

# Drupa delivers for packaging print

Mega printing trade expo drupa, held in Düsseldorf, Germany, reaffirmed its status as the premier global event for the printing industry, and showcased an impressive array of innovations pertinent to the packaging sector. PKN's **Lindy Hughson**, and **Dominique Huret** of Cape Decisions, took to the floor to file this report.



IMAGE: MESSE DÜSSELDORF/CTILMAN

**A TRIP TO A** trade fair in Germany sounds exciting, and it is, but it takes some shoe leather to keep up with all that is going on in 18 expo halls, some auto filters in the brain to divert PR hyperbole from the real stories, and copious cups of coffee in the press centre to keep going. Fortunately, at a heavily subsidised 50c each in journo central (aka the press office), copious cups of coffee were affordable. Here's what we found on our caffeine-fuelled rounds.

## HP PULLS OUT ALL THE STOPS

For digital press developer HP, drupa is a significant venue for showcasing innovative technology and, of course, selling it. The Israeli company displayed advanced production and printing solutions, designed to automate commercial print and packaging production lines. On the drupa show floor, HP occupied a full hall, with eight automated production lines, capable of handling 80 jobs

and 25 different applications, all powered by HP innovation and supported by the company's "partner ecosystem".

With 7500 digital presses installed across the globe at 4000 customers, HP has a strong track record. Its intelligent system for industrial print, called HP PrintOS Suite platform, is a modular system. HP says it easily implemented, catering for businesses of various sizes. Intelligent automation harnesses the power of data analytics to provide insights, which enables the system to automatically make data-driven decisions.

In terms of digital presses, the giant HP Indigo V12 presented first at Labelexpo last year is now commercially ready. This narrow-web V12 label press integrates HP's new LEPx technology. But the most notable difference from the current generation of HP Indigo presses lies in the use of a long 'blanket-belt' (replacing a central cylinder), which is used to transfer the image

onto the substrate. This technology will also be applied in future generations of HP Indigo presses for flexible packaging, and later for commercial printing. The press prints at 120 linear metres per minute.

HP Indigo 200K Gen 5, for printing flexible films, was also a showstopper, with ePac Flexible Packaging announcing a multiyear strategic agreement with HP, as it continues its expansion in the digital packaging print market. The HP Indigo 200K digital press delivers a 30 per cent increase in speed, and a 45 per cent boost in productivity, compared to its predecessor, the HP Indigo 25K. It features what HP says is gravure-matching colour quality, based on the HP Indigo Liquid Electro Photography (LEP) and One-Shot Color technologies. It is designed to print high coverage packages with white on most industrial substrates, both surface and reverse.

Now fully mature, another interesting product is HP Digital Pouch Factory,

**Above:** Some 170,000 visitors pounded the show floor of the 18-hall expo at Messe Düsseldorf.



IMAGE: MESSE DUSSELDORF/CTILLMAN



IMAGE: MESSE DUSSELDORF/CTILLMAN

HP claiming to “go from the file to the pouch in hours, not weeks” and to be “the only field proven solution”. Indeed, robust partners stand by the HP Indigo 200K: Karlville Swiss, Karlville and Nobelius. The latter takes care of the combi thermal lamination, solventless and without any curing time. Karville provides the slitter, JetFX supplies the solo module for the digital embellishment, based on an UV inkjet application in one pass. Digital foiling overlaid with 3D effect, or spot coating are also possible. Polyfilm and finally Karville pouch machine finalises the pouch. This comes in an inline setup.

### FUJIFILM: DISCOVERING A DIFFERENT WAY

On one of the biggest and busiest stands at drupa, imaging giant Fujifilm – which was marking 90 years in business – impressed visitors with a host of new print solutions in commercial, wide format and packaging hardware, software and consumables.

The company has launched the world’s first B2 sheetfed toner press, its first digital flexibles press, as well as new flexo plate, new inkjet heads, and a new XMF workflow.

But it was Fujifilm’s award-winning Jet Press FP790 that stood out as the star of the show for the company. This water-based inkjet digital press is aimed at flexible packaging printing.

It targets short run with a print speed of 50m/min irrespective of the ink colours, a resolution of 1200x1200 dpi, and what Fujifilm says is high colour stability, which Fujifilm says rivals flexo, and not surprisingly generated wide interest. At drupa, several sales were secured, and the press achieved the ‘Best Press for Flexible Packaging’ and ‘Best Digital Press’ recognition at the European Digital Press (EDP) Awards, organised by the EDP Association, which recognises the best digital technologies in various categories of digital printing, converting and bag making.

### BOBST MAKES BIG STATEMENT

“Our company is embracing change as we are becoming a software company” – this was the leitmotif of Jean-Pascal Bobst, company MD, at the press conference opening of this leading equipment and service supplier for packaging and label manufacturers. Bobst Connect is the cornerstone of its software journey. To reinforce its data and cloud-based software capabilities, Bobst is continuing and fostering its collaboration with

**Above:** The huge HP stand, occupying an entire hall, was a non-stop buzz of activity.

**Left:** Impressive new flexible packaging printing tech from HP.

**Below:** At Fujifilm’s stand, visitors were invited to ‘discover a different way’.

Microsoft. In an increasingly AI-driven environment, this collaboration provides the cloud-based infrastructure, the expertise and data security needed for Bobst to provide high-end software solutions to its customers.

A new partnership with Packitoo, specialist in digital solutions in the packaging industry, was also announced. This aligns with Bobst’s strategy and strengthens its vision of a digital and connected future for the packaging industry. The French company Packitoo develops digital solutions for packaging; Packitoo’s Hipe is a web-based sales tool tailored for automating quotations, managing packaging projects and supporting web-to-pack e-shops for printers and converters. This tackles key challenges for converters in a market that seeks more customisation, smaller orders and quicker delivery times. It offers a personalised digital sales process, allowing converters to quote jobs to clients more rapidly and accurately, considering all cost factors, like machine types used. At the same time, they can connect to pre-press applications from leading software providers such as Esko.

As alternatives to non-recyclable metallised polyester films, oneBarrier is Bobst’s family of industrially viable recycle-ready mono-material ultra-high and high barrier duplex and triplex substrates for packaging designers. The ‘family’ of Bobst’ oneBarrier sustainable solutions to date includes PrimeCycle (comprising EVOH and topcoat-free transparent AlOx-based or opaque AluBond-based full PE mono-substrates) and FibreCycle, (a mono-material high-barrier paper-based structure coated with functional layers that can be recycled in the existing paper stream). Leading third party institutes have confirmed the recyclability of the two oneBarrier solutions.



IMAGE: MESSE DUSSELDORF/CTILLMAN

**PACKAGING IS WHERE IT'S AT**

Addressing members of the press at drupa, “we are everywhere” was the opening gambit of Koenig & Bauer CEO Dr Andreas Plesske, referencing the world’s oldest press manufacturer’s capability across all printing technologies and across all substrates. Dr Plesske said that packaging is the main growth market for print, citing Smithers figures that put the current CAGR for packaging at 3-4 per cent, and he made it clear that it is to packaging that the company will be directing its R&D and investment. As a result, the focus of the Koenig & Bauer’s 4000sqm drupa stand was on packaging and digital solutions, including its demonstration of an end-to-end packaging workflow with offset,

IMAGE: MESSE DUISSELDORF/CITILMAN



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**Packaging is the main growth market for print.**  
 DR ANDREAS PLESSKE, KOENIG & BAUER

digital and flexo printing and finishing. In line with the packaging digitalisation trend, Koenig & Bauer showcased how connected packaging builds a bridge between analogue packaging and the digital world. PKN visited the stand and spoke to market engagement manager Florian Stark, who demonstrated the company’s development of a platform based on Google cloud technology, where brand owners can store

digital information to individualise, personalise and enrich their printed packaging, alongside detailed product and manufacturing specifications.

Still in the digital solutions realm, this time across production automation, Koenig & Bauer showed a virtual product configuration based on innovative automation technologies and a digital twin of its own production facilities, developed in partnership with Siemens. The objective is to accelerate development and commissioning processes and to raise customer support and after-sales service to a new level, the company says.

The new technology allows the collection and evaluation of detailed machine data and information on the condition of machine components. Using the feeder for a Rapida 106 medium-format sheetfed offset press as an example, Koenig & Bauer gave drupa

**Above:** Bobst is embracing change, focusing on software, and building its packaging portfolio.

visitors a glimpse of the future with its standardised and modular automation platform, and demonstrated real-life predictive maintenance cases and performance dashboards for individual machine components. The platform is currently still in the development phase, but shows how Koenig & Bauer intends to respond to global megatrends and lead the group into a new era.

Making its debut at drupa was the VariJET 106 press, which Koenig & Bauer developed jointly with Durst. This digital press for folding carton printing unites the strengths of digital inkjet with the benefits of a classic offset process. The press combines high print quality with the flexibility of the entire configuration, in particular, the possibility of adding several coating and conventional printing units. The print samples produced on the press illustrated industry-firsts, such as printing

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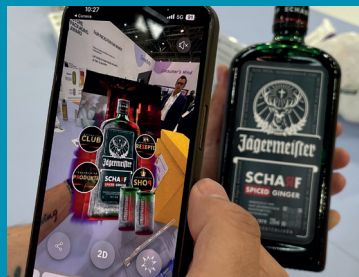
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## Touchpoint Packaging

At drupa, the Touchpoint Packaging booth's theme was 'think digital, be sustainable'. Connected packaging was front and centre, as demonstrated by Linked2Brands and snoop it! Both were showing smartphone activated 2D-code based platforms, not new concepts as such but the extent of platform applications is much expanded, and uptake is on the increase with the new EU regulations around on-pack transparency coming into play, providing a way to communicate recycling information and CO2 emissions associated with the product. The scope of brand-consumer engagement is also at a new level, with virtual experiences integrating and enhanced by AI and AR.



Also spotted at the booth was a new take on the advent calendar novelty pack – it's called ikopak and is the brainchild of architect Richard Sprenger, who teamed up with pacproject and MM Board & Paper to create a scalable prototype of this spherical fibre packaging solution. The moulded pulp cavities are all connected in one flat-pack construction and can be filled with confectionery, toys, other novelty items, then sealed with paper-lidding and folded easily into the spherical shape.



**Right and Below:** Koenig & Bauer made a strong show of its packaging print prowess.



IMAGE: MESSE DUSSELDORF/CTILLMAN



IMAGE: MESSE DUSSELDORF/CTILLMAN

on mostly brown substrates with water-based digital white for primary food packaging. The partnership claims to be the first in the world to offer digital white inks for primary packaging.

Also launched was the MetJET ONE, the first digital metal decorating press developed by Koenig & Bauer MetalPrint offering an "attractive price-performance ratio and outstanding print quality". The modularity of the MetJET ONE enables flexible adaptation of the entire production line to the individual needs of customers.

### KURZ RETHINKS WHAT'S POSSIBLE

When it comes to embellishments on packaging, Kurz really does deliver the goods. One of the themes on the Kurz booth was Creativity and Technology, Falling in Love – and let us just say it was pretty hard not to. The new Silver Line range caught our eye with the elegant achromatic designs that are possible, tripping the light fantastic on various shades of grey to create three-dimensional effects in silver-metallic shades with impressive visual depth, including impressive holographic prints. Silver Line film can be used in various embellishment processes.

Also a provider of system-matched solutions with strong engineering experience, Kurz exhibited its DM-Maxliner3D. The independent unit combines high-calibre metallisation, UV spot varnishing and UV relief varnishing in a single, highly efficient work step. Its production speed reaches up to 5100 sheets per hour. This innovative

digital embellishment equipment can implement a broad portfolio of effects and finishes, and could be a ground-breaker in digital embellishment.

Kurz company Scribos, meanwhile, partnered with Xeikon to collaborate on the technology that enables digital label printers to provide interactive features for brand protection, track and trace, and consumer engagement. With the capabilities of Xeikon's Titon dry toner printing, Digital Metal embellishment from Kurz, and Scribos' product security expertise, the single-pass label application offers a solution for safeguarding brand value, combating counterfeiting and grey market trading, as well as increasing consumer loyalty.

### PRINT ROOM OF THE FUTURE

Claiming to have brought to drupa "the most advanced end-to-end smart factory digital production lines ever shown in public", Konica Minolta and MGI Digital Printing Systems (MGI) had 30 live running machines on their joint 2300 square-metre booth, the seventh largest at drupa. The goal was to demonstrate how separate processes such as foiling, varnishing, printing, folding, and drying can be combined into one full integrated production run.

In the print room of the future, digital printing is front and centre, as Olaf Lorenz, GM International Marketing, Konica Minolta Business Solutions Europe, told the media: "[Our] mission is to promote the shift from analogue to digital printing, creating a world in which high-value-added printed materials are printed efficiently and the environmental impact is minimised."

Konica Minolta showed its new AccurioLabel 400 Press, designed for CMYK + white on-demand label print production, with the latest in automated technology. It is targeted at label printers looking to diversify into shorter runs, or those using entry-level digital label presses looking to move up to the next level, and at commercial printers looking to move into mid-high volume label printing. Konica Minolta now

# HP Indigo V12 Digital Press

## The New Math of Label Printing



## Revolutionising label Production, Again.

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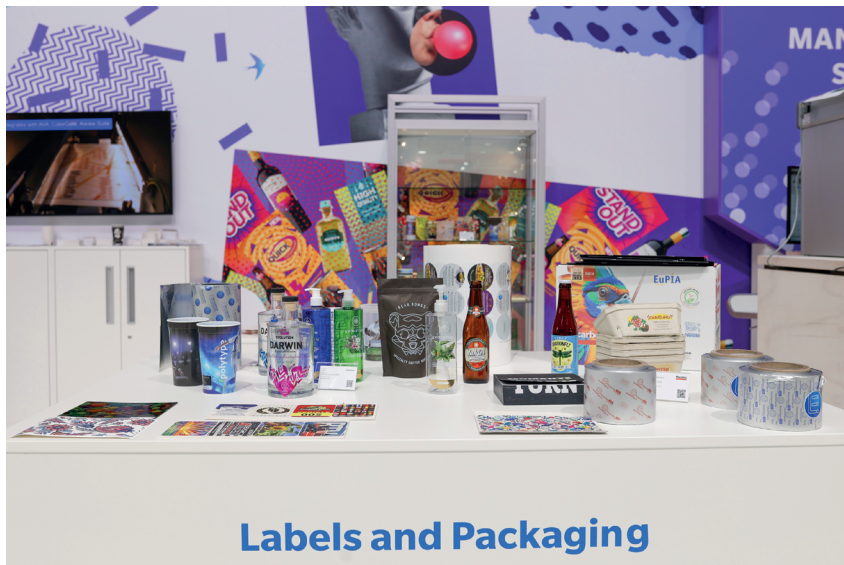


IMAGE: MESE DUSSELDORF / C TILLMAN

## Labels and Packaging

has 1500 label presses in the field, the majority its AccurioLabel 230, which will continue to be available.

The AccurioLabel 400 Press will print on virtually any stock, and its white ink opacity means one pass printing for white plus CMYK is the norm. It has a five-colour 3600dpi resolution of cyan, magenta, yellow, black and white, and has a high maximum print speed up to 39.9 metres per minute. It uses electric web guides rather than tension for guiding the web in a precise path. The press tells the operator when the web needs to be changed, with splicing taking place at one point just beyond the unwind, meaning there is no need to guide the whole new web through the press.

Also on the Konica Minolta stand were digital embellishing solutions, both its own – the newly launched AccurioShine 3600, which has a dozen effects, and which is targeted at commercial printers seeking added value solutions for the clients – and four different solutions from MGI, including the Octopus digital die-cutter for roll-to-roll label production, which runs at 20 metres a minute, with cutting, weeding, and slitting, and which can be specified with up to 15 finishing tools, for multiple applications including kiss-cut, micro-perf and creasing.

### HEIDELBERG WORKHORSE

The German press giant showcased the offset Speedmaster XL106, with the new Peak Performance generation nicknamed “the workhorse”. Specially designed for folding carton, this press has been totally upgraded to reduce the touchpoints. It allows full automation with a “push-to-stop” concept that

“ [Our] mission is to promote the shift from analogue to digital printing, creating a world in which high-value-added materials are printed efficiently and environmental impact is minimised.

OLAF LORENZ, KONICA MINOLTA EUROPE

takes automation to what Heidelberg says is a new level. The press can run up to 21,000 sheets per hour, a 15 per cent increase in comparison with previous generation. According to Heidelberg, 25 per cent less paper waste is produced.

Following the successful market launch of the flexo Heidelberg Boardmaster and the increasing demand for sustainably produced, budget-friendly and recyclable/compostable



IMAGE: MESE DUSSELDORF / C TILLMAN



IMAGE: MESE DUSSELDORF / C TILLMAN

**Above:** The Kurz stand was an eye-catching display of print finishing finesses.

**Above left:** Labels and packaging were central to Konica Minolta's drupa presentation.

**Below:** Heidelberg showcased a wide range of solutions for users in the packaging and commercial sector.

packaging, Heidelberg confirmed it is planning to extend the range of applications for this new inline flexographic web printing system to flexible paper packaging in the medium term. The Boardmaster flexographic web printing system can process water-based inks, coatings, and barrier layers at production speeds of up to 600 metres per minute with an availability of up to 90 per cent. According to Heidelberg, this is ideal for the paper packaging market.

Heidelberg offers a comprehensive range of solutions for users in the packaging and commercial sector along the entire value chain, from platesetters to customised printing presses and finishing systems. However, with the integrated Prinect software, its philosophy of a complete solution provider has become reality, as around 60 per cent of Heidelberg customers worldwide now use the software. At drupa, a new functionality was proposed: Prinect Touch Free, a production manager option for full automation in digital and offset printing. The Prinect Touch Free automatically finds the fastest and most efficient route from the job to the finished product. This enables print shops to produce a large number of jobs with very short runs without a great deal of manpower. Its hybrid workflow uses AI to make the right production decisions quickly, automatically and integrated into the portfolio of offset and digital machines.

Remarkably, half of the 1450 stands at this year's drupa had packaging solutions on them, demonstrating clearly how important packaging has become to the print world, and where a major growth opportunity is to be found. ■