

Media packaging takes centre stage at Media-Tech Expo

If some product areas still struggle to get going at the Media-Tech events, maybe its because all the visitors are congregating around the print and packaging stands. It is the one area where there continues to be innovation and new products, coupled with the interest generated by the realisation that packaging is the value-added that helps replicators going



The Long Beach Media-Tech Expo met most exhibitor's expectations

Media packaging, and related automation equipment, was the darling of the Media-Tech Expo held at the Long Beach Convention Center in Long Beach, California, May 15-17. Media-Tech Expo was sponsored by the Media-Tech Association. It was the first replication equipment trade show in North America in two years.

Nearly one quarter of the more than 110 companies exhibiting at the MEDIA-TECH Expo were offering something packaging related, from media packaging itself, to automation and semi-automated packaging equipment.

The inaugural MediaPack Summit, hosted by *MediaPack* magazine, drew numerous attendees interested in learning about and discussing the key issues that the media packaging side of the industry faces (See page 14). Topics under discussion included the current state of the industry, environmental issues, the impact of downloading, and predictions of what the future holds for the media packaging business.

The New Product Showcase held during the MediaPack Summit offered attendees a close look at some of the packaging industry's

hottest new offerings from companies including New Medium Enterprises, Dering Corp., Univenture, Key Solutions, AGI Polymatrix, JakeBox and Super Jewel Box. New Product Showcase attendees received samples of the packaging shown.

The Media-Tech Expo itself drew mixed reviews. For starters, there were some significant North American packaging suppliers missing from the Expo, including Ivy Hill, Univenture and Dering. Although in nearly all cases, those packaging suppliers that did not exhibit still had executives walking the show floor.

For those companies that did choose to exhibit at Media-Tech Expo, the level of expectation for the event was turned up pretty high in some cases, based on exhibitors continuing to invest substantially in time, money and personnel, to put on a good presence at the Expo. Among the notable packaging suppliers that exhibited at Media-Tech Expo were AGI Polymatrix, NEXPAK, Scanavo, Super Jewel Box and Transcontinental Ross-Ellis.

A couple of exhibitors voiced disappointment regarding either the turn-out, the companies that attended (or did not attend) the event, or both. "There were less people than expected to be honest," said Jean Noel Fournillier, managing director at packaging supplier Key

Solutions. "There were a lot of replicators, but not so many studios. We felt the industry was down a bit...this is the feeling we got."

But many other exhibitors had a favourable impression of the show, particularly those selling automated and semi-automated packaging equipment solutions. "There are no tyre kickers," said Engineered Automation of Maine's Roland Wyman, noting that while attendance was not considerable, all those present were truly interested in potential equipment purchases. Wyman said that replicators are interested in smaller automation solutions for DVD and next generation media packaging, rather than having to make a significant investment at this stage. Wally Willense of Digital Media Automation (DMA) agreed. DMA was showing off its DVD Merlin packaging

"Mid-sized duplicators are interested in machines that offer personalisation and rapid changeover"

machine inserter/collator and Presto semi-automatic slip sheet inserter. The machines are modular, and can be added onto as needed. "The trend is that people want to start small," said Willense. "They want to take small steps."

Willense noted that Media-Tech Expo was "exceptionally good" for DMA, adding that they had a lot of interest from third-tier service providers.

Advanced Media Products' Joe Ryan noted that his company has a lot of interest in its modular packaging solutions from, "...small packaging houses that don't replicate, don't duplicate, but just package." He said that a lot of maintenance is needed for larger packaging solutions. "We've been busy," said Ryan toward the end of the first day of the Media-Tech Expo. "We were flooded with people this morning."

(Continued on page 36)

(Continued from page 34)

Digital printing garners interest

Aside from media packaging, the hottest product on the Media-Tech Expo floor was disc decoration. Specifically digital printing of artwork on discs was of interest to many duplicators and replicators. Companies such as CDigital Markets, Tapematic and Kammann Machines showed off digital printing solutions at the show.

Digital printing solutions offer a higher quality image at a more cost-effective price for shorter run sizes than silk, offset, thermal or inkjet printing. Digital printing also offers up to 600 dpi resolution, as well as the ability to print variable data on each disc. A complete digital printing solution typically costs in the low-to-mid six-figure range.

"We were very pleased, but you never know until after the show," said Tapematic's Ron Goodwin after the first day of Media-Tech Expo. "The show isn't over-active, but for us, we've had everyone stop by. If 500 people came through the Media-Tech Expo door, we had 501 come here. It looks like a lot of people are interested in digital printing."

Kammann also enjoyed a good show. "We saw a lot of interest from what is a new market for us – mid-sized duplicators," said Kamman's



Digital print gains ground notes Tapematic's Ron Goodwin and Antonio Scoti

Thomas Wuebbbers. "They are interested in having a machine that meets their requirements, including personalisation and rapid changeover. We see a very good chance for this very flexible digital inkjet printer.

Otari unveils new packaging equipment

Otari introduced the CM-60CS DVD and CD case stacking table, and the VDP-208 CD and DVD duplication system at Media-Tech Expo.

The CM-60CS can interface directly with Otari's CM-20 DVD packaging line as well as being used for standalone operation with other packaging equipment, or connected to the line output of cellophane or shrinkwrap machines.

The system was designed to stack and store finished, ready-labelled DVD and CD cases of all formats for final carton packaging. "The CM-20 system is fully automated for DVD packaging," said Kyoji Harada, chief engineer, product planning and marketing division, "which is an important concern today. It can accommodate Slim boxes and multi-packs of up to four discs, with a quick and easy changeover that requires no tools."

The VDP-208 has a very small footprint and is ideal for office use. It is a standalone unit and requires no additional PC, monitor or keyboard. It features continuous 20-disc copying and contains the robotics system that has proven very successful for several years now. "The automatic disc supply and collection system mean that the VDP-208 can support long periods of unattended operation," said Harada. "We have seen a great deal of interest in this system at the show."

Future Media-Tech events

The next Media-Tech event in North America will be a Media-Tech Showcase and Conference, tentatively scheduled for Spring, 2008. A venue has not yet been finalised for that event. The Media-Tech Expo 2008 will be held at Messe Frankfurt in Frankfurt, Germany, May 6-8, 2008. More information can be found at: www.media-tech.net ●