FLAAR Reports

Wide Format Printers, Color Management Tools Books on Digital Imaging

at SEYBOLD San Francisco 2002 (Sept 10-12)

FLAAR Reports

Table of contents

Wide Format Printers

Canon

Canon showed two nice new printers, a 36" and for the first time: a 24". Both these are unusual widths in today's world of 60" printers. Mutoh makes a printer over 80" wide for example. Canon's 24" is their W7250; W7200 is their 36" model.

Output was handsome but sometimes grainy, probably due to film grain of the stock photos as much as inherent inkjet graininess. The photo of the house had a lot of digital noise in the shadows. If you are going to show off the quality of your printer, better use flawless photos. Epson excels at selecting photos which are absolutely outstanding. Makes their Epson printers look nice. The best photos on the Canon were those provided by BEST RIP.
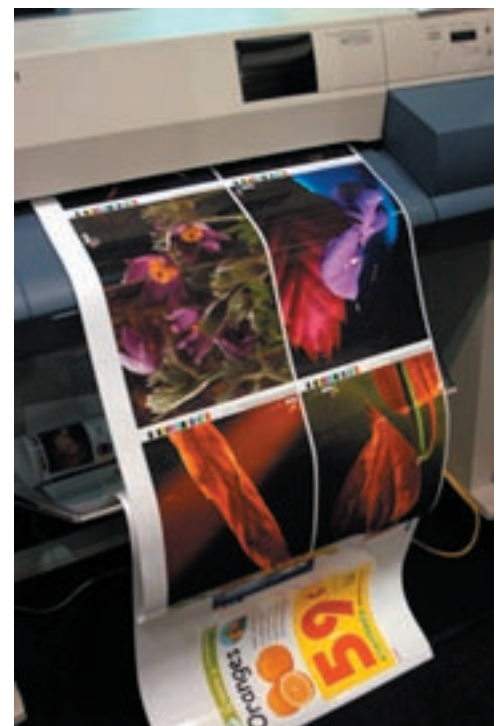
Canon imagePROGRAF W7250

Did not notice a specific EFI Fiery RIP tied to the new Canon printers, though probably they were somewhere. In Europe Canon intelligently selects PosterJet RIP; costs half of the EFI hardware RIP. Plus, PosterJet can be upgraded, and used to run other printers at the same time, or later on. None of the EFI Fiery RIPs for the older BC-W9000 can be upgraded nor run anything else. The dominant RIP in the Canon booth was BEST.

Canon imagePROGRAF W2200

Canon is brave coming out with a 24" printer considering that Epson has the best track record in the 24" market. Epson's really low price will be tough to beat by Canon's list price of $3,495. Difference is the market segments positioning. Epson does an excellent job speaking to their faithful public. Canon is more in the corporate world of copiers. Only if Canon leverages its millions of faithful camera owners can it perhaps come close to Epson's current lead among individual photographers and pro-sumers. Whereas there are 500 Fortune 500 companies potentially to buy Canon (and, so far, primarily HP), the total number of photographers is far larger than the number of corporate purchases of printers. Epson is after the individuals at the moment; they will gobble up the corporations later (when their printers are faster).

One disadvantage of any Canon printer continues to be its lack of pigmented ink. Epson has already learned from its earlier fast-fade reputation that end-users desire pigmented options.

Canon's sole trump card is its relative speed and an unsullied brand name. The brand name of Canon cameras and copiers stands for a level of quality that will also appeal to end users. Canon clobbered Xerox and others in the copier market. But it will take pigmented ink and more understanding of the marketplace for Canon to be successful in the world of wide format.

In the realm of desktop printers I have always liked the former Canon 8500. Never had one, but their output always looked nice at tradeshows. The new Canon imagePROGRAF W2200 desktop is reported to be even better. A 4 picoliter droplet size and 1,280 nozzles for each color sure offer attractive print quality.

Epson

Epson presented their nice new 7600 and 9600 as well as the 10600 replacement for the 10000. It was stated that the inadequate color gamut of the 10000 ink in general, and the weakness of the yellow ink in particular, were the reason for the switch to the new inks. Despite the 600 designation, the 10600 is six inks, not seven inks like the totally new 7600 and 9600.

The 7600 and 9600 were to replace the 7500 and 9500, flawed with metamerism, poor grayscale, and propensity to banding and clogging.
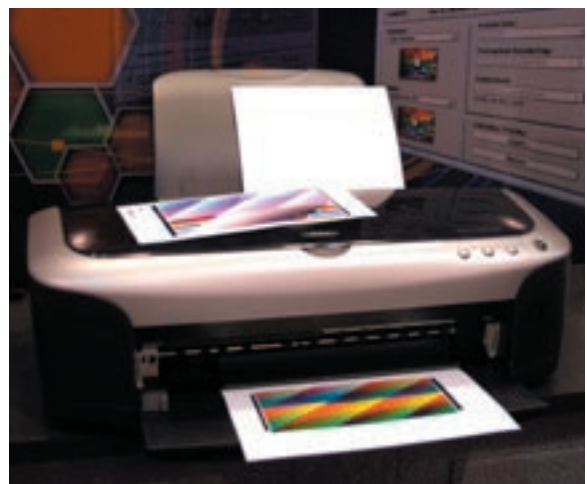
Epson Photo Stylus 2200

The 2200 was to replace the ill-fated 2000p and potentially the 5500. The 5500 was so unpopular in Europe that it is rumored that Epson resellers in several countries refused to sell it anymore since so many people returned them. Main problem was poor color gamut of Epson's pigmented inks. Personally I like the Epson 5500 that we have at the university, but I overheard several color pros in various booths talking about the sad history of that model. We have also received a series of e-mails from a professional photographer in Switzerland as he was disillusioned about the insufficient colors of the 5500. But, as is so typical, despite his bad experience he still went ahead and bought the Epson 7600. He reports he likes it (especially compared with the 5500).

All in all Epson deserves credit for listening to the upwelling of discontent. The output of the new 7600 and 9600 look very professional. With their light black 7th color Epson clearly scooped Canon, Lexmark, Encad, and everyone else for that matter. Epson is gobbling up the pro-sumer photography market of hobbiests and digital photographers. Epson will own this market by the time Canon or other manufacturers realize the market is as large as it is. Actually this market is as large as all the million pro-sumer photographers and probably another million traditional and now digital artists of professional quality around the USA and Canada.

The 7600 and 9600 are for individuals or any situation where output is limited. These are not production machines. Their ink cost is high; speed is low. Quality is very high. If you need quality plus versatility and a tad more speed, then you might prefer the Mimaki JV4. Uses comparable printheads as the Epson 10000.

The current generation of Epson printers use the same piezo printheads as in the Mimaki JV4, Mutoh Falcon II, and Roland Pro II. The advantages of all these are that you can use a wide variety of different inks. The Mimaki JV4 is the most ink-friendly of all, plus it can take thick and stiff material such as posterboard. So if you intend to do dye sublimation, textiles, and other exotic substances, then a Mimaki would be the choice with more options. Why Mimaki over the Roland or others? Because Mimaki JV4 is a mature and hence perfected printer. Roland's comparable printer is not yet finished and still showed birthing defects at Seybold.

Hewlett-Packard

We have received questions asking about the HP DesignJet 5500 for the last several months but only after it was shown publicly at Seybold could be discuss the details.

Essentially the 5500 is an HP 5000 with improved speed, a heater, and specific features for professional users who need to keep their printers running around the clock, often unattended. To accomplish this, everything is modified for speed, starting with the print server card.

HP printers can be operated from the convenience of your web browser, so you can be at home, or even on vacation, and send files to your HP 5500. Actually, even if the printer is turned off, the printer's 40 GB hard drive stores your files.

The ps on-board RIP includes Pantone certification, so you can print spot colors. This feature is crucial for achieving corporate logo colors. If for whatever reason you need to generate and handle ICC color profiles, then there are other options available from aftermarket sources, and necessary too. These aftermarket RIPs are discussed in detail in FLAAR series on RIPs and color management.

The 5500 can now print from JPEG or Adobe PDF formats. However it would seem you would still need enough pixels per inch, where 150 dpi is desired in the original file. That's tough, since JPEG and PDF is usually 72 dpi for faster download as an attachment and/or viewing on the Internet. But for position-only viewing, such as in proofing, these features are a bonus.

Clearly many people have tabulated what certain corporate and quick-print companies have asked for in a new printer. HP has definitely responded and addressed its traditional markets.

In summary, for quick-print companies or in-house corporate use, where multiple people need to print to one machine, every feature possible has been added to make the 5500 as close to an in-house printing press as is feasible under today's technology. Works from Linux, UNIX, PC, and Macintosh.

It will take a while for us to digest all the new features of this machine, but the talk we heard around the tradeshow was positive. The fact that Encad was totally absent from the entire show was further documentation to the success of the earlier HP 5000. The HP 5500 will make it even more difficult for Encad, or Canon, to penetrate the favored markets where HP is so entrenched today.

The images featured by HP as print samples in their booth were more attractive and varied than in previous years. Kudos to their sample-photo-selection manager.

Mutoh

Mutoh's new Falcon II was exhibited in two booths. It was not continuously printing in either booth but I have seen output from this printer at a sign shop and the owner there is content. Indeed after buying the Agfa GrandSherpa version of the Falcon II he also bought the new Mutoh solvent ink printer.

Mutoh's Falcon II

The Mutoh has a foot pedal for raising the feeder rollers so your hands are free to do the actual feeding of the media. Mutoh is stressing the quality of their output as a boon for lenticular printing. This is always been an area that I felt the art students on our university campus would be interested in experimenting with. Actually as an archaeologist in a former life, I would find it fascinating to have a lenticular image of ancient ruins with one image being the ruin as seen today (as a ruin) with the other lenticular image being a 3-D restoration showing the same temple-pyramid in its original glory a thousand years ago. This would be an educational tool for museums and archaeology courses.

Mutoh was represented by Guy Cipresso, Clint Fox and Mark Laizure.

Roland

Roland showed several new printers, including a contour cutter (Camm Jet Pro II), SolJet Pro II and Hi-Fi Jet Pro II with aqueous inks using the newer printheads (same as Epson 10000, Mimaki JV4, and Mutoh Falcon II).

A new RIP was announced, Roland SelectColor. The previous RIP was lackluster; people wrote and expressed dissatisfaction with the earlier RIP. Thus we laud any new and improved RIP.

The Roland DGA booth was staffed with friendly and helpful people. They pointed out the integrated media clamp. This cleverly holds down the edge of the media, to avoid head strikes when the media curls. This was a problem with some media on earlier Roland printers. The delicate piezo printheads would strike the edge of the media when it curled up. A head strike could cost up to $530 or over a thousand dollars depending on how many heads got totaled.

Roland SolJet Pro II

The Roland and Mimaki each offer dual sets of six inks. The difference is that Roland's heads are all in line. That means you have to use identical sets of inks in both groups. You can't use 6 dye and keep 6 pigmented in the other. I don't fully understand the subtleties but will keep at it until I can report the fully scoop.

I know the Mimaki better because FLAAR now has one, the JV4.

Piezo printers have a propensity to leave horizontal banding tracks across the image. The Hi-Fi Pro II was banding noticeably at the tradeshow. The Mimaki did that when it was in beta stage over 16 months ago. A year later the engineers had corrected that situation. That's why we waited to get a Mimaki until it was perfected. Today Mimaki works just fine.

Same with the Mutoh Falcon II. It had serious banding at Print '01 last September. Now the Mutoh Falcon II and Agfa GrandSherpa looks nice.

The first print I saw from an Epson 7600 in Europe had light banding but at today's tradeshow the output looked beautiful. Thus in all probability Roland will eventually eliminate the banding. The printer won't be finished and ready to be delivered for another month anyway.

Roland is devoting considerable attention to the growing market for solvent ink printers for companies who don't want to pay the $250,000 price of a Vutek, Nur, or ScitexVision. Downside of the Roland SolJet may be their lack of a full true solvent ink. Reports suggest the Roland SolJet uses an oil ink that may require coated media. Thus their main competition may be the newly released Mimaki JV3-160S, which may use new solvent inks. It is not easy to learn what is actually inside anyone's inks, nor precisely what media they will, or will not, work on. But indications from Mimaki USA is that their new printer is quite versatile.

Not present; Mimaki

Mimaki rarely exhibits at tradeshows. However Mimaki was strong at SGIA a month after Seybold, indeed Mimaki JV4 printers were all over the tradeshow in booths of many other exhibitors.

ColorSpan was not present based on the rather obvious drifting and unsure focus of Seybold tradeshows. Hard to tell whether this was a tradeshow on PDF, or pre-press, or what. In other words, would enough visitors come who would be in the market for a Mimaki or ColorSpan? But ColorSpan was present at SGIA, even had a newly updated X2 vesion of their Mach 12 printer.

Encad could also have used the justification that Seybold's focus was drifting but Encad is a more generic printer covering a wide variety of potential markets. The last time Encad exhibited at Seybold (2001) they had a great party and were giving out bottles of wine to everyone.

But by year 2002, HP presented their new printer; Mutoh showed their new printer and discussed their several other new printers; Epson showed four new printers; Canon showed three new printers; Roland showed three new printers. So reading between the lines, Kodak-Encad had no new printer to show (the Kodak 5260 evidently failed to the point that even Kodak removed it from trade magazine ads several months ago).

One potential reason for lack of improved models for Kodak-Encad would be if Lexmark thermal printheads have reached the end of their development. Canon owns their own patents on their bubble-jet technology. HP owns most of the rest of the thermal inkjet patents. Neither Kodak nor Encad has a single printhead technology of their own. Lexmark printheads were developed for pie charts and bar charts as opposed to Epson piezo printheads which aim directly for top quality photographic realism. Essentially the chassis of the most recent Encad printer is the same as that of the NovaJet Pro of 1996. Improved is the ink feed (less bubbles of air which plagued Encad printers of the 1990's).

It is uncertain whether a market exists for an Encad with Epson piezo printheads since Epson already owns that entry level market. Roland, Mimaki, and Mutoh occupy the mid-range and high-end portions of that piezo market. Thus it's hard to see Epson or Mimaki having incentive to OEMing their printers to Encad. That leaves Mutoh (the factory who manufactures both Epson and Mutoh).

The remaining option would be a new Encad to have the new Brother printheads. Downside is the current generation of those printheads did not adequately function in the Kodak 5260 printer.

We hope Encad can hold out with their current generation of printers until they can find a viable technology to differentiate themselves from their competition. Positive features of Encad printers are their simplicity, their excellent dye inks, and relative lack of banding. Weakness is their grainy dithering pattern and modest dpi. It is widely known that Encad is working on a new printer, but it failed to appear at SGIA. It was scheduled for that show the last days of October, but evidently did not adequately function. Encad can't afford another debacle such as the Kodak 5260.

Encad was the first company to provide an evaluation unit to FLAAR (1997). It was our reviews of our favorable experience with this early printer which led to the overall FLAAR network and FLAAR Reports series. Only when it was not possible to update this printer with another Encad did we bring in other brands. Ironic, since we would have been a totally Encad facility still today otherwise.

Instead, currently FLAAR has two 72" ColorSpans, three Epsons, five or so HPs, an Ixia model of the Iris giclee printer, and a brand new Mimaki JV4. We look forward to adding additional piezo printers later this year and next.

Lyson Inks

Lyson had a large booth. They included the SolventJet retro-fitted solvent ink printer based on an after-market adaptation of the earlier model of Roland. If you need the added speed or quality of the newer better print-heads, then you might like to compare the SolventJet with Roland's own SolJet Pro II.

Early SoventJet printers are alleged to have problems of their solvent ink dissolving internal parts and causing failure. The new versions are hopefully retrofitted with better hoses. No published statistics are available on how often it is necessary to replace the piezo printheads in the SolventJet.

Lyson also included their solvent ink adaptation of the Seiko printer, the Tiara Sapphire. Output looked attractive.

In earlier years Lyson specialized in after-market inks for Iris and Epson printers. But newer Epson printers no longer take after-market inks. And Iris stopped manufacturing their 3047 printer in 1999. Thus Lyson has sort of gone deeper into the solvent ink market.

A new competitor, however, has appeared on the scene, the Mimaki JV3-160S solvent ink printer.

RIP Software

EFI was supposedly somewhere, but I never noticed them. Their heyday was 1996-1998.

DuPont had a mini-booth inside one of the area parks. DuPont displayed their proofing solution based on Adobe PostScript. They indicated this was not a direct clone of anyone else's product. Previously DuPont had a version of BEST.

ErgoSoft was at Seybold but since they were not listed I did not find them.

BEST Color RIP

BEST itself had the largest presence of any RIP. BEST personnel were in the booth of Canon, Epson, Hewlett-Packard and probably elsewhere as well. BEST also had their own separate corporate booth. For further information contact rd@bestcolor.com.

PerfectProof

PerfectProof had a booth to show their ProofMaster proofing software. For further information on their proofing solution contact 1 (888)-228 9070.

FLAAR has an entire report series on RIP software, available separately. An additional FLAAR Fast Facts on color management is included in that package. Thus if you need more detailed information on RIPs or color management, you can order that series.

Color Management Software and Tools

X-Rite was present in the booth of Monaco. X-Rite is one of the top two names in color measurement tools.

GretagMacbeth is the giant Swiss-American company which specializes in color management. The Macbeth ColorChecker is the defacto standard in photography, indeed in this era of digital photography is more useful than any Kodak color reference.

Nik showed their various digital imaging software. If you work with digital images you definitely need to learn about Nik products.

Monaco

Over the last year Monaco has risen to be up in the top ranks of color management software. It is ironic that neither Apple nor Adobe has viable products specifically in color management or ICC color profiles.

Just visited a professional giclée photography studio. They used Monaco successfully to profile their BetterLight digital camera.

FLAAR at Bowling Green State University uses Monaco. The lab manager at the FLAAR wide format printer facility at Francisco Marroquin University has been asking for years to get Monaco color management software and an X-Rite DTP-41. We hope to add these color management essentials this year.

Monitors for Graphics

Normally you had to go to Comdex to find out about computer monitors. But this year at Seybold an abundance of monitors were available to peruse.

Apple

Apple featured dual monitors on virtually all their booths. Very impressive.

Matrox

Matrox Parhelia is a multi-monitor ultra-sharp display concept. 2048x1536 is a respectable quality. This is appears to be designed for PC only.

FLAAR Reports

NEC-Mitsubishi

For the last two years I have been searching for a monitor as good or better than the Apple cinema display. The 22" Apple cinema display is close to flawless monitor. Their quality is better than anything I saw from Dell during 2001 or early 2002. Only downside of Apple cinema display is that after a few years parts of the monitor field disintegrates (we know, we have four of these monitors).

NEC/Mitsubishi offer a monitor which can rotate for landscape or portrait viewing. Something about a vertical 21" monitor that commands attention. You put this on your desk and visitors and colleagues in your office will definitely notice you (and your work on the monitor).

I do not know if this is a direct digital monitor or not, LXD2110.

Mitsubishi also offers a 22" CTR (20" diagonal) which includes SpectraView colorimeter for calibration: MultiSync FP2141 from NEC or Diamond Pro, DP 2070-BK from Mitsubishi. This monitor is dual-platform compatible (Mac and PC)

Sony

Sony cleverly recognizes the need to have a built-in color calibration system. Their Artisan Color Reference System offers the benefits of a Sony monitor with color management. It's easy to find these monitors because they are available from MicroWarehouse, Club Mac, Printnation, and MacMall.

Sony commissioned a white paper from Seybold, "*Anchoring the Black Point: A Look at Sony's Artisan Display*," Sept 2002, by Peter Dyson. Well worth reading.

Totoku

The premium Japanese brand Totoku deserves to be better known in America. Although I have not met Shinji Otsu, their General Manager of Multimedia Products, I have seen the stunning quality of their monitors.

My first introduction to Totoku monitors was from Madhu Reddy, at Print '01, precisely one year ago. Then at IPEX I subsequently noticed an IBM monitor whose 3600 x 2400 was twice the specs which translates to four times the resolution of Apple's pride and joy, their 23" HD cinema display.

Now, at Seybold, an equally impressive Totoku monitor, comparable to the specs of IBM, was featured at the Torque booth. Torque is a company which specializes in storage servers for graphic arts applications, telephone 800 846 3789.

Totoku monitors are available from US Electronics Inc. Contact is Madhu M. Reddy, phone at (952) 285-5720, or by e-mail monitors@usElectronicsInc.com. We have several Totoku monitors in our facility. I personally like them better than some of the ViewSonic monitors we used to have (too much flicker from the ViewSonic). We can document that Totoku monitors have less flicker than ViewSonic since we have both: we stopped buying ViewSonic monitors after we experienced Tokoku monitors.

Of course monitor performance also depends on your video card and the settings you select. So you can see flicker from any monitor if you don't have it properly set up.

Totoku, like all monitor companies, is gradually evolving to LCD displays, but you can still obtain CRT monitors if you wish.

9X Media

9X Media makes multi-monitor display systems. These systems physically hold three, six, or eight (or more) monitors in order to show large images. 9X Media also offer computers and video cards to support as many monitors as you need.

Digital Image Storage: Hard Drives

When you buy a digital camera or large format inkjet printer no one really alerts you to all the accessories which you will need: such as storage, digital asset management software, and all that. Comdex or CeBIT in Germany are the best tradeshows to learn about these accessories. At Seybold only one lone booth had storage devices.

Scanners

Scanners were, as so often at tradeshows, virtually non-existent. Canon and Minolta may have shown some entry-level equipment in their booths, but they were certainly not very noticeable.

Probably some scanners existed in the sprawling Apple area, but again, sort of lost.

Microtek had the only booth of actual flatbed scanners. Umax was absent and did not see any Creo scanners.

A nice Fuji scanner was shown in booth of a reseller. Nikon did not exhibit.

Contex

Contex was the largest scanner booth at the tradeshow. Contex is the largest wide format scanner manufacturer in the world. Contex scanners are sold by Ideal and elsewhere. It is also my understanding that some Oce wide format scanners are from Contex. HP bundles a Contex scanner with its DesignJet 800ps printer.

Contex introduced two new monochrome wide format scanners: Crystal Tx 40 and Chroma Tx 40.

Digital Cameras

With Photokina 2002 in a few weeks and PhotoPlus Expo the first week of November, there was little incentive for camera companies to exhibit at Seybold. However Minolta showed their new DiMage 7Hi. Looks nice, but one of their brochures is misleading, labeling it as an SLR. The term SLR does translate as single lens reflex but it means a removable lens; SLR does not mean a single lens. No Minolta digital camera is an SLR and it is misleading to label them as such.

Book Reviews

Several publishers exhibited at Seybold, including Peachpit Press and John Wiley & Sons.

It is absolutely essential that you do as much reading as possible. No matter how deep your experience, you can always learn something new and useful from a good book.

And even if you are a newbie, go ahead and try out these books. Bit by bit you will learn the jargon and understand the work flow of digital imaging.

Peachpit Press

Peachpit Press has long been the leader in readable books on digital imaging. Peachpit books on Adobe and Macromedia software are especially good.

FRASER, Bruce, BUNTING, Fred, and Chris MURPHY
 2003   Real World Color Management. Peachpit Press, Berkeley.

I don't understand the date 2003 unless it's a typo or unless the book does not yet exist. Color management is an absolute necessity. I can remember when I first looked for books on this subject 3 years ago. Other than technical volumes from GATF, virtually nothing available, especially not that was relevant to inkjet printers.

Books essential for web designers

CASTRO, Elizabeth
 2001   Perl and CGI for World Wide Web, 2nd edition, Visual QuickStart Guide.

GREEN, Garo and Abigail RUDNER
 2003   Dreamweaver MX: Hands-on-Training. Peachpit Press.

  Essential reference books so you can survive in the world of PDFs

DENNIS, Anita
2002   Real World PDF with Adobe Acrobat 5. Peachpit Press.

DEUBERT, John
 2002   Creating Adobe Acrobat Forms. Peachpit Press.

CHOW, Garrick
 2003   Acrobat 5 Hands-on Training. Peachpit Press.

BELLE, Pattie, et al.
 2002   Adobe Acrobat 5 Master Class. Peachpit Press.

Books on Adobe Illustrator

McCELLAND, Deke
 2002   Real World Adobe Illustrator 10. Peachpit Press.

Books on Adobe Photoshop

MIERAN, Michael
 2003   Photoshop Color Correction. Peachpit Press.

BLATNER, David and Bruce FRASER
 2004   Real World Adobe Photoshop 7. Peachpit Press.

John Wiley & Sons

John Wiley & Sons is the publisher of the "Bible" series. We would recommend the

Dreamweaver MX Bible
Photoshop 7 Bible

If their *Mac Upgrade and Repair Bible* includes Mac OS X this would be an essential reference for every Mac owner.

Among their other books, another classis by Dan Margulis, *Professional Photoshop, The Classic Guide to Color Correction.* We have found every edition a definite must-buy, though we have not yet received his version for Photoshop 7.

Wiley also publishes the popular "*for Dummies*" books. They are great for newbies; we highly recommend the Bible level once you have dived in and actually seriously used serious software. Bibles are for intermediate to advanced users.

Exhibits of Wide Format Inkjet Prints

The largest exhibit at Seybold were the panoramas of national parks by Stephen Johnson. Michael Collette showed his panorama camera there. Collette is the inventor of the panorama system used by Johnson.
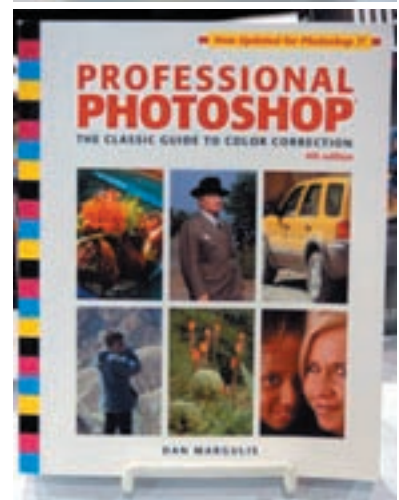
The exhibit titled Digital Art Contest was as described, digital art. Many photographs were included in some of the images, but digitally altered in the style of each artist.

Hewlett-Packard had prints in two exhibits outside their own booth: the above Digital Art Contest, and then a separate HP exhibit. This other exhibit included the now oft-shown photos by Greene of movie stars and the much publicized photos of the Beetles' first visit to America. Pictures have been on the front cover of every trade magazine in the digital imaging field. These have historical interest but it was the other images in this exhibit which were artistically outstanding. The photos of the Beetles had a distinct magenta color cast to them, as though they were intended to be reddish duotones. Actually a handsome duotone effect, but if indeed they were supposed to represent neutral grayscale, they were too magenta. But at least they were not greenish (a commonly discussed problem with black-and-white photographs on Epson piezo printheads).

In the HP exhibit area they showed beautiful digital art by Jesus Vilallonga on HP fine art paper aquarella. In another corner of the exhibit you could see HP prints of "Nature's Best International Photography Awards."

In another part of the HP exhibit area were multi-media work with cotton poplin, done on a desktop-sized HP inkjet, the DeskJet 1220C. I have never seen anything like this from a Canon, Lexmark, or Epson. The quilt was outstanding; the vertical row of 3-dimensional birds was very cute and clever. Regrettably this exhibit had a wall around it and only a limited opening area to entice visitors to enter. The rather plain photos by Milton Greene and the Beetles were not as eye-catching as the colorful and impressive art work elsewhere nearby. Besides, Milton Greene photos by Epson printers were shown in another booth.

The trio of artists, Dorothy Simpson Krause, Karin Schminke, and Bonny Lhotka had their exhibit and trusty Mutoh Falcon II printer. What was especially interesting was the spray-on inkjet ink receptor coating material, "inkAID."

They also commented on the improvement in quality of lenticular prints when using 2880 dpi of the Mutoh Falcon II.

Awards for Best in Show

The absolute best exhibit at Seybold is the Digital Art Contest and Gallery. Coordinator of this gallery every year is Daryl Wise, dsw@surfnetusa.com, tel 831 763-9313. Exhibit winner was Glowing Flowers by John Allison. You can see more of his capable art on www.john-allison.net. The entire exhibit was printed by an HP DesignJet 5000ps. Frankly I can't imagine any Iris, Roland, or Epson doing this exhibit any differently that a normal visitor would have noticed. The quality from the HP was outstanding. The same exhibit would have been also beautiful if done on an Epson or Roland (or Mimaki or Mutoh) but probably would have taken longer, may have used more ink at higher cost, and may have cost more with proprietary media that works on those piezo printers.

Best monitor at the show was from Totoku.

The Mutoh Falcon II is the only 8-color printer with the Epson 10000 printheads. The Roland and Mimaki version of these identical Epson piezo printheads have dual sets of six heads.

The advertising sheet for the Mutoh deserves honorable mention for most honest advertising. Whereas other companies claim's are misleading with respect to continuous tone and lack of inkjet graininess, Mutoh states that their product offers "near continuous-tone." This is indeed the appropriate designation.

For in-house corporate use, pay for print, repro shops, and all the commercial print shops, including sign shops, the clear preference is the HP 5500. All last month this (then not yet released printer) was already the most sought after printer by corporations.

For individuals, pro-sumers, for people with a second-business, home business, or retirement business, this is the market which Epson has been successful in cultivating. Their 7600 and 9600 clearly has pleased this captive audience. Just like people who are enthralled with Macintosh computers and buy whatever Steve Jobs says is Cool. There are thousands of Epson lovers who move up the rungs of Epson models. This season they are buying the 7600 and 9600.

For solvent ink printers the verdict is still out. The competition is Roland's SolJet II, the after-market Roland Solvent-Jet, the Tiara Sapphire, and Mutoh's two solvent printers (one with Spectra heads). The indication is that new Mimaki JV3 solvent ink printer may trump them all in the future.

Seybold as a viable tradeshow?

The East Coast version of Seybold more or less ceased to be a viable tradeshow and collapsed to be just a few conferences and a few booths. The move from Boston to New York did not help matters much either.

The San Francisco version used to be two vibrant halls filled with crowds. This year it had shrunk to a single hall with only a single page of exhibitors. Although there were attendees, the number had clearly shrunk. Many exhibitors blamed this on lack of focus of the show. Was it a pre-press show, a printing show, or PDF and Internet software?

Nonetheless, Roland and Hewlett-Packard both used Seybold San Francisco to launch their new wide format printers. Although the Epson printers appeared in ads earlier in the summer, Seybold was the first time they had really been shown to an inquisitive public. Kodak and Encad were conspicuous by their absence.

DPI and BigPictureShow collapsed due to the decline in the economy but more because too many other sources of information are now available via the Internet. Digital Output trade magazine reported that Seybold's parent company was suffering. Will be interesting to know if their East Coast show survives at all. I am guessing the San Francisco show will limp on at least another year or so. We hope they survive, but if it were not for the two new introductions, FLAAR itself would have not bothered to attend.

Contacts so you can obtain personalized information directly

For more facts on the nice new Epson 7600, 9600, and 10600 contact Dan Hunt, dhunt@parrotcolor.com.

BESTColor RIP can be reached at RIPinfo@bestcolor.com.

PerfectProof (ProofMaster) can be reached at telephone +1 (888)-228 9070

To learn about Mimaki products, contact sy@mimakiusa.com or sales@itnh.com.

Monaco color management software contact is: Bonnie Fladung, bfladung@monacosys.com.

Contact for the graphics monitors for US Electronics Inc. is Madhu M. Reddy, phone (952) 285-5720, or by e-mail monitors@usElectronicsInc.com

Acknowledgements

Peachpit Press, Wiley, and other publishers provide books for review, as is traditional. ColorSpan, Encad, Epson, HP, and Mimaki have provided printers for review. PerfectProof, Best, PosterJet and other RIP companies provide RIP software for review. Monaco has provided their software for review. US Electronics has provided Totoku monitors for review. Obviously we know more about the products which we use ourselves at Bowling Green State University and at Francisco Marroquin University.

We believe that all products have positive features. And naturally, even the best products, as well as the products we prefer and use ourselves, they may have a few glitches. There is no such thing as one single product which is absolutely perfect. You probably already learned that during your years of buying cars. However we only recommend products we use at the university and hence can demonstrate and document that these monitors, printers, software, or accessories hold up. It is especially impressive when equipment survives use by students and co-op employees. Of course they are a good reviewer: they come into the facility cold, have never used the item before. If they can get the hardware or software to produce, flawlessly, then it would seem this is a good product.

If you notice, the complete spectrum of competitors provide products in each class. Thus we have no incentive to praise one and denigrate the other. However if a product has slick ads, with potentially misleading claims, with hyped numbers, with silly exaggerations, we point these disreputable aspects out quickly.

www.wide-format-printers.org	www.fineartgicleeprinters.org	**CLICK HERE TO VIEW EACH FLAAR NETWORK SITE**
www.digital-photography.org	www.flatbed-scanner-review.org	
www.laser-printer-reviews.org	www.cameras-scanners-flaar.org	www.large-format-printers.org
www.FLAAR.org	www.ctpid.ufm.edu.gt	www.wide-format-printers.NET