




## Surelab a sure thing for Fotofast

June 9, 2016

When Fotofast Photo Design Centre's trusty 15-year-old Agfa D-lab (remember them?) finally started to falter, owner Phil Gresham opted for an Epson Surelab D3000 rather than the latest silver halide solution. We asked him how the decision has panned out so far...

You're known in the industry as an early adopter – why did it take you so long to move to dry lab technology?

Initially we weren't too excited by the dry lab quality, also we had two wet labs that were in perfect working order that had cost in the order of \$500k. So with plenty of spares and service help, why would we change? As well, dry consumables used to be more expensive than silver halide consumables. The crunch came when we started to have problems with our 2001 Agfa D3 that had served us so well. There were troubles somewhere in the printer that the experts here and overseas could not fix. Prior to that it still did the job well, and we are still using it to scan film all day every day.

The software on the Surelab D3000 is very easy to use and everything syncs with the IPS Order Manager – software developed locally by Independent Photo (IPS) – with kiosk and online orders. See more detail at <https://www.iphoto.net.au/software.aspx>



— (Pic: Will Gresham.)

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Running costs are touted as a big advantage with dry labs. Has that been your experience?

Electricity costs are way, way cheaper; no chemicals to heat, no dryer and no hot laser. Also, the heat output meant we had to work air-conditioning harder at times when we had 32+ degree days and it would struggle.

Sad to say with silver halide using Kodak Pro paper, price increases with paper and chemicals meant that the dry lab consumable pricing is now almost the same. Time spent on service is almost nothing, so a saving in labour costs too.

What output are you offering now that is different?

On the old wet labs we only had 14 sizes, now with dry we have 40+, and many of these are panorama. With the huge use of the Pano mode on iPhones and Android we are sure that offering a big range of pano sizes will get users enthused to print.

How about durability – inkjet prints are said to be more prone to scratches and water damage?

Kodak and Epson refuse to give us definitive archival information, but from what we understand it is far more archival than silver. It is durable given our 'finger nail' test, and also the paper is porous, so the ink doesn't sit on the surface. Epson US claim that the prints are water resistant, but it's something we haven't tested...

Care to hazard a guess on cost to make a 6x4 – how does it compare with AgX?

Cost is approx 11c for a 6x4-inch – silver halide is a bit more expensive. We probably sell as many prints in larger sizes, 6x4 is not where it's at these days and we are not working in the BigW/Harvey Norman/Snapfish market. Taking into account the running costs of the Surelab, the actual print cost is less.

Why did you go with inkjet over dye-sub?

Quality of inkjet is far superior than dye-sub, at least comparing with the Kodak Apex system which is probably the closest comparison as a production printer. (Ex-)Officeworks customers with Apex output make great customers, at least those who are concerned about quality rather than just price.

What do your customers say about the output?

They love it, the colour gamut of inkjet is far superior to silver halide; there is so much 'punch' in the prints. IPS says its Kodak Professional papers for inkjet drylabs, which range from gloss to lustre, to fine art matte to metallic, are all colourfast, microporous emulsions which are waterproof. And the Kodak brand inspires confidence because it is so familiar.

In summary we will keep the Agfa lab as a neg and slide scanner but will remove the paper processor, freeing up room for more equipment.

We would love a Noritsu HS1800 high speed scanner – but they are a bit expensive.



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— The dry lab has boosted Fotofast's panoramic print business.

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HarveyG on [June 10, 2016 at 5:00 am](#) said:

*Well done Phil. It must have been a very difficult decision as I know you were a loyal D-Lab user and letting go of silver halide is a big step.*

Reply ↓



Steve worley

on [June 10, 2016 at 5:09 pm](#) said:

*How much are they ?*

Reply ↓



PG

on [June 12, 2016 at 5:57 pm](#) said:

*Steve, you could buy almost five of them for the price of our 2001 d3!! No scanner however.*

Reply ↓

frank on [June 10, 2016 at 5:23 pm](#) said:

*What happened to your loyal friends at HP Phil ?  
I thought that was the best product  
Epson good decision*

Reply ↓

 on [June 12, 2016 at 6:02 pm](#) said:

*Frank we are using two of our 12 HP kiosks still for books, calendars, cards, collage posters Prints and gifts with our Dakis kiosks, they load files much faster than the 10yo HP's. HP RPS were a great replacement for the 16 Agfa iBoxes.*

*But as Bob Dylan sung, "the times they are a changin"*

Reply ↓

 PG on [June 13, 2016 at 10:01 am](#) said:

*All the hard work was done by Wil,  
<http://fotofast.com.au/files/ff%20prints%20posters%20may%202016.pdf>  
it wasn't just a case of install, ready!*

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May 27, 2016

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