

Degraf launches plate processors

James Quirk reports from Degraf's first International Open event in Monte Carlo, where several new plate processing systems were launched

Degraf, Italian manufacturer of equipment for the production of flexo plates, hosted 180 customers, partners, and journalists at its first International Open event. The event, held in Monte Carlo, welcomed visitors from 52 countries and was attended by large delegations from the US, Far East, and South America.

The company used the occasion to launch a series of new products and to acknowledge the ongoing support of its distributors and OEMs. Organized in association with AZ, a subsidiary of Degraf, and Mekrom, the company's main distributor, the two-day event celebrated the company's 20 years in the flexo industry.

Degraf, which sells its products through major plate manufacturers such as Dupont, Flint Group, Kodak, MacDermid, and Asahi, displayed ten machines at the event, four of which are new this year: the 'Concept' processors 305 P, 505 XP, and 505 DW, and a multi-process unit, Concept 305 EDLF.

The Concept 305 P is the updated version of Degraf's 301 P, which was also displayed at the event. The 305 P is a processor for flexo plates of up to 92x120cm (36x48"), which allows the operator to remove all brushes manually – allowing maintenance and cleaning operations to be simplified. As with all Degraf washing units, the movement rotating cylindrical brushes, which oscillate in different directions, reduce processing time and eliminate plate shifting, according to the company.

Concept 505 XP is claimed to be the first wash-out unit in the world that can process flexo plates of up to 132x203cm (52x80") in batch or in-line mode.

In batch mode, the plate is loaded into the washing bed at high speed. Comprehensive washing is ensured by 22 oscillating cylindrical brushes, which rotate over the entire surface in opposing directions. When this operation is completed, the plate passes to the exit section and the machine is ready to load the next plate. Working in batch mode is particularly useful in the resurfacing of individual plates and in non-standard or occasional production, as well as in the use of extra-thick plates (exceeding 4 mm), offering significant time savings compared to the inline/incremental mode.

Concept 505 DW, a wash-out unit launched in May 2006, is specifically designed to allow the production of analogue and digital plates using a single piece of equipment. The machine can process plates of up to 132x203cm (52x80"). The processor is equipped with a prewashing section, which removes the carbon layer from the digital plates, which is then collected in a





(L-r) His Excellency René Novella, secretary of state for Monte Carlo; and Degraf president Riccardo de Caria at the gala dinner at the Hotel de Paris

Degraf used the event to underline its continuing strategy of selling its machines through a network of OEMs, partners and resellers around the world. 'We do not like to sell directly to the customer,' said Jacques Dutard. 'We want to create the demand from our five OEMs, instead of just making the machines that they ask for.'

The company's emphasis is on investing in R&D and developing new solutions – it lacks a commercial structure strong enough to enter the market independently. Géry Dubois, sales manager for Degraf's main distributor Mekrom, reiterated: 'Selling directly necessitates a local support network and therefore great resources.'

separate tank. This approach ensures that the washing solvent is always non-contaminated.

The first Concept 505 DW was installed at NuMaber, a flexo trade shop based near Treviso, Italy. Impressed with the new unit, the company installed a second machine in May 2006.

Concept 305 EDLF is a multi-process unit for exposing, drying and finishing flexo plates. It can process plates of up to 92x120cm (36x48"), and contains a new automatic system for the opening of the lid, allowing the operator fast and safe access to the equipment from three sides.

Concept 305 EDLF is also equipped with a lamp temperature control which keeps lamps at 45°C to maintain optimum UV output. A controlled cooled bed considerably reduces oxygen emissions, with the consequent decrease 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 together or individually to ensure maximum flexibility for a better management of the equipment.

Alongside the new machines, Degraf also gave visitors the chance to see Concept 201 HTD; an all-in-one unit which can manage the entire flexo production cycle for plates up to 66x81cm (26x32"); Concept 400 ECLF, a multi-process unit for plate exposing and finishing; Concept 501 ETL, a large format exposure unit; and the Concepts 501 D and 501 LF, a large format dryer and light finisher combination.

During the event, Degraf thanked its OEMs and partners in an award ceremony. OEMs Asahi, Dupont, Flint Group, Kodak and MacDermid were all acknowledged, as well as customers NuMaber and JV Imaging, and Asia Pacific equipment service leader Remi Loh.

The two-day event culminated in a gala dinner in the luxurious setting of the Hotel de Paris in Monte Carlo, where guests were entertained by the Philharmonic Orchestra of Nice. ■

