



▶ An eye on the future: Aristo's Aristomat LFC 5252 large format cutter

A cut above the rest

Mike Richardson meets Applied Cutting Systems' director, Alan Langford-Smith to hear how he spotted an opportunity to introduce Aristo's range of digital flatbed cutting machines to the world of composite materials manufacturing.

Increasing demand for composite kit cutting services that are cut, bagged, tagged and delivered direct to the customer means the flatbed cutting machine is fast gaining a new lease of popularity. Although its origins lie in the signmaking, packaging, textile and leather industries, it is within the composites manufacturing industry where the battle for flatbed cutting supremacy has intensified.

Ashford, Kent-based Applied Cutting Systems (ACS) offers a complete range of digital cutting solutions to a wide range of manufacturers who need to cut a wide range of materials. The company is the UK agent for Aristo, the Hamburg-based manufacturer of digital flatbed cutters.

Using a choice of cutting heads and specially designed blades, the Aristo Digital Cutter can slice its way through many different materials. For example, Aristo's Aristomat machine can cut up to 38mm thickness of material and there is also the option of performing routing jobs too.

With their robust design, accuracy and precision, Aristo Digital flatbed

cutters offer a solution for many industries that need die-less CAD cutting. Suitable for the production environment as well as producing samples and prototyping, all machines can be configured with the Aristo 'Automatic Eye' intelligent camera system to provide a 'print and cut' solution.

Fortune favours the brave

Gaining familiarity with Aristo flatbed cutting machines whilst using one as a demonstrator at his previous company, director, Alan Langford-Smith established ACS when it became apparent his old company wasn't so keen in promoting them as well as he thought it could. It was an opportunity that turned into the birth of a new company.

"My previous company was mainly involved in vinyl cutting and the associated digital print industry," he begins. "During the 1990s these machines started utilising different types of cutting heads that offered the ability to cut many different types materials, other than just vinyl. I eventually realised that there were so many more

industries that we could and should be involved in. I'd like to think that we can cut most flat materials, and whether it's a woven, solid plastic or fabric material, we've usually got a head, a tool or a blade that can cut it.

"Aristo has been around for 150 years manufacturing precision instruments, so with this kind of history, it feels it has established a fixed place in the digital table cutting industry. The fact you can have up to seven tools means these Aristo machines are very efficient as they can help reduce setup time. ACS has the ability to service anyone that wants flatbed cut materials for any industry application. This can mean either supplying the machine itself or the cutting services using demonstration flatbed cutting machines."

Whilst price is always near the top of the customers' demands, another priority means any flatbed cutting machine must cater for a range of different workflows. The ability to cover an 'around the clock' service and flexibility for any kind of end user demand is essential when

Production processes: Flatbed cutting



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competing in today's market. High levels of performance are also required in cutting speed, material handling and in automated production to reduce labour costs and any potential material mishandling by the operator.

Aristo says what makes its customer service an attractive proposition is the reaction time when it comes to support issues, like machine repair and spare parts availability. Today, Aristo produces almost 95% of its parts in-house or together with subcontract supplier located in Hamburg, where it employs six technicians and two application engineers at its headquarters. The company has a huge network of partners that support its service network to ensure that the reaction time is reduced to the utmost.

Aristo keep a number of 'loan' tool heads in its warehouse which can be rented out in case a customer needs to make necessary tool head repairs and

help eliminates customer production downtime. It frequently offers application training at its headquarters as well at the customers' premises too. Additionally, Aristo insists service training is given to its foreign Aristo partners to ensure that its technicians are always at the latest stage of any new product development.

In terms of CAD and material utilisation nesting software, Aristo's cutting tables work in tandem with SAI Flexi software. Flexi offers many different software tools like Flexi letter, Flexi sign and Flexi engrave to create and convert cut files. Flexi can also be used to import any of today's standard CAD files.

Aristo services customers that produce both low volume piece-parts and high volume quantities on its machines. Quality cutting is essential for these customers because today's composite materials can be very expensive. To ensure perfect usage of such costly

material, Aristo offers its customers a ceiling mounted projection system, which operates with a beamer to display the job to be cut directly onto the cutting table.

Besides its own design and development department, Aristo works very closely with partners specialised in the area of composite materials handling to service the growing demand for large format cutting. For the carpet, banner cutting and signmaking industries, Aristo says its customers now cut material up to 5m width and 7m length. Equipped with turnkey conveyor and material handling systems, customers can cut material from rolls to increase their production efficiency.

The future's on the table

Not just a manufacturer of digital cutting tables, Aristo sees itself as its customers' partner – one that can accompany their individual ideas, offering them a perfect matching solution for a competitive price.

"With over 20 years' experience with Aristo machines, I will only sell a system when I'm confident it will do exactly what the customer wants and has a certain amount of 'futureproofing' built into the configuration," Langford-Smith concludes. "ACS is ready to meet composites manufacturing industry's demands. The recession is now behind us and manufacturing is definitely growing, albeit slowly. People within this industry are becoming increasingly more confident in buying more equipment. Composite manufacturing applications are increasing and it is definitely a sector that I feel we're well-suited to and will be at the forefront for the foreseeable future."

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▼ Material gains: Applied Cutting Systems offers a complete range of digital cutting solutions to a wide range of manufacturers

