

Automechanika

Frankfurt 2018

WELL, WHERE TO START? THERE WAS SO MUCH TO SEE AT THIS SHOW THAT IT IS HARD TO KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN. IT WAS SPREAD OVER 24 LARGE HALLS WITH A COMBINED FLOOR SPACE OF OVER 315,000 M² ON A HUGE SITE.

On the first day, my exercise tracker told me I had walked 20,000 steps, equating to around 14 kilometres – on day two I used the shuttle bus! This 25th event since the very first in 1971, which featured over 5,000 exhibitors from 76 countries and visitors from more than 170 countries, is much, much bigger than the first Automechanika that I attended back in 2002.

It really does take a long time to get around and plan the parts of the show that you want to see as the program is so full. I was surprised at the quantity and variety of events taking place. Apart from the usual product and equipment demonstrations, there were a number of training classes running in all of the repair disciplines, not just to give visitors some hands-on experience, but full sessions that provide the participants full certification for the training completed.

Key themes this year for Automechanika were the connected workshops and the battle for data, clean vehicles, and the shortage of skilled professionals. While it was good to see a focus on the skills shortage, by far the biggest activity that I saw was the number of vendors, seminars and presentations presenting digital tools for workshops. For example, Hella and Bosch dominated one of the large halls, taking the majority of the central floor space between them to showcase their various new diagnostic and IT kits. This is their home market, so not



Collision Talk Messe Frankfurt Exhibition GmbH Jochen Gunther.

surprising they were making such a huge splash to outdo each other.

The digitisation megatrend is evident, not only in the field of vehicle technology, but also amongst car dealers and workshops, where it can be seen in everything from eCall services, remote controls, smart batteries and cloud-based expert systems to new IT systems, components and the use of virtual reality and augmented reality tools. In the area of “clean” vehicles, there were many products for emissions testing and inspections, new inspection equipment for direct-injection petrol engines and products designed for electric mobility. The independent service sector certainly won’t be short of kit over the next few years.

This is reflected in the Automechanika Innovation Awards, where 40 percent of

the 120 nominations were in the categories of tools, measurement instruments and equipment.

The first thing that struck me once I made it to the collision repair exhibition hall was that the global paint companies were conspicuous by their absence. The only international paint company in the main hall was Sherwin-Williams, who were presenting their portfolio of refinish brands following their acquisition of Valspar. The Sherwin-Williams stand was very impressive, all thanks to the efforts of a fellow Aussie, Wineth Malvar, who some of you may know from her days in Australia and Asia-Pacific.

An interesting piece of equipment that I came across, both on the Sherwin-Williams stand and on a technology company’s stand, was paint application training using virtual

reality. I watched a few people give it a try and it certainly looks realistic enough and their feedback was very good. The real test will be if it can improve the skills of painters or allow painters to try new types of products in simulated conditions.

I was also quite surprised by the sheer number of smaller European and Asian paint makers exhibiting and trying to grow or enter the European market with both colour and ancillaries. There were so many that I lost count of the number of stands.

Although the major paint companies weren't exhibiting, they were supporting other events. BASF, for example, was supporting the Classic Car exhibition, which is a first for Automechanika. The exhibition featured a collection of classic cars with the exhibitors showing the products and services that support this growing segment of the repair industry here in Europe. The European repair associations estimate the market value of repairs, renovation and support for classic, vintage and veteran vehicles at €16 billion in Europe.

The exhibition featured a number of classics in excellent condition, some familiar but many not. One challenge that I heard discussed by a couple of young guys on one of the stands was how to diagnose the issues on these older cars without an onboard computer! How times have changed!!

Axalta took part in two events, "Collision Street" and "Collision Talk". "Collision Street" was a small, focussed exhibition area where small stands were set close together in order to encourage discussion and participation. The aim was to promote networking between decision makers from the sector, insurance companies, workshop equipment specialists and collision repairers. The focus was on improving repair processes and new repair methods and encouraging collision repairers to provide more mechanical services.

"Collision Talk" took place, for the third time in 2018, at the Automechanika Academy. There was a panel discussion with representatives of insurance companies and body shops discussing



Car-O-Liner.



The Fix Auto Team.



Augmented Reality - Petra Welzel.



Opel.



Skills Training Workshop.

5 Minutes with ...



Jake Featherstone
BASF Coatings

When did you join the industry? 2004

What was your first job in the industry?
Apprentice Panel Beater

What do you do now?
Sales Representative

What do you like about the industry?
The passion some people have for the industry/cars

What don't you like about the industry?
The negativity around it at times

What music do you like?
Lots of different types

Your Favourite Artist?
Rufus

Your favourite food?
Japanese

Your favourite drink?
Coca Cola

Your hobbies?
Boating, four wheel driving, fishing and getting away with friends

Who in the world would you most like to meet?
No one really springs to mind



Mirka stand.

the upcoming changes to the way insurers manage collision repairs and current issues in the European accident damage market. My local contact at Axalta was very pleased with the outcome and was pleased to see good discussions going on between collision repairers, insurers and leasing companies.

I am often asked which show I think is best, Automechanika or SEMA. That is really not a fair question because they both have a lot to offer the wider repair and service industry and are both great shows in great locations if you want to add a holiday to your trip. However, you only have to look at the discussions and networking sessions between repairers, insurers and others on the issues

they are beginning to face, to note the familiar industry challenges – it is a common theme. As European automotive technology becomes more prevalent across the Australian car parc, Automechanika certainly becomes much more relevant than it used to be.

I really enjoyed my trip to the event this year and was able to catch up with many old contacts – and even made a few new ones. The next event is in 2020. I hope to see you there!



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