

Media Release

Automechanika Leading International Trade Fair for
the Automotive Sector
Johannesburg Expo Centre, 18 - 21 March 2009

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FIRST AUTOMECHANIKA SOUTH AFRICA EXCEEDS ALL EXPECTATIONS

The first Automechanika South Africa, held at the Expo Centre, Johannesburg from March 18-21, exceeded all expectations. More than 400 companies put on indoor and outdoor displays that covered a gross display area of 25 000m² , making it the biggest inaugural Automechanika automotive aftermarket trade fair since the brand went global about 10 years ago.

Johannesburg is now the 13th city in 12 countries to stage an Automechanika trade fair for the automotive aftermarket.

The original plans – made long before last year's global economic downturn - had called for 250 exhibitors. This target was far exceeded by the 400 companies that came to Expo Centre, near Johannesburg's new World Cup soccer stadium. They were split about 50:50 between local and international exhibitors and came from South Africa, Asia, Europe, South America and the Arab world.

Many of the foreign companies took advantage of the trade fair to gain access to the South African market. For some, this was their first time in the country. Others came with the aim of further developing their working relationship with existing customers in South Africa, while also looking for additional markets.

“We are very pleased with the support we got from so many exhibitors, because they were actually pioneers in a new venture in South Africa, which underlines the strength of an established global brand such as Automechanika that dates back to 1971,” commented the show director of Automechanika SA, Philip Otto.

More

“The standard of many of the displays was outstanding and the overall atmosphere was one of professionalism. The overseas visitors seemed most impressed because for many of them it was their first visit to the African continent and they did not know what to expect,” added Otto.

The participating companies and organisations exhibited and demonstrated a wide variety of products for the workshop and replacement parts segments, as well as automotive accessories and vehicle washing products and equipment. There were also a number of automotive service providers and allied industries represented, including several from the trucking and transport industries.

About 8,200 trade visitors, many of them vehicle manufacturers, dealers, workshop proprietors, forwarding agents and investors visited the show over the four days. They came primarily from the sub-Saharan countries in Africa, although there were a number of overseas visitors.

Detlef Braun, Member of the Board of Management of Messe Frankfurt, which owns the Automechanika brand, said: “With Automechanika South Africa we have added another potent event to our family of high quality trade fairs. It is one of the brand’s major global premières and we were delighted that it was supported by a number of prominent global companies such as ABB, ZF, Liqui Moly, Bosch, Diesel Technic, Tenneco and Castrol. This underscores the high quality of the fair.”

Comments from some of the South African exhibitors:

Fred Bengsch, Director, DIESEL-ELECTRIC (RAND) (PTY) LTD, SA:
“We are a Bosch wholesaler in South Africa and have taken some good orders during the fair here. I am sure that this fair will continue to develop well over the coming years. All of our customers were here: automobile workshops, fitment centres, special workshops, such as diesel workshops, Bosch workshops, diesel truck workshops, parts dealers, transport companies, haulage companies and forwarding agents.

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“Two years ago, we founded an umbrella organisation for independent workshops – e-CAR – on the basis of the German 1A organisation. We help these workshops to achieve a high standard of quality because we only represent quality brands. We used Automechanika SA to promote this concept.

“The idea of e-CAR is that the workshops purchase their parts from us and 3% percent of their turnover goes into a special fund from which they can finance, for example, their advertising and promotional activities or training and diagnostics software. In the last analysis, all e-CAR workshops benefit from this.

“I very much hope that Automechanika South Africa will develop into the leading fair for the automobile industry in South Africa along the lines of the parent event in Frankfurt.”

Lilian Hansen, Product Manager, Bosch: “The quality of the first Automechanika South Africa was very good in terms of both event quality and trade visitor quality. We had a number of visitors from countries outside South Africa, including Angola and Zimbabwe.”

Mark Heitmuller, of KWH which distributes Turtle Wax and similar products: “Automechanika SA served the purpose that we’ve been looking for in that it is a dedicated trade show. Although we also support consumer shows our focus is entirely different. Here we were looking for dealers and distributors; here we were talking business.”

“**Dana de Villiers**, CEO of the Motor Industry Staff Association (MISA): This was the first time that MISA had participated in an exhibition and it was a huge success for us. The visitors were the correct target audience for our organisation and we had very good exposure to employers in the automotive industry and it was good for relationship building. We will definitely be back.”

Shawn van Eeden, Branch Manager of BASF: “We experienced good exposure to our market and more than half the leads we picked up are saleable. It was an opportunity we could not miss.”

Malcolm Perrie, Managing Director of Federal Mogul: "We were happy and impressed with the number of visitors from African countries, especially the visitors from Kenya and Tanzania that visited our stand. We will be back in 2011 if the economy is OK."

Don Holmes, Divisional Sales Manager, Alert Engine Parts: "We were very satisfied with our experience at the show. This was an opportunity for us to do relationship building outside the workplace and this is, in my view, a great benefit. We will be back."

Renier Stevens of Riv's Air Brakes: We are very satisfied with Automechanika SA and the exposure we got. We had one sale from a visitor from the Congo who paid cash in advance for his order!"

Comment from Britain:

Richard Howes, Managing Director of All Makes 4x4 from England: "I found Automechanika South Africa to be well organised with a reasonable number of decision makers, particularly given that this was the first time it had been held in that country. I would have liked to have seen more local South African manufacturers of parts exhibiting at the show as an opportunity for more of them to sell their products to visitors from overseas.

"I was pleased to see that there were visitors from outside South Africa, which demonstrated that the show had been well advertised in the region. Personally I was able to conclude some business at the show, which was the purpose of me attending. I am sure that in years to come this show will continue to grow and gain in stature."

As one would expect from a trade fair that was founded in Frankfurt, there was strong support from German companies. A total of 15 German companies came to South Africa to be part of this latest expansion of exhibition company Messe Frankfurt's famous Automechanika brand. Most of them were located on the German pavilion.

One of these, MAHA, a global player in the vehicle test-rig segment, used the occasion to announce a merger of its local subsidiary, MAHA South Africa with a local company, Workshop Electronics (Millitron) at a media conference with South African journalists.

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Opinions from some of the German exhibitors:

Klaus Burger, President and General Manager of MAHA: "It always depends on the goals one has for taking part in a fair. Is the aim to find a dealer or to find customers? We have had a dealer in South Africa since 1991. However, we wanted to attract more vehicle workshops for the truck and car segments, as well as independent testing stations, of which there are many here in South Africa.

On the other hand, we used the fair to meet dealers from neighbouring countries, such as Botswana. Some visitors were amazed at how big the fair was.

Guido Hommel, Member of the Board of ClimAir: "Truck drivers in South Africa need to find out about our products. Wind deflectors for the windows go together with South Africa like Jack and Jill. I planned my presentation here very carefully. In 2008, I came to Johannesburg for three weeks and saw that all motor manufacturers are represented here.

"Moreover, at Automechanika Middle East, I spoke with a South African who wanted to distribute our products. However, I wanted to wait until Automechanika South Africa before making a decision. In the end, I decided on the same South African, an entrepreneur who makes car mats. Together with him, we plan to set up an office in KwaZulu-Natal soon, before the cold season begins here."

Olivier Lehn, Area Sales Manger, Washtec: "The vibe at our exhibition stand was excellent and people are realising that there is still a great deal of business available in the vehicle washing business. We see a big gap in the South African market for truck and bus washes. The market is saturated with hand-washing equipment.

"Portable washes have a bad reputation. They are badly marketed and badly maintained, so our 'Soft Tec's' brushes received a good reception. I had up to 12 contacts per day – either wash operators or investors. Shell came along too, a very promising contact for us!"

More

Ralf Nädtke, Director of Overseas Sales of DT-Diesel Technic (parts for trucks and buses): “We announced our participation in the first Automechanika South Africa well in advance. For example, we ran advertisements in the SAA on-board magazine, published a press release on our website and sent out personal invitations.

“The first day of the show was very good – almost as good as at the Automechanika in Frankfurt! We used the subsequent days to bring together visitors from workshops and haulage companies with our distributors and key accounts. Previously, we have taken part in African fairs in Ethiopia and Kenya, but never in South Africa.

“Here in Africa’s strongest economic region, there is a great demand for alternatives to original parts from the independent aftermarket (IAM). Many users purchase parts from the vehicle manufacturers at inflated prices.

“Our aim in taking part in the fair was to make our Diesel Technic brand better known as a first-class alternative. We would particularly like to set up a distribution network for the SADC/COMESA countries in South Africa, to increase our share of the market there.

“The fair in Johannesburg was a good opportunity for us to bring our dealers together with potential customers. At present, it looks as though we will take part in the next Automechanika South Africa.”

Olaf Christian Bank, General Manager, iAGe: “We have conducted very good discussions with trade visitors from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Zambia, Nigeria and Namibia here at the first Automechanika South Africa. For us, South Africa was uncharted territory although we have been represented here in certain segments for some years. The fair was a good opportunity to meet key accounts and end customers.

“The subject of safety in the field of trucks, buses and trailers is very important in South Africa so we are very well positioned here with our drum brakes, brake discs, and other safety-relevant axle components. We want to expand our portfolio and continue to expand. Hence, we plan to invest more time and money in the South Africa market. We are pleased with the number of visitors and the intensity of the meetings held.”

More

Michael Euchner, Export Manager, Autotestgeräte Leitenberger: “We make manual testing equipment for the workshop and service sector for renowned automobile manufacturers such as VW, Audi, Porsche, Volvo and Mercedes. We have been taking part in the Automechanika trade fairs in Frankfurt since the 1980s. There, the automotive world gets together and we meet the right people to sell our portfolio of products.

“We took part in Automechanika South Africa to find dealers to cover the South African market and, having made some very promising contacts, can say the fair was very worthwhile for us.”

Gerhard Kus, After Sales Export Manager, BERU: “We will soon celebrate our company’s 100th anniversary as one of the world’s leading spark-plug manufacturers. Our aim was to evaluate the South African market and we prepared well for the first Automechanika South Africa. Although we already have dealers in South Africa, we are not completely satisfied. At the fair, we made contact with another two potential distributors. One of them is based in Johannesburg and has been in the market for 20 years.”

Siegfried Grimm, Managing Director, Hepu-Autoteile: “South Africa is a new market for us. At the fair, we made only a few but very good contacts. However, we will only be able to see what this really means in a couple of weeks. Some end users came to our stand to find out where they could find our water pumps.

“German quality counts in South Africa, too, and there is a growing interest in our products. We want to have a direct connection to South Africa, to promote our products more effectively. We also had visitors from Namibia, Mauritius and Botswana. Some of our customers also exhibited at the first Automechanika South Africa and I was able to visit them on their stands.”

Further information: www.automechanikasa.co.za and www.automechanika.com

Background information on Messe Frankfurt

With annual revenues of €436 million (November 2008) and over 1,400 employees around the world, Messe Frankfurt is Germany's biggest fair and exhibition company. The corporate group has a global network of 29 subsidiaries, five branch offices and 48 international sales partners, which represent Messe Frankfurt in over 150 countries of the world. Events 'made by Messe Frankfurt' are held at over 30 venues worldwide.

Automechanika South Africa, 18 - 21 March 2009

In 2008, the Messe Frankfurt group organised over 100 fairs, more than half of them outside Germany.

At present, the Exhibition Centre can boast 322,000m² of exhibition space with nine exhibition halls and a congress centre. The company is publicly owned with 60 percent being held by the City of Frankfurt and 40 by the State of Hesse.

Further information: www.messefrankfurt.com

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