

EFI VUTEk 5r+ Printer's High Performance Drives Additional Opportunities for UK Trade Printer

Digital Sign Services in Guildford was the first UK customer to purchase the 5-metre wide EFI™ VUTEk® 5r+ roll-to-roll LED inkjet printer, installed in September 2018. Managing Director Tom Weaver has been impressed to say the least with the printer's cost of ownership and high performance, as well as EFI's total service offering.

"Thanks to the success of the first VUTEk 5r+ and EFI's after-sales service, help and support with bedding in the new machine, we will be purchasing our second VUTEk 5r+," says Weaver.

"The VUTEk 5r+ is used for all types of very large-format printing", adds Weaver. "We do quite a lot of floor coverings on linoleum. For short exhibitions and floorings, we do a lot of fabrics and canvases as well large, single-piece wall coverings, banners and mesh building covers. We print on the full range of principle UV materials. For example, we recently used the VUTEk 5r+ to print three 53 x 18-metre single-piece banners in sections that we then welded together and finished."

VUTEk reliability year after year

Digital Sign Services already has a great deal of experience with the EFI VUTEk brand, having been a VUTEk user from the start. The company was formed in 2001, having evolved out of a marquee maker called Plastiweld that handled welding and finishing of plastics. Customers often requested these to be printed, so, the company changed its name and direction and moved into large-format trade printing. Its first wide-format inkjet printer was a VUTEk 3360 solvent ink machine. By 2005 the workload was high enough to justify a second VUTEk, a 5530, to run alongside the first.

The first move into UV-cured inks came with a 3.2-metre VUTEk QS3200 in 2007, followed by a pair of 5 metre VUTEk GS5000r printers in 2009 and 2010. A 3.2 metre VUTEk LX3 Pro hybrid printer in 2014 introduced the benefits of LED curing lamps to the company, while a dye sublimation VUTEk FabriVU® 340 in 2016



Challenge:

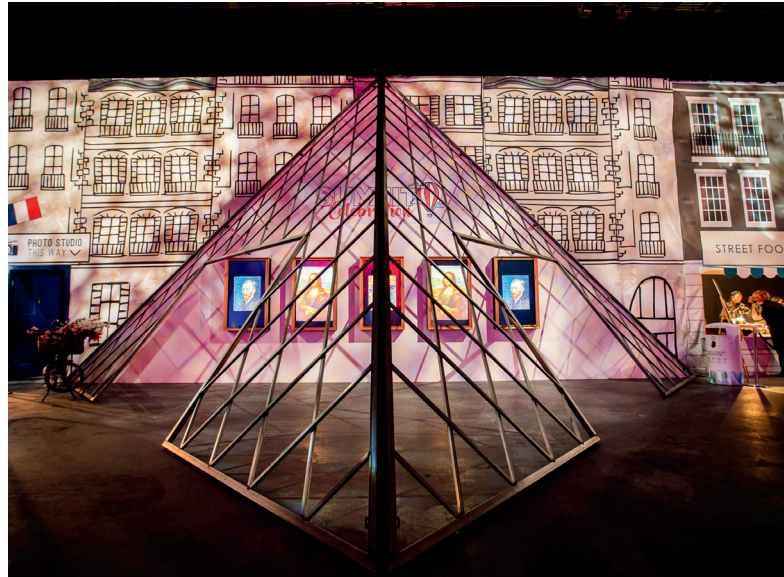
Replacing a fast UV production system with an LED printer that can accommodate even greater volumes.



At Digital Sign Services all production is handled within their 15,000ft² (1400m²) factory. Based in Guildford, UK, Digital Sign Services employs 35 people and works purely in trade services, selling to other sign services companies rather than directly to end user customers. It specialises in large format for retail signage, windows, point of sale, and the like. The company offers a highly personalised service where each team member's experience and technical knowledge contributes to top quality production.

Units 13/14 Quadrum Business Park
Guildford GU3 1LU

+44 (0)1483 402800
digitalsignservices.co.uk



Digital Sign Services' uses its 5-metre wide VUTEk 5r+ roll-to-roll LED printer for a variety of very large-format printing, including floor coverings on linoleum, fabrics and canvases for trade shows, and large single-piece wall coverings, banners and mesh building covers.

backed a move into soft signage.

"We have recently increased our shift to run from 7:30 am to 10:00 pm, primarily on the 5-metre wide machines," says Weaver. "That's quite a big jump in production ability that we're looking to fill.

"The decision to install the new VUTEk 5r+ came because the workhorse GS5000r printers were approaching the end of their lifetimes", says Weaver. "The big reason why we choose EFI again and again is their after-sales care and their response to any issues or problems we may have. EFI has been brilliant in reacting to the teething issues that you get with any new machine. On top of that, we think the VUTEk 5r+ is a better machine, in that it uses LED lamps for curing rather than mercury vapor lamps."

The VUTEk 5r+ is the most technically advanced five-metre roll-to-roll printer on the market. In addition to its powerful LED-UV curing lamp array, it features a redesigned platform chassis with greater robustness and sustainability. Media handling is improved and there are new white ink printing modes. The print head control algorithm has been re-engineered for higher ink densities and an overall quality improvement. Printing resolution is up to 1200 dpi and the native EFI

Solution:

"The auto blockout feature is really valuable. ... We've used this extensively since it's been installed."

TOM WEAVER,
MANAGING DIRECTOR



UltraDrop™ Technology 7-picolitre printheads generate variable drop sizes for even higher visual quality.

“The LED curing was another major factor in Digital Design Services’ decision to order the VUTEk 5r+”, says Weaver. “The GS5000r has mercury vapor lamps and these are an expendable or degrading item. For certain materials that we run, the UV lamps have to run at high intensity. This was killing our mercury lamps very quickly, which is both bad for the environment and also expensive. So by switching to the VUTEk 5r+, we have the reliability of the LEDs in a less power-hungry machine that also doesn’t have mercury lamps damaging the environment or anything else.”

Unparalleled quality in day-night backlits

Performance also improved for some job types. “For certain applications the VUTEk 5r +will be a lot quicker,” says Weaver. “The auto blockout feature is really valuable here. We do a lot of print for retail outlets on the retail parks where, for example, there is a dark blue background with a logo within that. At night they just want the logo to illuminate. So, on the VUTEk 5r+, we print the image on the front and it adds registration marks to left and right of the image. We then turn the material and send it through for the other side.

“The machine picks up the registration marks, then prints black overall on the area where we don’t want the light to penetrate through, and 80 percent colour on for the logo. When it’s installed, it shows the perfect colour during the day, then at night, with the lights on, just the logo is visible with a colour density that looks the same as by day. The print finishers report that is almost millimetre perfect. We’ve used this extensively since it’s been installed.”

The VUTEk 5r+ can also handle five-layer printing, which is often used for retail windows that have to show an image that has the correct density when viewed from inside or outside the store. “We don’t have a market for that yet, but people I have told have been

Result:

“The big reason why we choose EFI again and again is their after-sales care.”

**TOM WEAVER,
MANAGING DIRECTOR**

interested, so we may get some work because of it," says Weaver.

"The first VUTEk 5r+ as installed today has four colours (CMYK) plus white, but the second machine will be ordered with seven colours", Weaver says. These are CMYK plus light cyan, magenta and black, as well as white. "The plan will be to have the second machine loaded with seven colours for ultra-high quality, so we can switch between four and seven depending on the application and end user."

UPDATE: the second machine was installed March 2019.

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