

PROCESSORS

on parade

Mike Taylor reports from the first Degraf International Open

Monte Carlo was the spectacular setting for the first Degraf International Open, an event organized by the flexo plate processor manufacturer and its partners Mekrom and AZ. More than 180 customers, OEMs, and journalists from over 52 countries attended the three-day extravaganza in the Hotel Le Meridien, staged to celebrate over 20 years of success in the flexo market - and to present Degraf's latest systems. It was also the occasion for the company to thank OEMs and partners with its own award ceremony.

A star of the event in Monte Carlo was the "revolutionary" Concept 505 XP, which is claimed to be the world's first machine to process flexo plates both in batch mode (individually) and in-line (incrementally). With this new patent pending system users can choose the operating mode that best suits their production requirements.

In batch mode, the plate is loaded into the washing bed at high speed. "Complete and faultless" washing is said to be ensured by 22 oscillating cylindrical brushes that rotate over the entire surface in opposing directions. When this operation is completed, the plate is passed to the exit section and the Concept 505 XP is ready to load the next one.

Degraf says that working in batch mode offers significant time savings compared to the in-line/incremental mode, when resurfacing individual plates and in non standard or occasional production, as well as in the use of thicker plates (exceeding 4mm).

In in-line mode, the new machine loads plates one after the other. They then pass through to the washing bed, one after the other, without stopping, while the cylindrical brushes move in the opposite direction, with a rotational oscillating action. The plates then exit the machine "perfectly clean", ready for the machine operators". As there is no downtime before the loading of the following plate, the in-line working mode allows continuous production.

The working mode can be selected easily through a 'user friendly' touchscreen on the front of the 505 XP. When processing is completed, the brushes are automatically washed with fresh solvent to eliminate any trace of polymer. They are then lifted off the washing bed to avoid any possible bristle damage.

Another new system on parade was the Concept 305 EDLF, a multi process unit for exposing, drying and finishing flexo plates up to



92 x 120cm.

It features a new automatic system for opening the lid, which gives the user easy, fast and safe access to the equipment from three sides. A PLC with touchscreen operator interface provides simple control of all functions.

Optimum output

Aimed at all flexo users who need to manage different production activities with a single unit, the Concept 305 EDLF is also equipped with a temperature control that keeps lamps at 45degC for optimum UV output. A light integrator system ensures that, during the exposure phase the plates always receive the same quantity of light independently from the lamp output; and a controlled cooled bed is said to reduce oxygen emissions, decreasing or eliminating blurring problems.

This multi process unit also has a drying section of four drawers, each with its own timer, where the air flows uniformly for rapid evaporation of the solvent, said to help reduce the overall process time. The finishing section has 20 UV-A and 19 UV-C lamps that can be activated together or individually, as required.

Also new was the Concept 305 P, offering a

high level of automation and "maximum efficiency" for mid size (up to 92 x 120cm) plate wash-out. This model utilizes Degraf's proven rotating cylindrical brushes which, oscillating in opposing directions, are said to reduce processing time and eliminate any risk of plate movement. This is claimed to make the whole process faster.

A simple locking system allows tool-less removal of the brushes, with access, maintenance and cleaning made easy. An integrated solvent density meter measures the percentage of polymer in the washing solvent, topping it up when the set-up values are exceeded. This helps to ensure greater accuracy in the process, says Degraf.

The Concept 305 P performs different cleaning cycles automatically to ensure consistent quality, with cleaning of the wiping brushes after every plate is processed.

Degraf also presented the Concept 505 DW wash-out unit for both analogue and digital plates. Officially launched last May, this machine was profiled in the June issue of *Converting Today* (page 28).

All of these machines are available through Degraf's international network of resellers and OEMs. □

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