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(71) Applicant: J.I.T. TECHNOLOGIES, INC. [US/US]; 410-D Stuart Andrew Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28217 (US).			
(72) Inventors: EWERT, Brian, C.; 9808 Windy Gap Road, Charlotte, NC 28208 (US). ROBERTS, John, S.; 1560 Truckee Drive, Carson City, NV 89701 (US). PATTERSON, George, S.; 164 Sam Clemens Drive, Dayton, NV 89403 (US). ROSE, John, R.; Unit 203, 8314 N. 21st Drive, Phoenix, AZ 85021 (US).		Published With international search report.	
(74) Agents: DREMANN, Christopher, C. et al.; Christopher C. Dremann, P.C., Suite 100, 10925 David Taylor Drive, Charlotte, NC 28262 (US).			

(54) Title: APPARATUS FOR VARIABLE IMAGE PRINTING ON TAPE

(57) Abstract

An apparatus (210) for printing variable identifying information on the tape (50) is disclosed. In a particular application, the apparatus replaces a labeling station and is combined with a case sealing station to seal cases with adhesive tape on a conventional production line. The apparatus includes a variable image printer (30), and preferably a thermal printer. The thermal printer preferably includes a thermal transfer print head and a thermal transfer ribbon (34) specially engineered to print through the release agent on the face of the tape. The tape is dispensed from a tape unwind spool and is routed past the print head with the thermal transfer ribbon positioned between the print head and the face of the tape, and the

face of the tape opposite the print head. The thermal transfer ribbon (34) is co-engineered with the tape (50) to be compatible with the physical characteristics and chemical composition of the tape (50). Accordingly, the apparatus (210) can be utilized to label any desired product codes, stock or lot numbers, bar codes, and shipping data printed thereon. In a preferred embodiment the variable image printer (30) is controlled from a standard operator control panel of a controller (48) integrated with the variable image printer (30).

