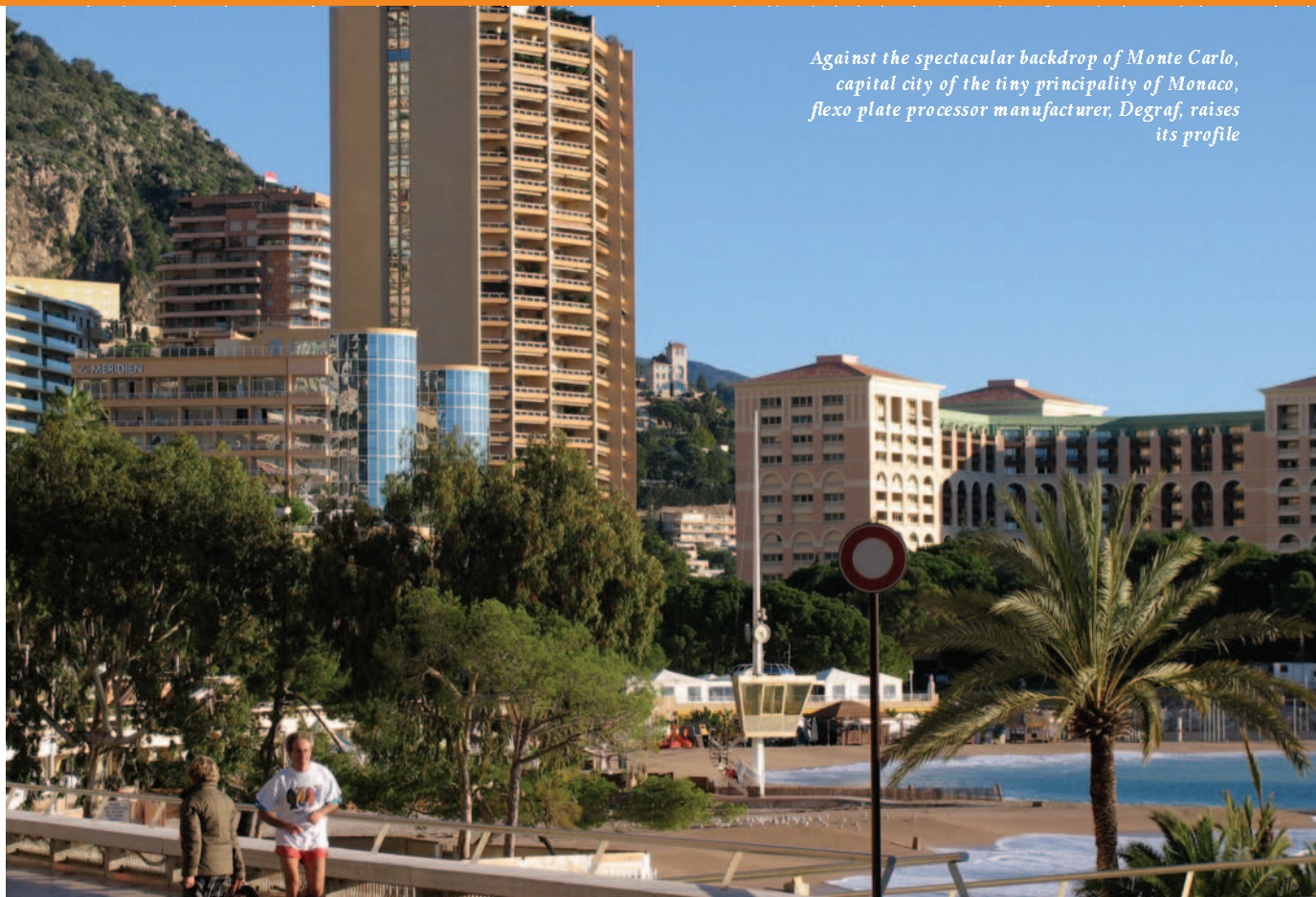


*Against the spectacular backdrop of Monte Carlo, capital city of the tiny principality of Monaco, flexo plate processor manufacturer, Degraf, raises its profile*



# Degraf unveils new concepts in flexo plate processing

Monte Carlo was the venue for a recent gathering of Degraf resellers and the media at which the company unveiled its plans for the future of flexo plate processing. APP's Brian Moore was there.

**H**EADQUARTERED in the town of Lacchiarella just outside Milan, Italy, Degraf is the name behind a great many of the world's flexo plate processors. That the name may not be so well known among flexo printers and converters – whose processors usually come from distributors in a package with their flexo platemakers – is something that the management of Degraf would like to change, hence the recent gathering of 182

distributors and media from 52 countries in Monte Carlo.

In business for over 30 years, Degraf has been quietly developing and manufacturing its line of technologically innovative, reliable, and high-quality processors for the last 20 of them.

Degraf's technology has been adding the perfect finish to flexo plates imaged by BASF, DuPont, Flint, Asahi, MacDermid and Kodak systems, so it comes as no surprise that the company – which has been 'behind the scenes' for so long – would like more of its end-users to know more about the company, its aims and its vision.

Though the Degraf name does not appear on its processors, the company is very well known to OEMs such as DuPont and Asahi who have sufficient confidence in the Italian manufacturer's products to place their own badge on the technology, and to sell it as part of complete and robust end-to-end flexo platemaking systems.

Few end users have any reason to make direct contact with Degraf which is ably represented in the field

by its five OEMs and specialised international distributor, Mekrom Engineering SA of Lugano, Switzerland. Acting as the intermediary between Degraf and its OEM customers, Mekrom sales manager, Géry Dubois takes care of most customers in the Australian, New Zealand and South East Asian markets.

Degraf president, Riccardo De Caria who hosted the Monte Carlo event, is keen to open up a dialogue between his company and its ultimate customers, to make sure they are fully aware not only of what solutions the company has to offer, but also, that it is ready and listening intently for input such as special requirements from the people who use the products.

Says De Caria, "Degraf always has been and always will be focused on research and development in response to market needs.

"Whilst we will continue to market our solutions through the OEMs and our partner, Mekrom, we will in future take opportunities, such as this 'Degraf Open', to make sure that the market is optimally informed about our exper-

tise and our offerings.”

It was largely in response to the needs voiced by end-users of Degraf products that the company developed several innovative new concepts and took the opportunity to launch them in Monte Carlo.

Among the innovations unveiled with great fanfare in Monte Carlo and now filtering through the OEM and Mekrom distribution network is the new Concept 505 XP, said to be the world's first washout unit which is capable of processing plates in either batch or inline mode.

In batch mode, the plate is completely loaded into the washing bed at high speed for comprehensive washing by 22 oscillating cylindrical brushes. Upon completion of washing, the plate is transported out and the 505 XP is ready to process the next plate.

Working in batch mode is particularly useful in the resurfacing of individual plates and in non-standard or ad-hoc production, as well as in the use of extra-thick plates exceeding 4mm, offering substantial time savings compared to inline mode.

In inline mode, the 505 XP loads plates one after the other, conveying them through the washer one after the other continuously. While plates are in transit, cylindrical brushes move in the opposite direction, with a rotating, oscillating action.

Since there is no downtime whatsoever, between the loading of the next plate, inline working mode allows for continuous, non-stop plate production, optimising the entire working process. Control of the Concept 505 XP is made easy through a user-friendly touch screen.

“I am sure this new ‘Concept’ confirms our constant commitment in



*Degraf president, Riccardo De Caria: keen to make the packaging world much more aware of his company and its expertise in flexo plate processing*



*Mekrom Engineering SA sales manager, Géry Dubois, takes care of most customers in the Australian, New Zealand and South East Asian markets, explains the features and benefits of Degraf's new Concept 505 XP flexo plate processor*

the search for concrete and practical solutions for everyone who is involved in the production of flexographic plates,” says De Caria.

Meanwhile, Degraf launched the Concept 305 EDLF, a multi-process unit for exposing, drying and finishing flexo plates which, says De Caria, is the most innovative solution of its type on the market.

Capable of processing plates up to 92 x 120cm, the 305 EDLF features a new automatic lid opening system, enabling the user to have easy, fast and safe access to the equipment from three sides.

All functions are easily managed via touch-screen operator interface resulting in a versatile production unit for flexo printers who need to manage a variety of different production activities with a single system.

The 305 EDLF is equipped with a temperature control to keep lamps at a consistent 45.C, to guarantee optimum UV output.

A light integrator system ensures that during the exposure phase, plates always receive the same amount of light independently from the lamps' output. A controlled cooled bed considerably reduces oxygen emissions, resulting in a decrease or total elimination of blurring problems.

This multi-process unit also includes a drying section made up of four drawers, each one with its own timer, where the air flows uniformly for a quick evaporation of the solvent, resulting in a general reduction of process time.

The finishing section is made up of 20 UV-A and 19 UV-C lamps, which can be activated altogether or individually, in order to maximise flexibility for the best management of

the equipment.

Last but not least, Degraf debuted its new Concept 305 P processor for mid-sized (up to 92 x 120cm) plate washout. The 305 P incorporates Degraf's well-proven rotating cylindrical brushes to provide prepress houses and packaging printers with an efficient and reliable solution for flexo plate production.

The movement of brushes which oscillate in opposing directions, reduces processing time whilst eliminating any plate movement while in contact with the brushes. This results in a perfect and stable position of the plate, which optimises the mechanical action of the brushes, making the whole process faster.

A simple locking system allows the removal of the brushes without requiring any kind of tool, so that the access to the brushes is extremely easy, simplifying both maintenance and cleaning operations.

An integrated solvent density meter measures the percentage of polymer in the washing solvent, topping it up with fresh solvent, thereby ensuring greater accuracy of the process and improving the result.

Different cleaning cycles are automatically performed in the 305 P to ensure consistent quality: cleaning of the wiping brushes after every plate is processed; cleaning when the unit is switched off; and circulation of solvent in stand-by mode to keep the brushes 'ready-to-use'.

Well satisfied with Degraf's first International Open, De Caria says more events are planned in the future in order to increase the awareness of the company's solutions and innovative Concepts to the world of flexo printing plate production. □