

MANAGEMENT

Distinguishing Strategies: X-Ray Manufacturers at APEX

By Lance A. Scott, Founder and CEO, Alliance Technologies

The breadth of X-ray equipment applications at IPC APEX Expo 2019 demonstrated that high-resolution X-ray inspection has become an essential analytical tool for the SMT and PCB assembly industries. With an influx of recent entrants to the X-ray inspection market, it has been remarkable to witness the evolution of the various participants' business strategies to secure their positions in an increasingly competitive market.

My first stop on the trade show floor was to Don Naugler, president and general manager of VJ Electronix. Naugler is one of the most knowledgeable managers in the industry, having been with the company during its early days as Nicolet Imaging Systems and SRT Rework. The company recently celebrated its 30th anniversary, and continues to differen-

tiate itself through creative customization, cost-effective solutions, and application know-how. Among the products on display was the XQUICK II inspection system for counting components on reels to facilitate inventory management and MES integration.

Inspection, Metrology and NDT

Sciencescope owner and CEO Edy Lin exhibited a full range of inspection and metrology equipment including X-ray inspection systems for a variety of sample sizes, software features, voltage ranges, and application-specific configurations.

Glenbrook Technologies has also been a long-term participant in the X-ray inspection marketplace since its founding in 1983. The company differentiated early on with the development of its unique MXRA®

fluoroscopic camera based on founder Gil Zweig's in-depth knowledge of X-ray phosphors and night vision technologies. The company produces a wide array of cost-effective systems for specific applications, such as catheters and biopsy needles, mail threat detection, backplanes, low-density materials, and electronics. The company is well-known for its versatile JewelBox Series.

Through the development of ultra-high-resolution X-ray tube technology, YXLON has integrated and expanded the FeinFocus portfolio to introduce a broad range of scalable X-ray inspection systems for assembly, laboratories, semiconductor fab, and NDT. Sheri Martin, sales manager, May Qadir, applications engineer, and Jochen Dietel, senior service engineer, all expressed the positive industry reception to YXLON's latest system, the FF35 CT, for its 150 nm 2D detail visibility, 190 kV transmission tube, and helical CT scan and reconstruction.

Ed Moll, vice president of sales — Americas, Viscom, was one of the busiest at the show as he entertained a steady stream of customer inquiries. While Viscom also manufactures its own high-resolution X-ray tubes, it has demonstrated a particular strength in automation and the seamless integration of AXI and AOI. Viscom's X7056-II also integrates high-quality 3D AXI volume calculation with planar CT.

Nordson DAGE is expanding its vertical integration by designing both its own QuadraNT sealed X-ray tube technology with feature resolution down to 0.1 µm and Aspire FP 6.7 MP detector. Dave Wilson from the company's New England representative, Competitive Edge Solutions, was proud to demonstrate amazing images on the Quadra™ 7's dual 4K UHD monitors.

After an impromptu reunion with Hal Hendrickson, sales director — global account, inspection products, and Phil Zarrow and Jim Hall from ITM Consulting, I was surprised to hear that Hal had just announced his retirement earlier that day. Congratulations to Hal for all that he has done for the electronics industry. Nordson MATRIX also exhibited its XS series AXI systems.

Richard Amon, founder and CEO of Optek, and Nicola Doria, President and CEO of Pluritec provided an overview of the latest X-ray drilling, measuring and multi-layer optimization equipment, while other long-term industry participants included Nikon Metrology, Omron Inspection Systems, and Saki America.

Among the notable newer X-ray industry participants is Creative

Electron, founded by Dr. Bill Cardoso, CEO, in 2008. The company has quickly gained industry respect for its TruView™ family of products. The company's iPhone teardowns with ifixit have become popular among both hobbyists and professionals, along with image reviews of everything from candy to footballs.

VisiConsult X-ray Systems & Solutions GmbH, exhibited its XRH-Count contactless counting system for electronic components. The company has quickly built a reputation in the traditional NDT and security markets. Optical control GmbH & Co. KG exhibited its OC-SCAN®CCX SMD-component X-ray counting equipment, which was recently recognized with a 2018 Global Technology Award.

PRO-X110 X-ray

The biggest buzz of the show centered around the Resources Unlimited Co. booth where owner and CEO, Todd LaMarche, was exhibiting the PRO-X110 X-ray inspection system. LaMarche has relied on his many years of X-ray industry experience, system design, and applications knowledge to develop an excellent combination of image quality, versatility, and intuitive software and controls.

The PRO-X110 contains a high-resolution 110 kV X-ray tube that solves many industry challenges and produces a wide beam for brilliant oblique angle views and magnification up to 400x. The company has also introduced a dual-tube PRO-X2T system for versatile, next-generation NDT.

LaMarche was joined in his booth by North American Imaging (NAI)'s vice president of operations, Allie Baylock, and industrial product specialist Josh Hunt, who exhibited an assortment of NAI's imaging products, equipment, and post-processing software. Mark Chatfield, site leader for Thermo Fisher Scientific's Kevex X-ray, also displayed an impressive assortment of the latest microfocus X-ray sources, along with Jeff Wimsatt, director of sales. J.P. Zhang, marketing — product manager, for an exciting new entrant in the X-ray digital detector space, Nanovision Technology, was also available to discuss the latest in CMOS detector technology.

A staple in the electronics industry each year, IPC APEX always impresses with its concentration of top suppliers — this year was no exception.

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