

## The perfect finish enhanced with the QS3200...

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Not every user of a wide-format ink-jet printer has come from the same kind of background, a factor which is clear to see with Portsmouth-based G3S whose design and graphics' capabilities show a different emphasis on overall output than many of its contemporaries. This former laminating and encapsulating specialist has perfected many different techniques during the years and the addition of an EFI-VUTEk QS3200, purchased from UK distributor CMYUK Digital, now combines the versatility of direct-to-substrate digital output with specialist finishing capabilities.

The company was founded originally more than 20 years ago and has progressed to become a leading manufacturer and supplier of a full range of retail and point-of-sale applications to general retail, niche and specialist companies throughout the UK. Its full printing and finishing service is complemented by two Zünd dieless flat-bed cutters which are used for contour cutting and routing, plus a wide variety of lamination and encapsulation machines catering for a range of widths of different types of hot and pressure-sensitive films.

Unlike many users of UV-curable based flat-bed printers, G3S has found that laminating many of its applications has proved to be particularly successful in terms of quality of finish and longevity. No-one will dispute that this ink type is suitable for output which doesn't require over-laminating but, with some types of board and card often compromising the adhesion causing the print to flake and crack, finding a method of removing this likelihood whilst improving overall the visual impact of the output is proving to be popular amongst the company's client base.

Mark Sanderson is sales director at G3S and believes that the company's success in the display market has come about as a direct result of comprehensive experience in finishing processes, not only for digital print but also with offset litho output. "Our attitude to wide-format production is unusual because we tend to think backwards, establishing the finishing methods we're going to use before we start progressing the job," he states. "But we're only able to operate this way because our vast, overall knowledge in laminating and encapsulating techniques is second to none. We know exactly how to work with different surfaces, ink types and films; where many companies might deem an added layer to be unnecessary or not possible, we're extremely successful in proving that protective and specialist finishes can be achieved.

"Just because UV-curable ink doesn't need laminating, this doesn't mean it's not worth going the extra mile by improving its appearance," Sanderson continues. "We're fully appreciative of the benefits of these inks and their longevity on rigid and flexible materials but, on many substrates, being able to over-laminate or encapsulate adds a tremendous degree of extra 'pop' and can turn an ordinary job into something special. Not only that, because the ink never comes into direct contact with the dirt and grime in the outside world and is always protected, durability and longevity are both enhanced."



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One of G3S's talents is in providing solutions to unlikely display problems. The company is rarely, if ever, defeated by a challenge. One example of this involved three-dimensional, sandwiched panels with intricate cut-outs, reverse-printed onto a clear substrate to allow direct consumer contact without affecting the printed finish. "The client came to us because he hoped we could come up with a laminate which would work with small protruding items fixed to a rigid panel. We knew no film would be tough enough to cope with an irregularly raised surface, as was the case with this design, and certainly no laminating machine would be able to handle the job. However, we were able to come up with a simple, yet innovative method of producing to the right specification with an eye-catching, practical and tough result."

The addition of the EFI-VUTEk QS3200 to G3S's armoury of display production equipment has given the company more than merely additional print capacity. Its capabilities have enabled greater innovation to be generated as well as being a solid work-horse for straight-forward applications. G3S looked at a selection of high-end flat-bed machines but amongst the reasons why the QS series appealed were its rear-to-front material feed and its reputation for performance and reliability.

Many of the jobs produced on the QS3200 are relatively small and are nested to get the maximum area used from a single sheet of material. These are printed with registration marks and paths for cutting on one of the company's Zünd flat-bed cutters before being passed to the relevant finishing process. Working with EFI's Fiery XF RIP, which is optimised for use with the QS series, simplifies lay-outs and origination, and ensures colours are accurate and adhere to the right ICC profiles to guarantee consistent repeatability across different surfaces and coatings.

Although G3S has several roll-fed printers and a smaller flat-bed machine, the increase in demand for jobs which carry the benefits of no emissions or VOCs made it necessary to invest in a wider, faster UV-curable system. The addition of the EFI-VUTEk unit is also in line with the company's intention to move into greener production in the future, and it's already working with specialist materials and coatings which are fully biodegradable. All these products are currently being tested on the QS3200 with excellent results, and will certainly prove their worth amongst the growing numbers of new clients as well as existing customers who want to incorporate more environmentally-friendly displays and processes into their campaigns.

"We would never describe our company as a print provider," concludes Sanderson. "We supply highly practical and innovative display solutions which combine our finishing expertise with our printing capabilities. In today's tough market conditions it's essential that we offer our client base good quality, long-lasting output which gives them a good return on their investment in displays. Adding the EFI-VUTEk QS3200 has enabled us to become more adventurous with wider-format jobs but, at the same time, we know this is an industrial-strength machine which will continue to produce all kinds of applications direct to unusual as well as everyday substrates."



Printer showcased in this study:  
**EFI-VUTEk QS3200**

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