



Bystronic glass

continuous ongoing
developments

During glasstec in October last year, we had the chance to speak to Manfred Dietrich, Head of SBU Automotive Glass and Managing Director of the Bystronic glass location in Bützberg (Switzerland), who gave us some updates on the company's automotive glass division, with the 50th anniversary in mind.



Manfred Dietrich, Head of SBU Automotive Glass

INTERVIEW WITH MANFRED DIETRICH DURING GLASSTEC 2014

Manfred Dietrich started working for Bystronic glass at the beginning of 2013 as the Head of SBU Automotive Glass and Managing Director of the Bystronic glass location in Bützberg (Switzerland). In 2014 the company celebrated its 50th anniversary.

Glass-Technology International (GTI): *Since our last meeting with Bystronic glass at Vitrum in 2013, there have been a series of important changes – first and foremost in top management. Can you give us an idea of the moves and changes that have happened in this last year?*

Manfred Dietrich: I can only talk about Bystronic Automotive Glass in Bützberg, Switzerland, and which is a part of the Bystronic glass group, in turn part of Zurich-based Conzeta AG.

I joined the company at the beginning of 2013, following reorganization in 2012. Since then the company has been concentrating exclusively on automotive glass, which has proven very successful: almost half of passenger cars worldwide are equipped

with glass produced and using production machines from Bützberg.

GTI: *Bystronic glass' 50th anniversary! Other than the 'expected' and 'normal' celebrations, what can you tell us about the day-to-day life of a company with this kind of history?*

Dietrich: Our employees are proud of our company, the products and the success we have today. The identification with the products for the automotive glass industry is very high.

GTI: *Not so long ago you separated your two glass competencies. How has and is this affecting your business?*

Dietrich: Yes, this took place in 2012. Today these two Strategic Business Units (SBU) have completely different products, customers and market approach. The concentration on automotive glass in Bützberg affects our business in a positive way: our highly standardized delivery programme allows us to organize our production in a very effective way by using Lean management methods.

Bystronic Automotive Glass is located in Bützberg, a small town in central Switzerland, between Berne and Zurich. Our Bützberg plant has always been a specialist in automotive glass machinery, but we are also looking for alternatives, such as display,



and we have other applications in this sector but only as a niche sector. It's a sector that is growing – just think about smartphones, tablets and so on – as well as for TVs, but it's a really different market.

Another sector that we work in is kitchens – where we are speaking about the glass used for worktops and splashbacks and, of course, in the appliance sector.

We have a total of six branches for the sales and service activities of the Bystronic glass group: Denver (US), Sao Paulo (Brazil), Shropshire (UK), Moscow (Russia), Singapore, and Shanghai (China).

GTI: *How is automotive glass changing? Do you think it's following the style of changes like that of the architectural sector?*

Dietrich: It is moving in the direction of more security and of lower emissions (sound and noise) as well

as lightweight. This means that the glass is getting thinner and thinner. For windshields, because of the safety laws and rules, the glass used will stay the same thickness as that of today – maybe just a little bit thinner – but the sidelites and backlites could change. What we can see, and what we expect to be one of the goals in the near future, is that development is moving towards thinner glass for these two, with applications of 0.7 millimetres.

GTI: *Going back to windshields, what can you tell me about the information that we can get on this glass - HUD (Heads Up Display)? Is that something that you are contemplating?*

Dietrich: This is different and could be considered as part of the display sector. So yes, we are interested in this type of technological glass.

GENERAL SITUATIONS

As far as machinery in general is concerned, we are speaking about modular designs that integrate cutting, breaking, grinding and drilling with the utmost precision and reliability. We are a second-tier producer that means we deliver to the big automotive glass suppliers such as Saint-Gobain, Fuyao, Pilkington, AGC, etc.

Our quality control consists of several steps: with suppliers, at our facilities before and after assembly, after set-up at clients' premises, and during production – all with global service.

GTI: *How important is the international market to the company compared to the national market?*

Dietrich: We export 100 per cent into all automotive markets, out of Switzerland. We follow our customers



closely, which means that we provide reliable service wherever the customers are.

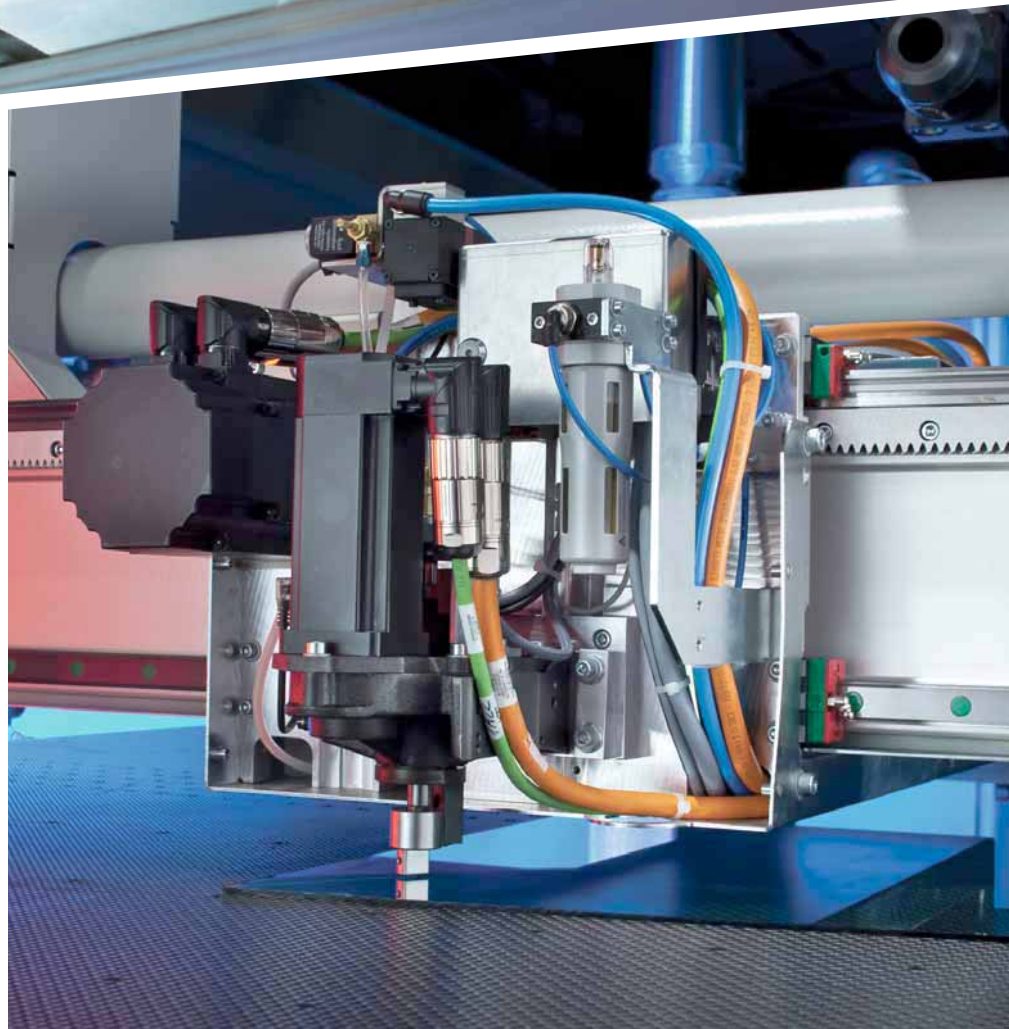
Our main markets are China, United States, Europe, Far East (India, Malaysia, Thailand, South Korea), then the new growing and emerging markets such as Brazil, Mexico and Russia.

GTI: *How important is R&D for your company?*

Dietrich: R&D is of the highest importance for us; we constantly introduce newly-developed innovative products. Approximately 80 per cent of our current delivery programme regards products that were developed less than 3.5 years ago.

GTI: *Which is the company's flagship machine and which needs and demands was it designed and made for?*

Dietrich: This is our champ'speed machine sy-





stem, developed for the efficient pre-processing of automotive glass.

GTI: *How will it optimize the production quality/price ratio?*

Dietrich: The machine concept can easily be adapted to all customer requirements regarding machine floor layout, output and machining needs (drilling, automation, pre-cut, etc.), and is aimed at second-tier customers.

GTI: *Has the company made plants and/or machinery that is particularly interesting with regards to the innovations made compared to standard techniques?*

Dietrich: Approximately ten years ago we developed the first laser cutting machine for flat glass – which was, at that time, ahead of market needs and demands. And this is not a question of technology but of economics. We then followed up this trend with laser machining.

As far as new products are concerned, they are continuously being developed in response to the ever changing market and sector.

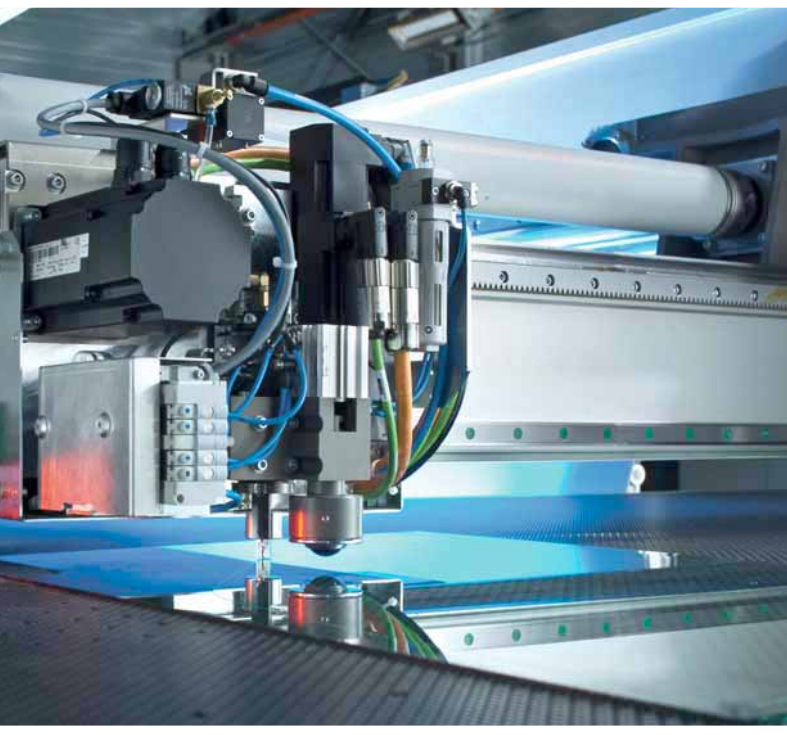
GTI: *And now developments. One of your earlier exhibition mottos was the slogan “how fast can you go?” Can we ask how fast Bystronic glass machi-*

nes now go? Are you continuing to increase the speed of your machines? And what will be your next steps as far as technology is concerned?

Dietrich: The automotive industry is moving very fast and the demands are increasing fast. From the technical side, the cycle time and the tco (total cost of ownership) are of considerable importance. The speed of the machine is only one point, another is the reliability in production and, at the end of the day, cost.

GTI: *Where do we go from here, after your ‘first’ 50 years? What is going to*





happen and what are you focussing on for the future?

Dietrich: We see that a certain level of competition will come from plastic windows. And in fact, quarterlites are normally in plastic but we are working on developing the glass for these. More could come from plastic used for sidelites but we do not see any plastic being used for windshields due to safety regulations.

In fact, today, plastic has disadvantages compared to glass and so there is not real competition for the near future. In any case, since things are continuously changing

we are continuing to monitor the situation and opportunities are still there for something to change.



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