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### News / Design & Photography

## Epson and IPS create a winning combination at Academy

In a world first, **Independent Photographic Supplies** (IPS) has installed multiple **Epson SureLab SL-D3000** dry-film minilabs at the Academy School Photography and Production (Academy) in Adelaide.

Since establishing IPS in 2003, Stuart Holmes and Rob Voysey have provided a specialist range of photographic services and equipment to photolab operators across Australia with the aim of offering the best brands with the best tech support and value added services.

"We always had the highest respect for Epson and understood they were the market leader in wide format inkjet printing. For the last eight years, IPS has been representing another manufacturer's inkjet photo lab that has utilised Epson print head technology. However, we found that traditional dry lab printers were more suited to retail specialty photo and did not meet true professional photolab requirements. That was until the Epson SL-D3000 arrived on the market with performance and quality that met these standards," Rob Voysey noted.

"With the history and knowledge that we have accumulated over time, it didn't take long for us to realise that the SL-D3000 is the lab that we had been looking for and more importantly it was the ideal solution for Academy in Adelaide.

Voysey continued, "The SL-D3000's six-colour ink system delivers the largest possible print gamut. This colour capability surpasses what was considered the best professional standard in photographic printing from the conventional silver halide 'wet' process.

"In one of our early tests we included running a set of test prints, then over a six week period we printed over 180 rolls of 10" paper – that's three cubic pallets or 90,000 8"x10" prints! On reprinting the test prints the lab staff could not find any difference from the prints printed on day one. In that whole period the printer had not been recalibrated or missed a beat of any kind, not even a paper jam.

"Our final test was having several printers side by side. By making fine adjustments we were able to have identical prints coming off each printer which has always been a problem in large production labs. Traditionally, if a reprint has to be made from a long print run, it would only match if it was sent through on the same printer – this is now a thing of the past. When all was said and done our assessment of the SL-D3000 was that it produces professional, identical, beautiful prints that can consistently be printed from one day to the next with no major operator intervention."

In total Academy has thirteen Epson SureLab SL-D3000 dry-film minilabs giving them the print capacity of over 2,700 8"x10" prints per hour. As one of the leading photography services schools in Australia, Academy now has a state-of-the-art photo printing workflow that is one of the most efficient in the world. Only one operator is required to keep the printers 'fed' and print editors can test on one printer and print on another simultaneously meaning that urgent jobs do not need to wait in any queue.

Voysey continued, "The good news doesn't end there as IPS has developed our own workflow software, Image Flow Manager (IPF), that communicates with the Epson printer network. One of the typical problems in the photo lab world is getting the captured image to the printer. There are excellent software packages that take care of all the 'front end' and 'in lab' workflow, but the final link to the printer generally falls short.

"As a special project with the Academy's proposed installation, IPS's technical managers scoped and flow charted the lab's requirements as to how they wanted the work sent to the SL-D3000 printers. The IPS technical managers wrote and tested the software and by the time the school photo year kicked off it was fully functional. Now the lab can split a large order across any number of printers, direct orders based on utilisation and monitor a whole number of parameters on each printer from a central control hub. As a result we now have a complete solution for high production, high quality photo labs with Epson as the ultimate print engine and IPS' automated Image Flow Manager seamlessly delivering the prints as the organisation requires. This is a world first!"

He concluded, "The fact that the same image can be printed on all of the thirteen SL-D3000 printers then have the prints laid out on a viewing table and the lab staff can't pick any visual difference between them is testament to the fact that we have a breakthrough product – a real game changer.

"We are delighted with the total support from Epson Australia - the local staff from top to bottom are 'can do' people. As an independent photo specialty supplier, IPS has had to earn our position in the market the hard way. Epson treats us like a real partner. We are really pleased with the relationship. That relationship together with such a standout and unique product as the Epson SureLab SL-D3000 dry-film minilab is a real winning combination both in Australia and across the rest of the world."



An Epson SureLab SL-D3000 at Academy

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