Stitches SOFTWARE REVIEW

Whether your company is big or small, whether you're a newbie or a veteran, our software guide includes options tailor-made for your business.

BY SHANE DALE

If there is one noticeable trend in decorating software, it is this: The companies providing the software are beginning to understand the importance of doing business with the little guy. ● More and more companies are offering two software packages: one for smaller and newer companies, and one for the been-there-done-that crowd. In terms of embroidery software, JCW Software LLC created a "design for dummies"-type product to compliment its FastManager PRO software in 2008. The simplified version, SMS, "is an

identical looking program to the PRO, but is scaled down to make it more specific to the everyday needs of the small- to medium-size shop," says Andy Boyea, sales and marketing manager for JCW Software.

Similarly, Wilcom International now offers two versions of its software based on CorelDRAW: one for newbies and one for experts. Its DecoStudio software is for "people just getting started in the

industry," while EmbroideryStudio is for "high-volume production," according to Kristi McKenzie, marketing manager for Wilcom International.

With the desire to cater to smaller ad

SOFTWARE INCLUDED IN THIS REVIEW:

specialty distributors and decorators has come the attempt to sell design software that will meet all the needs of one's business – including the tedious housekeeping necessities.

For example, SMS offers much more than design support for small-scale users. It offers office management, as well. "One highlighted improvement is the industry's only true auto-scheduling module," Boyea says. This module knows a company's days and hours of operation, its holiday schedule and, like many new software offerings, estimates the length of time required for a given project.

Likewise, the newly released OnSite 7 by Shopworks has added features that give distributors with a staff of five or less the ability to keep track of all of their nagging details on one program. This includes order entry, marketing and job quotes, a log for purchasing, shipping, receiving and inventory, and accounting and general ledger features. "The key feature of our product is that it is completely integrated and includes all modules to run your business," says Jay Malanga, president of Shopworks. Read on for our comprehensive software update.

EDITING/ LETTERING AND DESIGN/ DIGITIZING

Melco Industries Inc. recently released **DesignShop** V9 embroidery, digitizing and production software, which "leaps forward with a strong
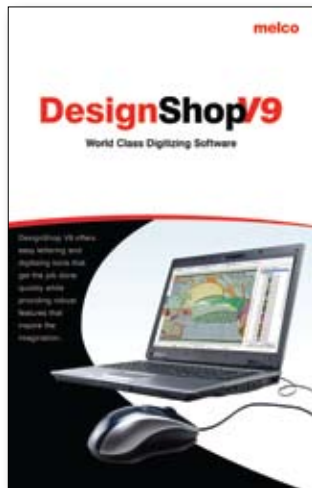
list of both digitizing and production features," says Mike Angel, vice president of marketing and U.S. sales.

♦ **What's new:** New digitizing features for DesignShop V9 include the UnaFill splicer, which allows users to splice multiple directions of fill stitches for one object. Auto-underlay has been added with multiple choices of underlay styles for any digitized object and fonts.

In addition, new production tools include fabric profiles that allow users to save design information like stitch densities to specific fabrics, or apply fabric profiles to specific designs. "Design information may now be printed with bar codes," Angel says. "Use a bar code reader at any time to recall the design, eliminating the search for design files on hard drives or disks."

♦ **Key features:** Melco has added its LogoExpress feature that allows users to link directly to an online digitizing service portal, with digitizing turnaround times as short as 24

hours. "DesignShop V9 users can opt for the LogoExpress feature during times of heavy volume," Angel says.

♦ **Who should use this software:** Anyone involved in embroidery production or embroidery digitizing services, Angel says.

♦ **Who shouldn't use it:** Embroidered product brokers, or those that subcontract embroidery work, according to Angel.

♦ **User review:** Jay Butterfield, president of Silk Screen Ink (*asi/326703*), says DesignShop V9 is "relatively user-friendly. Through the Product Option, we can easily create garment files with all of their information – sizes, colors, manufacturer, supplier – and implement them toward our Web site," he says. "This feature not only saves us time, but it also saves us the hassle of gathering images of each color of garment."

Butterfield also loves that his entire operation can work in conjunction with other Melco products and software. "We can lay out a design in DesignShop, open it in Amaya OS, and sew the job within a matter of minutes on our Amaya Embroidery Network," he says.

The only drawback is DesignShop's occasional tendency to shut down. "Sometimes, the program will shut down unexpectedly, resulting in the loss of any work done," Butterfield says.

♦ **Contact:** Melco Industries Inc., Denver, (800) 799-8313; *www.melcousa.com*
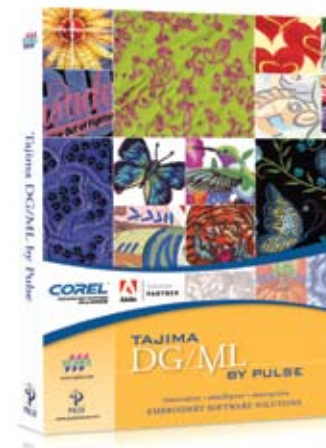
Pulse Microsystems Ltd. likes to point out that its latest offering, **Tajima DG/ML by Pulse 2009**, is the only embroidery software to receive certification by Microsoft Vista. "It comes in four levels that are designed for users with varying needs and skills," says Preeti Suri, marketing manager for Pulse, "starting with lettering and editing at the composer level, and ending up with a full-featured Maestro level that offers automated features for digitizing complex designs, and industry-leading sequin, sequin fill and chenille."

♦ **What's new:** The 2009 version of Tajima DG/ML includes Draw Fusion, which Suri calls "a revolutionary intelligent and interactive way to convert vector artwork from CorelDRAW into embroidery, with a full set of user input parameters for control over the result." Version 2009 also offers new features available at lower levels, like intricate fills and symbols, and appliqué tools that allow users to design unique fashion trends.

♦ **Key features:** "Tajima DG/

ML has all the features and functionality that professional design creation requires, such as underlay, pull compensation, and density functions that give the user full control over the design," Suri says. "The software also reads and writes all popular commercial and home formats, communicates with all brands of commercial machines and offers exclusive support for Tajima's LAN machines, gearing it especially for commercial embroiderers."

Tajima DG/ML's capabilities also include creating new designs from existing designs, and adding personalized lettering. It can also create satin lettering from TTF fonts, and can generate a professional quality design – either from vectors or from bitmap images using Autotrace – that can be converted to embroidery, Suri says.

♦ **Who should use this software:** "All levels of Tajima DG/ML are meant primarily for commercial embroiderers, while home embroiderers moving up from their simple software applications will find that this software allows them to create professional designs with ease," Suri says.

♦ **Who shouldn't use it:** "The software is really designed for professional users," Suri says. "It cannot substitute for basic embroidery knowledge and digitizing knowledge."

♦ **User review:** Jerilee Auclair, owner of Black Eagle Designs, uses the highest level of the Tajima DG/ML software (Maestro), and likes that she is able to use hotkeys that shorten the moving time between tools. "These keys translate to CorelDRAW and many other applications, so

I like that integration," she says. Another big favorite for Auclair is the ability to move letters within a line of text. "I can resize individual letters, move them up, down, wherever I want to on the text," she says. "I like the ability to make one letter in the text line larger than the others."

Auclair says the conversion process from other formats to outline forms in Tajima DG/ML can be a bit bumpy. "It's not clean or easy and it's often simpler to redigitize the offending area, but if you are not a digitizer, this is not going to work out well," she says. "The conversions need to be clean, quick, precise and spot-on every time. Other software can do this, so it's not an unknown entity out in the software world."

♦ **Contact:** Pulse Microsystems Ltd., Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, (905) 821 8300; *www.pulsemicro.com*

Digital Art Solutions sells and supports **Smart Designer X3**, which was released in January and created to enhance the graphics capabilities of CorelDRAW. "With Smart Designer, over 100 new menus and features are added to CorelDRAW, transforming CorelDRAW from a general graphics software program to an industry-specific graph-

ics system," says Jay Busselle, general manager of Digital Art Solutions. "Each feature added is designed to simplify and automate the graphic design process for the promotional product, sign, screen printing, direct-to-substrate digital printing, embroidery and engraving industries."

♦ **Key features:** Smart Designer allows users "to automate and simplify complex design tasks, such as text effects, circle text, text on a path, athletic tails and weathered effects," Busselle says.

♦ **Who should use this software:** "Anyone engaged in the imprinting industries that wants to simplify graphics, increase creativity and reduce art production times by as much as 90%," Busselle says. "Users of Smart Designer report that they are able to manage their graphics with less stress and frustration. Clients also say they can create custom graphics in less time with an overall increase in the creativity of the designs."

♦ **Who shouldn't use it:** "Professional graphic designers who are paid hourly and have large egos," Busselle says.

♦ **User review:** Don Arbuckle, president of Creative Resources Inc. (*asi/397241*), says the best thing about Smart Designer is the ability it gives him to pull ahead of the competition by creating multiple design concepts in a short time with very little artistic skill. "With so many professional templates to start with, I can rapidly e-mail artwork concepts and sell additional items using the supplied blanks and forms that secure a lot of add-on sales to the original order," he says.

Arbuckle also enjoys the ease of customization it provides, along with its athletic shaping and text effect capabilities. He adds that Smart Designer's professional templates come in handy for someone like himself who has little graphic art background.

The only drawback to the software is its tendency to slow down his computer since it's such a large program, and it has caused his computer to crash at times. "Their tech support has always been able to help me figure out the issue and get it resolved," Arbuckle says. "Be sure your computer is fully up to date with processor speed and memory to get the most out of the program."

♦ **Contact:** Digital Art Solutions, Tempe, AZ, (800) 959-7267; *www.smartdesigns.com*

Pantograms offers **Forte Embroidery Suite**, which can be used for everything from basic lettering and editing to advanced digitizing, according to Ron Long, national sales manager.

♦ **Key features:** Forte features auto digitizing, sequin digitizing and 250 keyboard fonts. It also uses thread charts for colors from major thread manufacturers, Long says.

♦ **Who should use this software:** "Anyone from novice to expert embroiderers and digitizers," Long says.

♦ **Who shouldn't use it:** Small home embroidery machine users should look for other options, Long says.

♦ **User review:** Larry Smith, owner of Mobile Embroidery, says Forte has all the features he needs to complete a digitized file. "It's not overly complicated," he says. "Some

other programs have too many 'clicks' to accomplish the same task." The price also makes the software attractive to Smith. "It has all the features I need at the best cost," he says.

On the downside, Smith would have liked Forte to allow TrueType fonts to be digitized, or at least have the names of similar fonts cross-referenced for greater convenience. He says it's also important to save a backup generation copy of your work. "If you err while creating curved objects, you may crash your current working copy – although it does have an auto backup feature," Smith says.

♦ **Contact:** Pantograms, Tampa, FL, (800) 872-1555; *www.pantograms.com*

Dalco Athletic sells **Stock-Stitch**, a Windows-based program that lets users choose from a selection of stock letters and numbers that can be arranged into designs, such as school or team names, according to Mike Carter, vice president of sales for Dalco. "Because they are pre-digitized, designs can be put together in minutes and ready to sew out," he says. "In addition to letters and numbers, the library also includes states, banners and mascots."

Carter says the program can be used with just about any type of appropriate appliqué fabric and Dal-Chenille, a faux-chenille material that looks and feels just like a traditional chenille letter. "It is ideal for award jackets, as it can be used to create award letters, numbers, sleeve patches and chevrons," he says. "It also can be combined with scrim felt for a finished look."

♦ **What's new:** StockStitch version 6.03 uses zigzag or satin stitch columns to sew down the pieces while still giving the user control over stitch density and column width, Carter says. "Users don't need to import files into another embroidery program, and then choose individual letters, line them up, space them and export them," he says.

♦ **Key features:** Carter breaks down one of the key features of StockStitch: "Let's say you want to create an individual, one-color name and number for the back of a baseball jersey. You would select the Text icon in the software and choose the particular font and size you want stitched on the precut component part, then type in the name and click Apply. You'll see the name on screen with a zigzag stitch. Next, select a font and size for the number, type the number and click Apply. Again, you'll see the number on screen in the standard zigzag stitch."

"At this point, you can make adjustments, such as the amount of space between the name and the number. After you've made your tweaks, save the file and export it to a floppy disk or hard drive, or send it directly to your embroidery machine. You also can make a printout of the design so that the customer can approve it before you stitch it. What's more, the software even provides an approximate stitch count, helping to price the job," says Carter.

♦ **Who should use this software:** Embroiderers who sell a great deal of uniforms and spiritwear. "This program handles a critical, frequent task and increases productivity and efficiency," Carter says.

♦ **Who shouldn't use it:** "It can't be used for anything

A Lucky Find

When choosing design software, Jerilee Auclair says it's vital to examine the company behind the software as closely as you examine the software itself. Of course, she didn't know that at first. She just got lucky.

When Auclair, owner of Black Eagle Designs, first opened the doors of her business, she had somewhat of a chance encounter with Hirsch International, which sells Pulse design software. "I did not make an informed choice," Auclair says. "I was doing research on equipment and sent info requests to every company that offered the information from a card in the back of a magazine. Hirsch was the only company that responded."

Not knowing exactly what she was buying, Auclair purchased a Tajima embroidery machine, along with the Pulse embroidery software. "That's when I began to compare it to other systems and realized I truly had gotten lucky," she says. "It would have been easy to choose another system and end up having to spend big money replacing it."

But not only was the quality of the software top-notch, but Pulse's free and capable tech support team kept her business going. When Auclair encountered a sizable problem shortly after she purchased the software, Pulse stepped in. "I had a major computer issue which I incorrectly thought was a software issue," she says. "Pulse went miles beyond what was required or reasonably expected to help me keep my business doors open. I've never seen another software company go to the lengths Pulse does for a customer."

"Through the years, I've come to the conclusion that it's not just the software that I bought, but the company behind it. I was a new and very green person who wanted to embroider, and it would have been easy for them to shrug me off. They didn't."
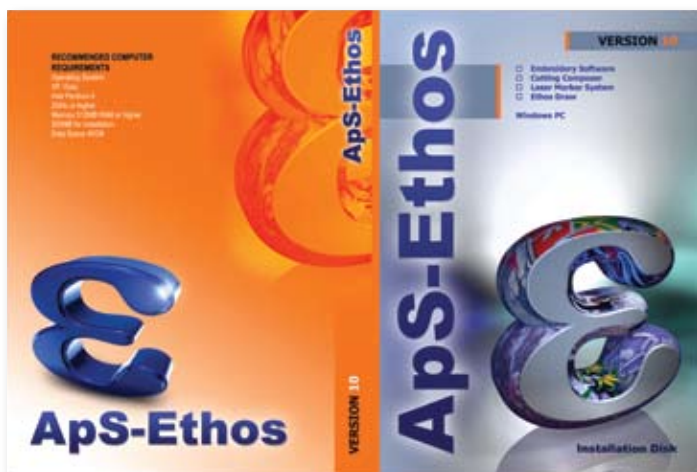
other than appliqué in the stock letters, numbers and shapes that come with it," Carter says. "You can't edit or digitize with this program."

♦ **User review:** Trina Miller, director of purchasing for Express Design Group Inc. (*asi/190969*), enjoys the ability to "just sew foregrounds alone," along with the ability to quickly change letters that StockStitch provides. "At the time of purchase, it was the only one on the market that worked with precut Greek letters and Tajima embroidery machines," she says.

Miller cautions that the software doesn't allow her to automatically center letters upon being altered. "You have to space the letters and center them manually," she says. "The program doesn't always work when the width of the letters is different. Sometimes you run into spacing issues."

♦ **Contact:** Dalco Athletic, Dallas, (800) 288-3252; *www.dalcoathletic.com*

Brother International offers **ApS-Ethos** embroidery software via GS-USA. The software is provided in a basic package (**Artisan Plus**) and

a more advanced package (**Virtuoso Plus**). Both are upgraded yearly with new features, according to Lisa Pross, Brother's senior marketing and operations manager.

♦ **Key features:** Both the Artisan and Virtuoso versions of ApS-Ethos include over 200 satin fonts, fill stitch specialties, snapshots, branching, reflect tools, automatic appliqué and underlay choices, Pross says. "The Virtuoso Plus includes vectorized art manipulation, automatic vector conversion tools, a CAD-based drawing system, a comprehensive database and the ability to create custom keyboard lettering."

♦ **Who should use this software:** Pross says the Artisan Plus version of ApS-Ethos, which is a lettering, editing and digitizing package, is ideal for those who are new to embroidery design and manipulation, while the Virtuoso Plus is perfect for more advanced and experienced embroiderers.

♦ **Who shouldn't use it:** The software "can be used by all levels of embroiderers," says Pross.

♦ **User review:** Marcia J. Chabot, owner of BackYard Kreations, likes that ApS-Ethos

is user-friendly, and also enjoys the editing point tool. "You can go from creating a word using the text tool and then, with the one-click system, select the edit point tool, and you are then able to change the shape of the text," she says. Chabot also appreciates the bordering tool, which allows her to put a border around most of the text in the software.

One thing the software is missing, according to Chabot: a spell check tool. "In addition, I would like the printout to list the thread color next to each of the steps in a design," she says.

♦ **Contact:** Brother International, Bridgewater, NJ, (800) 432-3532; *www.brother.com*
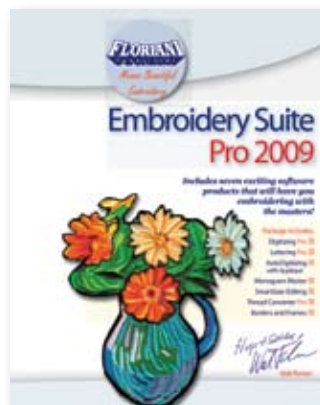
Floriani Commercial sells **Embroidery Suite Pro 2009**, which has been perfected through five generations of Floriani family decorator knowledge, according to Melanie Coakley, Floriani's commercial division manager. "What used to take years to learn is now built into the software," she says.

♦ **Key features:** "Items like the pull-and-push compensation are integrated into the design with each selection of fabric to sew on," Coakley says.

"This save-to-sew feature is a must for a variety of fabrics. Your master file is saved as punched, and with the click of a button, various fabrics can be stitched with proper push-and-pull comp."

♦ **Who should use this software:** Everyone, from the novice to the seasoned veteran, Coakley says. "Its simple-to-use format engages the most difficult of designs to create," she says.

♦ **Who shouldn't use it:** "Pertaining to embroidery, I have not found anything it will not accomplish," Coakley says.

♦ **User review:** D.J. Anderson, director of Floriani Embroidery Products, says he loves how easy the software is to use. "The layout is very simple and well organized," he says. "It doesn't overwhelm you with icons when you open it up. It's laid out like a digitizing software program should be."

Anderson also likes a pair of tools that Floriani Embroidery Suite Pro offers: the Magic Wand, an auto-digitizing tool that allows users to choose the type of stitch they want to auto-convert before the actual conversion; and the Save2Sew feature, which lets users modify underlay settings and density settings, and pull compensation settings of a design based on the chosen fabric type. The software is also relatively inexpensive, according to Anderson.

"The only negative thing I see is that the software is still in its infancy," Anderson says. "There are a couple of features that I would like to see added, like team names and merging elements. I guess it just doesn't have some of the bells and

whistles of other programs."

♦ **Contact:** Floriani Commercial, Knoxville, TN, (865) 459-5115; *www.rnkdist ributing.com*

Great Notions' software, **iPrint**, is so easy that anyone from decorating beginner to expert can use it, according to Deborah Jones, vice president of sales and marketing. "It's ideal for graphics users who want to combine graphic images, add lettering and export creation for printing transfers, direct garment printing or other use," she says.

♦ **Key features:** iPrint's custom imprinting ability is important, as is the fact that it can import images in popular graphics formats, according to Jones. It can also resize, merge, rotate, mirror and add lettering.

♦ **Who should use this software:** Jones says iPrint is especially suited to beginner and intermediate graphics users.

♦ **Who shouldn't use it:** "Even those users who are proficient in high-end graphics software may enjoy this simpler package for simple creations," Jones says.

♦ **User review:** Along with the appeal of its low cost,

Margaret McKenzie, a Dallas-based embroiderer, likes how iPrint allows her to add lettering and create special lettering effects. "This helps create a mood for my artwork, such as funny or dramatic," she says.

McKenzie says her only complaint is that the software doesn't give her much control over editing colors for bitmap and .jpeg images.

♦ **Contact:** Great Notions, Dallas, (800) 528-8305; *www. greatnotionsprintables.com*

SWF East offers **Sierra Embroidery Office**, which recently came out with its newest version: EO9. Its production time estimate tool is among its most popular features.

♦ **What's new:** "The main upgrades in EO9 are in the interface with the end-user," says David Ritchie, sales manager for SWF East. "It has a Microsoft Office 2007 look and feel to it, so it is comfortable to use and easier to navigate through."

♦ **Key features:** The productivity tools predict when a project will be completed based on design characteristics, machine features and operator intervention. The more accurate the parameters are specified, the more accurate the estimate.

EO9's Stitch & Print tool is also popular, featuring realistic simulation views that allow customers to preview screen-printing designs on pictures of garments or digital 3-D models. This tool also provides movie files that show designs simulated on 360 degree spinning 3-D models and quotes with details of designs

used and jobs to be done, says Ritchie.

In addition, EO9 includes over 100 design fonts, true type fonts, auto-digitizing from CDR and AI files, over 400 patterns, on-screen vector editing and advanced copy-and-paste features.

♦ **Who should use this software:** All embroidery customers should be able to put this software to good use, Ritchie says.

♦ **Who shouldn't use it:** "Filing your tax returns would be a good example" of what not to use EO9 for, Ritchie jokes.

♦ **User review:** Pat Horowitz, training director for SWF East, says the "intuitiveness of the software" is what impresses her the most. "It's easy to use; ribbons pop up with the tools you need on them." Additionally, Horowitz likes the Dynamic Zoom tool. "You can zoom in and out by dragging your mouse up or down," she says. She also appreciates the Auto Scroll feature, "which allows you to rest your mouse in a band around your screen, click in the bar, and the screen starts scrolling," she says. "This is so handy when digitizing."
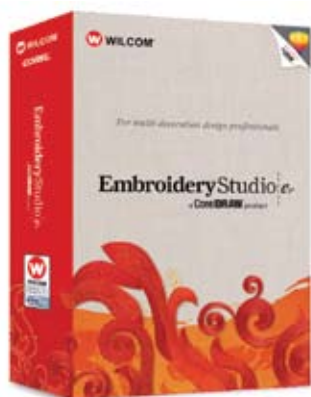
The ability to open con-

densed (.cnd) files is an improvement that Horowitz would like to see added to EO9. "It would help a lot with color assignment and bringing in designs I already have in the format," she says.

♦ **Contact:** SWF East, Tampa, FL, (877) 793-3278; *www. swfeast.com*

Wilcom International recently released two software products based on CorelDRAW. Both **Wilcom DecoStudio e1.5** and **Wilcom EmbroideryStudio e1.5** include the complete CorelDRAW Graphics Suite X4. Each program also comes with stitch processing, combines print and embroidery, and supports all major embroidery machines, according to Kristi McKenzie, Wilcom International marketing manager.

♦ **What's new:** Both software offerings come with a great deal of extras, such as additional clipart, templates and fonts, McKenzie says.

♦ **Key features:** DecoStudio provides automatic conversion from vector art to stitch to suit the user's particular fabric and garment type. It also comes with true object-

based editing, basic digitizing tools and multi-decoration design capability, according to McKenzie.

EmbroideryStudio comes with all the tools of DecoStudio, along with an auto fabric assistant that "intelligently determines the best underlay, density and pull compensation, depending on parameters," McKenzie says. EmbroideryStudio also features appliqué tools, customizable workspace and dockable toolbars, monogram wizards, and creative effects such as color blending.

♦ **Who should use this software:** Promotional product companies, users who are still getting their feet wet in the industry, and those looking to add another decoration technique should go with DecoStudio, while professional embroidery digitizers, fashion designers and textile artists should choose EmbroideryStudio, McKenzie says.

♦ **Who shouldn't use it:** DecoStudio is not for expert designers or complicated, artistic embroidery designing, and EmbroideryStudio shouldn't be used "if you're only doing print work and not wanting to get into embroidery," McKenzie says.

♦ **User review:** Wilcom International does not allow direct user reviews of its software, but one testimonial compiled by the company says, "The improvements made with EmbroideryStudio e1.5 have made digitizing even more efficient. The customizable user interface allows me to put the exact tools I need where I need them, and the auto fabric settings give me the ability to quickly start a design."

♦ **Contact:** Wilcom International Pty. Ltd., Alexandria, Australia, *www.wilcom.com.au*

EMBROIDERY BUSINESS MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

FastManager, which is owned and operated by **JCW Software LLC,** was originally created in the mid 1990s to aid in the screen printing and embroidery business of the company's owner. Fast forward to 2008, when FastManager released a small-business version of its FastManager PRO software called FastManager SMS (Small-to-Medium Shop). "The SMS is an identical looking program to the PRO, but is scaled down to make it more specific to the everyday needs of the small-

to medium-size shop," says Andy Boyea, FastManager's sales and marketing manager. "It is also a customizable version by which the customer can purchase only those advanced modules that would be applicable to their specific business without the need to purchase all modules, which are available in the PRO version at a higher price tag."

♦ **What's new:** Boyea points out two major improvements to FastManager via its new SMS product. "The auto-schedule module knows what days of the week you are open, the times you are open, your holiday schedule, and can very precisely calculate not only how long a job will take, but will also find the right machines and also schedule all the sub departments," he says. SMS also boasts a directly integrated purchasing system linked with Alpha Shirt Company (*asi/34408*), Broder Bros. Co. (*asi/42090*) and NES (*asi/72808*). "With this module, you can check stock and place your order with just a click of a button," Boyea says. "You will get back confirmation numbers and adjusted pricing information, which automatically get applied in the program for you."

♦ **Key features:** FastManager's PRO and SMS versions allow users to choose whether to order their goods by individual work order or by consolidating multiple orders to save on shipping costs. "We also have a profit analysis tool, so you know exactly how much you are making on every job, and you can even run this as a report on specific customers to see how much money you are

actually making off of them," Boyea says.

♦ **Who should use this software:** Boyea says the two software offerings together are "a perfect fit for any size screen printer, digital garment printer, embroidery or heat-pressing company."

♦ **Who shouldn't use it:** "Although the program has modules to handle other services, it is not specifically designed for sign shops," Boyea says.

♦ **User review:** Heidi Husman, graphic designer and systems analyst for Special Tees (*asi/331342*) and user of FastManager PRO, says her favorite feature is the fact that she doesn't have to enter in prices for most of her vendors. "The prices are kept up by the suppliers themselves, so I know they are up to date," she says. "If I had to do this on my own for every single product that a vendor handles, it could take hours, and the chance of inaccuracy would be high. Using FastManager takes that worry out of the equation."

Husman also likes that most of the work is done on one screen. "The quote screen is the same as the work order screen, which is the same as the invoice screen," she says. "This software is loaded with features that most others don't have, and it's at a great price point for small- to medium-size businesses like ours."

The only downside to FastManager PRO for Husman is that not all distributor catalogs are listed. "A couple of times, I've called vendors to ask why they don't have their catalog in there," she says. "Both times, they responded promptly, and

within two weeks, their catalogs showed up inside FastManager."

♦ **Contact:** FastManager, West Palm Beach, FL; (888) 728-8718; *www.fastmanager.com*
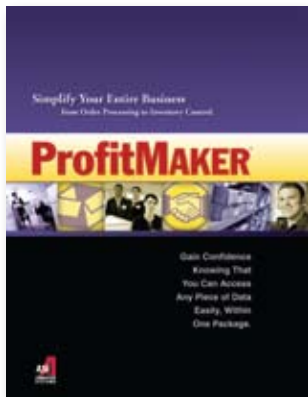
ASI Computer Systems presents **ProfitMaker**, which is the "flagship product" of the company, according to Mike Place, director of sales and marketing. ProfitMaker is updated twice a year, and its newest version, 9.0, is scheduled for release in the first quarter of 2009, as announced at this year's ASI Show in Orlando.

♦ **What's new:** "We have recently added integrations with many blank wearables vendors' online ordering systems, as well as the key ASI services ESP Online, LogoMall, ASI-CreditConnect and ASI Supplier Ratings," Place says.

♦ **Key features:** The software is "a complete business management tool" that allows users to put all of their order information and accounting materials into one system, Place says. "ProfitMaker is very good at processing very detailed orders – orders that have components or products from multiple vendors, like multiple blank wearables vendors and

decoration vendors. It also contains a complete accounting system, so everything is processed in one system. Avoiding re-keying information saves time and errors."

♦ **Who should use this software:** "We have versions of ProfitMaker for both distributors and suppliers, and some customers do a mix by doing some of the processing in-house, such as screen printing or embroidery," Place says.

♦ **Who shouldn't use it:** "It doesn't make sense for companies that don't do enough transactions to where they feel like their current processes are holding back the growth of their business," Place says.

♦ **User review:** Alan Mittleman, president and CFO of Custom Logos (*asi/173183*), says he loves the fact that ProfitMaker is used by many of his company's vendors. "This means that we're able to communicate with them in a way they're comfortable with," he says. Mittleman adds that the software does a great job of tracking sales and margins by sales rep and customer, and gives him the ability to easily handle his inventory and company stores through Profit-Maker.

♦ **Contact:** ASI Computer Systems, Cedar Falls, IA, (319) 266-7688; *www.asicomp.com*

Shopworks' OnSite 7, includes all modules to run a business, says Jay Malanga, president of Shopworks. This includes order entry, marketing and job quotes, customer management, purchasing, shipping, receiving, inventory, production control, and accounting and general ledger features.

"All of these modules work seamlessly together, minimizing data entry and maximizing employee efficiency," Malanga says.

♦ **What's new:** Among the key improvements to version 7 of OnSite are improved navigation tools, an attachment feature that allows users to store digital files in the system and link them to records, and improved e-mail and alarm formats.

♦ **Key features:** "Two of our strongest features are order entry and the management and production of a work in progress," Malanga says.

♦ **Who should use this software:** Malanga says companies in a wide array of industries – screen printing, embroidery, awards, promotional product manufacturing and distributing, and digital printing – that make between $500,000 and $30 million annually in sales, should use OnSite 7.

♦ **Who shouldn't use it:** "Unlike QuickBooks and other accounting-only packages, our software is not intended to be one-size-fits-all," Malanga says. "Any companies that are not in our industry would probably not benefit from our software. OnSite was specifically

designed to address the needs of our industry."

♦ **User review:** Greg Kitson, president of Mind's Eye Graphics Inc. (*asi/273036*), says OnSite's purchasing module helps him to simplify employee schedules and give customers an accurate estimate of delivery of the finished product. "It's quite simple to generate daily reports showing how many orders were entered, produced and invoiced in both net and gross sales in order to ensure that we're meeting our profitability benchmarks," he says. "After a few months of data entry, the management reports begin to provide information crucial to profitable management and business growth decisions."

Kitson has three complaints about OnSite's software. "My biggest pet peeve is that with the live relational database, I can only look at one view at a time, and when doing comparative 'what if' scenarios, I have to print out, to a .pdf or paper, incremental reports or findings to show each event," he says. "It would be nice to have several windows open at the same time to review data."

His other two sticking points are the limited financial reports that the software provides, along with the weekly need to use a payroll service or another piece of software, "since it is not cost-effective for an industry program such as Shopworks to effectively manage the ever-changing payroll tax laws," Kitson says.

♦ **Contact:** Shopworks, West Palm Beach, FL, (561) 491-6000; *www.shopworx.com* ●

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