly, mainly because of the high cost of imported machines due to high import taxes, which is where we can score with a lower cost machine which still prints with high quality." Ahuja reckons there



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“With multi-nationals now moving into India, the demand is for modular presses which can add, for example, screen printing or hot foiling at a later stage”

are no more than 25 high quality modern narrow web flexo presses in the whole of India today, so there is a lot to play for.

The press on display was a 6-color machine with hot foil and two die cutting units (the second is a combined sheeting/die cutting station), matrix rewind and programmable sheeter/stacker. Drying is by high velocity hot air with UV on the last unit. Full UV is available as an option. It can also be modified for roll-to-roll converting. Ahuja is pitching his press in direct competition to European and North American manufacturers in terms of quality and output, with a price under \$200K. There are currently seven presses sold in India.

At the show a press was sold to an Iranian printer specified with 6-colors, hot stamping on the first station, two die cutting stations and UV/IR dryers.

The Ultraflex press is sturdily built with helical gear drives and hardened chrome impression and anvil cylinders. It is available in a range of print widths from 10in (254mm) up to 20.5in (521mm). All models except the 10in include 360° motorized register control and can combine up to 12 print units (eight for the 10in model). The press can be specified for a range of materials via a variable infeed unit and separate tension control zones between print units and die cut units. Digital closed loop tension control is standard. The show model was equipped with a BST Pro-Mark inspection system

The print station incorporates a reverse angle doctor blade inking system with variable angle control and optional enclosed chamber. In-press plate position register correction is a standard feature and the inking unit can be changed over quickly without tools.

Multitec's Amit Ahuja says that with multi-nationals now moving into India, the demand is for modular presses which can add, for example, screen printing or hot foiling at a later stage. A wide range of modular add-ons are available including hot/cold laminating, chill rollers, delam/relam, embossing, hot melt coating, hot/cold foil stamping, punch station and corona treater. The press can handle a

wide range of materials from 25 micron unsupported film through 300 GSM board.

Alois Gutenberg is another India-based Forms press manufacturer now eyeing the labels market. The company showed its QX press, which can convert both forms and labels with in-line perf, sprocket punching and die-cutting. It can be configured with up to four printing towers in a choice of offset, letterpress and now flexo. The die cutting unit incorporates a 16in wide magnetic cylinder and waste rewind. Maximum speed while processing labels is 40 meters/minute (8,000 feet/hour).

One of the most interesting press launches of the show was from Mumbai-based Kohli Industries, which showed for the first time a narrow web gravure system converting PVC shrink labels. The Mantra 900 is a compact machine (2400mm long x 1500mm wide x 2100mm high) using paired printing units for either two or four color printing. Fast change features include tool-less doctor blade holders, pneumatic impression roll and doctor blade units, while the cantilevered design of cylinder and impression rolls allows easy access. There are just 2-3 press lengths of web in the press during make-ready. It is



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versatile enough to handle a wide range of label materials including pressure-sensitive label stock, paper, PET, BOPP, shrink PVC, aluminum foil and lightweight board, and can print on the face or both sides at the same time using the paired print unit configuration. Maximum web width is 250mm with print repeat from 300-500mm and max speed up to 100 meters/minute (325ft/min), with centrally exhausted high velocity drying.

Tension and register is maintained by a combination of web edge sensor, electronic brake and load cell feedback on the unwind, motorized register control and a separate motor on the rewind. Unwind and rewind use

expanding airshafts.

Kaku Kohli, director, tells L&L a key target market is wider web gravure printers who have to handle short runs. Eighty per cent of Kohli's production is exported, with key markets Mexico, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Turkey.

Gujarat-based label printer S Kumar was demonstrating a low cost multi-color hot stamping label press. The company had previously imported hot stamping machines from Italy before deciding last year to design and build a machine that in the words of chairman and MD Nimish Hansoti, would be 'within reach' of printers in India. The SkilFoil system

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incorporates up to three-color hot foiling units, and optional embossing, die cutting, slitting and rewinding stations. It is designed for short run production between 50 and 200,000 labels, including barcode labels. It is easy to operate and runs off a 5KW power supply. Hansoti tells L&L that the press can either be used as a stand-alone label printing system, or as an added value unit to over-print pre-printed labels using an optional photocell. Label size is from 10 x 10mm up to 115 x 125mm.

Two machines had been sold to label printers in India and S Kumar runs one at its own plant. It has plans to sell the press throughout SE Asia and in the Middle East to Dubai and Iran.

Ratan Industries had on display a flat bed label printing and die cutting unit, while ID Technologies launched its own barcode/label printer.

Indian Labelstock manufacturing came of age long ago alongside their 'big brother' Avery Dennison, and they were

present in large numbers. Weldon Celloplast, Kedia Lamicoat, Stay-on Papers, Millennium Papier, Gloss Holding, Deluxe Lami Paper Plast and Sarvodaya Industries were busy all the three days. Nor were they perturbed, it seemed, by the imminent entry of Raflatac, whose executives were among the visitors gauging the market and the show.

Label printers

Some of India's top label printers exhibited at the show, including New-Delhi Good Work Co, whose owner Mrs Kusum Dungle has been in the print industry for 45 years. Three years ago GWC installed a Gallus R200 letterpress machine, as well as a Mark Andy flexo press, a Heidelberg offset machine and a Screen press. Platemaking is in-house, ink suppliers Sicpa and Akzo Nobel and dies are imported from Gerhardt and Koehler & Beck. Typical end use markets are automobile and export

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“Local manufacturers are now having to compete with the multi-national FMCGs in terms of better design and materials”

markets include Sri Lanka and Pakistan, as well as Namibia. Kusum Dunglay estimates 10-15 per cent growth in the labels market, with a growing use of more sophisticated materials such as clear-on-clear, while her end user customers such as India Oil are moving to automated applicator systems.

Other major printing houses included Inter Labels, PRS Permacel, Super Labels, Prakash Labels, Webtech Systems, Good Work Company, Meena Printech, Great Eastern and Million Papers, all anxious to meet end users.

“The most gratifying aspect of this exhibition was the presence of so many Label printers and the interest shown by the label users,” commented Anil Arora, the organizer of the show. ‘I feel, taken together, this is going to take the label industry up a couple of notches.’

The market

Sheetfed offset is still the main process for printing wet glue paper labels, but the situation is changing fast as end users take up automatic roll-fed label applicators, opening up the market for self-adhesive labels, as well as shrink and other filmic labels. More and more commercial offset printers are becoming interested in the labels market.

The quality of flexo origination is also improving. Mumbai-based Numex

Blocks was the first repro house in India to buy a Cyrel Digital Imager (CDI) digital flexo platemaking system, for example. The company’s plates were being used at the show on Multitec’s Ultraflex press and GiDue’s Combat, with excellent results.

Rotary tooling still has to be imported, and comes mostly from the US, Australia and Japan.

So rotary flexo is now establishing itself as a high quality process, as Abhay Datta, executive director of Graphic Technologies comments, ‘Three to four years ago nobody would have considered flexo. Today the pressure sensitive materials and the anilox suppliers are here and tooling suppliers like Gerhardt, Kocker & Beck and Electro Optic. But we need more manufacturing here. We particularly want one of the die makers to start up production here – it will certainly pay for itself!’

This is the first time Datta has shown his machine at an Indian show and he is now convinced that ‘something dramatic’ is happening in the Indian labels sector. ‘Local manufacturers are now having to compete with the multi-national FMCGs in terms of better design and materials. There is a very talented graphic design base here. What has been lacking up to now is the equipment.’

But he also has significant export plans, pushed by the devaluation of the Rupee.

‘Everybody talks about the size of the population of India, but we don’t know if there are better markets abroad.’

Globalization is a clear trend in this country, with the major global brands looking to produce a similar brand image for their products sold across the world. This in turn is pushing printers to consider technologies like rotary screen, which is why Stork had a crowded booth at the show. The trend is to start adding modular units as the demands of end users increase – particularly for spot UV and hot foil.

Single serve sachets are one of the fastest growing print-package segments in a market where the vast majority of consumers cannot afford labeled containers, and it is an area ideally suited to production on narrow web presses. Even the poorest people in the countryside are exposed to the advertising of the FMCGs moving into India – particularly through cable TV, which is ubiquitous in even the poorest areas. ■

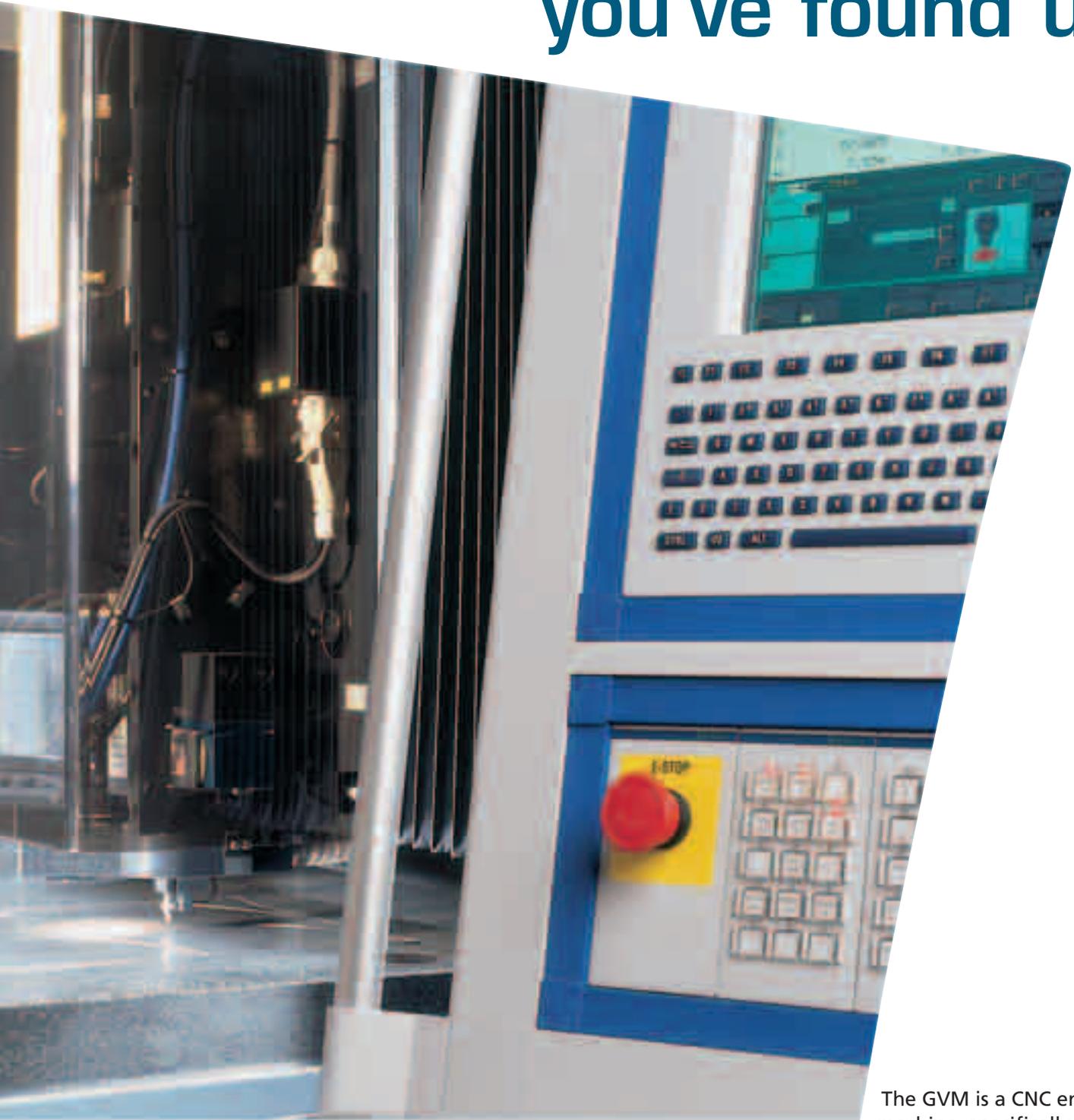
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Defeating the dust devil

Dust on the printed web becomes an increasingly difficult problem as label printers move towards UV printing systems. Skanem Skurup in Sweden recently implemented a program to eliminate dust from the pressroom. **Andy Thomas** reports

Dust is one of the label printer's biggest enemies. The most perfectly originated, mounted and registered jobs can be destroyed by spots of debris, and this becomes a bigger problem when printers move to UV-based inks. Where water-based inks wash debris off the plate, UV inks have a far higher viscosity, which causes dust particles to stick.

Three years ago Skanem Skurup – one of Sweden's biggest label converters and a part of the pan-European Skanem group – identified a major problem with dust as it implemented a strategy to move to UV flexo printing.

'During 2001 and the first half of 2002 we had increasing problems with dust,' recalls Tore Andreas Hassum, quality director at Skurup. 'The dust got stuck to the plates and caused repeated spots on the labels. We therefore started on a project to reduce this problem.'

Although all its presses already had vacuum cleaning systems, these were proving inadequate. So Skanem Skurup made the decision to invest in 'sticky roll' contact cleaning devices supplied by AB Kelva and became the beta site for the 'Compact' system launched by Kelva at last year's Labelexpo Europe.

'Since installing the Kelva system our problems have

"As a result of these on-going audits, one of Skanem Skurup's suppliers installed a materials cleaning system at their own facility!"

decreased radically, especially on areas of high color coverage,' says Tore Andreas Hassum. 'Today we have more or less no complaints related to dust.'

But Skurup views the contact cleaners very much as a 'last line of defence', and implemented its anti-dust program throughout the workplace. In addition to the Kelva system a new air moisture system was installed to reduce air dust.

Reclosable labels

As well as prime labels for the food, health and beauty, household chemicals and pharmaceuticals markets, Skanem Skurup produces a wide range of specialty added value constructions. These include peel & read and booklet labels, which use a special varnish exclusively developed by Akzo Nobel. Last year the company moved into UV-flexo printed in-mold labels with an off-line Dan Mekano cut & stack system. Other work includes printing direct onto a range of packaging materials including sachets, lidding materials and stand-up pouches. New pressure-sensitive products include 'skin labels' – which allow supporters to stick team logos onto their faces – and the ProSpot 'target' labels for golf club heads.

But one of the most successful added value areas is reclosable labels for wet wipes. Reclosable labels normally consist of a printed 60 micron PP film over-laminated with a clear 60 micron PP film. More recently, 20 micron over-lamination has been introduced to save on materials costs. This 60 + 20 micron construction is around 15-20 per cent weaker than the 60 + 60 solution.

To solve this problem Skanem has developed a new, stronger breaking system called RD2. The new breaks – shaped like mushrooms – are claimed twice as strong as current solutions, being less dependent on the adhesion between the package film and the label, which until now has been the critical factor.

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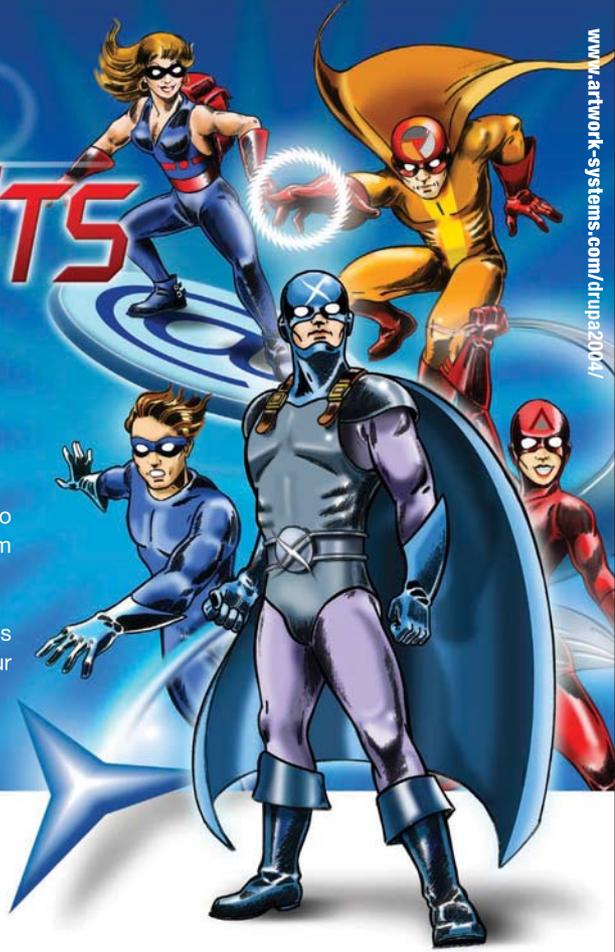
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Re-closable label on a wet-wipe pack

Sharing knowledge

In the same way that Skanem Skurup invited slitter operators to view its printing operation at first hand, the company insists that its own production personnel visit the packing/filling plants of its final customers where labels are applied to containers. By learning about the problems caused by incorrect rewind tension, die strike causing web breaks etc, they learn how to prevent those problems at source.

Skurup also has an education program for its end users to explain the label origination and production process, including showing marketing personnel how to design booklet labels. 'Customers have a better understanding for price and lead times when they appreciate how complex the production process is,' notes Lasse Larsson, export sales director at Skanem Skurup.

A practical result is a greater sharing of information. 'End users are giving out more information about their own production schedules, with annual forecasts, then forecasts for three months and the next 3-4 weeks,' says Lasse Larsson. A new business system, called Axapta, is being installed across the Skanem group which will mean end users can look at the stock levels of their labels, call them off and re-forecast.

Doors and gates are kept closed and the floors are wet cleaned weekly.

The next stage was to look at reducing the amount of dust generated by the rolls of laminate. 'Most of our problems are caused by badly slit rolls, so we started a project with our main supplier to investigate the problems related to the different types of material we use,' says Tore Andreas Hassum.

'Most of our problems are caused by badly slit rolls, so we started a project with our main supplier to investigate the problems related to the different materials we use'

Skanem began to audit its suppliers' slitting departments. They also invited slitter operators to visit the Skurup site to learn about the problems caused by dust from badly slit rolls.

'Many slitters were shocked when they came here because they didn't know about our dust problems and had not set up control systems,' recalls Hassum. 'It's important our suppliers cut clean. If you get adhesive on the knife it doesn't make a clean cut, so we asked – how often do you clean and change your knives?'

As a result of these on-going audits, one of Skanem Skurup's suppliers installed a materials cleaning system at their own facility!

The project also found that different types of materials generated different amounts of dust. 'In general, PE and PP contained more dust than paper because of their static properties,' says Tore Andreas Hassum. 'But high gloss papers can also cause problems because they have a thicker clay surface and the slitting knives break up the clay.'

Thomas Nilsson, production director at Skanem Skurup notes that vacuum cleaning is still used on uncoated papers

What roll cleaning technology has been used by the "Best in Show" entry for the last 2 major UK print awards? Visit www.alphasonics.co.uk



News in brief

EC approves Raisio's acquisition by Ciba

The European Commission has cleared Ciba Specialty Chemicals' acquisition of Raisio Chemicals, first made public on 19 March 2004. Closing is expected within June. Ciba believes that the acquisition will create a top-tier chemicals supply business for the paper industry, with the advantages of complementary product portfolios and excellent geographic fit for the two businesses.

STS covers San Francisco apparel trade

Shore To Shore (STS) has opened a new sales and service office in San Francisco to serve the second largest retail and branded apparel region in the USA. The San Francisco office will take care of those companies that are located on the west coast from southern California to Oregon – near the offices of worldwide companies including Gap, Mervyn's, Gymboree and Levi Strauss.

Matrix Label implements CRC MIS

Indiana-based Converter Matrix Label Systems, Inc. has signed an agreement to implement THE System from CRC Information Systems, Inc. (CRC). Matrix Label Systems will implement a fully integrated software solution including THE System's Label Estimating, Finished Goods Order Entry, and Leads & Prospects modules along with CRC's core accounting package.

SATO RFID printer scoops top award

SATO's new SATO CL 400e RFID label printer has been named Best Product at the LogiMAT trade show. LogiMAT is an international trade fair for distribution, materials handling and information flow, held in Stuttgart.



because the contact cleaner picks out the good threads.

The AB Kelva equipment is now used to measure the dust generated by different materials, by examining the debris collected on the adhesive rolls and rating on a scale of 1-5.

Contact cleaning – how does it work?

The AB Kelva contact web cleaning program consists of a single or double-sided cleaning unit with either passive or active anti-static equipment to stop the web re-attracting dust after cleaning. Also included is a filter-fan unit and a dust collecting filter. Specially formulated polymer rolls lift and transfer contaminants from the web surface to easily replaceable adhesive rolls. The polymer roller is shaped to make good contact with the web even at low pressure.

The double sided Compact Web Cleaner (CWC) launched by AB Kelva at

Labelexpo Europe last year utilizes 50mm diameter polymer rollers and is suitable for web speeds up to 300 metres/minute and web widths from 300-550mm. 'The compact format makes it easy to install in the small space available on the infeed/web guiding zone of narrow web presses,' says Mats Marklund, managing director at AB Kelva.

The CWC features continuous cleaning even when the adhesive rollers are being changed over, while a 'crocodile' opening allows free web movement. It has built-in passive anti-static equipment as standard with an option for an active unit. The rollers are FDA approved for medical and food contact.

AB Kelva is a member of the Swiss Chromos group, founded in Sweden in 1970. The company also supplies BASF flexo plates and processing equipment and ITW Dynatec glue application systems to Swedish converters. ■

e No.358

Going digital

As part of its move from letterpress and offset to UV flexo, Skanem Skurup invested in a CTP Thermoflex from Creo, which will be producing digital plates for 80 per cent of jobs by the end of this year. Skurup has been using digital proofing systems for three years, which helped the transition from analogue platemaking. 'Most of our customers already sign off on digital proofs,' says production director Thomas Nilsson. 'In fact the digital Cromalins are much closer to the final job, and with 4-color work almost 100 per cent.' The CTP is driven through an Artwork Systems Artpro/Nexus workflow, which now includes Artwork's latest stochastic screens.

"What roll cleaning technology has been used by every single winner of the EFTA label print awards for the last 3 years? Visit www.alphasonics.co.uk"

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e No.110

Making the move to flexo

Pressures on margins in the wet glue sector have driven Italian sheetfed printer Viappiani to move to UV flexo to enter the faster growing markets of sleeves and pressure-sensitive rolls.

Andy Thomas reports from Segrate, Milan

A combination of over-capacity, reverse auctions and competing label technologies has made life difficult for today's wet glue label converter. There is still good business to be done, but it requires substantial investment in dedicated finishing technology, ruthless efficiency and the ability to target the few high growth areas left to this sector, such as in-mold and cut & stack film.

These pressures are driving sheetfed printers towards web-fed technology to enter the high growth areas of combination printing, sleeves and roll-fed pressure-sensitive labels with in-line added value decoration. An excellent case study of this process is provided by one of Italy's major label converters, Viappiani.

Viappiani was founded in 1929 by the present owner's father, Bruno, who started out printing shotgun targets for the local fairs in Milan. HJ Heinz was one of Bruno Viappiani's original customers when he opened his first print shop – the company still prints for Heinz. The operation grew steadily through the 1940s and 1950s, making the move from letterpress to offset and becoming the first Italian converter to look at screen-printing. The company moved to its present premises in Segrate two years ago, consolidating its operations in Holland

and elsewhere in Italy at the Milan site. In May it celebrated its 75th anniversary with a major open day for its customers and company staff.

Today the company is run by Bruno's son, Giorgio Viappiani. The business is doing well – Snr Viappiani pilots his private helicopter to pick up key visitors to the plant from multi-national brands based across Europe and North America.

Viappiani's main business is sheetfed offset labels, printed on a battery of 52cm Heidelberg Speedmasters supplied with plates by a Creo CTP system.

A sophisticated finishing operation includes an automated Polar cutting and banding line, now being fitted with a robotic palletization system. An interesting piece of kit is a programmable cutter originally designed to cut shoe soles, which has been modified by Viappiani engineers to die-cut labels. This precise cutting tool enables pre-production staff to achieve better nesting of labels, for more labels per sheet.

'The wet glue market went down quite a lot, but modern presses are faster and have quicker make-ready so we are more competitive than before,' says Giorgio Viappiani. 'Also, there are good margins in growth areas like cut & stack wraparound plastics labels, and now transparent wraparound plastics labels.'



Bruno Viappiani started the family business in Milan, 1929

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The current site at Segrate, Milan



“The wet glue market went down quite a lot, but modern presses are faster and have quicker make-ready, so we are more competitive than before”

These labels allow end users to move into higher value added plastics without changing their current paper labeling machines. They can be applied to all PE, PP and PET and glass containers.’

Another sheetfed growth area has been In-mold labeling onto blow-molded, injection molded and thermoformed containers. A current project involves replacing direct screen-printing with IML on injection-molded pails produced for a major international drinks company. Viappiani handles the whole project, working with the pail supplier. The company has recently added transparent substrates to its IML program to produce a ‘no-label’ look.

Viappiani also has a program of value added options for its sheetfed business, including perfumed inks with personalized fragrances, scratch-and-win and erase-and-win with water and alcohol, personalized solutions and a range of security features.



Below: Viappiani's 520mm 8-unit Varyflex; right: the sheetfed labels' finishing hall; below right: Heidelberg Speedmaster presses form the core of the wet glue operation



Moving to flexo

Despite the obvious success of its sheetfed business, Viappiani has been hit by the overcapacity in the wet glue market and the consequent need to move into faster growing sectors such as shrink sleeves and pressure-sensitive labels.

'We think our future is on the web, although we cannot change overnight, and there are still new technology developments on sheetfed we can take advantage of,' says Giorgio Viappiani.

So the company made the decision to move into web flexo with an Omet Varyflex press, housed along with its related equipment in a dedicated building.

The Varyflex is used primarily for pressure sensitive (60 per cent) and shrink/stretch sleeves (15 per cent).

'The Varyflex press has the ability to change between unsupported film and pressure sensitive labels without



"We think our future is on the web, although we cannot change overnight, and there is still new technology developments on sheetfed we can take advantage of"

changing the machine configuration,' points out Giorgio Viappiani. The press incorporates an Arcotec corona treater and chill drums to handle these thinner, heat sensitive substrates.

Fast make-ready is achieved by the combination of plate sleeves, removable inking cassettes and programmable pre-register on both the print and die-cut sections. The Varyflex print unit is driven by two independent drives for the plate and anilox cylinders. Plates are mounted outside the press on lightweight sleeves, which are locked up on the press by air pressure.

Also now available for the Varyflex is a Screen unit which can be inserted, without tools, into any printing unit. The silkscreen head is driven directly by the print unit and utilizes the UV lamps already on the press web path. The operator can adjust for paper thickness, doctor blade inclination, printing pressure and traverse/circumferential pressure. Automatic pre-register and automatic inker with level control are also available.

Giorgio Viappiani sees shrink sleeves and wraparound roll-fed labels as the big products for the future. Recently a Krones Controll reel-fed labeling machine reached speeds of 140,000 labels an hour using labels converted on the Varyflex.

On shrink sleeves, Viappiani is now using 12-micron thermo-sensitive OPP substrates supplied by ExxonMobil, claimed cheaper and easier to apply than conventional OPP shrink films. Viappiani also purchased a DCM seaming system to make sleeves. 'It was hard to master and took a lot of time,' says Giorgio Viappiani. Other new equipment in the flexo hall is a Prati TC400 Jupiter inspection-rewinder.

It will be interesting to follow the progress of Viappiani as it seeks to make investments both in flexography and its sheetfed operations over the coming months. There is certainly further room to expand at the Segrate site and still leave room for Giorgio Viappiani to land his helicopter. ■

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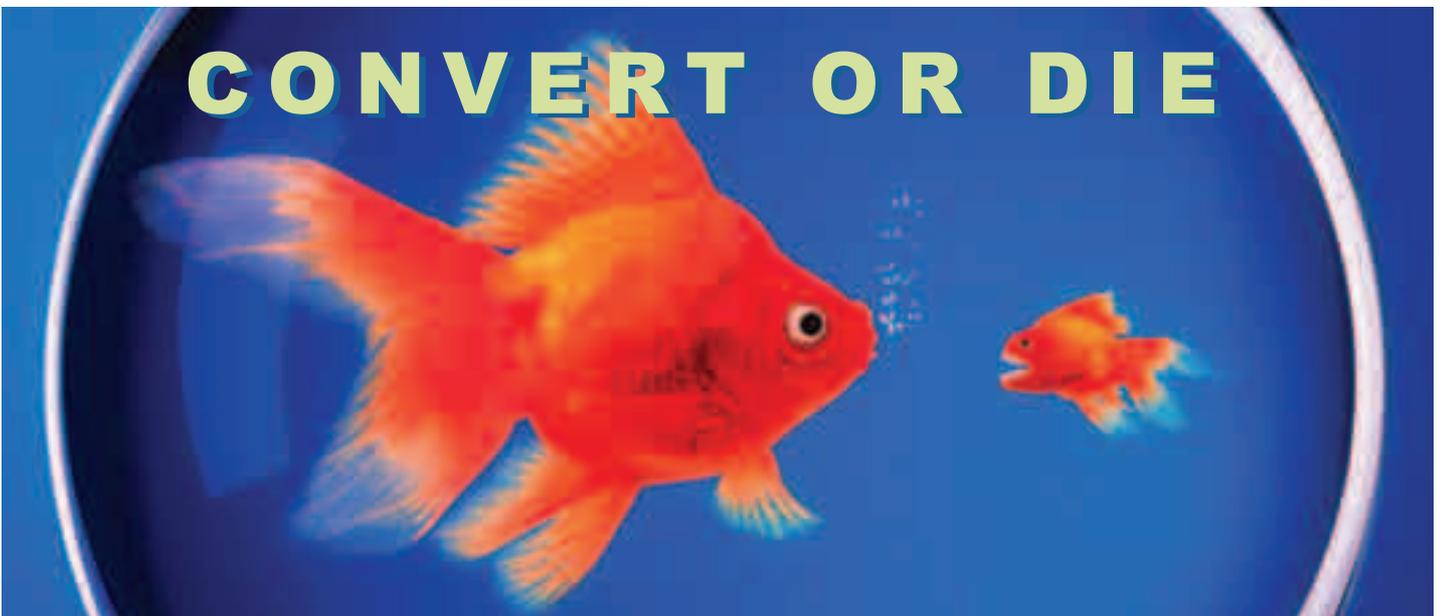


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e No.173



Profitable converting from innovative technology

Fifteen unconventional label presses produce a sales throughput of over \$8 million a month – and there's not a standard product label in sight. **Mike Fairley** revisits Ko-Pack's press manufacturing and label converting facilities in Yamagata, Japan

It's now more than 25 years since Ko-Pack first started designing and selling label presses around the world, with the first two machines being installed at Norprint in the UK in the late 1970s. Initially 5, 6 or 8-color machines for high-quality product labels, they provided a cost-effective means of meeting brand owner's requirements for well-printed product labels for a range of end-user market applications.

In the intervening years, Ko-Pack has installed more than 1,500 presses in some 50 or so countries. Today however, it not only continues to sell standard rotary letterpress machines, but also designs, manufactures and sells some of the most innovative and creative presses in the market place. Rotary letterpress, flexo, offset, UV flexo and foiling options are incorporated in combination press and converting lines that both print and make high added-value products in-line.

Complex label and product solutions produced on these innovative presses are as diverse as peel-and-reseal labels, booklet/form label composites, promotional coupons, random-numbered stamps and games, neck collar promotions, sausage skin casings, piggyback formats, pot noodle lids, clear plastic

“Rotary letterpress, flexo, offset, UV flexo and foiling options are incorporated in combination press and converting lines that both print and make high added-value products in-line”

gift boxes and windowed labels.

The challenge in all these innovative converted products is to produce them in one pass through the press: printing in multiple colors, formatting of multi-layer constructions, printing of silicone and adhesive stripes or patches, sequential or random

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Specialist converting is key to Ko-Pack's success

numbering, windowing, folding and gluing, applying labels, etc – right through to the finished products coming off the end of the press line.

Applications for these innovative Ko-Pack capabilities are not just for self-adhesive solutions, but today include wrap-around labels with removable coupons and windows, sleeve promotions, paperboard and plastic cartons, paperboard collars, lidding materials for pots and tubs, film/corrugated laminate label wraps.

More recently in Japan, Ko-Pack is looking to provide high-quality narrow, mid and wide-web flexo press technology for unsupported film and flexible packaging solutions. With gravure under increasing environmental pressure in the country, Ko-Pack is joining with partners to develop, train, educate and grow the flexibles and carton markets in Japan.

High throughput and profitability

Outside of press design, production and sales, Ko-Pack has additionally one of the largest label and converted products printing plants in Japan. Using the futuristic Yamagata plant in North Eastern Japan, Ko-Pack's own design innovative press technology has enabled the creation of what must be one of the highest throughput and profitable label plants anywhere in the world. Volumes are often into multi-millions, and frequently for global brands and global promotions.

Opened in 1985, the Yamagata factory has grown from an initial handful of product label presses into a high-tech

“With gravure under increasing environmental pressure in the country, Ko-Pack is joining with partners to develop, train, educate and grow the flexibles and carton markets in Japan”

converting facility in which 15 booklet, leaflet, piggyback, coupon and other innovative all-in-one press lines create each month over \$8 million in sales of high added-value converted products. Today, there is not one standard product label being produced in the whole facility.

Some of the unique products being produced at the time of visiting the Ko-Pack label production plant in Yamagata included 600,000 special Fuji camera-wrap promotion labels a month. These incorporate a special weak adhesive that will not harm the camera. An innovative capability also had to be designed into the press to remove a number of small unsupported window areas from each label.

Another label product being produced at the time of the visit was a special peel-off window coupon promotion wrap-around label for Pepsi. Designed to encourage recycling, these creative labels are for a global Pepsi promotion – in which each batch order is for some 8 million labels. Also for the beverage market was a uniquely constructed four-sided Suntory promotional neck collar that incorporates self-adhesive elements, special cuts, folding, forming and assembly in the converting line to provide a novel neck collar solution that can be read from four different faces.

Perhaps an even more diverse peel-off promotional label construction under development is a unique printed OPP film with a laminated corrugated liner. Designed for the labeling of disposable paper cups used in hot drink vending machines, the film/corrugate label is wrapped around the cup and so protects the hands from the hot drink. After consumption, the film wrap promotional coupon element can be easily removed by the customer, so leaving the paper cup and corrugated wrap to be disposed of for recycling. Being launched in October this year, Ko-Pack's initial print order for this unique product is 0.5 billion pieces.

In a highly creative promotional solution for a Japanese flower distributor Ko-Pack is also producing a holder wrap for cut flowers which incorporates a peel-off element which is impregnated with special chemical. When the customer has purchased and taken the flowers home and placed them in a vase containing water, the peel-off tab can be removed and

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Ko-Pack's 12-color flexo press in action

“Our printing plant is now more profitable than at any time in its 19 year history. Everything that we produce is unique and produced in one pass on our own design printing and converting technology”

dropped into the water. The chemicals enable the flowers to stay fresh for much longer.

Look for other innovative label constructions being produced in Yamagata and you can find a self-adhesive fold-up business card solution which incorporates peel-off self-adhesive index tabs that can be used to mark documents, files and other products, or a special unique neck-collar promotional label construction for Evian.

For Jun Kobayashi, now Chairman of the Ko-Pack Corporation, there is no doubt that he has made the right decisions. “Our printing plant is now more profitable than at any time in its 19 year history. Everything we produce is unique and produced in one pass on our own-design printing and converting technology. All-in-one production makes the products commercially viable for customers – and gives us a good financial return. Any converter today can produce standard color-printed product labels down to a price – so we don’t try and compete with them. We aim to provide global solutions, for global customers, that

solve problems, sell products and offer market and promotional opportunities in a cost-effective way.

‘Because we design creative presses to provide high added-value cost-effective solutions for our global brand owner customers, we know the machines work successfully – and we know how profitable they can be. This profitable all-in-one pass technology can then be made available to our label converter customers around the world – plus all the know-how to find the right customers – through our press manufacturing and sales operation.’

So how do both sides of Ko-Pack’s business fit together? ‘Sales of presses make up some 65 per cent of the Corporation’s turnover today; the remainder is in high added-value printed and converted label and related solutions’ says Jun Kobayashi, ‘and we are looking to expand both sides of the business considerably over the next few years.’

Comprehensive expansion program

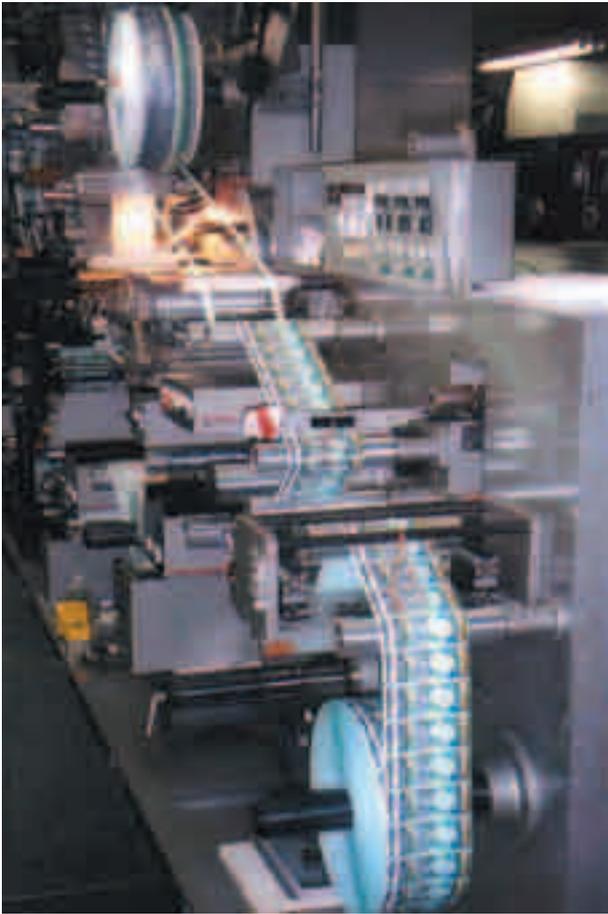
Now at maximum capacity, the Yamagata label printing plant struggles to meet demand for its innovative products, so an additional printing facility is in the pipeline and expected to open in 2005/2006.

On the press manufacturing and sales side of the business, a major new factory was completed in October 2003. This will spearhead Ko-Pack’s entry into the unsupported film and flexible packaging/web-fed carton sectors in Japan using narrow-to-wide web environmentally friendly flexo presses built by Ko-Pack or through an OEM agreement with Bielloni for the sale of gearless sleeve technology presses up to 1550 mm wide.

To develop environmentally-friendly flexo packaging solutions for Japan, Ko-Pack is also partnering with Dainichi Seika, Mirage and Akzo Nobel for cationic and water-based inks, and with companies such as Praxair and Altech to set up an innovative label and package printing training and support center in Yamagata. There, existing gravure converters, end-users, brand owners and packaging producers will be able to learn about – and



*Top: converting promotional covers for Fuji disposable cameras
Bottom: booklet labels constructed in one pass*



“Although Jun Kobayashi says he is looking to retire within the next three years, he is still enjoying the creative element of producing innovative all-in-one solutions”

have demonstrated – the benefits and potential of environmentally-friendly flexo. ‘This is a three-year project,’ explained Jun Kobayashi, ‘to convert the Japanese gravure package print sector to flexo, whether water-based or UV-cured ink technology.’

This training and demonstration center, designated as the ‘Stealth Center’ after the 16-color wide-web vector digital drive flexo presses installed there, offers facilities that include full flexo plate and flexo sleeve manufacturing, anilox and ink requirements, as well as a range of Ko-Pack unsupported film and carton press solutions up to 400 mm wide.

With the rapid growth of the Chinese label and packaging markets, Ko-Pack is currently also evaluating the potential of establishing a high added-value converting facility in China within the next two to three years. In particular, this would have the facility to produce innovative environmentally-friendly paper-based pot noodle lids that will enable the pot lids to be both microwaved and recycled – so dispensing with the current aluminum lids used on pots. Ko-Pack have already undertaken materials and press trials to enable this application to be produced commercially.

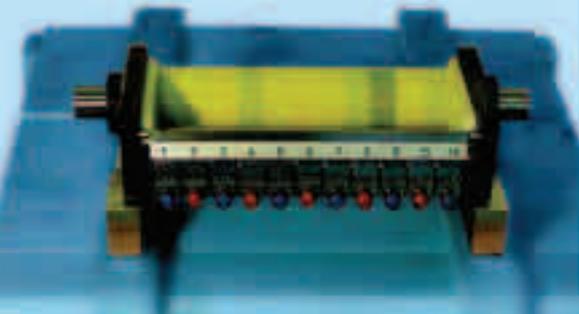
With creative, innovative and highly profitable label solutions, and a profitable innovative press manufacturing division, Ko-Pack undoubtedly has the resources to continue to grow the all-in-one-pass press solutions market in the coming years – and is determined to be at the forefront of creating the flexo market of the future in Japan – for all kinds of unsupported film, flexible packaging and cartons.

Although Jun Kobayashi says he is looking to retire within the next three years, he is still enjoying the creative element of producing innovative all-in-one solutions, and simply relishes the opportunity of converting Japan’s gravure printing industry to quality flexo production in the foreseeable future. Even if he does decide to retire, then his son Jun Junior, who has just been appointed as President and CEO of Ko-Pack International Corporation at a ceremony in Tokyo, is more than ready to continue the company’s progress.

The world of labels has undoubtedly benefited from the creative ideas and innovative technology solutions that have emanated from Ko-Pack, and from the vision that Jun Kobayashi has shown. It will be interesting to see where this innovation and creativity takes the industry in the future. ■

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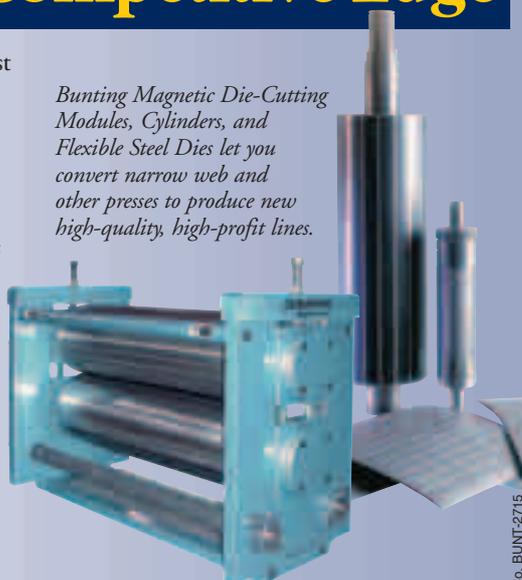
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REPORT 1

The Self-adhesive Label Market in Western Europe

The market rose to around 3.9 billion sq.m. p.a. (2002), and is continuing to grow at about 6% annually, while filmic label materials continue to achieve double digit annual growth. Although overall label growth has slowed since the mid 1990s and business is getting tougher, significant opportunities exist for label converters, raw materials suppliers, equipment builders and investors.

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REPORT 2

The Self-adhesive Label Market in Central / Eastern Europe

May, 2004, sees a major EU enlargement as ten new countries join the EU. Eight of them are in Central/Eastern Europe. This is having a major impact on retailing, supply chain logistics and also product related crime. This is all highly significant for the labels/ packaging sectors. The market for self-adhesive labels in Central/ Eastern Europe is growing at over 20% p.a.

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REPORT 3

The International Market for Brand Protection Solutions

Global losses due to product / brand related product piracy are running into several \$ hundred billions p.a. in today's world. This translates into major opportunities for packaging / label / security technology suppliers. This aim of this report is to provide inputs and guidance to both suppliers and brand owners as to how to exploit these opportunities for the mutual benefit of both parties.

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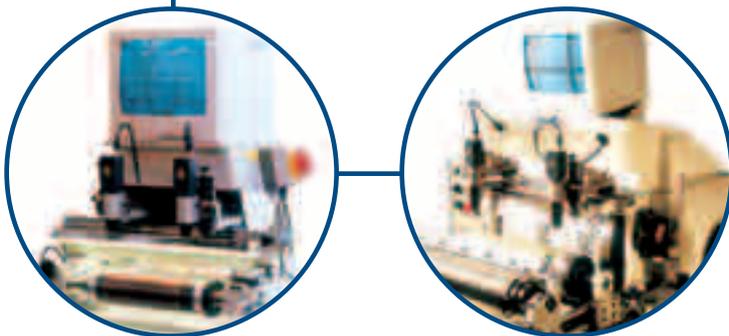
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MPS impressed converters with a demonstration of its EF press' capabilities at Labelpack Equipment in Stockport, UK. **Katy Wight** reports

Effective flexo printing

Dutch press manufacturer Multi Print Systems (MPS) held an open house for UK converters recently to showcase its high-end Effective Flexo (EF) press. The EF press is intended for prime UV flexo on materials ranging from ultra-thin foils to carton board – everything from 25-250 micron. MPS was founded in 1996 and its first commercial press was installed in 1999 in Sweden. Since then, the company has sold 80 presses across Europe and will be exhibiting at Labelexpo Chicago for the first time in September.

At the open house – *Pushing Limits* – MPS managing director Eric Hoendervangers introduced the EF printing seven-color UV on pressure sensitive paper labelstock and rotary die-cut. Attendee converters were already impressed by the make-ready speed – ten minutes for seven color stations – and then they saw how quickly the EF can handle a changeover. The operator stopped the web momentarily to splice 30 micron unsupported BOPP to the paper labelstock, showing that the totally servo-driven press can effectively run two different substrates inline across the press at one time. The web stopped for a matter of seconds to form the splice and readjust the registration and tension, and only a single row of labels was lost. To cope with the change in substrate, the press uses chill rollers to maintain a temperature below 30 degrees Celcius, regardless of the heat output of the UV or hot air drying systems.

The EF system's print stations utilize what MPS calls 'Crisp.Dot' technology. The impression cylinder is made from special rubber and not steel, which reduces print pressure by three to five times and in turn reduces dot gain. MPS claims that the press can consistently produce dot formation equivalent to offset. This is aided by a non-driven impression cylinder which ensures that its circumvention speed matches

the print speed. The station also features a tension-free zone between anilox rollers and plate cylinders, which is intended to increase the life expectancy of the plate and prevents the dots on the plate from taking up too much ink.

Each converting function – be it printing, die cutting or foil blocking – is driven by a separate servomotor. This direct drive allows you to expand the press with extra modules and the positioning rail gives the possibility to integrate de-lam/re-lam, web turner bars, Stork screens or other applications, at any location. The press also has integrated digital servo-driven web tension control and each station has its own register control with pre-set capability independent of web transport. With a photo-optic unit on each station, the auto registration makes 14,500 checks per second and can tell when shifts have taken place. Only the first print station had to be readjusted after the changeover to film, for example.

Printing on seven color stations gave MPS the opportunity to illustrate the capabilities of Opaltone, the seven-color reproduction system that utilizes CMYK plus RGB. Amanda Jones, sales account manager for Paragon Inks, gave a presentation on the possible cost savings and print quality achievable with the system – and the printed results were striking. Along with Paragon Inks, MPS has formed a number of strategic partnerships and representatives from Cheshire Engraving, York Reprographic, Rotometrics, Rotoflex, Herma and GEW were available for consultation at the event. ■

 No.361

Also on display was a module of the EC (Effective Converting) UV flexo label press. Available in widths of 250, 280 and 330mm, MPS is promoting the EC as ideal for pressure sensitive printing and conversion



The data game

A new generation laser technique for printing variable information has added benefits for end users. **Katy Wight** looks at the wide range of applications covered by Datalase

Datalase is a non-toxic and environmentally friendly ink, coating or substrate additive, which when exposed to low power CO2 laser emissions at high speed, provides a customizable solution for image generation. The technique can be used for applications ranging from the coding and dating of products, to the printing of graphics and security markings on metal, flexible packaging, paper, board and plastics.

Datalase differs from the conventional use of lasers, which typically 'burn' an image into the material, or remove a dark layer of ink to reveal the light-colored substrate underneath the packaging to form a contrasting image. It doesn't involve ablation and much lower powered lasers are needed. Instead, shining a laser on the ink causes a chemical reaction, producing a different color on the substrate. The image is stable, with high contrast and a higher fidelity than traditional coding and marking processes. Imaging can also be formed

through polypropylene and polyethylene films allowing the image to be permanently embedded in laminates.

The Datalase ink can be 100 per cent integrated in the substrate or you can flood the coating so that the ink is found in the overall coat surface. Alternatively you can patch print an area on a label or packaging. Patches are discrete, although visible to the eye as the ink has an opaque finish, but Sherwood plans to introduce Datalase clear in the coming months. Sherwood describes the laser image as 'clever'. It can produce a solid image, without the 'dot quality' that you can't avoid with most variable data methods such as inkjet

'Datalase has many other benefits,' says Andrew Jackson, applications marketing manager at Sherwood Technology. 'Firstly, there are no limitations on the substrate that you can use – virtually any surface can take the ink. In the past variable data printing has been restricted by the materials

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Already the fastest growing label markets in Europe, the Eastern European countries are seeing unprecedented investment by brand owners, retail groups and product manufacturers. But what do these changes mean for label industry suppliers and converters? What are the opportunities for partnerships, acquisitions, co-operative ventures, sales and marketing? How will the enlarged EU impact on both Western and Eastern European label suppliers and converters, and where are the new opportunities?

The European Label Summit brings together speakers from the European Commission, from EU entrant countries, label users, trade bodies, suppliers and converters to examine and address the many existing and new issues arising.

In addition to the conference programme, there will be one to one meetings, tabletop displays from top international industry suppliers including **Avery Dennison, HP Indigo** and **Creo** plus a gala dinner (**FREE to all conference delegates**).

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CPC interest

■ Datalase is approved for non-contact use on food packaging and was awarded its first major contract with Muller Dairies in the UK to replace traditional methods of coding and aid traceability. 'Datalase has allowed us to improve the quality and speed of our product coding and has also provided a more reliable process with far less downtime on our very high-capacity filling lines. We are already investigating the possibility of extending its use to other areas of our business to maximize productivity.'

■ A pharmaceutical company in the UK is interested in a project that Datalase undertook with InPrint in the USA, to print variable data on a booklet label

■ Datalase is currently applying for a patent to use the technology to print information directly on to tablets. It has undertaken a coating trial with a major pharmaceutical company to put dosage and other information directly on to the pill. The ink is made of two foodstuffs so that it is safe for consumption.

available. Datalase can be used to replace about 95 per cent of existing VIP methods and can also be used on materials that are laser markable.'

For the end user, this range of possible applications means that a single VIP method can be used across a breadth of products and different packaging solutions. The Datalase ink can also be applied using normal coating machinery, with minimal – if any – investment by the converter.

'There are also environmental benefits,' adds Jackson. 'No solvents are used in the system, so it is VOC-free.' There are by-products produced by the process, however. At the point of contact, the surface releases a small amount of vapor, but nothing of significance and following rigorous testing, it has been approved for non-contact use on food packaging.

'Datalase can also help to increase productivity,' says David Miller, business development manager. 'You are also only using a small fraction of the laser output so the line speeds can be much faster. UK converter Alcan has been producing codes conventionally for Nestlé at 200m/min, but wanted to put Datalase on its slitting machines, so we have been researching that. We

have been doing trials reaching speeds up to 300m/min.'

'Another advantage for productivity is the reliability of a laser production line. Basically you can 'fit and forget', which can make a big difference to your uptime. You won't have to stop and unblock those inkjet nozzles.'

At present, the technology only allows variable data printing in black, but Sherwood is planning to release color versions towards the end of the year. The prototypes are in place and test marketing is planned for the third quarter. Datalase has been gaining lots of interest and Sherwood has been in discussions with the pharmaceutical, cosmetics, food and beverage sectors. It is also involved in a number of strategic partnerships to expand the use of this technology into new applications with lasers that are a fraction of the size of currently available devices. ■

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Müller Dairy has deployed Sherwood technology's Datalase, a new generation marking and coding technique, on their high speed filling lines





Gallus 'S' series – a closer look

Gallus launched its 'S-class' series of EM260, 410 and 510 presses at Labelexpo Europe. The company recently held an open day at their site in Germany to demonstrate the press' capabilities in more detail. **Andy Thomas** reports

At Labelexpo Europe, Gallus introduced a variant of its established EM range of presses. The EM 'S' (for servo) range utilizes similar concepts of a platform/modular design, and indeed with special adapters can re-use many of the 100+ modules from the existing EM260, 410 and 510 range. So what are the principal differences between the two machine ranges?

At a recent open house showcasing the Gallus EM410S, Gallus vice president sales and marketing Klaus Aarestrup was keen to stress that the 'S' range does not replace the existing EM press program. But with its direct servo capability, the press is certainly faster to set up and change over, has better multi-substrate handling capabilities and higher levels of operational efficiency through the use of, as an example, servo-driven pre-setting. Gallus' Uli Kretzschmar said: 'It's a question of whether you really need the extra efficiency. If you're just doing long runs of PS you will not see the big benefits.'

The 'S' press is specified with a servo-driven web transport to ensure optimal multi-substrate flexibility across the full range of label materials now on the market, with a particular emphasis on the fastest growing segments including shrink sleeves, in-mold and wraparound, as well as added value pressure-sensitive. Beyond this, the press is specified for a range of packaging materials including PET lid foils and small-format flexible packaging such as sachets and stand-up pouches.

Gallus' position, as elucidated by Klaus Aarestrup, remains that it will not encourage label converters to move into cartons or flexible packaging, except where it makes sense as an extension of their existing business portfolio. Thus although the press is specified up to 300gsm cartonboard, Gallus has a completely separate press program dedicated to carton

production. First seen at drupa, the Gallus KM410/510 press utilizes the heavy-duty FSM 410 flatbed cut/crease unit, with a 510mm version under development, as well as being capable of full rotary production.

'A label is product decoration, regardless of the substrate,' said Klaus Aarestrup. 'Border line applications are secondary packaging such as a light folding carton or primary packaging such as a shampoo pouch. This is a question for the label printers' sales team – can they sell it?'

The open house was a good demonstration of this flexibility, featuring a changeover between a pressure-sensitive 'motor oil'-type label printed using five UV flexo + one rotary screen, and a shrink sleeve label in two designs reverse printed six colors UV

Waste reduction

According to figures collected by Gallus – which probably understate the reality – on run lengths below 70,000 labels, over half the cost of production is accounted for by makeready on repeat jobs, and on runs of 10,000 set-up accounts for almost 90 per cent of job cost.

So when we look at more expensive presses such as the 'S' series, reduction of makeready time and waste is a critical component of the cost justification. Extensive use of servo and digital control technology allows extensive management of job data and pre-setting, which is key to reducing waste and set-up time. The digital control system on the 'S' presses allows extensive parameter storage, including print cylinder pre-positioning, length register pre-setting, web tension pre-setting, repeat length and correction, and press speed.

The addition of a chambered doctor blade greatly assists the speed and logistics of changing inks.

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Further extending the EM range

At the open house, Gallus announced more new additions to its EM range:

- A 340mm (13in)-wide EM340 press
- The EM260/340/410/510C range of converting systems for a wide range of 'non-printing' applications including the production of blank labels on the reel, zig-zag folders, sheeters etc. Decoration units can also be added. Potential applications include the converting of pre-printed webs such as in-mold webs, with inseting control. Other applications include applying glue and silicone on a pre-printed linerless web, or back printing on a liner. The system can also be configured as an off-line die cutting machine.
- A foil saving and hologram inseting unit was announced for the EM family – an add-on to the hot foil stamping unit with friction spindles for multi-web applications. Savings on foil material usage can range from 30-80 per cent. The foil saving unit was shown in action at Drupa on the Gallus KM4/510 carton press
- Gallus' head of printing technology, Kishore Sarkar, is to set up a Gallus 'consultancy' to assist label printers, particularly in the move to monofoils.

flexo on clear 50 micron PVC using specialist 'shrinkable' inks. The 'S' press comes as standard with driven chill rolls for handling these heat sensitive materials – they are optional on the EM presses. The changeover was completed in around 18 minutes as a "first time job" using manual pre-setting. For a repeat order, faster setup can take place using auto pre-setting (job recall).

The 'S' print cylinder is directly driven by its own servomotor. Not only does this allow adjustment between metric and imperial print lengths, but it allows repeat length to be set on extensible substrates, such as shrink films, to take account of stretch factors.

Gallus' EM 'S' series presses feature a hybrid printing unit which allows changeover between flexo (water-based or UV) and screen printing in the same unit. Changing processes is a simple matter of exchanging squeegee unit for a chambered doctor flexo inking assembly and hooking up the relevant ink pump.

Changeover between rotary screen and flexo printing can be achieved without breaking the web while reverse printing can be achieved without turning the web.

The print unit assembly is mounted on a slide-in platform unit, but it should be noted that the print unit base stays in the press, which is a different concept to the 'plug and play' Gallus EM280.

The 'S' press is built for front loading of plate and anilox sleeves. Although presses such as Omet's Varyflex have been

designed for plate sleeves, the 'S' press is, next to the Gallus RCS 330, the first narrow web machine to be designed to take anilox sleeves. Clearly there are potential benefits in terms of no moveable parts such as gears and clutches – and no bearers to get broken in the washing machine – and far easier handling of lightweight sleeves.

Similarly there are interesting developments taking place in the plate sleeve market with the development of directly imaged narrow web gapless/endless plate cylinders from Rotec and Cyrel's in-the-round processing, a technology which is migrating from the wide web market. As Klaus Aarestrup points out, there are clear advantages to lightweight plate sleeves in terms of no loss of register accuracy caused by remounting plates, ease of handling and speed of make-ready.

Cost and limited availability remain issues, however. Says Aarestrup: 'It is chicken and egg. There will be more of a demand for such advanced plate on sleeve technology as press manufacturers demonstrate the cost benefits, in speed of job changes and quality difference. Then the costs will come down. We have to learn from other more industrialised manufacturing industries that what counts is the cost of the output, not the individual components.' ■

No.364

Hybrid 'S' print unit





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Recruiting salespeople



A good sales team will combine the skills to find new customers and take care of the customers you have. The job of the sales manager is to spot the necessary talents, says **David Harrison**, pan-European sales director at Skanem Group

A combined sales force is a mixture of hunters and farmers. The hunter has the stealth to track down the prey and make the kill; the farmer has the skill and knowledge to grow the crops and look after the flocks.

Now whichever label you choose to stick on the description – infantryman, hunter, farmer or backroom battle boy – the first skill of a sales director or manager is in spotting the right person for the right job.

Training takes time and if a skilled travelling salesman with a good track record can be hired from another industry, fine. But remember, customers buy from companies, not people, and there is no guarantee that a person good at selling trucks can repeat the success with labels.

Not everyone is a born salesman. Indeed a really good, natural salesman is a rare breed and a proven, intelligent salesperson is worth the investment of retraining to sell your products.

They have the knack and the personality to go 'cold calling', to turn the 'foot in the door' into the 'order in the book'. And while it is good to have them keep contact with the customers they have wooed and won, it is a waste of their talents to have them going on round after round of repeat visits.

If the outside sales team are the 'finders', the internal sales department are the 'minders' and 'grinders' and they are the people to take over the repeat business – the backroom staff which look after the vital work of ensuring the customer gets what he wants when he wants it and ensuring that your product continues to be the best the customer can buy.

Of course a good sales team requires a good leader. No matter how good the abilities of the sales force, it will not perform to its best effect under weak and inefficient leadership – 'Lions lead by donkeys', as it was described in the First World War.

And good leadership starts the moment the leader first meets the recruit – at the job interview. It requires as much from the interviewer as from the interviewee.

Tell them everything about the company, its products, its strategies, its growth plans and why you need additional salespeople. Tell them what is expected from them, their sales targets and how they are calculated. It is no good dangling a tantalising bonus if the new recruit cannot see how it can be achieved.

They need to know exactly what their job will be – a hunter or a farmer – the geographical area in which they will work and the markets they will operate in. The more detailed the job description, the better fitted they will be for doing it successfully.

I know it sounds like a statement of the obvious... but sometimes the obvious is not obvious to a weak team leader!

Have a good talk about the applicant's CV – their experience relevant to the job vacancy, knowledge of the printing processes, the varieties of labels there now are and the market and customer requirements. Getting the new recruit talking gives a valuable insight into his or her personality and should help you avoid putting a round peg in a square hole.

Encourage them to discuss their own perceived strengths and weaknesses.

Probe as to why they think they should be given the job and where they want to be in five years' time – although it's a bit tricky if it's your job they see themselves in!

Of course no one can come into a job cold and be a success from the start. A painstaking induction pays dividends because it is you who are putting a new face into an old company, and the sales person needs to know as much about its history as he does about how to make its future prosperous. ■



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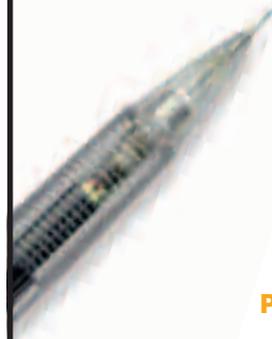
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Leading Indian label printers will be exhibiting their capabilities at the show. An excellent opportunity for international label printers, buyers and brand owners looking for alternative source for labels.

INFO LABEL 2004

The three-day Conference will focus on exports, cutting edge technologies and brand protection. The deliberations will be woven into the common theme – 'Challenges and opportunities in a Globalised Marketplace'.

INTERNATIONAL PAVILION

Tarsus, the owners of the worldwide Labelexpo exhibitions and the publishers of the number one industry periodical – Labels and Labelling, will host a 600 sq.mtr. International Pavilion as part of the India Label Show 2004.

India Label Show 2004 will thus bring together the worldwide manufacturers and providers of machinery, materials and services for the label industry, the printers of labels in India and the brand owners from India and abroad on a platform that promises to usher in new avenues of opportunities for everyone connected with the Label & Labelling Industry.

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Labeling news

Labels & Labeling

New reader enquiry service from Labels & Labeling magazine

A new system for submitting reader enquiries to L&L has been introduced to help speed up response times to your enquiries.

By far the simplest way to submit your reader enquiries is to visit us online at www.labelsandlabeling.com/reader.htm and simply fill in the online reader enquiry card as indicated.

Alternatively you may e-mail us at readerenquiry@labelsandlabeling.com providing us with your name, company name and address, telephone/fax numbers, and e-mail address. Please state the magazine issue number that the advertisement or selected news item is featured in (found at the top right hand corner of the front cover), and the reader enquiry number, which is positioned at the bottom of each item and advertisement or in the advertisers index at the back of the magazine.

Avery and Bemis probed by European authorities

Avery Dennison Corporation and Bemis Company Inc. have both confirmed that officials from the European Commission and relevant national competition authorities have visited and obtained documents from their European facilities. Avery Dennison has facilities in the Netherlands and Germany, whilst Bemis has a pressure sensitive materials operation in Belgium.

The investigation appears to relate to alleged anticompetitive activities in the European paper and forestry products industry, including the adhesive label stock market. Both Avery Dennison and Bemis are cooperating fully with the investigation.

No. 501

Akzo Nobel Inks becomes ANI Printing Inks

Akzo Nobel Inks has changed its name to ANI Inks. At the time of the management buy-out of the Printing Inks group from Akzo Nobel in February 2002, it was decided that the group could continue to use the name for a period of three years. That period lapses at the end of 2004.

Peter Koivula, president and CEO at ANI, commented, 'Apart from changing our name and identity, we're also taking a decisive step forward in terms of marketing and communication, slightly adjusting our message to the market, making it a significant ingredient in our future customer promise.'

No. 502

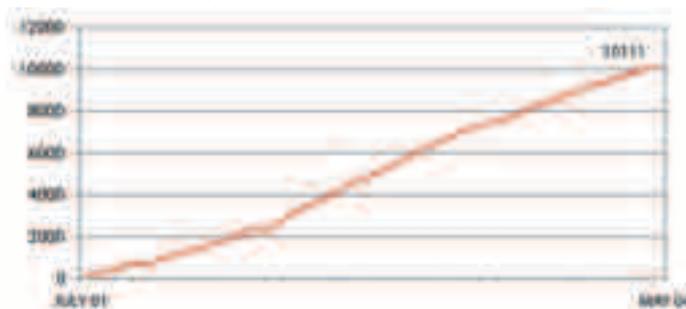
Labelsandlabeling.com – the online home of the labeling industry

www.labelsandlabeling.com, the leading online portal for the label and product decoration industry has grown phenomenally since its relaunch at the end of February. 15,274 unique visitors logged onto the site in April alone. The number of registered users continues to grow rapidly and has just passed 10,000 (see graph below).

Still the online home of the magazine,

readers can view an archive of the magazine going back to 2001, research the 2004 labels directory and keep abreast of all the latest developments in the industry through a host of new feature areas, including a technical forum, links section, events diary and streaming conference section. All of this is available free of charge. Have a look for yourself at www.labelsandlabeling.com No. 500

Growth in registrations on labelsandlabeling.com



Wal-Mart says suppliers will meet RFID deadline

Wal-Mart has begun its long-awaited trial of RFID tags and electronic product codes (EPCs), and insists that its supply-chain partners are on track to meet the 2005 target for tagging goods.

The retail giant, whose support for RFID has driven take-up of the technology across the globe, is testing EPCs with eight manufacturers, including Gillette, Procter & Gamble, Nestle and Unilever, at a regional distribution center in Dallas.

The manufacturers' support, at a time when many are raising doubts over the benefits of RFID, will be vital to the success of the project, says Linda Dillman, CIO at Wal-Mart. 'We're grateful to these companies for their commitment to improving the supply

chain process,' she says. 'It's not easy being a pioneer, but that is how progress is made. These eight companies are revolutionizing the way we do business.'

The trial, which initially covers 21 products in seven stores, paves the way for Wal-Mart to achieve its target of having its 100 top suppliers using RFID by January 2005, Dillman says.

All but two of Wal-Mart's top 100 suppliers are on track to meet the deadline, with many planning to join the trial earlier, says Simon Langford, manager of RFID strategy at Wal-Mart. Langford also says RFID tags would be rolled out to UK retailer Asda during 2005 as part of Wal-Mart's global implementation of the technology.

 No.503

Agfa enters flexo plate arena

Agfa Corporation has entered the flexo plate arena with the launch of a new photopolymer plate for the flexo market in North America. Aqua FLASH is claimed the fastest flexo plate available in the market today, capable of making a finished plate in less than 45 minutes. The Aqua FLASH system allows for parallel platemaking capabilities producing a set of four fully processed plates in less than 70 minutes. Additionally, the plate uses a water-wash system instead of solvents to process the plate.

Aqua FLASH is capable of providing resolution up to 175 lpi and can be used to print to a wide variety of substrates including tags and labels, envelopes, flexible packaging, folding cartons and more.

The Aqua FLASH system was developed in conjunction with Olec, Flexo BRAVO and Toray. It is commercially available from Agfa in North America.

 No.504

Nilpeter creates Brazil Subsidiary

Nilpeter has announced the formation of Nilpeter Brazil. This subsidiary will handle the sales and service activities of Nilpeter presses in Brazil as of 1 May 2004. Nilpeter claims that its establishment signifies a strategic focus on Latin America and on the important Brazilian market in particular.

Latin America has become an increasingly important market for the label press manufacturer, which has manufacturing facilities in Europe and the USA. Through its new sales office in Brazil, Nilpeter hopes to be in a stronger position to serve its Latin American market directly.

Nilpeter works in close cooperation with Intergrafica Print & Pack GmbH (IPP) in Latin America. Moving Nilpeter's support into Brazil will continue to enhance this partnership, which has existed for many years. In the near future, Nilpeter's Brazilian presence will also benefit the rest of the region by providing a direct local connection to the company.

 No.505

MPS re-organizes German-speaking territory

MPS Machines has reorganized its sales territory in German-speaking areas. Up until now, Ortwin Diehl has served Germany, Austria and Switzerland. As of May 2004, Wolfgang Binner, of the Printech Company, will assist Diehl, covering postcodes in the range 70-98 in southern Germany, Austria and Switzerland for MPS. Wolfgang Binner has already sold two systems in Switzerland, including an EF 330-8 color machine, sold to the Etimark AG Company of Grabs, Switzerland. Diehl will continue to be responsible for northern and eastern Germany.

 No.506

Illochroma France takes first RDP SOLID press

RDP Marathon Inc. has announced the first sale of its new Sleeve Offset Lithographic Independent Drive (SOLID) technology to wet glue specialist the Illochroma Labelling Group.

Illochroma France has purchased a multi-colour RDP LS • 100 variable size web press, configured with the SmartSet press control system. The press is 38.5in / 978 mm wide in a hybrid configuration and will be installed at the Croix industrial site in northern France.

'Illochroma is an innovator in wet glue labels, and this sale presents a great opportunity to participate in providing their end-user customers with value-added excellence,' said Eric Short, president and CEO, RDP Marathon.

Released in March 2004, RDP's sleeve technology provides printers with the ability to print any size without the restrictions of conventional gearing

 No.507

Labeling news

RFID set to become standard for airline suppliers

Boeing and Airbus have agreed to collaborate on developing common part marking and automated data collection using RFID technology.

'RFID offers the aviation industry many proven benefits, with the ultimate

objective being continued safety, airworthiness and operational efficiencies for commercial airplanes,' said Kenneth Porad, program manager, Automated Identification Program for Boeing Commercial Airplanes. 'By working together, Boeing and Airbus benefit by avoiding conflicting requirements with mutual customers and suppliers. It is critically vital to have AIM's support and involvement on this initiative as they are the global RFID Industry trade association.'

RFID involves 'smart label' identification tags installed throughout an airplane that store data including part and serial numbers, manufacturer codes, country of origin, date of installation and maintenance and inspection information.

No.508

Philips and Checkpoint form RFID partnership

Checkpoint Systems, a provider of RF-based product identification and shrink management solutions for retailers and consumer packaged goods manufacturers and Royal Philips Electronics, have announced a strategic alliance. The two companies will provide RFID-enabled tags and readers, combined with system integration services, to retailers and fast-moving consumer products companies. The two companies are already working together on several projects in the European retail industry, including the Metro Group in Germany.

The two companies will deliver system integration services that address the specific needs of retailers seeking to adopt RFID in their supply chains.

No.509

e-flash

Want all of the latest labeling news delivered straight to your desktop?

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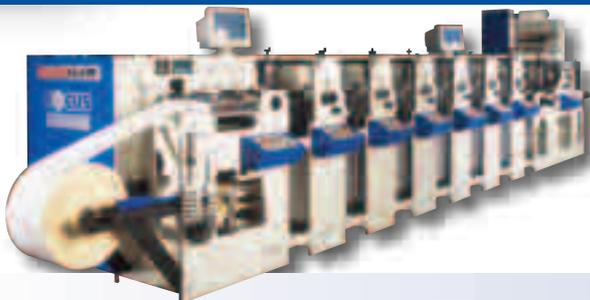
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- Modular print units enabling 2 colours up to 8 colours
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- Compact in-line press design
- Maximum press speed: 100m/min
- Constantly rotating ceramic anilox rolls with reverse angle doctor blades
- Automatic plate cylinder throw-off at press stops



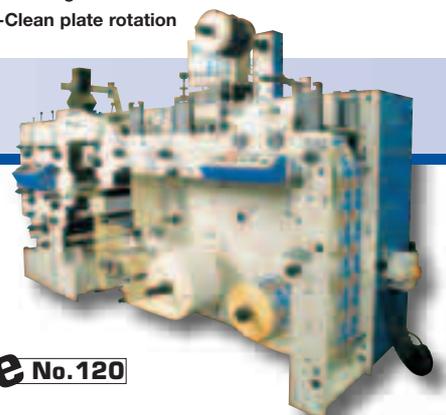
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Specialty paper manufacturers form new association

Twelve suppliers of specialty papers have created a new organization, PaperPlus, which will represent the manufacturers of 1-side coated and calendered papers for flexible packaging, wet-glue labeling and self-adhesive labeling.

These companies, with their 23 manufacturing sites, represent almost the entire European production of 1-side coated papers and a very large part of the European production of base papers for the self-adhesive business. PaperPlus will be located in Brussels.

The Executive Board has elected Snr Borello, Ahlstrom's LabelPack division president, as its first president. The Secretary General will be Mr. Rein J. Middelburg, who has had extensive experience in sales, marketing and communication management positions

with leading companies in the European paper industry.

PaperPlus' main aims will be to promote paper for use in targeted end use areas, primarily the packaging and labeling of food and beverage products. It will also produce relevant European trade statistics for its members and lobby the EU and national governments on behalf of its members for better legislation on paper base packaging.

 No.510

Intelligent joins Team Tag-it program

Texas Instruments has teamed up with Intelligent Ltd, one of the largest integrators of RFID in the UK and Europe, to help customers implement complete RFID solutions across a wide range of businesses. Intelligent has joined Texas Instruments' Team Tag-it RFID Program, an international partnership of companies dedicated to the development and adoption of RFID smart label solutions.

 No.511

Reader enquiries

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Or e-mail: readerenquiry@labelsandlabelling.com

providing us with your name, company name and address, telephone/fax numbers, and e-mail address. State the magazine issue number. We will forward your enquiry directly to the relevant company.

 No.127

The label ink specialist

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ink mixing system

● washing unit
Flexomat 630/1000

● special-
cleaner

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+ varnishes
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New products

Global Vision

TVS 2.0 PRO software engine for automated electronic proofreading

Global Vision has launched a new software engine for its automated electronic proofreading systems. The system is FDA compliant and apparently requires minimum training.

Featuring automatic error detection, one window error review, single pass full-image inspection and an image management system (IMS) that stores reports, Global Vision claims that the new system will simplify error detection and reduce inspection time. The IMS utilizes Oracle or SQL Server for archiving masters, samples and inspection reports. Capabilities include replaying of inspection results for management and FDA audits. The inspection report displays the master, sample and the resulting comparison images. Reports can be saved, printed, emailed or exported into various applications.

Global Vision develops technology-driven solutions that deliver accuracy and reliability for its customers' proofreading applications, including file-to-file, intelligent OCR, artwork inspection, non-contact counting and high-security character inspection systems. L&L issue 4 will carry a detailed case study of the system in use.

No. 400

Retroflex

S-Series flexo press

This narrow to mid range web press can reach speeds up to 750 FPM with 1-10 color configurations. The S-Series has features such as pneumatic lock up with impression delay, quick change anilox and plate rolls, 360° register, chambered blade systems, AC drive with line shaft, servo drive and UV, IR or air impingement drying systems. The S-Series print station is also available as a retrofit to existing lines for additional printing or coating needs. See future issues of L&L for an in-depth review

No. 403

Exxonmobil

Anti-Static Label Films

ExxonMobil has strengthened its range of Label-Lyte Lithor anti-static films. The new range includes a variety of cut & stack, in-mould and wet glue patch films.

For wraparound cut & stack labeling, the Films Business now offers a comprehensive range of Lithor films for clear, white and metalized applications.

The Label-Lyte Lithor range now also includes glossy white (LTR741), matt white (LTR742) and silky (XI and LT447) films, as well as Lithor LTL247 supplied with Label Mate anti-static lacquer, specially adapted to rotary printing techniques and end-of-line sheeting and guillotining.

Meanwhile, ExxonMobil's 65µ Label-Lyte LT447 film for in-mould labeling (IML) has been joined by a new 45µ version, Label-Lyte XI447 specially designed for rotary printing applications. The design of the cavitated white OPP film ensures a smooth finish after moulding, unlike other materials which often give an "orange peel" finish, says the company.

ExxonMobil's metallised patch label film, 85µ Label-Lyte XP280, launched at Labelexpo 2003, has now been joined by white and clear versions. Metalized Label-Lyte XP280 and white Label-Lyte 95XP547 have been specially designed for use with water-based glues and offer a moisture absorbent surface and anti-static properties.

No. 402

PCMC

Vision-G CI flexo press

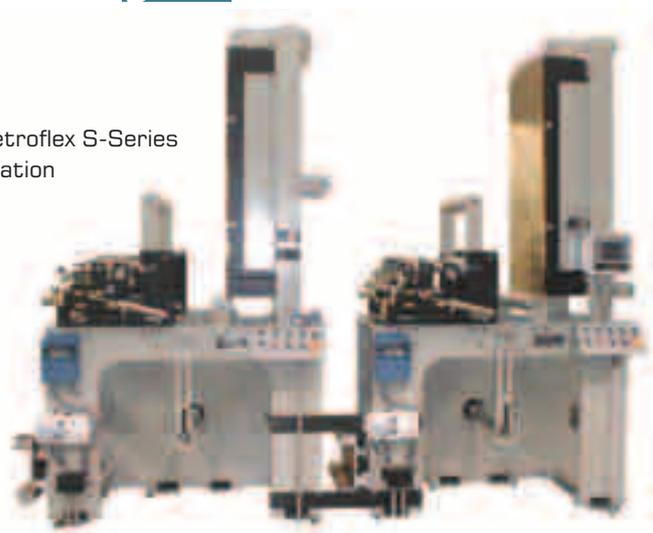
The Vision-G was developed in response to customers who need an advanced 8-color press with either 760 mm (30") or 1040 mm (41") web widths. The Vision-G is similar to the previous Vision models, with the addition of the new Bosch-Rexroth fiber optic servo-control technology.

According to PCMC, the new design allows for an 8-color, tool free changeover in 35 minutes. It has a wireless operator pendant and is compatible with other software for future integration and networking. Ethernet communication is used between PLC's and all operator screens. The system can be connected to the converter's network or the Internet. PCMC also says the Vision-G design gives unlimited incremental repeat capability to meet future market demands.

A wide range of options are available on Vision-G. This includes the award-winning eXtreme drying system for better drying on all types of substrates. The flexibility of the eXtreme will also assist printers with drying problems.

No. 401

Retroflex S-Series station





UV Curing Lamps and Systems



DCR-a5S

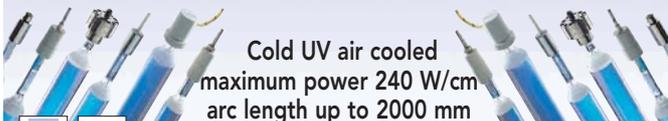
DCR-a5

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New products

RK Print Coat Instruments

FlexiProof UV

RK Print Coat Instruments has developed a new version of the FlexiProof 100 with optional integrated ultraviolet curing (UV) capability.

The sample preparation system can be used for quality control, the development of new products and as a method for providing proofing sample and conducting pilot runs.

Proofing and curing inline at high speed enables the FlexiProof 100 with UV to highlight problems with inks that would be difficult or impossible using conventional proofing methods. For example, pin holing cannot normally be captured, as a conventional proof is made then taken to a UV conveyor, by which time the surface properties have changed dramatically.

Mirage Inks and Skanem have both ordered the new system.

 No.404

Torraspapel

New Thermal paper, Adestor sheets and films

The Adestor range has been expanded with the incorporation of new plastic sheets and film. Manufactured using polypropylene and polyethylene, these products are ideal for cosmetic product labels and labels that need to be durable and resistant to humidity and chemical compounds. Meanwhile, Adestor has expanded its range of sheets for wine labels and beverages, incorporating white and cream color laid-paper sheets.

Torraspapel has also expanded its thermal paper range. Three new products have been incorporated into the existing range: Termax SF1C (Standard Fax 1 Color, Standard 55 g/m² thermal paper in 4 colors), Termax PRN (Printer Not Coated 80 g/m² paper), Termax PHR (Printer Heat Resistant 55 and 75 g/m² paper) and Termax TRO (Ticket Resistant Offset, semi-protected 105 g/m² thermal paper).

 No.405



RK Print Coat Instruments' FlexiProof UV

Pulse Roll Label Products

MeshTec white

Pulse Roll Label Products has launched its UV curable screen white ink under the brand name MeshTec white. The new ink is formulated for use in all makes of rotary screen units and for fast running, flatbed presses. Superior ink adhesion and colour strength is claimed on a wide range of substrates including PE and top-coated PP, as well as on coated papers and board stock.

'MeshTec white has performed well during trials demonstrating excellent flow-out characteristics for solids with enhanced gloss and with the viscosity needed to hold fine type', states Gary Seward, Managing Director.

MeshTec is available for use in combination with UV offset, UV letterpress, UV and UV flexo varnishes. Variable information overprinting capabilities include hot and cold foil applications optimised to meet stringent end user demands and provide increased resistance properties to chemicals and abrasion in the most demanding industry environments.

 No.407

BST International

CCDPro camera, BST ProLogic and BSTProTouch

BST ProTouch integrates BST's CCD Pro cameras into a web/process management system capable of complex automated applications such as web width measurement, splice control and tire manufacturing. BST ProLogic is designed for use on extruders, slitters, printing machines and a wide range of converting machinery. The CCDPro camera features digital detection of web edges and center lines and has an LCD dot matrix display of web widths for multiple set points. It also provides compensation of contamination and can be used on applications where web size changes frequently.

 No.406

MeshTec white by Pulse Roll Label



GEW
UV lamps for inkjet, digital printing

GEW has announced the launch of JETCURE, a miniature series of UV curing lamp heads. Available in two models, JETCURE 1 and JETCURE 2 are ultra small, baby UV systems for curing applications where lamp head dimensions and weight are of critical importance for ink jet and digital printing.

Standard features of JETCURE include compact cassette style lamp head of light weight (down to 0.4 kg or 0.9 pounds), purpose-made aluminum components for high quality and reliability, quartz window to isolate the UV lamp from the curing zone to minimize heat build-up, integral quiet-running cooling fan requiring no exhaust piping, fast lamp warm-up and cool-down, and safe, cool outer surfaces. JETCURE lamp heads are available with arc lengths ranging from 2 to 30 cm (0.8 to 12 inches).

No. 408

Trident
BreezeMark UV

The BreezeMark UV Ink Jet printing solution consists of Breezemark UV Ink and a Trident UltraJet II or 768Jet printhead. BreezeMark UV Ink uses one third of the cure power of traditional UV cured ink jet systems, apparently making it ideal for flexographic web and plastic sheet printing on a wide variety of heat-sensitive materials such as polyethylene, polypropylene, Mylar, semi-gloss label stock, Tyvek and vinyl.

BreezeMark UV Ink is being promoted as a safe and environmentally friendly alternative to MEK or more aggressive solvent-based inks.

No. 409

Ritrama
Repositionable adhesive system

Ritrama has launched a new semi-permanent emulsion acrylic adhesive system. RI-AVM was originally developed to satisfy the demanding requirements of the vehicle graphics market. Applications include repositionability of labeled goods applied by high-speed labeling lines and sophisticated product/coupon booklets mounted as labels on a wide variety of products.

No. 410

The compact Jetcure by GEW



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 No.411

WLT/Simco

Compact web cleaner

Simco has developed the DD web cleaner, claimed more compact than the earlier model and now with an integrated power supply. The latest DD has also been fitted with a new vacuum and dust collection system,

Designed for installing on narrow web presses, the DD system is complementary to the extensive range of static control systems offered by the company, including in-mould labeling solutions, monitoring devices, air knives with ionizing along with in-line ionizers for pneumatic conveyors.

 No.412

Avery Dennison

Printacher

Avery Dennison claim that the Printacher is the first fully-automated solution for printing and attaching price and barcoded tags to apparel. An operator can produce and affix up to 20 tags per minute, more than doubling the output of conventional processes, which often consist of tag printing followed by a time-consuming secondary attaching operation.

Its thermal transfer print technology generates display quality alphanumeric characters that complement promotional tag graphics and produces bar codes that meet all current retailer scan rate requirements.

 No.413

BST International

ekrPro Com 60 web guide

The ekrPro Com 60 was designed for simple integration and use over a wide range of printing, converting, tire and OEM applications. It uses a new operator interface which combines color-coded icons for simplicity and an

LCD dot matrix display, which has data output which is both numeric and graphic. It has a wide range of input devices – line, contrast and edge sensors, as well as CCD Pro cameras, automatic servo center and FVG automatic edge seeking devices and remote control inputs. It also supports actuators (with or without position feedback loops), hydraulic servo valves, digital and relay outputs. A new development is its ability to compensate variable gain and phase-lag requiring a web speed signal from the machine. BST claims that this will help solve complicated web guiding application problems or providing automated closed loop machine feedback, in a simple, cost effective solution.

 No.414

Jetrion LLC

Jetrion 3025 DOD inkjet printing system

Starting at 2.4 inches (61 mm) with one printhead, and designed to incorporate multiple printheads for wider applications, the monochrome Jetrion 3025 inkjet printing system delivers 316 dpi across, and up to 526 dpi in the process direction, at speeds up to 250 fpm (77 mpm) with UV inks, and up to 400 fpm (123 mpm) with solvent inks. It was co-developed with Graph-Tech AG of Switzerland. Incorporated into the Jetrion 3025 is Graph-Tech's MIC controller with image layout capabilities, simplifying production of variable codes and marks. Jetrion claims that the 3025 provides the lowest running cost of available drop-on-demand marking printheads, and is suited to applications that require the placement of durable images on high-gloss and film materials such as those used in labeling and flexible packaging.

 No.415

Ion Industrial

8001KD-W static neutralizing bar

The 8001KD-W static neutralizing bar features a rugged fiber-reinforced polymer body designed to withstand tough operating conditions. Its ionizing electrodes are made of 99.9 per cent pure tungsten for a long life, even at

the highest ion output levels.

A slim design and versatile mounting brackets make it ideal for practically any type of application. Up to three new 8001KD-W static neutralizing bars can be connected to a single, high-voltage power supply using Ion's new insert-molded Universal VAC power strip.

 No.416

Ion Industrial and Dusenbery Worldwide

Combined slitter/rewinder and static control system

Ion Industrial and Dusenbery Worldwide have partnered to provide converters with a slitter/rewinder combined with a static control system. Dusenbery's new Revolution high-speed, duplex center winder is available with Ion's Virtual AC static control system, allowing converters to run webs at speeds of up to 2,000fpm completely free of static electricity problems at the rewind.

With its long neutralizing range, the Virtual AC system provides static control on rewinding webs from the start of a roll to its completion, effectively controlling static charges up to 20 \leq away. Ion static neutralization systems provide real time display, system diagnostics, and digital interface. Its plug-and-play features help to ease equipment installation, maintenance and upgrades.

 No.417

American International Machinery Signature Elite high-speed folder gluer

For label converters looking to move into in-line carton production, American International Machinery has launched the Signature Elite high-speed folder gluer. It claims to offer faster set-up with less tooling, increased versatility, and a built-in carton alignment section. The system has a servo-driven vacuum feed section and offers speeds up to 1800 feet/minute.

An optional extension after the final fold section can be used for a third axis backfold for folding front and back panels of simplex style trays or the section can be used for mounting ancillary equipment such as tapers, labelers or inserters.

 No.418

Ciba Specialty Chemicals

Prime IT

Introduced at Drupa, Ciba claims that Prime IT improves adhesion of UV-curable inks, coatings and adhesives. It is suitable for labels, flexible and rigid packaging, smart cards and commercial printing, on a wide variety of plastic substrates, including OPP, PVC, PET, PE and PA. Ciba claims that Prime IT's consistent performance results in high printing quality and improved color appearance. Ciba adds that the best results are obtained with UV inks, but as Prime IT durably changes the plastic surface, the resulting higher surface tension allows other printing technologies, such as water-based inks, to be used.

 No. 419

Avery Dennison

ComfortTag

Avery Dennison has entered the tag-free sector with the introduction of its new ComfortTag heat transfers, which are targeted to apparel, undergarment and active wear markets where wearer comfort is a priority. Tag-free apparel carries brand and product ID information on securely attached film labels instead of traditional tags to improve wearer comfort.

The introduction of ComfortTag represents the first phase of a three-stage roll-out of Avery Dennison tag-free technologies and product offerings. Phase two, planned for mid-2004, will introduce variable imprinting capabilities, allowing apparel manufacturers and suppliers to add variable data to partially preprinted film labels. Phase three, scheduled for late 2004, features products designed to enhance security and prevent counterfeiting and film for erasing mis-applied bonded transfers.

 No. 420

Accuweb Inc

WideArray edge detector

WideArray automatically detects web edges passing anywhere through its 18.4in edge detection range. When positioned on opposite sides of the web in a center guiding mode, the WideArray's detection range is doubled – providing 36.8in of highly accurate, fully compensated detection. The wider detection range allows operators to change the guide point or web width on the fly, speeding make-ready time by eliminating manual adjustment or mechanical edge sensing devices.

The new detectors feature AccuWeb's compensated array technology that automatically compensates for web flutter and pass-line variances, changes in temperature and humidity, as well as the effects of dust, dirt and other environmental factors. Accuweb claims that this technology assures precision guiding while eliminating the need for continuous maintenance and manual recalibration. They are available in both ultrasonic and infrared models.

 No. 421

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 No. 126



New products

ATD Inkjet Systems

IP 7000 ink jet printing system

The IP 7000 is capable of producing 100mm (4") tall images. Available throughout North America, Europe and Asia, the new IP 7000 series prints variable information including graphics, scannable bar codes and alphanumeric text onto a variety of porous materials such as labels, secondary packaging, paper overwraps and industrial fabrics.

It features Trident 768Jet printheads capable of producing 10cm images, the tallest image available from a single print pass. The 256 print channels within the 768Jet printhead make it possible for the IP 7000 to print up to 32 lines of seven dot high text information on each container. This feature is ideal for listing ingredients or for highlighting product details in various languages.

 No. 423

International Graphic Webster

Converting line for offset press

Argentina-based International Graphic Webster (IGW) has launched a converting line for short to medium runs of labels on a wide range of different materials.

The DGF-3085 is designed to work with the Ryobi 3202MCS pack to pack offset press. The basic Ryobi system prints two colors, but units can be ganged up to twelve colors, or work can be re-registered through the press. IGW supplies the unwinding unit, the UV curing unit, and the rewinder.

The DGF-8-250 finishing line carries out UV varnishing, die cutting, embossing, stamping, laminating, cutting, rewinding, and waste removal.

Maximum web diameter is 65cm (25,6"), maximum web width 36cm (14,17") and printing length up to 35,56cm (14"). Maximum printing speed is 6000sph, 35 meters x minute (10 feet x minute). The rewinding unit incorporates constant tension control and web sensor.

 No. 424

GRE Engineering

VP8020 digital print engine

GRE Engineering has launched its VP8020 Digital Print Engine from VIPColor. Optimized to handle variable content, the VP8020 Digital Converter is well suited for high mix print runs such as forms, labels, tags, direct mail pieces and ID cards. The VP8020 prints 600 x 1800 dpi using 256 levels of grey to give great color and significant tonal depth.

The VP8020 comes with a PC based RIP to handle variable data with minimal effort and a windows driver that can accept PS3 PDF files. The "Cool-Fusion" micro-toner, based on Minolta technology, achieves fast throughput of up to 25 impressions per minute (8.5" x 11"). It can handle a large range of paper and synthetic substrates and is ideal for adhesive-backed labels and multi part forms.

GRE has combined the technology of the VP8020 and the VP2020 ink jet version and designed a complete converting system capable of providing variable data, high quality printed products along with foil blocking, laminating, varnishing, die cutting and matrix removal. The reel fed substrate is then rewound in reel form or in stacked cut sheets.

 No. 426

Tharo Systems

Zebra R4Mplus

Zebra R4Mplus (shown right) is an EPC-compatible (Electronic Product Code) RFID smart label printer/encoder with UHF transponder support. The R4Mplus encodes and verifies smart labels and also prints text, graphics and bar codes. The PA1000t Tamp applicator ships with a large capacity unwind/rewind that reduces the number of times you need to change label stock. The PA1000t applicator can apply labels to the top or side of products of varying height. Heavy guide rods were engineered to compensate for high stress in side labeling with minimal deflection.

Depending on the durability of the transponder in the smart label, Tharo also has available the PA1000t/b Tamp/Blow applicator. The PA1000t/b is

suitable for applying labels to convex, concave, flat or delicate surfaces, on either the top or side of a product.

Tharo Systems has combined the powerful PA1000t and PA1000t/b applicators with the newest of Zebra's R series of printer/encoders, the flexible Zebra R4Mplus, to create the PA1000tZ RFID Smart Label Printer/Applicator. The PA1000tZ can print and apply up to 58 smart labels per minute.

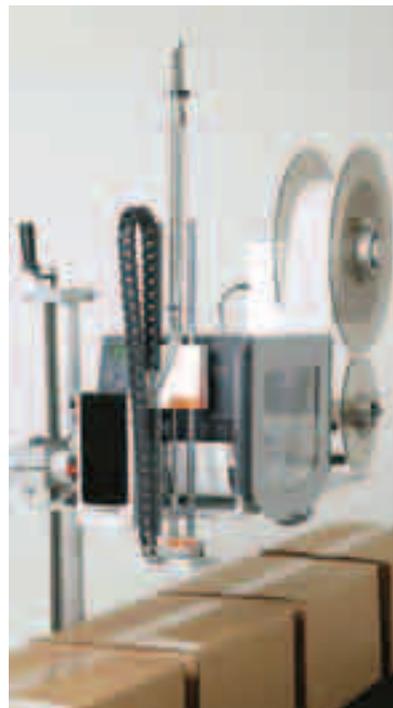
 No. 425

Graymills Corporation

Splash-resistant peristaltic pump

The pump has welded seams, a shielded rear air-vent plus bottom venting, along with a sealed speed control and forward/reverse switch to keep fluids from entering the pump housing. It has all of the same features of the standard Graymills peristaltic pumps: swivel lock fasteners for no-tool quick tube changes; Straight-Thru design to eliminate kinks, flow stoppages and snaking of the tube; dual roller technology to extend tube life; and an electric gear motor with electronic variable speed and forward/reverse control.

 No. 427





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Installations

Illochroma France **RDP Marathon SOLID**

Illochroma Labelling Group has installed RDP Marathon's first new Sleeve Offset Lithographic Independent Drive (SOLID) technology.

Illochroma France purchased a multi color RDP LS•100 variable size web press, configured with the SmartSet press control system. Engineered to optimize flexibility without compromising quality, this truly versatile 38.5"/978 mm wide hybrid press performs reliably at high speeds. The press will be installed at the Croix industrial site in northern France.

'Illochroma is an innovator in wet glue labels, and this sale presents a great opportunity to participate in providing their end-user customers with value-added excellence,' said Eric Short, president and CEO, RDP Marathon.

Released in March 2004, RDP's unique sleeve technology provides printers with the ability to print any size without the restrictions of conventional gearing. It is engineered with a single drive servo per insert and the sleeve inserts provide infinitely variable repeat sizes from 24" to 36" (610 mm – 910 mm). They are also interchangeable with other RDP inserts in the base print carrier, which include: flexo, conventional three-cylinder, and dry offset inserts.

No.512

White & Gillespie Pty. Limited **ThermoFlex Wide II**

White & Gillespie (Melb) Pty. Limited is the first Creo ThermoFlex Wide II installation in Australia and New Zealand. Founded in 1910, White & Gillespie provides prepress for specialist packaging in Australasia.

'After weighing up all the issues it became obvious to us that the Creo unit provided the best foundation for quality flexographic plate manufacture,' says Geoff White, CEO, White & Gillespie. While visiting Vancouver, he was persuaded by Creo founder Dan Gelbart. 'Dan's technical knowledge in the area of lasers is amazing, and he was able to

iron out any concerns that we had. After fully explaining the technology, it was clear that only Creo offered us the tools to be successful,' says White.

Creo claims that ThermoFlex offers decreased plate loading/unloading time, as well as the fastest sleeve imaging available. It allows the operator to image multiple plates at the same time since it is not necessary to mask the unused area of the drum. ThermoFlex also maintains consistent imaging times between plates of different thickness and images sleeves, as well as plates and film.

No.513

Sessions of York **FA-3300-S UV-flexo combination press**

Sessions of York – one of the UK's oldest and largest independent label producers – has ordered a ten-unit Nilpeter FA-3300-S UV-flexo combination press. The press is expected to increase the company's capacity for producing toiletry/cosmetic labels for major accounts, as well as pharmaceutical labels and special products. The configuration also includes four rotary screen units, a foil blocking/embossing

unit, turner bar and delaminator for reverse-side printing.

The FA-3300-S has a maximum print width of 330 mm and joins two existing eight-colour Nilpeter FA-2500 UV-flexo presses. With maximum print widths of 260 mm they are narrow versions of basically the same design. The 'S' version of the FA-3300 was introduced at last year's Labelexpo Europe as part of a new generation of servo-driven combination presses.

'We are very pleased with the FA-2500s,' said David Embleton, sales and marketing director. 'The first was installed in January 2003 and the second followed soon afterwards. Their modular design allows for fast and relatively simple wash-ups and make-readies, which makes them highly productive. Their performance influenced our decision to install a wider version of the same press, especially since it's our policy to duplicate certain label presses for reasons of technical consistency.'

No.514

Sessions of York installs a 10 unit Nilpeter FA-3300-S UV-flexo press



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Installations

Anglian Flexible Coatings

GEW NUVA Modified Atmosphere Curing System

GEW (EC) Ltd. has supplied specialist coater and laminator, Anglian Flexible Coatings, with a custom design, nitrogen purged, water-cooled UV curing system to cure silicone release coating on label stock.

'Specific silicone release chemistries for self-adhesive label stock require a very low oxygen environment to achieve critical levels of adhesive cross linking,' says Malcolm Rae, managing director of GEW. 'Traditionally, inert nitrogen UV curing systems were massive and consumed great amounts of costly nitrogen gas. Our challenge was to provide a compact and efficient curing system capable of processing heat sensitive, thin gauge films at a reasonable cost.'

Space restrictions had to be overcome on the converting line supplied by Polytype in order to integrate the UV unit. Using its state-of-the-art 3D CAD design system, GEW was able to engineer and manufacture a bespoke inert UV curing module with web transport features specifically for Anglian Flexible Packaging. Because the line was intended to coat unsupported films with a thickness as low as eight microns, the maximum in heat management was required. The inclusion of an integral water-cooled chill roll was needed for both heat management and increased oxygen sealing.

The NUVA Modified Atmosphere Curing System incorporates a UV curing lamp 1300 mm (51") in length, rated to operate up to 160 w/cm (400w/in) and with a fully retractable lamp head allowing total access to all working parts. The system is capable of lowering the oxygen level down to 6ppm but typically operates in the range of 20ppm at line speeds up to 150 m/min (500ft/min). The nitrogen atmosphere operational functions are controlled through the GEW color touch screen linked to an in-line oxygen analyzer.

Paul Field, managing director of Anglian Flexible Packaging commented: 'The converting system containing the GEW UV system is truly multi-functional. It is capable of coating all unsupported filmic substrates along with metalized film, foils and paper. In addition to a silicon release coating, we can also apply pressure sensitive adhesives, hot melt coatings and apply laminates. We began the installation of the line in November 2003 and began production in February 2004. GEW personnel worked closely with our people to ensure high quality production. The compact size of the GEW inert system and low nitrogen consumption has resulted in significant cost savings.'

 No.515

ITC Limited

Martin MBX automatic butt splicer

One of India's premier packaging printers has become the first in the country to install a Martin MBX automatic butt splicer. The Packaging and Printing Division of ITC Limited recently installed the MBX splicer on an existing Aquaflex in-line press.

At ITC, the MBX butt splicer unwinds and splices a web 476 mm (18.75 in) wide, on rolls up to 1830 mm (72 in) in diameter and at speeds to 150 ppm (500 fpm). ITC Limited is a diversified company that employs 15,000 people at more than 60 locations.

 No.516

Labelsco Ltd**Nilpeter FA-3300 modular combination press**

Labelsco Ltd of Barwell in Leicestershire, UK, has commissioned its fourth Nilpeter FA-3300 modular combination press to boost UV-flexo capacity. At the same time it installed a narrower six-unit FA-2500 flexo press of a similar open design. This now forms a key part of the company's expansion into pharmaceutical labeling, consolidating its position as one of the UK's leading privately owned label converters. The two new presses now give Labelsco a total of eleven rotary label presses, all of them from Nilpeter, as well as a reel-fed hot foil machine.

The latest FA-3300 has eight print units and a maximum web width of 330 mm. The installation included two 'drop-in' UV-rotary screen units. Other ancillary equipment includes a Nilpeter rotary hot foil unit, a Sherman Corona treater, Teknek antistatic web cleaner and BST video-web viewer. The inter-deck GEW UV-curing system is fitted with chill drums to aid the converting of heat-sensitive films.

Managing director Bob Robinson commented: 'We supply premium-quality labels and film packaging for the highly-competitive toiletries and health care sector, as well as the pharmaceutical industry. With an increase in orders we therefore had to pay close attention to ensuring we met tight delivery times. Fortunately, finding space for two new presses was not a problem. We moved into our present refurbished premises about 16 months ago, giving us over 65,000 sq/ft (over 6,000 sq/metres) of space with plenty to spare for future expansions.'


Gilchrist**RealTimeProof**

Gilchrist in Leeds, UK, a global brand management organization, has invested in RealTimeProof software. The investment in RealTimeProof was driven by their interest in acquiring enterprise-level proofing tools that could be integrated easily into their digital asset management data, job tracking and critical path workflow tools. It will help clients evaluate and collaborate design concepts on-line, before projects go to print. Gilchrist estimates that upwards of one million monitor proofs will be requested by clients and partners during the current year.

Paul Bean, Gilchrist Managing Director, says, 'With RealTimeProof Partner we have significantly streamlined the approval process, allowing our clients to collaborate online with their branding, creative and print partners, while utilizing international operations. The whole point of on-line proofing is to present the right information to the right people at the right time – regardless of location.'




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Installations



Litografia e Imprenta LIL S.A. DiMS

Litografia e Imprenta LIL S.A. a leading printer in Costa Rica has decided to implement DiMS! in their printing facility. As one of the largest printers in Central America, leveraging DiMS!' flexible ERP functionality, will enable LIL S.A. to handle all business processes for the broad range of printed products they produce, including; forms, books, folding cartons, labels, commercial print and office products.

LIL was looking for a solution to improve control of its manufacturing processes, enhance customer service and increase profitability and believed that DiMS! could meet these demands. The system's 100 per cent web-enabled structure was particularly attractive to LIL which has an international customer base.

'As a strategic decision we began researching an ERP solution two years ago to fit all the complex needs of our ever-changing industry,' says Mario Salazar, General Manager of Litografia e Imprenta LIL S.A. 'For 20 months we evaluated many solutions around the world. Finally we decided that our future Manufacturing System had to be specifically designed for the graphics industry. It had to understand the complexity of the business by integrating the best practices of the printing industry.'

 No.518

HB Label Print Mark Andy 2200 flexo press

Dublin-based HB Label Print produces labels for some of Ireland's largest food producers and retailers, and also has a strong presence in the high quality health and beauty sector.

It was previous experience with American manufacturer Mark Andy that prompted HB to install an eight-colour 10" MA 2200 flexo press. Fitted with turner bars, a laminating unit and full UV curing, the 2200 was specified by general manager, Vincent Keogh: 'I've always been impressed by the reliability and productivity of Mark Andy machines, and with so many variables in business these days, we needed a well proven machine.'

Managing Director, Ian Bowden commented: 'By using the Mark Andy 2200 with the most up to date ink and repro technology, we have the ability to compete with anyone in Ireland. We're also small, so we can offer flexibility and competitive pricing too.'

 No.600

HB Label, Dublin, trials its new Mark Andy 2200 flexo press



Innovative Creative Packaging HP Indigo ws4000

Innovative Creative Packaging Solutions claims to be the first company in New Jersey to acquire an HP Indigo press ws4000. The company invested in the digital label press to accommodate clients who require short to mid-sized runs, specialty colors, security features, image changes, numbering and personalization.

'Globally, some 35 per cent of label production is less than 6,500 linear feet. Our new HP Indigo press ws4000 combined with our Rotoflex Vericut Dual coating station has positioned us to deliver superior quality labels to this short run market segment – on demand,' states Shawn Smith, President of Innovative. 'Our clients can now recover costs associated with make-ready and printing plates while at the same time reducing inventory and overhead, it's everything our clients want.'

 No.519

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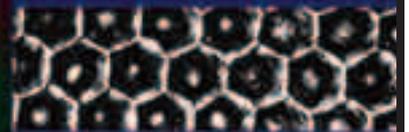
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e No.177

Matan Introduces: **the Spring 12** The New Short Run Label Converting System That Can Pay for Itself in A Few Months!

Matan Spring12, the ultimate solution for producing high-quality short-run labels, enables printers to offer unique capabilities for labels, tags and decals, such as spot colors (including metallic gold/silver, opaque white, etc), variable data, automatic numbering and bar coding.

Built on cutting-edge technology from Matan, the Spring12 offers flexibility, cost-effectiveness, unsurpassed quality and reliability.



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- No Clean Up!

The Spring 12 (Digital finishing system) complements both the Matan Spring and Spark printers, providing a total finishing solution to the Label converter: Laminating, Digital Die-cutting, Stripping, Slitting and rewinding finished labels in minutes! The only matching digital finishing solution for converting labels - from one to thousands.

The Spring 12 is the cost-effective solution for the small and medium label converters, offering short-run labels, decals and/or industrial markings products. Produce finished labels in quantities from one to thousands. True 4-color one-pass (spot and/or process), 4-5 year outdoor durability without top coating or laminating.



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Installations

Rapid Machinery Generation 3 flat bed die - hot foil

Rapid Machinery is claiming a world record production speed for its new Generation 3 Rapid flat die-cutting and flat hot foil stamping presses. Says company md Bruce Mansell, 'A local customer ran a difficult job laminating and die cutting using re-registration scanning of thermal printed consecutive bar code labels at the astonishing speed of 24,500 impressions per hour in 2-across the web configuration yielding 49,000 finished labels per hour.' Mansell says this feat was witnessed by a leading New Zealand label printer who was discussing Rapid's RFID and in mould label technology.

'He was stunned and asked the question why go rotary if flat will achieve such competitive speeds! The registration was perfect even at this speed. I think we can rightly claim a record here.'

 No.520

McGurk Group RealTimeProof

McGurk Group has chosen RealTimeProof to integrate into their web based on-line management system OMNI (Online McGurk Network Information). Steve Cheetham, managing director of Astutia Solutions Ltd, the Software Development Division of the McGurk Group, says 'With automatic managed digital approvals on-line, the time and cost savings are immense.

Importantly - it is also a unique selling tool to win new business.' 'In the past we had to upload and download PDF files which was a time consuming process,' continues Cheetham. 'With RealTimeProof you have one high-resolution file, centrally stored in one location, which is accessible to all parties. With fifty users, at present, this maximises efficiency and gives

assurance that only one version is used. RealTimeProof is proving to be a 'value-add, software tool.'

One of their main customers is McCain Foods who now use RealTimeProof to manage all the packaging development amendments and are an excellent example of the success of the on-line remote proofing tool in a packaging workflow.

Packaging designs typically use extremely large files and to zip files for approvals is time consuming and often not effective. Time to market in the packaging domain is also extremely important. With RealTimeProof, amendments to files can be made simply, easily and very fast.

 No.521




Paragon Print & Packaging are currently one of the market leaders in supplying the fresh and chilled retail sector with printed packaging. We have grown to be a £68 million turnover business within 9 years and operate out of 6 sites in the UK, employing 550 people.

Paragon currently produce self adhesive labels, printed sleeves and flexible packaging and due to further growth within the business this has created the opportunity for the following position:-

TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

You must have a minimum of 12 months packaging experience gained within the FMCG sector, and a working knowledge of printing/converting processes and their relationship with materials, laminates, inks, varnishes etc, would be useful. The successful applicant will be required to demonstrate good communication and presentation skills, as a key part of this role involves regular customer contact.

In addition you will be self motivated and have a high level of energy and drive. Reporting directly to the N.P.D Manager, you will be actively involved in the following key areas, whilst developing new business:-

- Research & Development
- Retail & Manufacturer Projects
- Internal & External Technical Support & Training

Mainly working from our Boston office, you will be an integral part of the N.P.D team, who will be instrumental in the development process of launching new products into the retail market.

Paragon Labels have been recognised for their commitment to Packaging Innovation, and have recently been awarded the Queens Award for Innovation 2003.

This is a great opportunity to join the fastest growing label company in the UK with a reputation for consistently, providing an uncompromising level of service.

A competitive package is on offer which will include a company car, life cover and pension scheme.

Closing date for all applications will be Friday 23rd July 2004.

Please apply in writing with full CV to: Sue Maltby, Paragon Print & Packaging, Lealand Way, Riverside Industrial Estate, Boston, Lincs PE21 7SW. E-mail: sue.maltby@paragon-labels.co.uk

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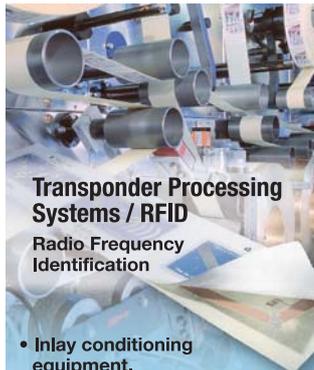
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