

Two companies explain why they selected the printers they are using

Bristol & London-based **Urban Storm** has been in operation since 2001, specialising in the production of outdoor advertising and banners. Director Sam Cook, who actually started out in 1989 with 'Scaffolding' and so far has five patents to his name, formed a partnership with his co-director Kevin Shute in 2007 to enable him to build on his media expertise as well as indulging his passion for engineering, something which differentiates Urban Storm from other print companies.

Realising that outdoor advertising has been under pressure for some time, Sam and Kevin looked for ways to produce a high quality, environmentally friendly and lower-cost outdoor system. The result is STORMFLEX, a rigid frame that has a number of patented quick release poster clamps, each of which can bear 85kg on light weight 110g polyethylene (PE), hold a fully recyclable PE ECOFLEX poster in place, and meet all the onerous engineering standards required for outdoor use. The weight-bearing capacity of the clamps means that the poster can be fully tensioned so that the graphics lie completely flat, thus providing a high-definition finish. As well as reducing costs, the increase in quality is so great that the value of the site is also increased. Further, since the system has been designed to eliminate any finishing requirements, the overall cost of production is reduced by up to 50 percent, a potentially huge saving that enables users to maintain margins in an increasingly difficult market.

Sam explains: "When considering our objectives for the new system, the environment was high on our list. PE material can be recycled into any number of other products after use, time after time, unlike PVC, which can only be recycled once. It is also four times lighter than PVC, and has twice the strength; but the downside is that it's incredibly tricky to print, as UV inks

simply won't stick to it. However, we still elected to use it, because we feel that this is the future of outdoor advertising."

Urban Storm thus began trialling superwide format printers in an attempt to find one that could provide the same depth of colour and vibrancy on PE as can be seen on traditional pasted billboard hoardings. Happily, it came across **Fujifilm's Uvistar**, a five metre roll-to-roll printer, which uses Uvijet QK inks that have been specifically developed for use on PE.

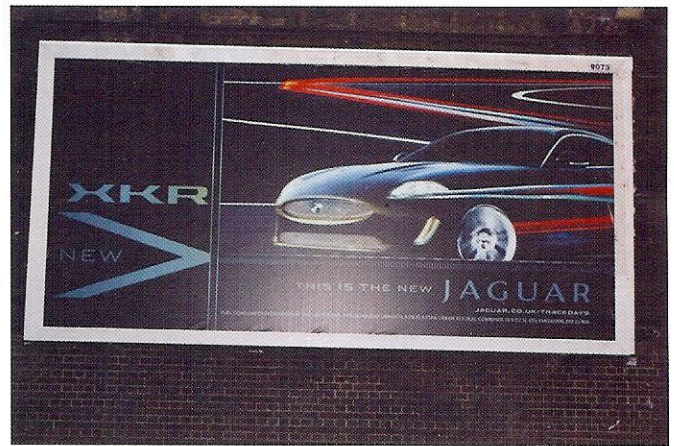
Sam reports: "I believe this printer and ink combination will alter the way that material for both billboard and POP applications will be prepared in the future. We have been delighted with the help we have received from Fujifilm and have worked with them to ensure that the printer delivers high quality, high volume output."

Currently, Urban Storm uses its Uvistar to print 18m² (48 sheet) posters onto the PE fabric, with guide marks for the clamps. The posters are then laid flat onto an air table, trimmed to size and can be packed immediately into a pizza-sized box for shipment.

Sam explains: "The sheets are dry when they come off the printer, so there's no nasty smell. We can produce up to 500 posters of 18m² a day and are currently operating a 16 hour shift, so have plenty of potential to expand."

The STORMFLEX system, which can be operated by one man, enables a poster display to be changed in approximately 15 minutes, while it would take two men at least 25-30 minutes to paste up traditional billboards.

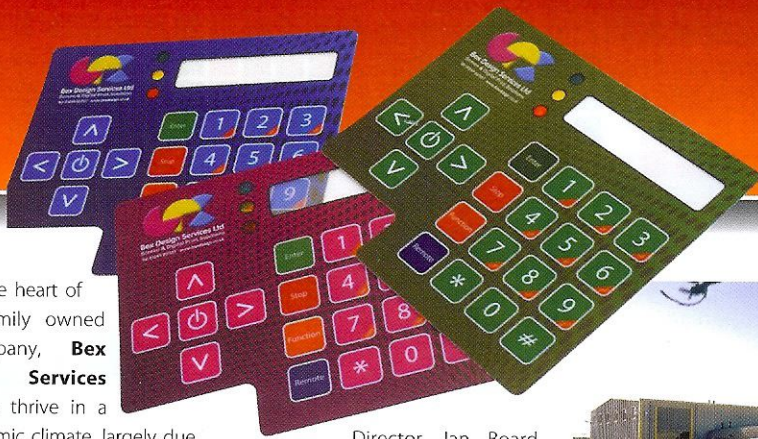
For outdoor advertisers and printers this system opens up myriad new opportunities and finally enables



outdoor advertising to become more of a premium advertising prospect. Accordingly, Urban Storm and Fujifilm will work with individual printers to demonstrate what their ROI would be when using

STORMFLEX and the Uvistar and how this combination can help to benefit their businesses.

For further information visit:
www.fujifilmholdings.com



Nestled in the heart of Wiltshire, family owned print company, **Bex Design Services**

continues to thrive in a tough economic climate, largely due to its investment in technology and delivery of a high quality product to its expanding customer base.

With a geographically and product diverse client portfolio, it employs 32 people and exports to Poland, the USA, France and China, aided by the global appeal of its ISO 9001:2008 quality accreditation.

Bex Design's core products are in the graphical overlay market – that is the production of fascia panels for small electrical products. Always a reverse print onto a clear substrate, these panels, which have to be robust and accurately registered, were traditionally screenprinted in a limited colour palette. However, following its investment in a grand format **Mimaki JFX-1631 LED UV** printer, the company has massively improved the creative content of its work, reduced lead times and delighted its customer base.



The purchase of the new Mimaki came about after some extensive testing of alternative products.

Commenting on his visit to Mimaki distributor, Hybrid Services and reseller Granthams, the company's

Director, Ian Board, says: "I'd trialled every machine under the sun and had almost given up hope of finding what I needed, but an internet search led me to Granthams and it soon became apparent that the Mimaki JFX printer with its LED cure was just what I needed."

The JFX's cold cure technology enables Bex Design to print onto substrates that are heat sensitive, and are thus prone to bowing and buckling when placed under traditional UV curing lamps, often resulting in head strikes that can be costly in terms of time, materials and hardware damage. The other vital facet of the solution is Mimaki's unique flexible inkset. Produced in partnership with 3M, the flexibility and excellent adhesion of the ink enables Bex to print, cut, hydroform and emboss to create stunning final products, with the minimum number of production stages.

"The flexible ink is the holy grail for us," continues Board. "It works for almost all of our applications, but what surprised me was the quality of its adhesion to other substrates. We can also use it to print onto foam core point of sale items and the adhesion is superb and, for the graphic overlay panels, it's also the only digital ink that's ever worked."



Because the standard screenprint model costs print jobs on the number of colours used, the norm for graphic overlay panels has been what Board refers to as 'two shades of grey', but this is a model he intends to turn on its head.

Gone are the days where unexciting graphics ruled the roost. For the same price, Board's customers can now have highly creative multi colour overlays that incorporate their true logo, a build up of imagery, drop shadows and so on.

Ian adds: "The Mimaki JFX has added a few new strings to our bow and we are really pushing the larger format rigid work. It enables us to offer our existing customers new products and they can consolidate their supplier base – thus protecting our position too."

Coupled with its investment in the big flatbed, Board also took the opportunity to replace an existing mild solvent printer with one of Mimaki's award winning **CJV30 printer/cutter** models, explaining:

"The biggest amount of work for the CJV30 is sequential numbering jobs that we output through Signlab - it's something else we can offer the client that we couldn't do previously, plus we also have light cyan and magenta inks and white if we need it."

Bex also take advantage of the powered take-up unit on the Mimaki to print over night and cut in the morning. Board maintains that following a difficult year, the company's investment in the two new printers has equipped it to make the most of the economic recovery. He reveals that he plans to acquire another Mimaki this year, in order to help Bex retain its new creative edge. He concludes: "I've received so much support from Hybrid and Granthams, who both know the industry inside out, and the level of service - be it next day ink deliveries or technical support has been professional and a cut above what I've experienced before. I'll definitely be returning to them when funds allow."

For further information visit: www.hybridservices.co.uk ■

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