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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

Industrial Ink Jet Printheads - The Japanese are Coming!

Over the past few years you could be forgiven for thinking that as far as industrial ink jet printhead suppliers are concerned it has been a two-horse race between Spectra, based in New Hampshire, USA and Xaar, based in Cambridge, UK. But after a series of presentations given at the IMI European Ink Jet Conference in Lisbon last week, there is one clear message – the Japanese are coming.

Setting aside the Seiko Epson printheads, which are well established in many wide format graphics printers, now we can look forward to a much wider choice of Japanese-made industrial ink jet printheads from Hitachi Printing Solutions, Konica-Minolta, Toshiba-Tec and SII Printek. Although some OEMs have already incorporated these printheads into products in the last few years, it was clear from the announcements of new products, made last week, that these vendors are now poised to take their place as mainstream suppliers to the market, alongside Spectra and Xaar.

In a frank and humorous speech, Mr Ohno, General Manager of Business Development at Konica-Minolta said, "We are not a rumour or a spectre. The Konica printhead is a reality – it is here"; and went on the outline their new and expanded range of printheads, both aqueous and non-aqueous, available in large and small drop configurations. Until now Konica was best known as the supplier of printheads to the Xerox X2 oil based wide format printers and as the manufacturer of the Nassenger textile printer. Mr Ohno's message made clear that Konica printheads will become much more widespread in the industry with the Azero CreonJet UV8250F, shown at SGIA, being only the beginning of a new wave of products.

Following a successful ITMA showing of the DuPont/Toshin Kogyo 2020 textile printer, and with over 20 machines already installed, Mr Tachibana, Business Development Manager of SII Printek talked about the advancements made to their printhead and its proven reliability in the field. It was clear that SII intend to build on this success.

In total, four Xaar printhead licensees attended the IMI event - Toshiba-Tec, Brother, Konica-Minolta and SII Printek – and are now poised to become mainstream suppliers to the industry.

In addition, Mark Elsbernd, VP Ink Jet Technology Division gave details of the long awaited next generation Hitachi printhead shown last month at SGIA in the TurboJet from Scitex Vision and the Colorspan DisplayMaker 72S. Known as the Gen 3-E1, Hitachi's new head has 96 channels and a larger 128-channel version, the Gen3-E2, will be released next year, with Generation 4 printheads due to be prototyped in 2005.

This strong line up of Japanese vendors was a significant industry event - reinforcing the fact that Japanese industrial ink jet printheads will soon become a major force in the industry. The Japanese are coming? – They are already here.

ENDS

Photos

High-resolution photographs (300 dpi RGB JPEGs) to accompany this news release are available for download on the IMI web site www.imieurope.com



The Japanese are coming – from left to right Mr Ohno, Konica-Minolta: Mr Tachibana, SII Printek: Mr Sugahara, Brother : Mr Umeda, Brother :Mr Watanabe, Toshiba TEC : Dr S Nishi, Konica-Minolta



Mr Masao Tachibana,
Business Development Manager,
SII Printek



Mr Akiyoshi Ohno,
General Manager Business Development,
Konica-Minolta



Every reason to laugh – the Japanese were out in force at the IMI European Ink Jet conference in Lisbon.

**About IMI**

The Information Management Institute runs the largest and most comprehensive conference and seminar programme in the digital printing industry. Each year over 2,000 industry technical and management personnel from over 600 companies attend around 20 events covering all forms of digital printing.

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