

Cutting Through the Confusion

Stanners Equipment has a long and respected pedigree in the supply of body repair welding equipment; their reputation is built on great customer service that engenders trust.

Over the last 18 months there has been turmoil in the global welding manufacturer marketplace and Stanners has been monitoring corporate activity and carefully evaluating their own position. BODY Magazine was invited to France to find out what conclusions the UK supplier has made and what they've done to adapt and protect their business - at the same time striving to protect the investment that their UK customers have made in welding equipment.

'18 Months ago when Elektron was taken into administration, we recognised that it was important to find an alternative, quality supplier, who was financially strong and had the right resources and equipment to meet the ever-changing needs of vehicle manufacturer technology,' said John Stanners, Director, Stanners Equipment.

'In GYS we have found a forward thinking manufacturing partner with facilities and technical capability second to none. GYS has more than 40 years experience, an internationally renowned R&D

department, numerous manufacturer approvals and a competitive pricing policy. In the 12 months that we have been working together, we have been delighted with the quality of welding equipment that we can now offer UK customers and the level of service that GYS provide'.

The GYS factory is an impressive facility and we were shown around by the company's managing director Bruno Bouygues. GYS is owned by Bruno's father Nicolas, an engineer who bought the company in 1997 when it was struggling due to a declining market for transformers, their main product line at that time. Today it is entirely different. With significant investment in product development and manufacturing capabilities one can see why the Stanners team feels they have made the right decision in partnering with GYS.

GYS manufacture on site almost every component that goes into their three main product lines - ARC welding machines for general industry, vehicle body repair welding machines and battery chargers. When many other companies - and government departments - are outsourcing every function they possibly can, GYS strive to bring every process under their own roof. This allows them flexibility and speed in addressing design constraints and to control quality of manufacture.

In the R&D department for instance they have made huge investment in design computers, prototyping machines and communication equipment allowing rapid collaboration on individual design requirements for each of their export markets. Stanners has already reaped the benefit of this. Michael Stanners confirms that in a recent meeting they had a list of 21 issues that didn't suit the UK market. 'Each one was addressed and solved within our meeting. But best of all, changes were made within the factory more or less instantly. It gives us great confidence in the product to know that we can have such open dialogue and swift action'.

Within the factory the Bouygues's aim has been to automate as many processes as possible while maintaining tight quality control. Each individual machine - not 1 in 100 or 1 in 10 of the production line - undergoes around 60 quality checks on its manufacturing journey. Each check is logged and tied to that machine's serial number for ever.

One of the main concerns that Stanners hear from bodyshop owners and managers hinges on the type of welder they should buy. Is this welding machine going to be capable of welding new models as they come out? Will it meet vehicle manufacturer specifications?

Bruno and John were both at pains to emphasize that they work not just with



Part of the R&D Design Laboratory



Bruno Bouygues explains the metal cutting and joining process. There's huge investment in these automated machines.



They all try and design in GD to ensure accurate welding corrections on every delivery component.



Quality checks are rigorously quality checked.



The parts shop where all components are stored.



GYS used their own transformers and have built machinery to weld automate the process.

Stanners Facts & Figures • Stanners was formed in 1947 by Mr and Mrs Margaret Stanners, (parents of current directors John and Michael) as a signwriting business, moving into the distribution of automotive paint. • 1980s; company emphasis shifted to capital equipment sales and servicing for bodyshops. This included welding equipment but it was not till the midlate 1980s that welding equipment became the company's main area of expertise when they took on distribution of the Japanese brand, Hiense. • Stanners Specialised Services LLP was formed in January 2009 to separate sales of equipment from training and certification services for welding technicians, up to BS weld test standard. • 26 employees including 5 technical sales people and 5 service engineers. • Head Office: Morpeth, Northumberland.

vehicle manufacturers, but with independent verifiers such as Thatcham and FOCWA. For Stanners, the Thatcham validation is particularly important because it is a universal test. John explains, 'Vehicle manufacturers test equipment but they only test it on their own models. Thatcham base their evaluation on how it physically performs on a range of models. They are checking that it performs as the welding supplier specification says it will perform. They also spend audit days in the factory, looking at quality control.'

The two companies have also come to an agreement on protecting the interests of Stanners' customers that previously bought Elektron equipment. John and Michael Stanners had already bought stockpiles of spares when the factory originally went into liquidation, so they can service and maintain equipment for many years to come. And they are pleased to announce an exchange programme is available - in effect a buy-back plan, exchanging old Elektron machines for new GYS machines.

So was the trip to France worthwhile? Apart from the obvious benefit of explaining the new GYS/Stanners strategy Tony Mottram, UK Sales Manager for Stanners, thinks so. He's just had a nice little order from one of the guests taken to France.



Investment in laser burning machines has been made to ensure top quality weld performance in these components



One of the final checking processes in the rigorous quality control system



GYS Facts & Figures

- Based in Laval, near Le Mans, France
- The company has 430 employees worldwide (up from 50 in 1997), including 29 R&D engineers (two of whom are highly qualified engineers holding doctorates)
- 17,300m² factory – currently adding another 10,000 m²

• Consolidated turnover reached €47m in 2009

• Export continues to grow steadily – GYS boast staff fluent in 12 languages - and accounts for 45% of company turnover

• Vehicle manufacturer approvals from Mercedes Benz, Toyota, Nissan, Peugeot, Citroen, Volvo and Ford
In Europe, GYS is the largest manufacturer of car body equipment

Most In-car Features are Welding
 With 100 years of experience and a team of 1000 welding design and manufacturing specialists and one year's experience with the body shop, we can weld anything and we make it all welding.

Our system practice gains clear benefits!



In our **Centres for Excellence** we design and train with the best technology for our product range application and for our working tools. We tailor our services in order to meet your needs.

The Lechler system allows you to choose the most suitable paint processes in order to achieve the highest efficiency for both the result and low cost. It increases, then, productivity by adopting safe and easy working methods.

Do not simply choose the best products, use the Lechler system and gain great and small benefits for your daily working activities.

www.lechler.eu



Caring about the differences!