



## Press Release

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For immediate release

### MUTOH SHOWS PREVIEW OF ITS NEW 3.3 METER "PHOENIX" PRINTER CONCEPT AT VISUAL COMMUNICATION EUROPE 2004

*New printer platform will be the basis for a new generation of Mutoh printers...*

**Oostende, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2004** – At the Visual Communication Europe 2004 show, which starts off today in Paris, France, the Belgium-based large-format printer and sign cutting plotter manufacturer Mutoh Europe N.V. is showing a preview of its new super wide-format (3.3 meter) printer concept, called Phoenix.

Phoenix is Mutoh's first super wide-format digital inkjet product and has been engineered at Mutoh's European R&D centre located in Oostende, Belgium. The product has been designed to be an industrial high-volume printer. Target markets are flexible and rigid outdoor signage (eco-solvent, solvent, UV) and direct textile printing.

The machine offers maximum media and print widths of 3.3 meter, with maximum roll weights of 200 kg. It incorporates a motorized 10 kg head carriage for multiple print heads, bulk ink supply and for additional curing equipment.

The Mutoh Phoenix is equipped with sophisticated media movement technology, i.a. a special single-operator media loading system. Media is loaded by way of a special threading bar and chain. The unit also offers an active sensorized tension bar system for flawless media tracking and straight winding of printed media. Depending on the application, the platform offers the possibility to incorporate different media heating and cooling features (contact heating, IR heating and fan bank), as well as a removable gutter.

"Recent wide-format graphics printer forecasts indicate a growth worldwide for eco-solvent / solvent-based wide-format printers from 22000 units in 2003 up to 63000 units in 2008. Moreover, two tendencies are clearly noticeable, i.e. on the one hand "mid-range" wide-format printer users are looking for wider equipment to grow their business and on the other hand, existing super wide-format printer users are looking for additional and cheaper production equipment", says Arthur Vanhoutte, Mutoh Europe's Managing Director.

"Outdoor wide-format printing being our core business, Mutoh Europe did not want to miss this market opportunity. Moreover, we have an installed base of over 15000 entry-level to mid-range outdoor solvent and eco-solvent wide-format inkjet printers up to a maximum width of 90 inches to grow from."

"Today's wide-format inkjet market is primarily driven by ink and print head technology developments. As printer manufacturer, in order to be able to cope with these frequent new developments on the hardware side, our approach for the development of our Phoenix 3.3 meter printer platform has been to build a multi-functional printer platform, capable of accommodating multiple head technologies and a modular ink supply system. Thanks to its open and flexible design, Phoenix will allow us to serve a host of market niches with short development lead time, such as sign, soft signage, textile printing, photography, and others. The Phoenix's versatile concept will allow us to fastly "configure" the platform with different features, in accordance with the specific application needs for each target market. Our Phoenix 3.3 meter machine should actually be called a "media movement platform" rather than a "printer", Vanhoutte concludes.

Mutoh Europe intends to bring to market both a solvent and an eco-solvent version of the Phoenix around the end of 2004. Final pricing has not been set, but unit pricing is estimated to start at approximately € 100000.

### ***About Mutoh Europe N.V.***

Mutoh Europe is a wholly owned subsidiary of Mutoh Industries Ltd., Tokyo, Japan. Founded in 1991, Mutoh Europe develops, manufactures and distributes CAS hardware (professional sign cutting plotters, apparel marking/cutting plotters and large-format full colour piezo-electric printers for indoor and outdoor applications). Employing 260 people, the company supplies all over Europe, the Middle-East and Africa, through an extensive network of authorised resellers.

The Mutoh group is one of the world's leading manufacturers of large-format piezo-electric printers. Mutoh manufactures printers and related peripherals for some of the biggest names in the pre-press, sign and graphics industries.

More information on Mutoh and its products can be found on <http://www.mutoh.be>