

# The Truth About Cleaning Leader . . .

## Cleaning leader is NOT:

- An IPA (Isopropyl Alcohol) pad
- An effective preventative measure against build-up
- An alternative to OEM (original equipment manufacturer) recommended cleaning methods
- A fool proof cleaning procedure for your printhead

### Question:

Is a printhead cleaning leader that is placed between the ribbon and the ribbon leader considered, by the printer OEM, as a satisfactory sole cleaning method to clean the printhead?

### Answer:

No.

Cleaning leader does not replace the manufacturer's recommended cleaning method. Cleaning leader is meant to be a supplement to the manufacturer's approved cleaning method.

### Question:

How well does a cleaning leader remove build-up from the printhead?

### Answer:

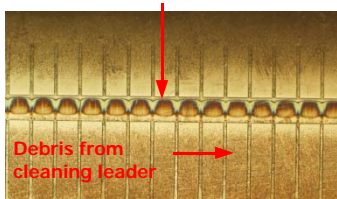
In Sony's laboratory testing, Competitive Ribbon A, containing cleaning leader between the ribbon and leader, did not show signs of build-up removal from the printhead heating element by the cleaning leader. After printing with Competitive Ribbon A, an IPA pad was used to clean the printhead, but was unable to remove the build-up left on the printhead heating element. The IPA also needed to be used to remove the debris left on the printhead from the cleaning leader.

Test: Printed 14 rolls (110mm x 450m) of Competitive Ribbon A containing cleaning leader, which is equivalent to 255,612 linear inches of ribbon, on a Zebra 140 Xi III plus at 8 ips with an optimal heat setting of 13. The 14 rolls were run according to the Competitive Ribbon A manufacturer's instructions in which the cleaning leader on each roll of ribbon was pulled over the printhead before printing.



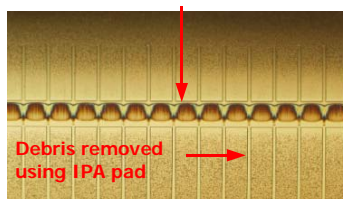
New Printhead

No significant signs of build-up removal



Printhead after printing 14 rolls of Competitive Ribbon A containing cleaning leader. Build-up was **not** removed from heating element, and cleaning leader left debris on the printhead.

Build-up unable to be removed by using IPA pad



Printhead after printing 14 rolls of Competitive Ribbon A containing cleaning leader, and after cleaning with IPA pad. IPA pad removed debris, but was unable to remove build-up.



## Facts about printhead build-up and cleaning

- Build-up can be caused from using poor quality thermal transfer ribbons which have a tendency to transfer backcoat onto the printhead. Other causes are dust, dirt, labelstock particles, and core particles.

- The major printer manufacturers recommend cleaning the printhead after every roll of ribbon with an IPA cleaning pad or cotton swab moistened with Isopropyl Alcohol (99% or greater).

Printer manufacturers recommend cleaning the printhead with approved cleaning supplies, such as cleaning cards, cleaning film, and cleaning pens, when aggressive build-up occurs on the printhead.

- To avoid excessive debris build-up, always use high quality ribbon with ink and backcoat designed to prevent build-up. Sony's ribbons are designed to protect the printhead from build-up using our SmoothCoat™ backcoat technology.

# SONY

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