

ITALY JOINS THE PARTY

If many Italian companies won't go to trade shows, then the show would have to come to them. And it did, with encouraging results. **William Kimberley** reports on the first Motorsport ExpoTech

THERE WAS no question that it was a risk but one worth taking thought the organisers and one which has proved to be right. Starting up a new trade show in the current economic climate was never going to be easy, and when the autumn is becoming a very busy time indeed for the motorsport industry with the PMW Show in Cologne in November, the PRI in Orlando and then Autosport International in the UK in January, the opportunity for yet another exhibition seemed non-existent. However, the Italians saw things differently.

Perhaps they realised that with few notable exceptions, their companies hardly ever attended trade shows – language partly being the barrier but also the fact that the domestic market was already providing a reasonable living for many of them. So if Italian companies will not go to trade shows, then the answer was to create one for them on their own territory which is how Motorsport ExpoTech came into existence.

Pretty well everyone loves Italy and with the weather getting colder in most parts of the northern hemisphere, the new exhibition provided the ideal excuse to visit the country. However, any thoughts that it might be a rather small, local interest event were quickly disabused on walking through the doors at Modena Fiere where a hive of activity met the visitor. The show was well supported by the carmakers including Abarth, Dallara, Ducati, Ferrari, Lamborghini, Lotus and Maserati amongst others. While most of them did not exhibit cars, the very fact that they had taken

stands illustrated that these manufacturers were giving the event their blessing.

According to official figures, more than 6,000 people visited the trade-only show over the two days in mid-October and the place was buzzing as a result. The preponderance of visitors and exhibitors were Italian but there was a healthy smattering of overseas representatives. Dr Andy Randolph, director of engines of Earnhardt Childress Racing, took time out of his busy schedule to attend the show looking for new products and also for possible suppliers.

"I was very impressed with the show itself and with the level of motorsports technology here in the middle of Italy, something that I never dreamed of encountering. I spoke with some companies that I will definitely be following up with when I get back to the US."

One of the big names at the show was Magneti Marelli which was announcing its new strategy of moving more strongly into the aftermarket and decreasing its reliance on Formula One which accounts for 60% of its motorsport business.

"Our aftermarket business accounts for 14% of our business," said Magneti Marelli's sales manager Keyvan Sangelaji, "and we want to grow it some more. We are doing



ABOVE & BELOW Maserati (above) was one of many Italian heavyweights to take a stand in a show of support. The X-Bow (below), developed by Dallara in conjunction with KTM, was one of the spectacular machines on display





ABOVE Modena Fiere was a hive of activity. Over 6,000 people visited the trade-only show during the two days

this by firstly concentrating on the two-wheel market as it is more receptive to this type of approach. For example, we are now packaging plug-and-play electronics systems for the motorbike with the original hardware. This is a less risky and less costly way to get closer to professional motorsport and from there we would like to expand into the more sophisticated four-wheel market."

However, Sangelaji was keen to point out that Magneti Marelli has no intention of losing its leading position in the Formula One market. "We are not in Formula One's standard ECU but are trying to compensate for that with other technologies with KERS – kinetic energy recovery systems – providing

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a very good opportunity for us to resume our visibility in the F1 paddock.

"We are also in the position of promoting road car-relevant technologies to the professional racing world; this does not directly have an impact on the cost of the development but in the long term makes the research more sensitive to the road car requirements."

One of the stalwarts of the show circuit is Pistal Racing, the Italian piston

manufacturer. It was showing some steel pistons for the new-generation Fiat/Alfa Romeo engine that were some 260 grams lighter than the original. "One of the early issues was noise," said Giorgio Casolari, technical and sales manager of Pistal Racing, "and we had some knocking problem but the addition of another ring cured that problem. We have also been undertaking some tests with these pistons on a Fiat-based marine engine for over a year.

"We have decided to enter the aftermarket because nobody wants to play with us and wasted our time for so many years so we decided to make a piston for everybody. We have therefore switched from forging technology, casting and vacuum casting to machining pistons from billet. The funny thing we have noticed with this kit is that we are making a connecting rod that is 17 mm longer which means that the industry could make an engine that is 17 mm shorter, but this is not our business. Our business is to make pistons for the aftermarket racing application."

Casolari also believes that steel pistons ▶



LEFT CRP Technology was in its Modena heartland. The company gave lectures on innovative materials, rapid manufacturing and reverse engineering

help reduce carbon dioxide emissions as they enable an increase in combustion temperatures which, in turn, reduces emissions. "It's a pity that the carmakers do not react too quickly as we can really reduce the fuel consumption with steel pistons," said Casolari.

One Italian company that has tended to hide its light under a bushel is Dino Paoli, makers of the "most expensive impact wrenches in the world" and used in Formula One, IRL, DTM, GTs and the Renault World Series amongst others. It was using the show to celebrate its 40th anniversary although sadly Dino Paoli, the founder, died in May this year leaving his company to be run by family members including his daughters.

"Every Formula One team has our equipment with Ferrari the first to use it in

It's never a question of cost. It's all about results, time and service

1975," said Federico Galloni, the managing director of the company. "When the other teams saw how fast our tools were they soon came knocking on our door. We've supplied the entire field since the early '90s, since which time we now supply our products to DTM and IRL teams amongst many others."

REM Chemicals was also at the show, Signor Bonazzoli, the Italian agent, explaining how popular the Isotropic Superfinish (ISF) process was in Italy. "Many years ago there was little interest in our

products but when a leading team used our process and substantially improved their performance, then that opened the floodgates for

us." He then went on to explain how one company at the show had given him a camshaft that Friday morning and wanted to have the results by first thing Monday morning. "This is typical of our motorsport customers. They want instant results and don't care if it means you have to work through the night or over weekends, that's not their problem. For example, I once prepared four connecting rods for a small team overnight and in the morning the engineer refused them because they were the wrong shape and threw them away.

"On the other side of the coin it's a wonderful business, although a bit crazy, because it's never a question of cost. It's all about results, time and service."

A number of interesting conferences were run alongside the exhibition. There were many topics covered, including an important one on aerodynamics hosted by Assomotoracing's Marco Giachi.

Participants included Dallara's Dialma Zinelli, Pininfarina's Giuseppe Carlino, Leonardo Limongelli from Scuderia Ferrari, Michael Guillaume from RUAG and representatives from CD-adapco, Fluent and Flow-3D.

Over the two days other workshops covered the design of competition cars, engine and component development, motorsport electronics and the contribution of new materials amongst many others.

For a start-up event, Motorsport ExpoTech can be considered a great success. Of course, there is a learning curve with things like stand signings and aisle markings needing to be improved, but these are just incidental items compared to the strength of exhibitor support and number of visitors.

"Modena Fiere is very satisfied with the way things went," said Biagio Oppi, the hard-working PR and marketing manager for the show. "What we want to do now is to strengthen the international links and attract more visitors from abroad to next year's event, which takes place on 14/15 October. As far as our Italian exhibitors are concerned, we have been told that they are very satisfied with the level of business they conducted at the show as well as the number of new contacts." **RT**



ABOVE & BELOW From single-seaters to karts, a wide array of companies dipped their toes in the water



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