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## The Matcutting Revolution – Profile Magazine October 2005

I remember reading a recent article written in Décor magazine, I forget which one, but it claimed that more than 50% of custom framing businesses in the USA rely on a CMC (Computerised Mat Cutter) for their mats? For those of us that remember, this was obviously not the case 10 years ago...

At an educated guess, based on the number of CMC's in Australia, and how many framing businesses there are, I would say that 30% of framers in Australia currently rely on a CMC in some way for their mats.

Some would claim that our industry is experiencing a "revolution" .... a "matcutting revolution".

Not since the advent of the underpinner and the v-shaped wedge by Cassese in 1975, has there been a technological revolution that has changed the face of our industry so rapidly.

As little as 30 years ago, the "craft" of joining the perfect corner on a picture frame was an admired skill, only possessed by a relative "few" in the profession. This was in the days where drilling, nailing and "kwikclamps" were the only methods employed by a picture framer to create a frame. A really good picture framer was very proud if he could cut and join 3 frames an hour. These days, no professional framer would be without an underpinner, and anyone can learn the "craft" of joining the perfect corner of a frame in less than 30 minutes. Thanks to technology, times have changed....

So why is the uptake of computerised matcutting so popular, not just in Australia, but around the world? What are the factors that have caused this revolution.. and making framers embrace this new technology?

### **The computer revolution -**

In the early nineties, there was a "computer revolution" which left very few industries untouched. The personal computer became so affordable, that every home, and business could afford to have one. As a tool, the use of a computer presented new methods and techniques in processing difficult, time consuming functions from the accounting, to pricing, to marketing, which seemingly everyone has embraced to the point where it is now taken for granted.

It was only a matter of time until this technology finally filtered its way down into the humble process of matcutting. In the early days of "computerised matcutting" – it was "the big guys" that embraced this technology, because although it was initially expensive, it was extremely cost effective to the larger OEM photo frame manufacturers.

Since then, competition in the CMC market has kicked-in worldwide, and driven the cost of this technology down to a more affordable level. Just like any market

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based on computer technology, at this point in time, you can now buy a more advanced product at a cheaper price than 12 months ago.

Now, it seems evident that more small custom framers are keen to own part of this new technology, and change their businesses; much like the underpinner did for framing 30 years ago.

So why are custom framers embracing this new technology so rapidly? Here are a few factors –

- **Save time** – For most custom framing businesses - the savings in time alone are enough reason to justify the investment in a CMC. All other reasons and benefits become simply “icing on the cake”. When the cost of a workers time (or owner’s time) is becoming more and more expensive, any saving in this area is huge advantage, especially when you want to remain competitive.
- **Quality** – To be able to offer a higher quality product, without the investment in highly skilled or trained staff is a secret weapon most big businesses use to improve their market share. A CMC allows a small custom framing business the ability to offer a better quality product, faster, with minimum skill level required.
- **Point of Difference** – Being able to stay ahead of your opposition is an important factor to any successful business. Having a unique “point of difference” is enough to give your business an opportunity to take hold of a stronger position in your local market. Many of the framers who have already invested in computerised matcutters over the past 10 years have recognized this, and used their potential “point of difference” to stay ahead by offering more creative, more advanced, more affordable mats than other framers could ever dream of offering. The computer matcutter has also created a more defined difference between the “hobbyist framer” and the “professional framer”, which helps add more credibility to framing as a profession and a professional business.
- **Save money** – “Less Mistakes = More Profit”. Many businesses without a CMC still suffer from the cost of having to re-cut mats, especially multiple openings, due to human error. A CMC greatly reduces the amount of mistakes, lost material and lost time for any framing business. Even though the anticipated savings here may seem initially small, it all adds up in the end.
- **More opportunities** - When was the last time you made up an excuse not to double mat a multiple opening mat? Although possible, this type of matcutting job is extremely difficult, time consuming and risky for the average framer, which is why most choose to “excuse” their way out of them, and ultimately compromise on potential business and profit. A CMC removes most of the limitations previously imposed on a small business with regards to matcutting. With the discovery of new creative opportunities presented by CMC’s has allowed small business owners to create new unique products and completely new markets.
- **Finance** - Never before has investment in capital machinery been so affordable and within reach of the average small business owner. With

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interest rates historically so low, it is now both affordable and beneficial for any small business to consider financing (leasing) a CMC.

Right now, with the demand on computerised matcutters increasing exponentially worldwide, we are rapidly approaching the time in the future where the CMC will not just be an "option" for a framing business, but an essential tool, just like an underpinner. It won't be long before the average consumer becomes educated as to what is now possible, and "excuses" for not offering multiple opening double mats simply won't "cut it" (pun intended ☺). The die-hard, "table-top traditionalists" can argue against it as much as they like, but the "Matcutting Revolution" is here to stay, and every framer without a CMC will eventually have to make a choice.... either join the "revolution" – or be left behind.

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*With over 15 years experience in the framing & graphics industry, Jared Davis has covered the wholesale, commercial and retail aspects of the business. His previous sales, marketing & training experience gives him an understanding of the changing opportunities for retail businesses, and he offers an up-to-date approach on new methods and techniques now required by today's business owners, to be able to successfully market, merchandise and sell their services to consumers. Jared is also a featured educator at major international industry tradeshow & conventions.*