



Viktor Agoston, head of KBA's Slovakian dealer Eurograf in Bratislava, is a dynamic and successful exponent of the 46 Karat

Slovakia: three printing plants, three business models for the 46 Karat

## From flyers to sample books

Between December 2004 and March 2005 three 46 Karat presses came on stream in Slovakia. Each of the three printing plants concerned has installed this DI offset press to pursue a different and distinct business model in their particular market. A fourth press installation followed at the beginning of June at Alius in Prievidza.

When the political entity known as Czechoslovakia was divided into Slovakia and the Czech Republic, the market was likewise split into two. At that time print production in Slovakia was more or less a cottage industry, with a proliferation of one-man businesses. Print runs were correspondingly short – 3,000 copies at the most – and the prevailing format was SRA3. When the government decided to open up the market in the early 1990s, printers started to upgrade their equipment with second-hand presses from abroad. More recently, Slovakia's accession to the European Union has stimulated widespread investment in new kit to exploit the growth opportunities now available. The proximity of Austria and the arrival of big international companies are driving up demand for high-quality print.

*Cutting-edge technology for the classic SRA3 market*

In autumn last year Bratislava, the Slovakian capital on the banks of the Danube, with a population of 500,000, was the venue of the Print 04 trade fair. Many industry professionals took the opportunity to review the technologies currently on the market and assess their suitability for specific applications.

The event included the first appearance in Slovakia of a 46 Karat. Eurograf, KBA's Slovakian dealer, was approached by a succession of



Four-colour promos are the main products printed on the 46 Karat at Ultra Print

print entrepreneurs expressing serious interest in the press. Three of them – Ultra Print, Typoset Print and Erland – decided to sign on the dotted line right there and then. Their unanimous verdict: the higher price for DI films and waterless inks, and the previously unaccustomed cost of cleaning cloths for the automatic wash-

ing systems, are more than outweighed by the lower waste rate and the ultra-short throughput times supported by on-press imaging. In the long term, the ability to fulfil jobs on the day they are received, and to deliver a much better quality, should enable the three firms not only to tie in existing customers but also to win a lot of new ones.

*Ultra Print: running at maximum capacity with commercials*

When Bratislava-based Ultra Print installed a 46 Karat in mid-December 2004 it also became the first print enterprise in Slovakia to take on board computer-to-press technology. Managing director Jan Holcik



Ultra Print's offset press minder Milos Benes soon mastered the 46 Karat

*Ultra Print in Bratislava (photo: ULTRA PRINT)*



(34), who established the company in 1995, now has a staff of six. Print jobs – 50% promotional and other corporate literature, 30% small periodicals and 20% books – are delivered ready-prepared by ad agencies and other clients, either for platemaking, in the case of the older wet offset press, an Adast Dominant (SRA2), or for direct imaging in the 46 Karat. If finishing is specified the sheets are conveyed to a Duplo brochure-making line.

Even before the fair took place Jan Holcik had obtained detailed information from Presstek, supplier of the ProFire imaging heads and the PEARLdry-Plus polyester plate rolls used in the 46 Karat. Having sold off two of its four conventional sheetfed presses a few years ago, investing in CTP just did not enter the equation when Ultra Print tabled plans to upgrade its equipment.

“Why should we prolong the era of conventional offset with computer to plate and all the associated updates?” comments Holcik. “Installing a fast, compact DI offset press like the 46 Karat, which is clean, easy to handle and easy to maintain, has allowed us to leapfrog several stages in press evolution.”

The main reasons Holcik cites for choosing the 46 Karat are that it is good value for money and the delivery time-frame was short. One of the other two manufacturers in the

running could neither demonstrate a press nor offer an acceptable shipping date, while the third was simply too pricey. KBA dealer Eurograf in Bratislava, however, was not only able to give an immediate demonstration but could also promise prompt delivery.

The 46 Karat printed its first sheet just seven days after installation work started. By the middle of January the two operators were fully conversant with the new technology and the press was running flawlessly. Initially it was operated in one-and-a-half shifts but this has since been expanded to two full shifts. Any incoming jobs considered suitable for DI offset are now scheduled to the Karat. Most of these are for advertising agencies, which often require a same-day service. Almost all the company’s clients are located in Bratislava and include a number of foreign firms that have opened subsidiaries there.

*Typoset Print:  
focus on high-end offset*

Prior to installing Slovakia’s second 46 Karat, Ludovit Karpinsky (34), Pavel Kordos (41) and Augustin Fischer (43), joint owners of a graphics studio in Bratislava with a staff of nine, first had to set up a dedicated printing company and hire two press operators. The press went live at Typoset Print



*Typoset in Bratislava was the first printing plant in Slovakia to achieve ISO 12647-2 accreditation for proof-to-print colour fidelity*

in February, and is one of the first installations of a 46 Karat<sup>PLUS</sup> worldwide. The <sup>PLUS</sup> indicates that it can print an AM screen resolution of up to 120lpc (300lpi) and even an FM screen, supported by Presstek’s new ProFire-Excel imaging system. This capability was the reason why Typoset decided to expand into print: no other press came into the question.

Over the years Typoset has established a reputation for top-quality graphic design and prepress among customers both in

the domestic market and further afield, in Austria and the Czech Republic. Karpinsky and Kordos bought the 46 Karat<sup>PLUS</sup> as a logical extension of their prepress portfolios, since it supports the same high quality standards and can convert the superior front-end products the company creates into equally superior print. The press operators set about mapping the Karat’s quality potential within the first few weeks of its coming on stream. This necessitated some minor assistance from KBA’s rapid-response support



*Typoset proprietors Ludovit Karpinsky (left) and Pavel Kordos use their 46 Karat<sup>PLUS</sup> to address the high end of the offset market*

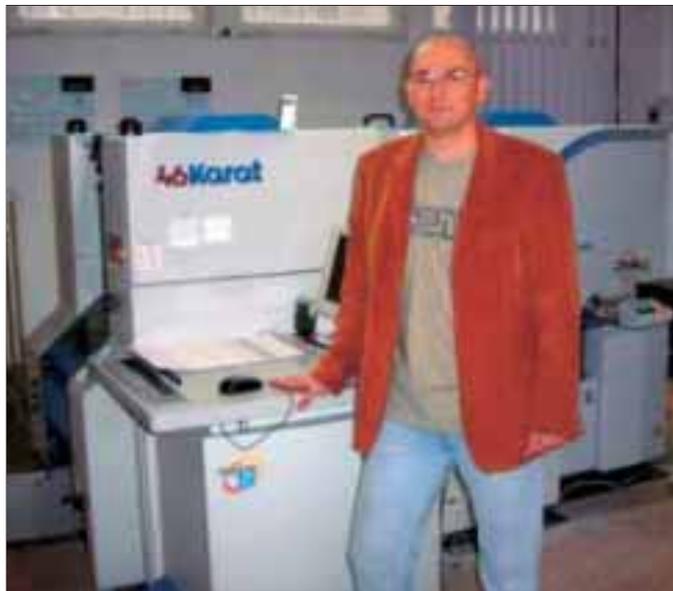


*Promotional literature, sample books, book covers, CD sleeves and envelopes are among the many products printed on the 46 Karat<sup>PLUS</sup> at Typoset Print*

team, which had to change some components and adjust the settings on others so as to extend the limits of the Karat's capabilities. The upshot was that challenging products such as solids-rich sample books for paper manufacturers, which had not previously been considered an option with the 46 Karat, are now part and parcel of its repertoire. Alongside the usual promotional and commercial products Typoset also prints book covers, brochures, envelopes and CD sleeves and booklets – products where quality takes priority over plant utilisation.

Karpinsky who, like his two co-proprietors, boasts a degree in photochemical technology, explains that he has plans to explore still more uncharted territory with the 46 Karat<sup>PLUS</sup>. "We have already run matt and gloss coatings in the yellow printing unit. Although waterless offset inks have a higher innate gloss, it is possible to enhance this still further. We have carried out tests to determine an optimum coating thickness that will not cause any drying problems."

Karpinsky emphasises the importance of colour reproductive accuracy. Typoset was the first company in Slovakia to adopt the Ugra/Fogra media wedge for a certified digital proof (Epson Stylus Pro 9600 with ProofGate RIP from ColorGate), and also generates ICC profiles for the 46 Karat<sup>PLUS</sup>. Using this equipment Typoset Print started by computing reference values for the CMYK standard colour gamuts on the 46 Karat. Customers with their own pre-press workflow can now work with just one ICC press profile for the Karat. The next step will be to reference and profile the ex-



For Erland and Miroslav Rybar, the 46 Karat's big appeal is that it has enabled the company to expand its pre-press services

panded Aniva colour gamut. Waterless versions of Aniva Euro inks were formulated specially for the 46 Karat by Epple. Typoset Print uses an Altona Test Suite Kit to conduct colour rendering tests.

*Erland:  
combining press and  
pre-press services*

Slovakia's third 46 Karat went live at Erland in Banska Bystrica, 200km (125m) north-east of Bratislava, in March this year. When Miroslav Rybar (36) set up his DTP studio and print agency ten years ago he deliberately chose a name that



At Erland the focus is on the production of high-end promotional literature, books and magazines

sounded like Ireland. Three of his seven staff are printers. At first they operated the press in twos or threes so that they could learn from each other and gradually progress to three one-man shifts.

"Run lengths in a small country such as this can be printed more cost-effectively on a DI press – investing in computer to plate and wet off-set would not have been viable," says Rybar when questioned on his choice of technology. What made him select the 46 Karat in preference to a rival press was the fact that it made better use of the sheet format during imaging. "That delivered a saving of around €3 per plate. So our profit margin is broader for each job."

Rybar is completely satisfied both with the print quality – particularly colour gradations and the densities possible – and with the reliability of the 46 Karat. His customer base extends beyond the national frontiers into Germany, Austria and Switzerland. But wherever they are, customers are prepared to pay over the odds for quality, and, of course, for a rapid turnaround. "We have acquired an image for quality. We have well and truly exploded the myth that a DI press is nothing but a glorified copier," says Rybar.

The most profitable jobs are those that entail design and pre-press services in addition to printing. Finishing work is contracted out. Erland's customer base encompasses ad agencies, publishing houses and other end users, for whom it produces advertising literature, A4 and A5 books, and magazines with up to 64 pages.



Matus Bernat is one of three 46 Karat press operators at Erland in Banska Bystrica

Dieter Kleeberg  
eurograf@eurograf.sk,  
kleeberg.stein@t-online.de

*Websites of interest:*

- www.ultraprint.sk
- www.typoset.sk
- www.erland.sk
- www.eurograf.sk
- www.karat-digital-press.com