

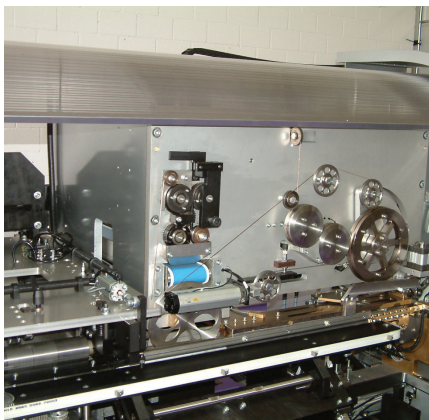
The X generation

**Can Man is entering the high speed welding arena with its new bodymaker, the X1.
CanTech International went to see the prototype in Switzerland**

Simplicity of design has become very much a watchword of the 21st century. It may not be a phrase that you would normally associate with welders, but in the mind of Ruedi Umbricht the two are inextricably linked.

“If you make simple machines – minimize the moving parts and minimize the electronic equipment – then you will logically minimize the troubles you will have with the machine,” he says. This philosophy is firmly behind the X1, Can Man’s first foray into high speed welding and a big step from the company’s previous machines. “Can Man is well known for its low and medium speed machines, and really we did not need to build this machine,” explains Umbricht. “But the market is there and the ideas are there. It makes sense to step up a level.”

The X1 is designed for food and aerosol production of up to 600 cpm with welding speed ranging from 40 to 90m/min. Can body height change is fully automatic and takes just two minutes using the patented QuickChange system, a touch screen control for data input, a PLC and servodrives. TempGuard is the temperature control system designed to avoid overcooling that can result in water condensation in humid conditions. This system, says



Simplicity of design means fewer problems



Ruedi Umbricht with the new X1 welder

Umbricht, offers huge savings in energy and related operational costs.

Simplicity is also the key to the electronics in the X1. The company designed the Pacemaker, a static welding inverter combining digital processor technology for safe and easy operation. To prevent overlacquering, hot and cold welding limits can be set and if the limits are exceeded the unit immediately reduces the current and shows a warning.

Wire threading has also been simplified, resulting in less wear parts and easier handling. Finally weld monitoring has been upgraded with the Qualimaker, which is available as standard on the X1 and can be installed as an upgrade on existing welders. Algorithms of various welding errors are stored in the main processor and used to compare with errors defined by the operator. As Ruedi explains, “Weld monitors traditionally have a bad name, but often it is the operator causing the problem, as they increase the tolerances on the monitor.” Because of the stored input, the Qualimaker can provide information on why the can is being rejected, making it possible to differentiate the causes of weld failure, such

as hot or cold weld, overlacquer and mechanical damage.

While the X1 will bring Can Man into new markets, it is based firmly on the company’s experience with its other machines. “When building this machine, we took our time and used our previous experience. The CM16 with 300 cpm, 60 metre welding speed is the best benchmark for the new machine – it is not something you just ignore.” The prototype is going to a can maker in Thailand, and Can Man has played host to a number of other interested Asian can makers keen to see what the X1 has to offer.

Emerging markets

Can Man made its first welders in 1994, beginning with the CM18, and has now manufactured over 135 machines sold mainly in Europe but increasingly to emerging markets – both food and aerosol – in south east Asia. The company employs 18 people in Switzerland – and half of them are highly experienced engineers who are expert problem-solvers.

Umbricht is quick to praise the calibre of his staff. He admits that the company does not have expensive technical centres all around the world – but points out that the quality of his technical people and the size of the company mean that problems can be solved quickly and easily. “I ask, ‘how many times do you actually need a technician on-site?’ Welding technology is 40 years old – it is a well-known technology. And I have known can makers able to troubleshoot problems better than the manufacturer’s own engineers.”

While the company obviously has an eye for design – from the ultra-modern curves of its machines to the smart silver and purple company literature – Ruedi Umbricht’s goal is to close the gap between the machine and the marketing, not to open it even wider. “The product is still the machinery – which can either work well, or not. Our policy is straightforward. We start with the design, the price policy, and what we are promising the customer. We try to be real.”