

Hints of manufacturing optimism seen at expo

Advanced technology spurs buying

There was more than a little optimism expressed by exhibitors and attendees at the Fabtech International exposition, cosponsored by Fabricators & Manufacturers Association (FMA) and the Society for Manufacturing Engineers (SME) and held from Nov. 16-19 at Chicago's McCormick Place. It expressed itself in signs of a serious buying mood. Exhibitors reported sales and quickly hoisted "sold" signs on equipment.

Anecdotal evidence of actual buying and buying intentions at Fabtech is especially important as forming machine sales through three quarters as measured in the U.S. Machine Tool Consumption (USMTC) report were running 12 percent below year-ago figures. Total 2002 metalforming sales

had plunged to a 7-year low of \$215 million, down 65 percent from 1997's \$611 million. The USMTC report covers both metalcutting and metalforming equipment sales and is jointly compiled by AMT—The Association For Manufacturing Technology and the American Machine Tool Distributors' Association (AMTDA), accounting for about 75 percent of total U.S. consumption.

Fabtech is the primary showcase in the U.S. for new forming and fabricating technology and related auxiliary products for processing metal plate, sheet, and structural components. Seven hundred companies displayed more than 2,000 products for welding, robotics, punching, bending, lasing, plasma cutting, sawing, coil processing, material handling, fixturing, and related processes. Stamping related products such as coil processing equipment and presses were generally represented in exhibits with videos and brochures.

Finn-Power's C5 33-ton hydraulic turret punch press was the star of the show, along with big game hunters, in its "Survivor" presentation.



Fabtech returns to the I-X Center in Cleveland, OH, for the 2004 version, which will be held from Oct. 26 to 28.

Forming, cutting, and joining were performed on the many turret punch presses, laser machines, welders, plasma cutters, aided and abetted by the latest robotic devices that could be programmed to dazzle show attendees with their precise, and often elaborate, movements.

Finn-Power International introduced the C5 33-ton hydraulic turret punch press, a 20-station machine with a maximum sheet capacity of 50"x100" (1270x2500 mm) and nibbling speeds up to 1,100 HPM (hits per minute).

The C5 machine was the star of a show that expanded upon Finn-Power's "Survivor" theme: "It's a jungle out there...are you equipped to meet the challenge?" The C5 machine, complete with grass-skirted table, and "big game hunters" were featured players in the presentation. **Finn-Power International, www.rsleads.com/401tp-153**

Amada America, a company that produces large Automated Manufacturing Systems (AMS) with cells controlled by its "intelligent" AIMS software and built around servo-driven turret punch presses and laser machines, reported big increases in the last three months on the tooling side of its business—a harbinger, a company spokesman said, of good things to come. Amada introduced its EM2510NT servo-driven turret punch press that can achieve 500 HPM on 1" centers. **Amada America, www.rsleads.com/401tp-151**

