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sustainable drycleaning

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Drycleaning companies were once again putting the environment and sustainability to the fore. As well as focussing on new solvents, they were exploring the possibilities of different cleaning techniques. On the finishing side the focus was on productivity and quality. Janet Taylor reports

Export markets have become a strong focus for drycleaning equipment companies as many are based in Italy where the home market economy is relatively weak. The American markets are a great attraction and Italian companies are well tuned to the needs of these regions.

Local support is very important for these markets and Renzacci has recently opened a base in Chicago.

Speaking after the show, Scott Mondì, general manager Renzacci USA, said that from his view the show had gone well.

Renzacci Italy's commitment to the event and to bringing a "wonderful representative cross-section of innovative products" had really helped to establish Renzacci USA in the North American market.

Now this company could provide "the final piece necessary to deliver quality, innovative products to the North American market and the ability to truly support the dealers and customers." Mondì said that many of the visitors to the Renzacci booth had commented on the innovation and technology that is evident in the products, such as world class soft-mount design on alternative solvent machines, a "no vent" dryer and a DrySolv drycleaning machine that achieves solvent mileage of 1,100lbs per gallon.

The i-Genius ozone cabinet is designed for protective equipment that cannot be washed or drycleaned but that needs deodorising and sanitising quickly and easily.

Mondì also said that many visitors had been very positive about the "i-Brain" computer that offers touchscreen technology and "the most user-friendly interface that I have ever seen." He thought that one of the main trends at the show was that drycleaners are learning to do more with less.

They are looking to build more automation and more efficiency into their processes.

They are also moving towards the use of alternative solvents at increased rates and wetcleaning is also becoming more important.

He said that these trends boded well for Renzacci as its soft-mount technology achieves much faster cycle times on alternative solvent machines.

Renzacci's range also includes washer-extractors and this allows Mondì's team to offer the end user and the dealer a full line of products from one supplier.

He liked the Atlanta venue and the organisation, saying that the city is a convenient location.

He was doubtless pleased to hear that the Clean show plans to return there in 2021.

Gabriele Cuppini, sales director of Union, said that his company was one of the leaders in the US market. The company was showing both examples of its full range and machines that it was introducing to the market.

All machines for this market are multisolvent but Cuppini highlighted two in particular. Both were air-cooled and did not need distillation - machines without distillation are particular requirement for the USA.

For the first time, the company was showing the Cloud machine, which uses

low-temperature steam rather than solvent.

"A steam machine can be a good complement to solvent drycleaning or for businesses that specialise in wetcleaning," said Cuppini.

He added that it can help to increase production as it can handle a wide range of work, including textiles, leathers, bags and shoes and is good for dealing with medium to low soiling.

Giocomo Fontana, export sales manager at Maestrelli was focussed on a return to the American market. In the past Maestrelli had done good business in Boston and New York but the distributor had long retired.

Fontana said that drycleaners in North America are used to buying locally so he was looking for a distributor that would import direct from Italy and provide all transportation, installation and technical support.

As an example of the range the company was showing the Dreamclean multisolvent machine without distillation.

At the Fimbimatic stand, LCNi talked to its president, Gino Biago and Vincenzo Minarelli, export sales manager.

Biago said he was satisfied with the show. The USA was coming out of recession and so the company was primarily focussed on this market although he had seen visitors from outside the host country.

The company was featuring the F Series Saver Edition SE multisolvent machines. These can be used with K4, hydrocarbon or GreenEarth.

Biago did not think that any one solvent dominated the market and Minarelli added that he thought the large number of alternative solvents could cause some confusion.

One of the advantages of this design was that it works entirely without water and this market was very concerned about water and energy use. It also has a nebuliser cleaning system that enhances and speeds the process.

In addition to machines the company was also featuring the range of decorative machine wraps that it introduced in Europe last year.

These allow drycleaners to differentiate their shops from the competition and they can choose from standard designs or request a customised design.

Italclean's managing director Eugenio Boni said the show was meeting but not exceeding expectations. The first day had been good and the second excellent, however the third day, when he spoke to LCNi, had been quieter and he expected the last day to be quiet.

The company was here to meet customers, not just to sell machines. He was showing a hydrocarbon machine that was very different in design from the one seen in 2013 and had several new features including a redesigned vacuum pump and motor. Boni said that the company had rationalised the back of the machine to make it more efficient and it now has a more powerful inverter.

The machine was available with and without distillation.

Realstar was showing its multisolvent machines but sales manager Roberto Grandi also highlighted the company's "new concept" machine that cleans by using steam and does not use water or solvent.

Grandi explained the thinking behind the concept. Drycleaning shops receive a lot of clothes that are not really dirty but do need refreshing. The machine will do that and the company has commissioned a special detergent for the system. Any stains can be pre-spotted.

He believed that this could be used as an additional machine to help to increase productivity by dealing with lightly-soiled work while the solvent machine dealt with the more

heavily-soiled loads. Grandi said the system was attracting a lot of interest and Realstar was carrying out field trials. The machine was easy to install and could fit into any kind of shop. A further advantage was that as it did not use solvent, it avoided the associated regulations.

The finish is important

On the Pony stand marketing manager Stella Fumagalli said the show had been good for the company, and that she had seen many of Pony's distributors.

There had also been interest from other distributors and from drycleaners.

For the past two years the company has had an office in Washington and launched this at the 2013 Clean show. Pony USA has now carried out installations locally in Washington DC, Virginia and Maryland. Customers have included big hotels such as the Willard, Four Seasons and the Ritz Carlton and also large drycleaning plants.

Last year Pony introduced the Twins rotary double-buck shirt machine to the European market and was now introducing this to the US market along with a double rotary collar and cuff press. The Twins machine can produce up to 100 shirts per hour. It features Pony's hot air recovery system, which reduces energy consumption and the machine also reduces steam use.

Corinna Mapelli at Trevil was at the show to meet contacts in North America and in South American countries such as Brazil and Mexico. Trevil was presenting the Presto FC single-buck shirt unit to these markets. The machine has already been seen in Europe but was new for the target countries. Mapelli said that in designing the machine, Trevil had paid great attention to detail. The aim was to have a machine that was productive but that also gave a good finish on the details of a shirt.

The machine can finish 60 shirts per hour but also gives a very good finish on the cuff pleat and placket.

The quality of finish on the back and on the shirt tail is also good and Mapelli said that this is because the tensioning system for the tail includes suction, so allowing the shirt to be positioned more accurately and become "integrated" with the form.

The unit also has Teflon-covered presses to avoid the risk of shine on dark shirts.

She said that feedback after the show had been very positive. All the products on show had generated interest and sales but the star product had proved to be the Pantastar trousers machine. Although it is not new, it attracted a lot of interest during the show and even more in the weeks that followed.

Trevil has already signed several deals and more customers are requesting demonstrations and evaluating the machine.

Gary Johnson, president of the Unipress Corporation, was extremely pleased with attendance at the show and felt that it was much better than that at the 2013 New Orleans event.

He was pleased to be back in Atlanta, which he believed was a good place to host the event. He attributed the boost in attendance to the revival of the economy, which has led to an improvement in business for drycleaners.

Johnson said that the shirt services sector had seen a lot of consolidation into large groups to gain efficiency and become more cost effective. There is demand for machines that can deal with large volumes.

The company had therefore decided to develop a successor to the Lightning double-buck machine as this model had been around for 10 years. A complete re-engineering of the double-buck concept has resulted in the Hurricane.

This has computer controls that interface with the internet or a smart phone app, allowing a laundry owner to oversee production or trouble shoot while away from the plant. With two operators, the double-buck Hurricane can finish 100 - 120 shirts per hour.

Johnson said that Unipress had attended every Clean Show since 1977 and the event was a great place to stage a machine debut.

Seeking alternatives

The wide choice of alternative solvents was evident at the show. GreenEarth Cleaning is a long established option but the company says the number of countries joining its network continues to grow.

In the US many landlords dislike having solvents on their properties so the GreenEarth has developed a landlord programme. Property management companies that sign up for this, make GreenEarth affiliation a condition of lease renewal. GreenEarth Cleaning then works with the drycleaner to build their business.

Asked about the show, the company said it had been excellent and that traffic to

the stand had exceeded expectations. It had hosted a special evening event for affiliates during the show.

GenX, developed by Caled Chemicals, is a more recent addition to the list of alternatives. The company says that GenX is an easy way for drycleaners to move into alternatives.

The specially formulated glycol blend can be used in hydrocarbon machines but has a much higher solvency. It also has the advantage of being able to handle water-based staining as well as greasy or oily marking. The formula also includes optical brighteners designed to enhance colours.

Helping drycleaners diversify

Many drycleaners are seeking to expand their businesses by offering additional services. Italia Service suggested that one way to do this would be to install its Revita machine, which can clean items such as shoes, belts, handbags, car seats and motorbike helmets.

The machine uses a six-stage process: Saturating with a low-humidity foam; using vacuum to remove foam and soiling; conditioning and rinsing; drying; sanitising to remove any odours; and finally, finishing with water repellent. The company said that it had already installed more than 400 in Europe.



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