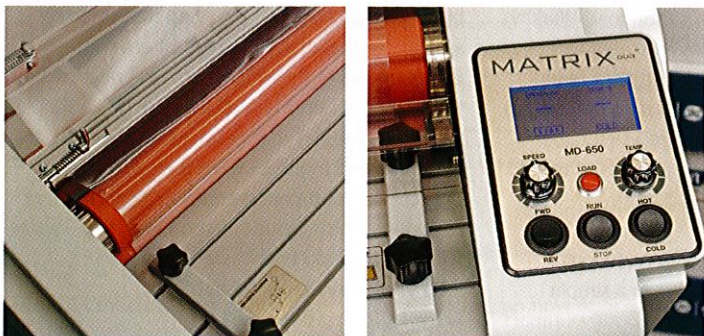


While the T3000 may not be able to match the fine extended colour range drop for drop, it's vibrant inks, matched with suitable media, will flatter a large percentage of regular customer's offerings, and certainly produce acceptable results for the price. You would have to be pretty picky to fault it.

Pound for pound on both purchase price and economical running costs, it's a very adaptable and potentially very profitable piece of kit.



ENCAPSULATING SPEED, EFFICIENCY AND PROFIT

LET'S be fair, a laminator is not one of those pieces of kit you are going to get too excited about in the scale of things. It's a functional device, an essential piece of finishing, but not exactly a high profile part of the print room.

It's for that reason it might be worth a second look to see if you are making the most profitable use of the service, especially if you have an older, tired and much neglected machine currently doing the job.

Although cheap desktop A4 laminators are generally available to the consumer, A3 and larger are still in the domain of the professional, with the options being either sheet or roll fed, and between single sided lamination and double sided encapsulation.

If you only output digital print up to short edge A3 then it may be that a small footprint sheet feeder is the answer for most tasks, but up-sizing opens

so many more opportunities, not only for finishing customers originals but creating composites from combinations of smaller items.

Lamination obviously improves the longevity and appearance of print, and in doing so increases the range of options available to the digital printer from mere paper to a flexible, scratch-proof water resistant product of adaptable size.

But as with all machines in the shop, it has to be fast, convenient and easy to use. Enter the Vivid's Matrix MD-650, a roll fed machine designed with a digital print shop in mind. With its own stand, it takes up a limited amount of space and despite being solidly built, can be easily manoeuvred around if not in immediate use.

A slightly smaller MD 450 is available that takes up to short edge A2, but for the extra cost the full width A2, short edge A1, is more adaptable and will be more economic on consumables.

The Matrix Duo is able to do both single sided lamination and double sided encapsulation. Its twin heated rollers operate on thermal film fed from above and below with the option of fitting both gloss and matt finishes at the same time when double siding. This way you don't need to change rolls for one job, just place the print in the machine facing whichever surface is preferred.

The independently heated rollers give an even distribution of temperature and pressure and are separated from each other when not in use.

The control panel is simple and easy to follow, ideal for a machine that may be used by several operators with basic instruction. A set temperature is chosen, the rollers engaged and operating temperature quickly reached.

A speed control monitors the flow of film both forward and reverse, and there is an anti-jam mechanism. The laminator will seal film at an average speed of a metre a minute. It will run faster but you have to be very careful feeding the initial leading edge of a long print to avoid skew.

A unique anti-curl bar allows quite thin laminates to be used, maximising value on a roll. Vivid's Boss range of film goes as thin as 27 mic, but even on an average of twice that thickness, that's a lot of A1s and twice as many A2s on a 100metre or more roll.

Even allowing for a certain amount of extra run through wasted as the lamination feeds through the machine, a roll system scores heavily over sheet fed pouches which start at a minimum 150 mic and get expensive per unit as they go up to A1 size.

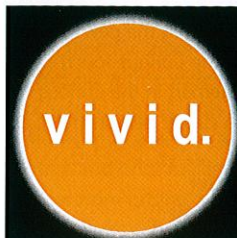
The wastage issue is an important consideration with either device as if a print gets trashed it's a cost of time and material. The larger pouches can also be difficult to store, needing to be kept flat and dust free, and easily damaged from an open pack. On a roll the film is effectively self sealed, and a little run on to clear any marks or creases is a worthwhile loss for overall efficiency.

If you are doing large format inkjet printing then large format laminating in house is essential. Nobody wants to put up with the time delay of outsourcing these days. To stay ahead of the competition it has to be supplied on demand and the Matrix and consumables are a perfect complement to inkjet prints with even heavy colour coverage producing a seamless bubble free finish from prints straight from the printer.

The 650 is an ideal size, with the majority of prints being up to 24-inch short edge. Beyond that size is a step up in cost and kit needed for handling, as well as the space required.

Checking the printer forums, an interesting comment from an independent Matrix purchaser was that since acquiring the machine it has been used ten times more than expected, because of its ease of use and flexibility. And that's certainly what we found having lived and worked with the machine for a month or more. It's one of those essentials that becomes an asset, and at an affordable price.

Full details from vivid-online.com



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