

# Growing green with Ivy Hill

Ivy Hill has issued an aggressive 'green' policy for sustainable media packaging, which the company unveils to US contributing editor Debbie Galante Block

**“W**e are committed to being the industry leader in greener entertainment packaging.” That’s the nature of Ivy Hill’s recently-issued ‘green’ policy. However, it takes more than words to bring about change, so what is the company actually doing to meet their goal? Steve Robinson, senior vice president and Richard Roth, executive vice president, sales, offer details on the company’s platform.

First off, according to Robinson, the vast majority of Ivy Hill’s standard CD and DVD products in the US will now be made from ecologically enhanced paper that includes at least 30% post consumer waste (PCW).

Another key part of Ivy Hill’s focus on green is its working partnership with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), which is one of the leading US environmental

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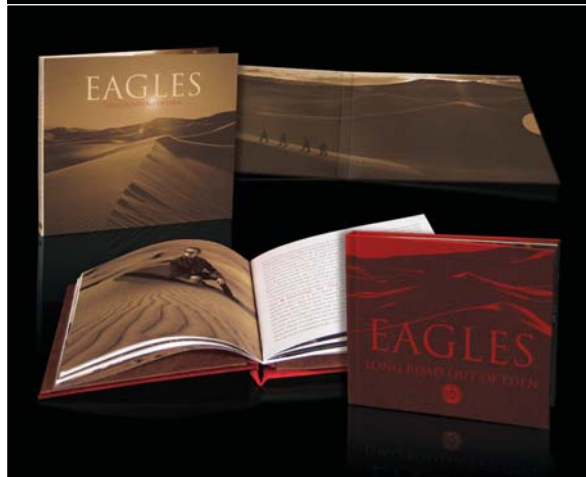
organisations. In 2007, Ivy Hill also received accreditation from the Forest Stewardship Council, an international organisation dedicated to promoting responsible stewardship of the world’s forests.

“We don’t want to make decisions for our customers,” says Robinson, “so we deliberately positioned ourselves in the middle with the NRDC on one side pushing us and our customers on the other side pulling us. NRDC is advising us as to what they think the greenest options are, and, then we are building the greenest options that we can.”

A list of case studies attests to Ivy Hill’s green commitment. For instance, the company worked on ‘Long Road Out of Eden’ from the Eagles for the exclusive Wal-Mart release. The standard package was made out of Domtar Feltweave, a 30% PCW stock. The deluxe package is made from Finch Casablanca which



Above: Ivy Hill’s Eco-Options range  
Left: A 4-Panel Soft-Pak and Casebound Disc Holder with at least 30% PCW



is also 30% PCW. Other recent green releases worked on by Ivy Hill have come from Warner Music and EMI.

Plastic trays have been a very large part of standard packaging for a number of years. Nevertheless, there is a feeling among many consumers that plastic is not ecologically sound. According to Roth, “It’s not entirely true, but that belief makes it very, very difficult for the major record labels to look hard at using plastic. They are extremely sensitive to consumer perception. As a consequence, there is a great deal of movement toward all-board solutions.”

Robinson agrees: “Even with PLA, which is made from corn, the response was that ‘it looks like plastic and our public is not going to know it’s not bad.’ I won’t state that paper making is clean, but the issues associated with it are relatively benign compared to the processes of making plastic. Recycling is another factor. In the US, more than half the paper gets recycled. The quantity of plastics recycled is much less.”

## Green, not cheap

An important issue packaging suppliers must deal with in terms of offering eco-friendly packaging is the cost. Many of the greener materials are higher cost because there are limited supplies available. While some customers are willing to pay the price, others are looking for ways to reduce packaging, and thereby reduce cost. “For example, if we look back over the last six months to a year, there has been a tremendous movement on a lot of

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Happy Feet in a 4-panel Soft-Pak of 100% PCW



(Continued from page 12) significant packaging toward the elimination of the plastic tray," says Robinson.

One product in demand right now is the Soft-Pak, which is made from renewable paperboard and, says Robinson, "It can be any shade of green, ranging from all virgin fibres to 100%

"If we can call a quick truce and work together as an industry, we can establish some standards on the packaging manufacturing side that will allow the replication/fulfilment side of our industry to develop standard automation equipment to quickly and efficiently load the discs," Robinson believes. The view at Ivy Hill



Steve Robinson

is that there is going to have some sort of real sense of industry unity on a product before companies will take on the capital expense of putting in automation.

The bottom line is that the road to eco-friendly packaging has many layers with no simple solutions. "Ivy Hill's design department is literally littered with little failures. We have to try a lot of things before any of them make sense," says Robinson. "Getting this right isn't easy, but it's a challenge worth getting up for in the morning." Ivy Hill's stance is that to succeed it takes persistent innovation and sustained commitment, of which it feels they have both. ●

## "The issues associated with paper-making are relatively benign compared to the processes of making plastic"

PCW fibres. Ivy Hill's current standard is 30% PCW, but we can easily make these out of any paperboard our customers prefer." Old Soft-Paks are reportedly very easy to recycle into new paper products. "The Wal-Mart Sustainable Packaging Scorecard gives the Soft-Pak a much better score than the old styrene jewel case," Robinson adds.

Anyone can make this package because there are no patents to work around. However, the package is not yet automated and, beyond the price of materials, the issue of automation, or lack of it, also drives up price. "Despite the fact there has been a significant reduction in the number of units sold, there still remains a relatively high volume business for hit product. That product has to be moved out the door," says Roth.

## THE GREEN COMMITMENT

Ivy Hill very recently introduced the first four volumes in its growing Eco-Options line for the packaged entertainment industry, as well as stating its ongoing commitment to greener choices for customers. Nearly two years in development, the Eco-Options line is specifically designed to set a new standard in environmentally-forward packaging and offer customers what Ivy Hill calls "the industry's broadest range of greener alternatives to traditional CD and DVD packaging available anywhere".

Ivy Hill's commitment to greener choices is summed up in its recent employee report: "We are committed to being the industry leader in greener entertainment packaging." Among the actions the company is taking are:

All of its standard CD and DVD products in the US will now be made from ecologically-enhanced paper that includes post-consumer recycled fibres while avoiding the use of virgin fibres harvested from any endangered forest.

The implementation of a range of greener office practices.

A working partnership with NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council), a key advisor in the Eco-Options program.

Accreditation from FSC (Forest Stewardship Council), an international organisation dedicated to promoting responsible stewardship of the world's forests and the only global forest management certification system where social, environmental and industry interests carry equal weight.

Increasing the percentage of post consumer waste in its current packaging, as well as exploring use of other fibres – some of them waste by-products from food production such as sugar cane and corn stalks, as well as bamboo and paper foam.

Investigating plastic alternatives made from renewable plant resources, such as polylactic acid (PLA), made from corn grain.

Supporting Wal-Mart's Sustainable Packaging Scorecard, which serves to move companies together in unison towards new industry standards, helping level the playing field, spreading investments across companies, and providing the entire industry with a common goal.