



Born in the USA

Over 5,000 people visited the inaugural Automotive Testing Expo North America in Novi, Michigan

by John Challen

The organizers of Automotive Testing Expo North America, the new exhibition focused solely on vehicle test and development, are to make the three day long event a permanent fixture in the industry's calendar following the huge success of the inaugural show. Held in Novi, Michigan, from 29 to 31 October, 5,200 visitors attended Automotive Testing Expo North America 2003, many of whom arrived from the top tiers of the GM, DaimlerChrysler and Ford vehicle development centers.

The event, which draws on the success of the established Automotive Testing Expo Europe held in Stuttgart each summer, featured 183 exhibiting companies, each presenting a wide range of auto assessment products and services. Automotive Testing Expo North America showcased not only the likes of industry giants such as MTS, Schenck, National

Instruments and Kistler; niche companies such as Canada's ISAAC, a data acquisition specialist, and Discom, an acoustical analysis firm, were among the technology and service vendors present.

Visitors were impressed... Jerome Ng, section supervisor, safety laboratories department at Ford, was particularly interested in Crash Test Expo, held within the confines of the overall exhibition: "At SAE, the exhibition is crowded with all kinds of exhibitors, but here it is nice to find dedicated areas."

And many attendees liked the show so much they are considering increasing their presence in 2004. Tony Seccia, account manager with Yokogawa, said: "It is refreshing to see so much traffic at a show just starting out. I came here as a potential exhibitor and I am very impressed with what I have seen."

But it was those exhibiting in 2003 that were the best judges. Dianne Bell, marketing manager, MTS, commented,

"Automotive Testing Expo North America has surpassed our expectations – we've been amazed by the volume of people we saw on the first day of the show. There has been a good flow of visitors from OEMs and industry suppliers and we've made some great new contacts... we've gained over 50 leads in just one day. These leads are from 'quality' people that knew what they wanted from us."

Nicole Meyer, marketing supervisor, IST, said: "We think this show is a big success: we have good leads from the right people. We will definitely be here next year."

Meanwhile, representing Froude, Inc., based in Plymouth, Michigan, Gareth Deakin, Froude Consine, beamed: "We have been very impressed with Automotive Testing Expo North America. The attendance has been very good with 'quality' people who are focused on engine and vehicle testing."

Booth means business



Frank Kalff, marketing and sales manager at FCS, signed deals worth US\$650,000 in Novi

A major success story at Automotive Testing Expo North America came from FCS, which announced its acquisition of the COM division of Enrotech Corp. The move, which enables FCS to offer not only test rigs, but now also the control software, attracted a great deal of interest. Indeed, an excited Frank Kalff, marketing and sales manager, automotive test systems, finalized three deals (one of which was with GM) at the show for the supply of equipment to the tune of US\$650,000!

Unsurprisingly, John Ritter, division VP, system engineering, FCS COM, was delighted: "Automotive Testing Expo North America has been a very positive event – the focus on testing rather than on general automotive certainly fits our needs. The people that have come to our booth are the type of people that we want to meet. Indeed, the press conference we held went very well – well organized, a big crowd attended, and those that stuck around afterwards gave us a very positive response. We're looking forward to coming back next year."

Show organizer and CEO of UK & International Press Events, Tony Robinson, said: "One of my yardsticks for event success is not so much to do with busy aisles or with people walking around: I want busy booths with people locked in discussions about technology. You'd find that pretty well every booth had discussions going on. When you see people writing notes and drawing diagrams, the show is right, and that's what took place here."

As for the 2004 event, to be held October 27, 28 and 29, Robinson revealed: "We've had a number of companies approach us already that did not exhibit this year who want to be here next year. We've also had a number of existing exhibitors talking about taking more space than they had in 2003, so my guess is the show will increase from 180 exhibiting companies this year to 250 or so in 2004, probably growing in size by more than 50 per cent year on year." ●

What was new at Testing Expo North America?

The president of Canadian outfit ISAAC, Jacques DeLarochelière, was keen to announce the arrival of the company's new data acquisition system that offers up to 512MB of storage space. The firm became fully involved with data acquisition in 1999 and has already sold two of its new compact units to SMA Engines, part of Renault.

Sypris introduced its pre-production fleet monitoring system used for new technologies and alternative-powered vehicles. Mark Dillard, director of sales and marketing for the company, revealed that GM had just announced its intention to buy one of the systems.

The big news from the Corrsys Datron booth was the launch of the LF sensor, a single-axis speed and distance sensor weighing 180g with 180mm standoff. According to Brent Rijnovean, VP, North American operations, the product represents a major shift forward for the company: "Previously the lightest sensor we had in the range was around 440g so this takes it to a whole new level."

In Crash Test Expo, the integral part of Automotive Testing Expo North America devoted to crash evaluation, there were more product launches, with high-speed video systems supplier Photron offering three new cameras designed for vehicle testing.

Meanwhile, across the aisle was Milka Pejovic-Roller, marketing communication manager for Redlake. One of a growing number of women in the automotive testing area, she offered details on another new high-speed camera, the HG-100K with its 1.7 megapixel CMOS sensor capable of 1,000 frames per second at full resolution and up to 100,000 frames per second at reduced resolutions.

Working in the thermal or climatic test area, EDP was keen to debut its RapidChill Chiller system that provides powerful refrigeration to cool liquids. RapidChill has been developed over the past two years and only takes some 200-300 gallons of hydrogen to maintain a constant temperature, compared with conventional systems that take up to 1,000 gallons.

Using Automotive Testing Expo North America as a launch venue, Link introduced its latest data acquisition system the 3801. News also came from Larry Bushmann, sales director, that Link had acquired an additional test company in the shape of Radlinski.

There were plenty of new products to be seen at the busy SOLTEC/Kyowa booth. First up was the UCA 60A datalogger, used for static strain measurements with up to 1,000 channels available. Other products given a pre-launch showing were the EDA 400A data acquisition system with four channels and PC card connectivity, and the DBU 120A bridge box used for strain measurement.

There was news from the Nicolet Technologies booth as the company debuted Liberty, its battery-powered, portable data recording machine for in-vehicle testing. A number of leads had been gained at the event from the likes of GM and Ford as well as "Japanese and Chinese Tier 1 suppliers".

Emissions measurement technology was on display at the Sensors, Inc., booth, with the new SEMTECH range of analyzers. QCM is said to be a very robust technology and allows real-time results to be gained, while QCS measures just the particulate fraction of the hydrocarbons. ●



Automotive Testing Expo North America 2003, with its 183 exhibitors, gave 5,000-plus visitors the chance to sample the very latest products and services in vehicle assessment, as well as meet potential clients

A guided tour

Walk through the doors of Automotive Testing Expo North America, and the first booth that caught your attention was MTS, complete with its stunning Jeep concept car as well as information about two new visualization tools that automate auto safety design. One, dubbed Safepass 201, is a highly automated CAE environment that accelerates interior head impact compliance evaluation, while the other package, 'Safedesign Insight' uses patented technology to overlay the results of safety tests and CAE simulations, improving the comparison process currently employed by engineers.

There was OE representation at Testing Expo, with GM's Cold Weather Development Center making its services available to other manufacturers. John Komar, engineering and site manager: "We are part of GM, but offer our services because we are located at a site that is not 100 per cent utilized. The project is basically done in order to keep the site busy." The project has been running for almost two years and, said Komar, is a possible template for other GM sites.

Meanwhile, the Mercedes-Benz Service Center was keen to offer its services, especially in the fields of chassis development, mileage accumulation and

emissions testing. Current vehicles being put through their paces at the company's two sites in Los Angeles and Michigan are the Porsche Carrera GT as well as a number of Korean manufacturer's vehicles.

One of the happiest exhibitors was FCS, which not only announced a merger with rig control software company COM, but also scored US\$650,000 worth of business at Automotive Testing Expo North America. Frank Kalf, marketing and sales manager, FCS was optimistic: "Revenues will grow. COM is expected to return profits of US\$1.5 million in its own right. Within the next five years it might be looking at profits between US\$5 to US\$10 million."

MDE came to Automotive Testing Expo North America with more details on its plans to build a Nürburgring on the west coast of the US. Confirmation of a site is currently being finalized with work set to start on the track soon after. Talking about the plans, MDE president Jeff Koch, commented: "The Nürburgring is closed for three months of the year during winter, and it is also has the complication that it is a public road. Our site would be private, and because of the favorable climate, will be available all year around."

"We had a great reaction from visitors. One great thing about this show is the location: the fact that the show is away from downtown Detroit is a major advantage"

Aaron Schumacher, technical manager, vehicle dynamics, Kistler Instrument Corp.



Automotive Testing Expo North America 2003 was a big hit with 5,000+ visitors as well as the exhibitors

Bringing paper to life

Suresh Bansai, college professor, Lawrence Technical University, decided to take a look at what Automotive Testing Expo had to offer, and was pleased with what he saw: "This event has a very good collection of resources to aid research and development. *Testing Technology International* is a good magazine, but as much as you read it, it doesn't make up for actually being present at the show: meeting people and seeing the products at the booths."

Location, location, location

Exhibitors and visitors were quick to praise the decision to locate Automotive Testing Expo North America in Novi. Dr Ing., Dieter Barz, member of management, head of division vehicles, Kistler Instruments, said of Novi: "Automotive Testing Expo North America is in a great location - I much prefer it to Cobo. This place has got lots of good hotels nearby and good access to the airport." Barz was also pleased to say that he had gained over 100 leads from the first day of the show alone.



Visitors to Automotive Testing Expo North America 2003, Novi,

National Instruments' focus for the show was the latest version of Labview 7 Express, which is PDA compatible. Also key to the success of the updates version is the Data Acquisition Assistant that allows engineers to save time in setting up measurement programs.

Meanwhile, news of more interest from the 'local' OEMs came via DTE, where it was revealed that following a decision by Ford to use some of the company's test rig equipment as standard machinery, more orders were expected to come in for its steering boot testing machine (see page 65).

One of the US outfits that dominated the Novi exhibition hall was Jacobs Sverdrup. Keen to expand its presence in Europe using the recently agreed contract to supply and build a climatic wind tunnel for Visteon, Bill Carpenter, VP, business development, commented: "It is important that we look outside of the US market to acquire new business."

The Defiance booth was full of optimism after GM had verified a squeak and rattle specification for interior components to be undertaken by the Troy-based test house. Ken Mitera, director of business development, revealed: "We are waiting for news to start the project. We are hoping this contract will provide a lot of work for the next 12-18 months."

"The show has been really good for us, especially the interest on the first day. We have had great conversations and gained good leads that we'll definitely follow up"

Bill Carpenter, VP and TG director, business development, Jacobs Sverdrup

The US arm of Lotus Engineering was full of hope for the future: Graeme Rogerson admitted that it was in "a tight market, but hoped to get busier over the next few months". Rogerson spelt out Lotus' plans for its Active Valvetrain technology, which include Eaton as a partner: "Over the next five years we hope to get into production, helped by lower costs of the product and an increase in sales."

Eddy current systems supplier Zetec was promoting its Insite HT 8 heat-treatment machine. Available in four or eight-channel configurations, Dan DeVries, VP aerospace and component test markets, revealed there are 10 demonstration units in the field, while interest has come from the likes of SKF and Delphi.

Kistler was very pleased with the reaction to its latest six DOF wheel transducer. The F1 technology was acquired through the takeover of Velos Messsysteme GmbH. Staff were equally pleased with the reaction to the company's latest component smart crash test barrier, which offers a flexible configuration of crash barriers for frontal or offset impacts. At the heart of the wall are 125mm² elements that have integrated data acquisition, memory and sensor identification with MICRODAU architecture from Kayser-Threde. ●

Traveling tales



EFE made the journey from France to be in Novi

Within the hall there were examples of European companies that intend to broaden their reach through setting up operations on the other side of the Atlantic.

French company EFE, which has a 30-year history in the pressure transducer industry, would normally use a distributor based in the south of the USA, but according to David Cayez, sales manager, the company decided to come to Automotive Testing Expo in order to try and market its products directly.

Hailing from Germany, SincoTec is a developer, supplier and operator of a range of testing equipment. Veronika Runzer, assistant general manager of the company, revealed that SincoTec was using the Novi-based event as a prelude to setting up a dedicated American subsidiary by the middle of 2004 – at present the firm only has offices east of the Atlantic.

Klaus Stähle, head of the software and electrical engineering department at German-based Stähle, was full of praise for Automotive Testing Expo North America: "As there are a lot of international people at the show, we will be here. We are hoping to attract US companies and are considering creating our own US sales office, but a lot depends on our feedback from Automotive Testing Expo North America."



enjoyed three days of presentations as part of the free Open Technology Forum. In between these demonstrations, there was a great deal to be seen in the Novi Expo Center hall