



Special Report: VINYL IS VITAL

Making the Vegas Strip SIZZLE

story BILL SCHIFFNER

cover



SkyTag Dazzles Vegas Strip with Toni Braxton Casino Wrap

With a \$1 million diamond-studded microphone, Toni Braxton shines, sparkles, and sizzles as the Las Vegas Strip's next superstar singer. The buzz has been fabulous as she delivers in her new 'Revealed' show at the Flamingo Las Vegas, which kicked off in August. To promote her show, the casino wanted to do something really, really big to generate excitement, so they called on SkyTag.

SkyTag, a Beverly Hills, CA-based outdoor media company specializing in building spectaculars, helped the Flamingo Las Vegas get their message across using some stunning mega-graphics.

SkyTag designed and installed the gigantic building wrap of the R&B singer that adorns the front of the Flamingo Las Vegas, measuring 300x150 feet. The printing was done by National Print Group (Las Vegas office) on its VUTEk 3360 and Scitex GrandJet super-wide printers using Clear Focus SuperVu perforated, pressure-sensitive vinyl film.

"Having Toni on the side of the hotel was an attention getter. It's the size of a football field 300x150 feet. It's one of the largest single surface mural ever produced on Clear Focus material," says Allison Weather at SkyTag. "She the biggest women to hit the strip. It has really helped generate excitement for her show."

graphics vinyl," says Weathers.

"SuperVu is designed so that images can be applied to the film using standard printing methods, including screen printing, wide-format digital imaging, electrostatic transfer, thermal transfer, inkjet printing, and airbrushing," she adds

"Both the VUTEk and Scitex machines were ideal for the output part of the equation due to the fact they easily print to such a wide range of substrates," reports Doug Coop at National's Las Vegas location.

The sign was printed in sections and then installed. "It took over 210 hours to affix it to the building," says Weathers.

An how did Toni feel about having herself size of a football field on the front of this hotel? Apparently, she was overcome with emotions. "I was very excited. No one told me that they were doing this, so when I saw it, I just couldn't believe it. I was a little overwhelmed. I'm driving on I-15 and I suddenly see parts of my head and body being slowly revealed across the building. I was behind the wheel of my car and sort of did a double-take," says Braxton. ♦



Special Report:

VINYL

A new lease on life

BY DENISE M. GUSTAVSON

With the advances in solvent printing technology and the growing demand for longer-lasting, outdoor-durable graphics, vinyl has gotten a new lease on life for outdoor graphics projects—banners, fleet graphics, and others—providing shops with another “weapon” in their arsenal of products. Many of these graphics can be printed more efficiently on vinyl, offering better fade and tear resistance, and are a lot more cost-effective—both in material and labor.

“Solvent digital printing offers a promise of higher productivity and lower cost of output,” says Phil Hursh, president/CEO, Sihl North America. “The market responded, not only in signage channels, but at in-plants and general purpose print-for-pay providers. We’ve seen the predictable cause-and-effect response. More printers able to print on vinyl banner materials puts more vinyl banners into the eye of the viewing public, which causes more of the viewing public to think about a big vinyl banner when he or she wants to get their message across to a buying audience.”

“The demand for scrim reinforced vinyl banner material has been increasing yearly for a variety of reasons,” says Randy L. Busch, president, Value Vinyls Inc. “Banner vinyl has continued to become increasingly accepted as a long-term advertising medium. It has proven to be an effective and visible means to get indoor and outdoor promotions noticed.”

“Historically, vinyl has been limited to outdoor signs viewed from a distance,” says LexJet’s vice president, Dean Lambert. “Again, this was based on the limitations of solvent printer resolution.

Now that the resolution has increased, there are no limits to what can be done.”

According to Mark Bosworth, vice president of sales, IJ Technologies, vinyl has made a “rapid transition from the aqueous-coated media to solvent systems. Value-added vinyl—like adhesive-backed products—appears to be growing. We are also finding more “sturdier” replacement products for vinyl in the aqueous inkjet market.”

Under Pressure

“Despite the pressures of competing technologies—direct to substrate printing, electronic display—vinyl, or PVC, usage in the graphics market continues to grow in North America at approximately four percent a year,” says Lance Hutt, global product manager—Digital, Avery Dennison Graphics.

PVC usage, according to Hutt, had begun to shift—from cast to calendered and from premium calendered to less expensive—for a number of reasons. “First, printer providers have become more knowledgeable, particularly as profit margin pressures have increased due to industry capacity exceeding demand. As a result, they are specifying the right PVC for the application,” he says. “Second, calendered film quality is improving.”

But even though vinyl usage is on the incline and colored vinyl demand



This poster advertising the film *The Da Vinci Code* was displayed at the Cinemamedia theater located in Tokyo's new Odaiba shopping, hotel and entertainment complex. Printing and installation was provided by Tokyo Bijyutu Senden Sha, Tokyo, Japan. It was printed with the Mimaki JV-3 on CLEAR FOCUS ImageVue perforated, pressure-sensitive vinyl film.

remains high, Hutt sees the market trending toward a higher usage of white vinyl—as more and more print providers and converters expand into the digital market. “While digital will not obsolete these competing technologies as they do offer advantages, digital will continue to take share, particularly as its speed and economies continue to improve,” says Hutt.

New Applications

Due to the enabling ability of digital technology—and its ability for affordable, short runs coupled with outdoor durability, professional printing of PVC is entering new spaces, according to Hutt, encompassing applications from outdoor vehicle graphics to personalized laptops. This, in turn, fits well with the trend towards “shorter-run and customized advertising campaigns, as product life cycles shorten and marketing messages become more targeted,” he says. “It meets the needs of smaller

companies that could not create professionally-printed one-off POP materials at an affordable price prior to digital."

One segment that has seen the almost exponential growth is the vehicle wrap market. Says Judy Bellah, public relations manager, CLEAR FOCUS Imaging Inc., "Many small print shops are adding vehicle wraps to the list of services they provide. One of the advantages of vehicle graphics is that they don't require high-end, super-wide-format printers to produce. The Arizona 180 was instrumental in opening up the vehicle graphics market, and there's been a steady stream of printers introduced that are affordable and work well for these types of graphics. As a result, vehicle wraps have become the bread-and-butter business for many small print shops."

Asia's Influence

In addition to manufacturers in North America and Europe providing more and more vinyl products—thanks to an increased demand—there has also been an increase and ongoing influx of products from Asian manufacturers as these companies move into the market.

Demand for these products, though, may have encouraged some of the influx from China due to stressed supply chains, according to Hursh. This has enabled "a lot of product of uncertain quality, backed by an uncertain supply-chain, to come to the North American market."

These vinyl products, says Bellah, need to be scrutinized carefully and may end up costing the shop more than just the price of the media. "The failure of a substrate can mean having to re-do an entire job."

Future Growth

Even though growth has continued at a steady pace, there are still untapped and unforeseen areas

where vinyl has not been used to date.

According to Busch, mesh materials are no longer just for building wraps. "Mesh is now being used more commonly for over-the-street banners, speaker covers at outdoor concerts, and temporary advertisements during building construction," he says.

Hursh concurs, saying that vinyl mesh, that may have been considered only good for grand-format building facades, "will prove to have many more uses in point-of-sale and trade-show/exhibit venues."

Additionally, an increase of short-term graphics will continue to grow vinyl demand, as end-users take advantage of the lower cost and the ease of ordering digitally printed signage and banners.

"Together with the use of pressure sensitive and adhesive backed vinyl films for vehicles," says Busch, "the options for indoor and outdoor advertising continue to grow at an impressive pace."