



The finished shirt with added sparkle

Blinging in the changes

Rhinestones bring a bit of flash and fun to fashion garments and dancewear. **Phil Millar**, of Creative Apparel, explains how to add some sparkle

Creative Apparel took the plunge and invested in a Nagel & Hermann rhinestone machine in January of this year. "We had a customer ordering rhinestones from us regularly and we used to buy them in," explains managing director Phil Millar. "We were spending about £10,000 a year on them so we thought there was a market for doing rhinestones. We went to the exhibitions and saw this fantastic Austrian machine.

"What makes our rhinestone machine different is that it has an auto-pilot mode. This means it has a mode that doesn't need an operator, which is pretty handy when a job needs to be run overnight. The printed-out rhinestone transfers are stored on a roll at the end of the machine and so prevents a huge pile up."

It is, says Phil, a popular technique for anniversaries and dancewear, in particular, and can be mixed with embroidery and print


for a great effect. The rhinestones used by Creative Apparel are also from the machinery manufacturer, Nagel & Hermann.


For the best results, Phil recommends using a big design. "The bigger the design, the more detail that can be added into it. The simplest way to explain it would be: the bigger the transfer area, the more rhinestones can be put into the design, like how a picture has more quality the more pixels per inch it has. It's the same theory."

The maximum print size on an adult T-shirt is 300mm x 450mm – clearly the area on a child's T-shirt will be smaller. Simple designs are easier to convert to rhinestones, with the company suggesting the most effective look is to have a simple text with few serifs. Round fonts are preferable as the 'holes' in letters such as 'e' and 'a' can end up being filled in if more angular fonts are used.

Creative Apparel offers a maximum of three colours but suggests two for a better

result: "This has been proved to be effective time and time again and we print rhinestone designs for two-colour football crests, like Arsenal." The company uses rhinestones that are 2mm wide, so the lines need to be at least that wide, and it recommends using multiples of 2mm for the width of different rows in the design.

"When it comes to the process, we want to make sure it runs smoothly and, with the best quality outcome and that all starts with the garment choice," says Phil. "We choose to stay with good quality brands like Gildan and have found that, after many test runs, the DryBlend and Heavy Cotton ranges are the best. This is due to the tightness of the weave, providing ultimate grip for the rhinestones when they are transferred." Phil does add a word of caution, however: "You have to bear in mind that some [stones] may still fall off regardless of the shirt's quality." 

 www.creativeapparel.co.uk