



Preview of FLAAR Report Series by Nicholas Hellmuth

On

Eco-Solvent compared with True Solvent Ink Printers



ECO-SOLVENT BASIC FUNDAMENTALS

Introduction to Wide Format Printers using Lite-Solvent, Eco-Solvent or other Mild-Solvent inks.

If you are considering buying a lite-solvent printer, or even thinking about an eco-solvent printer, you absolutely need to get this report before you make your \$15,000 to \$35,000 decision. Many people who bought these printers were surprised when they found out the reality of what they had been sold.

Nicholas interviews people who know sign shops with lite-solvent printer problems. Their experience can help you learn the full truth about lite-solvent and eco-solvent ink printers.



Annotated List of Eco-Solvent, Mild-Solvent, Lite-Solvent Wide Format Printers

FLAAR Fast Facts, new August 2005, as an update to the Introduction.



Get Started: Solvent & Eco-Solvent Ink Printers From A to Z

In an easy-to-follow glossary format we describe the jargon related to these printers so you can understand what in the world the sales rep is talking about. Protect yourself by becoming a savvy buyer. For example, what is the difference between eco-solvent, mild-solvent, lite-solvent, and true-solvent inks. And how do these differ from UV-curable ink flatbeds?



Nicholas Hellmuth's Helpful Guide to Buying, Using & Maintaining an Eco-Solvent Printer

FAQs & Secrets, expanded and updated August 2005.



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ECO-SOLVENT FAST FACTS and SITE-VISIT CASE STUDIES

First Look: Roland SolJet II EX Eco-Solvent Ink Printers

We pose questions that are not addressed by the over-enthusiastic ad claims. For example, do you really need lamination? What normal cleaning materials will damage or destroy your sign? And what is the truth about whether these eco-solvent inks really work on as many non-coated materials as is claimed?

This report is intended to be read together with any of the site-visit case studies.

FLAAR Reports

Evaluation of Roland SolJet II EX Eco-Solvent Ink Printers



Roland SolJet Pro II SC-540:

Evaluation of an Eco-Solvent Ink Printer at a Quick Print Copy & Sign Shop

A site-visit case study of the pros and cons of a Roland SolJet in a commercial print shop.

New October 2004

FLAAR Reports

Evaluation of Roland SolJet Pro II SC 540

Site-Visit Case Study #3



Roland SolJet Eco-Solvent Printer

Site-Visit Case Study of Pros and Cons based on FLAAR inspection of a sign shop. They had gotten rid of their Arizona solvent printer and tried out the Roland SolJet. Nicholas Hellmuth finds out what it is really like to have a Roland printer.

FLAAR Reports

Roland SolJet Pro II

Site-Visit Case Study #2



Roland SolJet Eco-Solvent Printer in a Commercial Print Shop

It takes three site-visit case studies to really find out what a printer can, and everything that a printer cannot accomplish. FLAAR takes the advertising claims of Roland and compares them against what a print shop owner says it is like in real life.

You won't get anything like this in a trade magazine (their advertisers would pull their advertising). FLAAR does not accept either advertising nor do we publish the often misleading claims that the manufacturer's want you to hear (in other words; we do not use the PR releases of the printer manufacturers).

FLAAR Reports

Roland SolJet Eco-Solvent Printer

Site-Visit Case Study #1



Roland VersaCMM Eco-Solvent Printer-cutter

Can this print 30" or is it really a 29-inch printer? This is important, because Encad claims 36" (but is it really?) and Mutoh claims 37-inches (claims 38 inches in Europe!). If you are a sign shop this kind of information will keep you in business, rather than buying the wrong width and having your competitors walk away with what should have been your profits.

FLAAR Fast Facts



Splash of Color (Roland) SolventJet Printer

SolJet vs SolventJET; it gets rather confusing. But one of these printers can't really achieve red colors. The other printer does an excellent job with reds.. Now you know why FLAAR writes reviews. The goal of a university institute dedicated to wide format printing is to assist the general public with educational materials.

FLAAR Fast Facts



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ECO-SOLVENT PRINTER EVALUATIONS

Mutoh Outdoor "Junior" A 37-inch Eco-Solvent Printer

If you are about to buy a VersaCamm or a Junior, the FLAAR Reports are the only ones that compare and contrast both of them, and we cover the Encad VinylJet too.

Updated August 2005.



Mutoh Falcon II Outdoor Eco-Solvent Ink Printer

The same chassis is rebanded as the Agfa GrandSherpa Universal, Gerber Elan, and probably some of the Spandex Jetster models.

Updated August 2005.



**Mutoh Spitfire ?
What kind of Eco-Solvent / Mild Solvent Printer is this?**

All other eco-solvent printers are retrofitted from ordinary water-based printers (a polite way of saying their original structure and chassis was never made to handle any kind of solvent inks). The Mutoh Spitfire is the first printer engineered from the ground up to handle mild-solvent inks. So if you want to avoid the problems of jerry-rigged eco-solvent printers elsewhere, you might wish to learn from this trend-setting new Mutoh printer.

FLAAR Fast Facts.

New August 2005.



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EVALUATIONS OF MILD-SOLVENT PRINTERS & OTHER INK TYPES

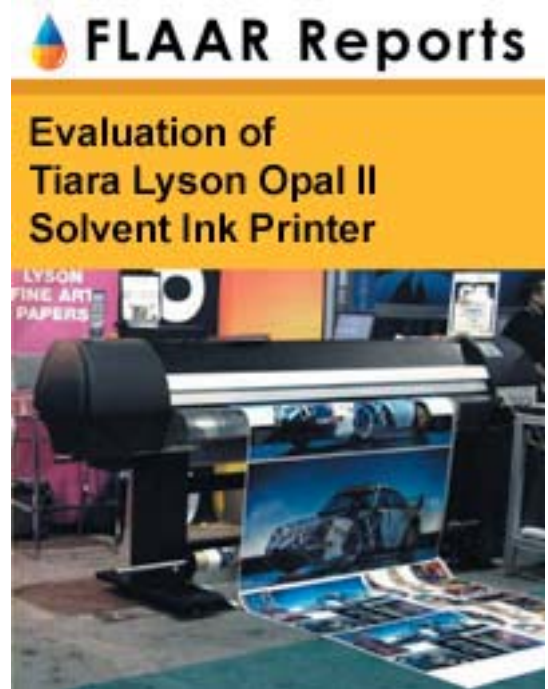
Mimaki JV3 Solvent Ink Printer: FLAAR Fast Facts

The Mimaki has outsold every other solvent ink printer available today, but it is not actually a true-solvent ink printer. Since the ads don't really say so, we do: one of the ink options is a mild-solvent formula, not a true solvent. What are the implications?



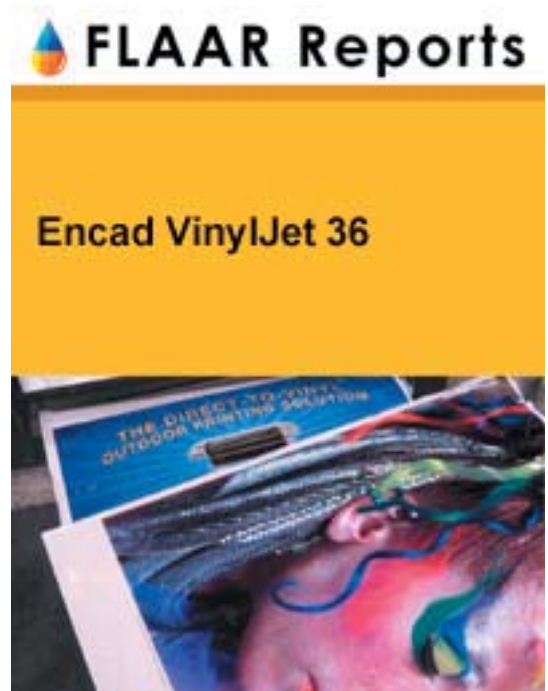
Tiara Opal II, Lyson Solvent Ink Printer

Retrofitted printers or direct from the original manufacturer? The range of choices is confusing. We work hard to provide comparative charts so that the end user can arm themselves with facts on which to base an intelligent buying decision.



Encad VinylJet 36

This printer does not use solvent ink but, in theory, can adhere to vinyl. But like all printers that do NOT use true solvent inks, some cleaning agents wash the ink completely off the vinyl. This might get your clients upset.



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Series & Discounts for Combo Sets

What does a set of inks cost for these eco-solvent printers? \$292 for CMYK ink set, more for a 6-color set (about \$438). Yet you can get FLAAR Reports for less than a set of ink.

The more series you buy at any one time, the more discount you earn.

The Learning Process: Based on our University-based Programs

In earlier years, many signs were made in family run enterprises using a vinyl cutter. Over the last several years many owners of this kind of traditional sign shop have written to us indicating that new digital print shops setting up in their neighborhoods are taking away their business. This is unfortunate, because sign shops can handle wide-format inkjet printing too. Thousands of sign shops have already added inkjet printers.

So we provide the independent information to assist sign shops to understand eco-solvent printers; how they differ from solvent printers, and which brand is good to consider (and which ones to skip).

The other major market for eco-solvent printers are print shops that want to be better able to handle outdoor signage. Neither Encad, HP, nor Epson are intended to print signs that will last outdoors in the sun and rain for very long (unless you laminate the prints). But surprise! Eco-solvent and even solvent ink prints often have to be laminated too. Now you can see why it helps to have reports from an independent source. We are a research institute, with offices at two different universities, dedicated to digital imaging.

Every FLAAR Report has a different amount of research behind it. The reports in this series take the FLAAR Standards on solvent ink printers (based on several years of learning about solvent ink printers), and update these standards to cover eco-solvent printers in detail.

We then took these questionnaires to the NBM sign and graphics trade show in Indianapolis and interviewed as many people as possible over a three-day period. In essence each report is a comparison of what the often over-enthusiastic ads promise and what you are likely to experience if you actually buy this particular brand.

Please realize the difference between Fast Facts, "First Look" reviews and site-visit case studies. These reports are based on interviews across the USA, in Greece (yes, we did a site-visit while a guest of Kodak at the Athens Summer Olympics), and in Guatemala (there are a hundred ink jet printers within a 10 mile radius of our offices at a university there). Our goal is to provide you a fresh insight into how to become a savvy buyer. Our system has the following levels of reports:

- Fast facts (introduction to pertinent aspects of a printer)
- First Look (adds additional information)
- Second Look (after we have seen the printer multiple instances)
- Site-Visit Case Study

In addition to the First Look reports, we did three intensive site-visit case studies of the Roland SolJet. Armed with these reports you will better understand how to select between

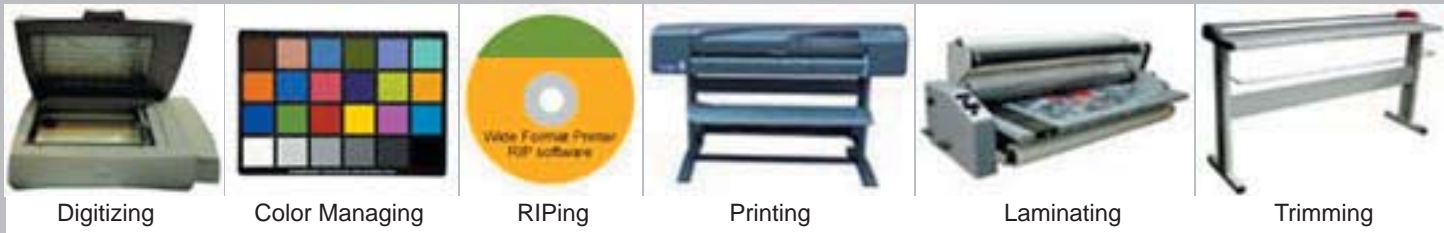
- Roland VersaCMM, Mutoh Junior and Encad VinylJet
- Between the Roland SolJet, Splash of Color Roland SolventJET, and Tiara Opal II
- You will know better how to compare the various versions of Roland eco-solvent with those offered by Mutoh.
- And you will have a better insight in how to weigh the pros and cons of eco-solvent and full-strength true solvent such as Oce Arizona, ColorSpan 72s, and Mutoh Toucan (see our Solvent Ink Series for those reports).

You will also learn, perhaps for the first time, the subtle differences between Mimaki JV3 (which is not a full-strength solvent) and the Seiko ColorPainter 64, which is also not a full-solvent (but has honest advertising relative to this aspect). Another challenge to fully understand are the "organic" inks: the Gerber Elan uses one flavor; Lyson Tiara Opal printers use the original flavor solvent ink. But how does one ink compare with another?

We are not aware of any outside, neutral, or otherwise independent review of eco-solvent and solvent ink printers. FLAAR is the only institute that makes the effort to learn, on its own, and then to share this information with others.

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