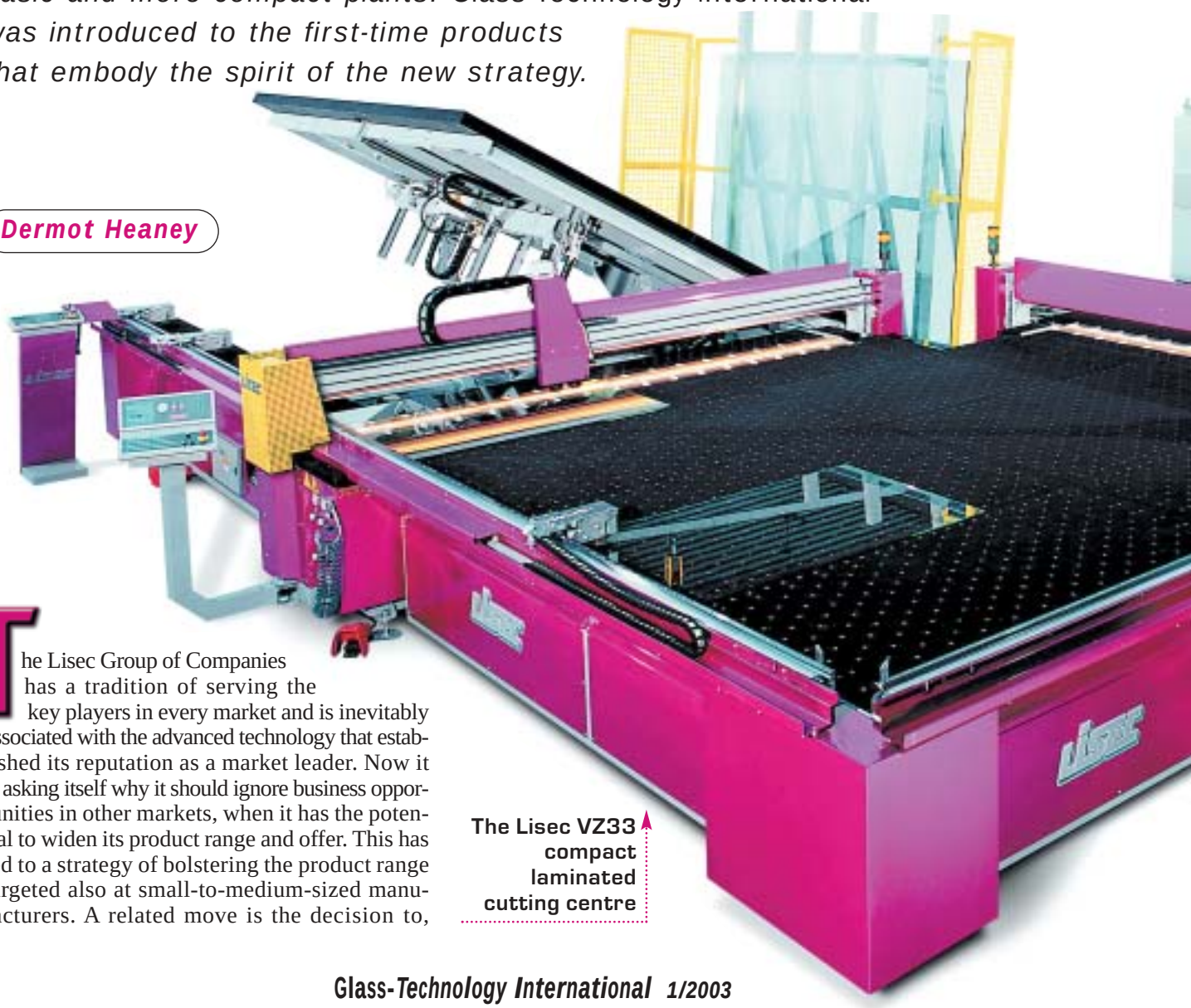
Widening appeal

As always at major fairs, Lisec was in the limelight at the 2002 edition of glasstec in Dusseldorf, Germany. The product range on show confirmed the company's continuous pursuit of innovation in its large flagship lines, but also reflected a growing interest in the market for small-to-medium sized glass processors, whom it now proposes to win over with more basic and more compact plants. Glass-Technology International *was introduced to the first-time products that embody the spirit of the new strategy.*

Dermot Heaney



The Lisec VZ33 compact laminated cutting centre

The Lisec Group of Companies has a tradition of serving the key players in every market and is inevitably associated with the advanced technology that established its reputation as a market leader. Now it is asking itself why it should ignore business opportunities in other markets, when it has the potential to widen its product range and offer. This has led to a strategy of bolstering the product range targeted also at small-to-medium-sized manufacturers. A related move is the decision to,

more than before, turn its sights on different markets worldwide, beyond the highly developed ones who require high-tech products. Markets such as Central and Latin America, Eastern Europe, Africa and partly Asia, which are not nearly so developed, require a different approach. The underlying idea behind the widening product range is to develop quality Lisec machines that are accessibly priced. The target is that this will draw customers away from low-priced plants produced by competitors that do not have the same levels of quality and technology. Looking beyond the value-for-money factor, the company also stresses that when customers acquire a Lisec machine they automatically plug into the company's extensive service and distribution network which, it claims, has increased by over 30 per cent since the 2000 edition of *glasstec*.

"We are really there for customers, when and where they need us, which is a very important consideration when purchasing a plant," explained Manfred Lesiak, Lisec's Marketing and Event Manager, to *Glass-Technology International*, at the company's 2,600 square meter stand, during the recent edition of glasstec, in Dusseldorf, Germany.

COMPACT APPEAL

The space needed for machinery in a production facility has always been an important factor and sometimes leaded to compromises depending on customers requirements and available space. Either one focusses entirely on output regardless of the size of the equipment or one accepts less production of compact machinery due to the limited available space.

Therefore, Lisec has decided to strengthen its offer of compact machines with highly developed automatic features.

To illustrate this strategy, Lisec presented its new competitively priced, compact-design glass cutting table for split stock sizes (up to 2,250 x 3,210 mm) of standard float glass.

The table is tiltable for glass loading either manually or by crane. It is equipped with built in break-out bars so that the entire glass cutting and break-out process can be done on one machine only.

Of course, it featurtes straight and shape cutting as well as optimizing the cutting pattern directly on the control panel. The cutting table is designed for easy self installation such as "plug and play". If wanted, a laminated cutting bridge with a separate break-out part can be added. The machine can then cover a wide range of the needs for cutting glass.

A further advantage for purchasers of such machinery is that the high technology and expertise developed for all the other well known Lisec machines inevitably bleeds through also to smaller products such as this cutting table.

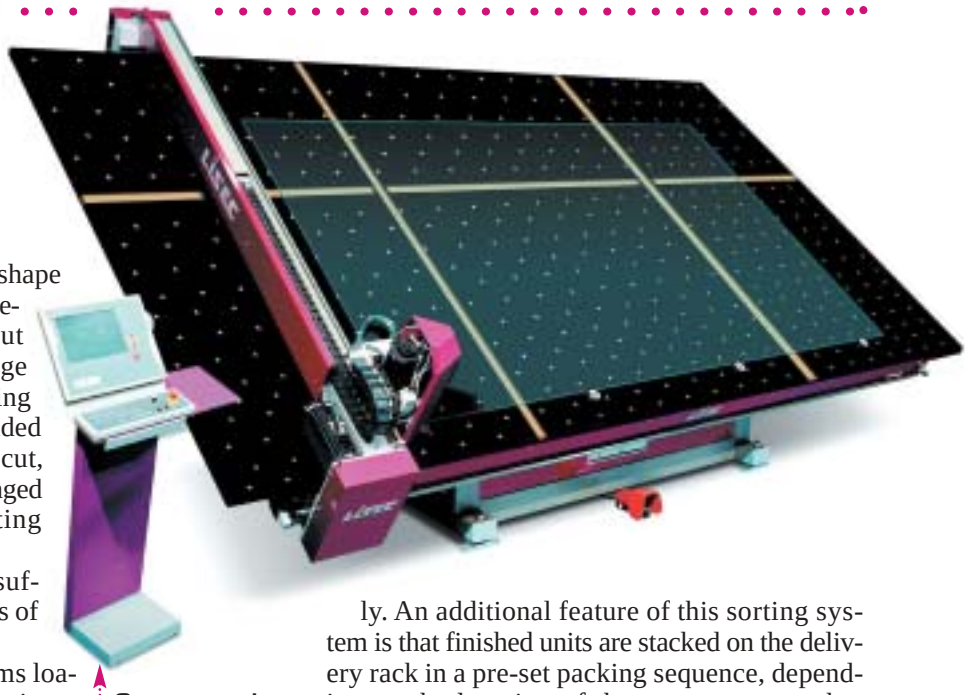
NEW LAMINATED GLASS CUTTING CENTRE

Nearby, was the prototype of a brand new machine the company regards as one of the highlights of the stand – the latest fully automatic laminated glass cutting centre. The main innovative aspect of this plant is its compact size (approximate overall dimensions eight by nine metres), which is currently unrivalled for the processing of split stock sizes – though it can be enlarged for jumbo sizes. The centre mounts two cutting bridges positioned at a 90° angle.

This fast-working, fully automatic plant boasts the kind of technology that is a standard feature of a Lisec machine, but in an ultra-compact format. On every cutting pattern, a sub-plate is cut, then deflected by 90°and given a further cut

to achieve the desired dimension. The L-shape configuration of this machine means the operation can be run automatically without turning the glass and with a simple change of flow direction. We watched, as a loading tilt table effected glass pick-up and unloaded the glass sheet; the first sub-plate was cut, moved on to the right-angle bend and changed flow direction, before the second cutting bridge completed the cutting operation.
It was pointed out that this normally suffices for all cutting needs and that all parts of the machine were multi-functional.

For example, the loading table performs loading, transportation and positioning functions.



Compact glass cutting table GSB/K for split stock sizes

AUTOMATIC GLASS CUTTING LINE FOR FLOAT GLASS

This plant, which closely resembles the other widely known automatic Lisec plants, features certain manual processes. When choosing which lines to exhibit, the company also decided to feature an option that is widely appreciated by customers. On the exhibited line, all functions are performed automatically with the exception of glass break-out, which is handled by the operative, who breaks sub-plates and turns sheets; front and rear trim cuts, on the contrary, are broken automatically. Once the operative has finished breaking and turning, the sheets are consigned to the new fully automatic sorting system. Here, too, reduced size has been a priority: the system is extremely compact and only requires two sorting racks, thanks to a storage buffer. The dedicated glass cutting optimization software plays a key role in this system.

Unlike other systems on the market which claim effective handling of remnant plates, the Lisec solution simply avoids that such remnant plates are created. Herein lies the dynamism of the system: the cutting sequence is programmed to exploit the glass as fully as possible. As a result, two pieces of IG glass that are supposed to fit each other and enter the IG unit sequentially might not be even cut from the same stock sheets. This is where the storage memory comes in. Indeed, the control system knows production status of all the glass sheets of the production batch at all times. Production status also includes breakages, which are entered by the operative on the touch screen so that the computer can remedy the situation and complete the production sequence automatically. An additional feature of this sorting system is that finished units are stacked on the delivery rack in a pre-set packing sequence, depending on the location of the customers or other parameters that producers decide on.

The company claims that the main gain with this system is that it allows real time updates on production progress for multiple complex production steps and material routes. It reduces costly sorting, double handling and searching, with consequent reduction in breakage risk. It optimizes utilization of space and racks, and provides management and sales staff with real time information about the status of orders - a great help for planned production.

IMPROVEMENTS FOR STANDARD LINES

Obviously, there has been no let up in innovation and development on the standard lines.

Among the refinements mentioned, was the vertical water-jet and edge-working centre, unveiled at the 2000 edition of glasstec, which has been further enhanced and now boasts many new functions such as grinding and polishing the glass edges. However, it was said that there is still more to come from this high-tech piece of technology. Another novelty for glasstec was the new automatic applicator for flexible spacer bars featured on one of the two IG lines shown. The first line was on show in the United States - as it was conceived mainly for that market - at the beginning of 2002, before debuting now in Europe. It was pointed out that the line represents a perfect solution for producing warm edge units like no other product on the market, as it combines the warm edge features of the flexible spacer with the high quality established manufacturing process at high speed. ■

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