

Miléca Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Miléca?

The Miléca™ is the fastest high-quality digital photographic printer currently available. It produces prints up to 12" wide in nearly unlimited length.

What applications is the Miléca most suited for?

The Miléca is the printer of choice to output digital prints for wedding portraiture, senior portraits, school composites, school service items, package prints, youth and team sports, index prints, and short-run applications such as business cards, greeting cards and invitations.

How does it expose paper?

Miléca exposes photographic paper using Sienna's patented Fiber Optic Imaging technology. The photographic paper is continuously transported past a fiber optic bundle as a light beam sweeps across the paper. The paper is in near contact with fiber optic faceplate which minimizes light loss and eliminates optical aberrations. Every image is sharp and evenly exposed from edge to edge.

Why isn't there a paper processor attached?

The Miléca is designed to fit easily into the workflow of the typical photographic lab which already has a high speed RA-4 paper processor. The exposed paper rolls up into a light-tight magazine which can be carried to the processing room for unloading.

For labs that need a digital printer with an integrated RA-4 processor, SMI offers the Netprinter product line.

What additional equipment do I need to purchase to run the Miléca?

You will need a workstation computer to run your application which will be networked to the CREW system Task Server Control computer. You will also need a RA4 roll paper processor, and perhaps a high speed cutter to cut the exposed prints (or they can be cut by hand on a rotary or slice cutter) An X-rite 880/890 series strip reading densitometer is required to perform the paper calibration.

How long is the expected life of the Fiber Optic Imaging Engine? Is it expensive to replace?

Expect the Imaging engine to expose millions of images before replacement is required. Because the Thomas Electronics exposure unit uses very small current, its life is much higher than competitors "flash-type" exposure methods. The replacement cost is only from 5-15% of the unit price.

What size paper widths does Miléca use?

The Miléca HSP accepts any standard RA-4 color negative paper roll up to 575' in the following widths:

- 3.5, 4.5, 6, 7, 7, 8.5, 10, 11, 12 inches
- 210, 297, 305mm

For optimum print quality, the take-up roll should be removed and processed at approximately 250 feet.

What is the paper magazine size?

The Miléca magazines are the same for supply and take-up. Approximate dimensions are 12"×12"×19". The empty canister weight is about 22 pounds.

What is the maximum print length?

The maximum print length on Miléca is determined by current print mode, and remaining space on the Miléca's internal hard drive. In 250 ppi mode, a 10" wide image could be printed up to approximately 44 feet long.

What are Miléca's resolution options?

The Miléca can print at a variety of different ppi's, but it has two or three possible modes of operation, 500 ppi, 300 ppi, and 250 ppi depending on options purchased. The machine is sold "standard" with 250 and 300 ppi

printing modes, while 500 ppi printing mode is an option. Each mode has a discrete number of different ppi's you can print at, and the print speed is dependant upon the mode (slowest in 500 ppi mode).

Can I add 500 ppi printing mode later on?

No, 500 ppi printing mode must be purchased at time of shipment.

How long does it take to switch the Miléca paper widths?

If you have a spare magazine already set-up and loaded, this procedure takes only a few minutes.

How much paper leader is used when loading?

Approximately 5 feet of paper is exposed when loading a new paper roll into Miléca.

How much paper leader is used as a trailer when cutting off exposed prints?

About 3 feet of paper is advanced each time a magazine is removed for processing.

How will the Miléca connect to my current network?

An Ethernet network connection allows for sending files from any number of PC and MAC workstations to the Windows NT multi-function CREW TaskServer system.

What kind of marks can be made for automatic cutters?

The Miléca will print optical marks or bar codes for use with some cutter types – contact the cutter manufacturer for details.

Is backwriting available?

Backprinting is not available on the Miléca.

Will the unit collect statistical information on what I print?

The Task Generator software will track the last images printed, and their printed status. The printer itself keeps a “odometer” of total paper inches run through the machine.

How long does it take to warm up? Is there a stand-by mode?

The printer takes roughly 20 minutes to warm-up. A standby mode will disable the paper path to prevent paper path wear after a set amount of time. Restarting from standby mode is virtually immediate.

Can the Miléca run in normal room light?

Yes the Miléca is daylight compatible. Once photographic paper is loaded into the light-tight canister in the dark room, it can be inserted or removed on Miléca in daylight operation.

Do I need an operator for each machine?

No, one operator could run multiple machines.

Do I have to use the CREW software installed on a separate computer networked to the printer?

Yes, to maintain speed, a dedicated Windows NT server computer with Thomas Electronics CREW Software is required.

What software can interface with printer/CREW software?

Currently the Task Generator software for the PC sends files to CREW Task Server. A Photoshop plug-in is available, and the Graphx Rasterplus RIP. Third party software programs are also available (like Timestone).

Can you interface with all 3rd party software programs and what are the stipulations/requirements?

While you cannot print directly from some third party software programs, you can interface with the Miléca. By saving properly formatted image files in a “HOT” folder on a PC on the same network, images can be automatically printed. Windows printer drivers are available to print from most any application, or you can use the Task Generator driver to select the files and submit them

Can I print directly from Kodak's DP2 system?

Yes. The CREW system support direct printing from DP2. Configure the Kodak software to name image files in a specific manner, and the CREW system will interpret the filename for appropriate printing information, and automatically print the images.

How do you keep the printer color calibrated?

A print made from the machine is used with an X-rite 890 series densitometer to balance the printer. Most Xrite 880, and 890 series densitometers will work with Mileca, but contact Xrite at 616-534-7663 to verify your units functionality with Thomas Electronics equipment.

How often do I need to run a color balance test?

This is very subjective, but usually once a day, or anytime a new lot of media is used.

What file formats are accepted by the Miléca?

Task Generator takes most popular formats including .JPG, .TIF, .TGA, .BMP, Kodak PhotoCD, Photoshop 3.0 .PSD files, and MAC PICT. .TGA files are the printers native format, so these files print fastest.

Does the machine receive data once to produce multiple copies or does it need data to be present for every print?

Data sent once can be multiple printed at extremely high speed.

What is the gap between prints? What punch marks are used to cut this gap?

Gaps between prints only occur during a engine calibration (about every 5 minutes) or whenever the CREW Computer (or you) cannot get the images files transferred fast enough to the printer during printing. The minimum gap varies depending on the mode (approximately 1.5"). As long as streams of images are sent at once, and data continues to flow to the printer at speed, gaps can occur between 2% or roughly 2/100 prints.

What are the site requirements? Humidity? Electrical requirements?

Contact your Mileca distributor for a complete site survey. Power Requirements: 120 volts AC Isolated Dedicated Line. 20 AMP Nema certified outlet is required. Backup power (UPC) recommended – maximum machine power consumption 400 watts. Processor: RA4 roll feed up to 12" wide. Operating Humidity: 5-80% (non-condensing) @25°C Operating Temperature: 50-86°F.

What periodic maintenance is required?

The Imaging Faceplate and drive rollers require cleaning every roll of paper or daily (more often in very dusty environments). The Faceplate is cleaned with lint free prepackaged wipes, and three rubber paper transport rollers are cleaned with a rubber restorer solution to keep them tacky and soft. Each cleaning takes only a few minutes. The print chamber should be vacuumed of dust about every month depending on print volume. An easily replaceable faceplate spacer on the Fiber Optic Faceplate requires replacement after approximately three hundred thousand prints. Other than this, only periodic inspections for part wear should be performed.

What type of photographic paper works best with Miléca?

Miléca is designed to expose most popular brands and types of RA-4 photographic paper. The most pleasing results are achieved when the printer is used with high contrast papers designed for use in digital printers, especially when the printer is used in high speed mode. Contact your sales representative for details and recommendations.