

Pumping up performance

Cape Town's first Mark Andy P3 has arrived and has gone swiftly into impeccable production at Sign & Seal Labels, printing wine labels of distinction, reports GILL LOUBSER.

SIGN & SEAL Labels' début in these pages occurred some 18 months ago (PPM Festive 2013) with news of the purchase of an Italian-built Cartes finishing machine, an investment destined to take the seven-year-old business to a fresh level – stepping out of the highly-competitive commodity market and into the realm of sophisticated, added-value labels (notably for upmarket wine labels).

As Sign & Seal's owner, Henk Crous, now happily confirms, that capital outlay has paid dividends, bringing renewed impetus to the business. And latest news is yet another step in Henk's strategic investment programme – this time in the shape of a Mark Andy Performance Series P3 press.

The history of capital expenditure at Sign & Seal Labels has been focused and steady. At the company's inception in 2007, Henk's first purchase was a locally-built Pacom seven-colour flexo press, soon joined by a number of other four-colour presses to keep pace with capacity requirements.

It wasn't long, however, before Henk realised the need to produce more complex labels for an increasingly sophisticated clientele, resulting in the purchase of an eight-colour Mark Andy 2200 press

plus Rotoflex inspection machines and the Cartes finishing machine mentioned above.

And now the bar has been raised yet again with the purchase of the Mark Andy P3 press, which has taken pride of place in the bustling factory. This is the first such press to land in Cape Town and one of only a handful yet installed in South Africa, placing Sign & Seal right up among the frontrunners.

As Mark Andy's Southern African distributor, SAreco's Paul Bower is delighted to have sold five P3 presses in this country. 'This underlines the strong market acceptance of the Performance Series flexo print platform; and we're looking forward to bringing more of these presses into the region shortly,' Paul states.

A new level of competitiveness

The new P3 at Sign & Seal is already bringing a new level of competitiveness to the business. 'It's allowing us to broaden our product offering to a portfolio of customers that includes the Western Cape's numerous boutique wine estates,' Henk asserts.

In fact, a word that crops up several times in our conversation is 'customisation' ... Henk is intensely



According to Henk Crous, the new P3 has moved Sign & Seal's game to a whole new level, and is 'the answer to a label converter's dreams'. It's also ideal for printing top-quality labels for the Western Cape's numerous boutique wine estates.



aware of the need to 'up his game' in a market where customisation and specialisation are increasingly demanded by wine producers.

'We already have an excellent reputation among our customers and increasingly they're requesting more specialised label finishes, such as foiling and embossing. Taking the plunge and imported the Cartes line in 2013 was a bid to "test the water"; and results have exceeded all expectations,' he adds. 'We were amazed at the rate of business growth following its commissioning.'

And now the P3 is adding even more to that growth. With its 250mm web width and eight UV flexo print stations, it's coping admirably with rising demand for customised labels, and helping to support Henk's growth plans.

The P3 sports numerous features such as ultra-high power GEW UV curing on all print stations, inline UV laminating and cold foiling, and a turnaround bar to allow printing on both sides of the substrate.

The choice of the P3 was based on its outstanding performance, its fast makeready, short web path, low waste, excellent print quality, and ability to hold tight register at high speed. But most important is the inline cold foiling capability.

'The P3's capabilities are huge,' comments Henk. 'We can now offer a combination of inline foiling and embossing, for the same price as offering offline hot foiling.'

'We're able to apply as many as three different colours of foil and we have a great deal of flexibility when it comes to combining and integrating our technologies and capabilities.'

Henk insists that the new P3 has moved Sign & Seal's game to a whole new level. 'Its design is simple and it's stable. It's quiet and quick and easy to set-up and changeover, and holds consistent register at high speed. It's the answer to a label converter's dreams!' he enthuses. 'We were also amazed at its user-friendliness, which has minimised training time.'

Another point of departure at Sign & Seal is the lack of a dedicated sales representative in the field! Amazing as this sounds, the policy is working well. To handle sales of specialised wine labels, Henk opted to join forces with a company called RR Wine Technologies (based in the Strand, Western Cape) that offers a one-stop shop to wineries – selling them everything from corks and aluminium screw caps to bottles and barrels – and has added labels from Sign & Seal to the line-up of wine-packaging requirements.

'We chose RR Wine Technologies because Miguel and his team also subscribe to similar values and business principles. This has facilitated our alignment and integration,' Henk explains.

And for the future?

To stay current, Henk believes in investing in people and machinery. This latest investment aligns with this strategic direction, and is certain to establish a new benchmark for performance in Cape Town's narrow-web industry.

It's clear that this bustling business – situated in two adjacent units in Winelands Park (a neat industrial complex near Kuils River in the Western Cape) – is almost bursting at the seams; and an obvious question is whether physical expansion is imminent? It is a possibility, Henk replies, indicating a third adjacent unit that could be incorporated. But for the moment,

he's prudently maximising every square centimetre of available space before committing to additional premises.

Finally, he pays tribute to factory manager, Carlo Steyn, who has played a major role in developing the business over the years.

'He's my right hand,' Henk declares. 'No challenge is too big for him; he's an excellent team member and part of our success. Undoubtedly, we have a winning team!'



Tradition and technology

HEADED by Miguel Ribas, RR Wine Technologies (based in the Strand, Western Cape) offers a one-stop shop to wineries – selling them everything from corks and aluminium screw caps, to bottles and barrels, and superbly-printed labels from Sign & Seal.

Specialising in the supply of natural corks for boutique wines, RR Wine Technologies encourages the best match between premium corks and premium wines. As Miguel remarks, 'Because wines are unique, offering bespoke packaging solutions has been the key to our success.'

The company sells natural corks that bring together the latest technologies with four generations of expertise in the cork industry, guaranteeing the finest individual solution for any wine.

In addition, representing TESA for Champagne corks provides local wine growers with almost 100 years of experience gained by supplying world-famous châteaux in Frances' Champagne region.

Additionally, the company supplies both imported and local screwcaps.





RR Wine Technologies specializes in natural corks for Boutique wines. We encourage the best match between Premium Corks and Premium Wines. Because your wines are unique, individual solutions are the key of our success.

Sign & Seal Labels convert our customer requirements into excellent quality self adhesive & non-adhesive labels, decals and tags in reel or sheeted form. We also do digital printing for sample or small runs. In addition we are distributors of Thermal Printers and consumables and also offer a bureau service for these labels.

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