

SEVEN COLOUR OVATION HIGH QUALITY POST PRINT MACHINE AND AN EVOLUTION ROTARY DIE-CUTTER FOR THE UAE'S LEADING BOX MANUFACTURER.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is located at the southeast end of the Arabian Peninsula on the Persian Gulf, bordering Oman to the east and Saudi Arabia to the south, as well as sharing sea borders with Qatar

and Iran. In 2013, the UAE's total population was 9.2 million, of which 1.4 million are Emirati citizens and 7.8 million are expatriates.

Established in December 1971, the country is a federation of seven emirates. The constituent emirates

GÖPFERT EQUIPMENT FOR ARABIAN PACKAGING

AN EXCLUSIVE REPORT BY DANIEL BRUNTON



L to R:
Issam Feteha,
General Manager
and Mohamed Saif Al
Ghurair, Chairman

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are Abu Dhabi (which serves as the capital), Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm al-Quwain. The UAE is a highly developed country with a high level of human development and is one of the wealthiest countries in the Middle East. It is also one of the world's fastest growing countries. The UAE's oil reserves are the seventh largest in the world, while its natural gas reserves are the world's seventeenth largest.

The late Sheikh Zayed, ruler of Abu Dhabi and the first President of the UAE, oversaw the development of the Emirates and steered oil revenues into healthcare, education and infrastructure. Today, the UAE's economy is the most diversified in the Gulf Cooperation Council, with its most populous city of Dubai emerging into a global city and international aviation hub.

With a relatively small population, it comes as no surprise to see the importance of

export and the importance that packaging plays. With around 40 box plants in UAE (all of which run their own corrugator), there is one company that stands out — Arabian Packaging. Located in Jebel Ali just to the south west of Dubai city, the company has always led the way on the domestic market.

In 2003/4, the company erected a state-of-the-art manufacturing site, where they installed a 2.8m corrugator from BHS Corrugated, two Martin 618 four colour flexo folder gluers, a Martin 924 five colour flexo folder gluer with inline rotary die-cutter, a four colour BGM 3.1m casemaker, a Göpfert five colour 2.8m rotary die-cutter, an Isowa three colour rotary die-cutter and a Bobst SPO die-cutter. A complete materials handling system was installed by Dücker.

The corrugator, the company runs B, C, E and F flute as well as BC, BE and EF doublewall board. Sheets, regular slotted cases, die-

cuts, stitched packs, internal fitments and heavy duty bulk packs — there is not much they can not offer.

Moving onwards

Since our visit in 2004, the company has focussed on growing its market and securing its place as the leading producer in the region. Two years ago, a major sea-change occurred as the company owners appointed a new General Manager following the death of previous General Manager, Peter Pryke. The Board of Directors recruited Issam Feteha to take on the role of General Manager of Arabian Packaging. Not content to simply keep the status quo, Mr Feteha worked hard at improving output and profitability for the plant and after five months, came to the Board and asked for additional investment. Having proven the plant was almost reaching capacity, the Board signed off on an investment project that would



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see Arabian Packaging once again deliver something to the region's customers that no other plant in the area could achieve – High Quality Post Print (HQPP).

"For customers looking for knock-out graphics, their only option was litho-laminating and that is relatively expensive," explains Mohamed Saif Al Ghurair, Chairman of the company. "We could see that there was demand for high quality graphics from some of our customers in the region and that is when we started to look at buying a Göpfert flexo press." Mr Feteha interjects, "We wanted to do something a little bit different — and it turns out that this is the first such project of its type anywhere in the world."

Instead of opting for a flexo rotary die-cutter, Arabian Packaging decided to separate the print and die-cutting process — and ordered not one, but two machines from the German manufacturer. The printing process is handled by a seven colour Göpfert Ovation high board line machine, equipped with inter-station IR dryers from JB Machinery and a final dryer at exit. Printed stacks of board are then transferred to the Bobst SPO or

the other new Göpfert line, a stand-alone Evolution rotary die-cutter, equipped with two Dücker Corrpal breakers and palletiser. "You might think it's crazy, as you end up doubling your costs for pre-feeders and take-off, but we were adamant that the speed of the Ovation should not be hindered by the slightly slower speeds achieved on a flexo die-cutter," says Mr Feteha. "With this configuration, the Ovation can feed two die-cutters — one flat bed and one rotary — and already, the results are impressive."

In addition to the new equipment, Mr Feteha and his team wanted to update the plant scheduling and software system. "We had a good look at various options available to us and we decided to choose RTS. We opted for their 'Global' ERP solutions, integrated with PC-Topp for production," he explains. "We have been really happy with how the systems work together and allow us to carefully schedule the plant. For our production planners, the move has been easy and they have more



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flexibility now in creating the daily and weekly plans."

Graphics sells

The company serves the needs of both large and small packaging users in the United Arab Emirates and they export to Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman and various African countries. The plant has an annual capacity of 100,000 tonnes. But now they can offer up to seven colour HQPP, producing packaging that stands out in the marketplace. Following investment in graphical and structural design and sample making, Arabian Packaging can help its customers create the ultimate corrugated packaging solution. Add to this that they make their own printing plates and cutting dies in-house, lead times can be kept to a minimum.

"We maintain large stocks of paper and other raw materials like inks, adhesives and essential spares on-site," says Mr Feteha. "Due to our geographic location, we have to be mindful of lead times for certain consumables and it is better to hold large stock than get caught out due to slow delivery and let down a customer. We source our paper from leading mills in



the Middle East, North America, Scandinavia, Europe and the Far East. But like Europe, we are seeing pressure from customers who look to specify lighter-weight packaging, so we use the best papers possible to ensure the ultimate in box strength for a wide range of customers — from glass to food stuffs, milk to soft drinks, confectionery to automobile spare parts, from mineral water to pizzas. To help ensure box quality, we have a fully equipped lab that tests all paper as it arrives as well as the usual ECT and BCT tests. In addition, the installation and use of the new RTS software solution allows for the control and tracking of each phase of reel handling, from the supplier's shipment to the corrugator in an efficient and integrated manner. Our customers have come to expect the best from Arabian Packaging."

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People are key

One area that the company prides itself on is its people. “We have built a very strong team of operators, engineers, sales and designers,” explains Mr Al Ghurair. “As a family, we have always believed that if you look after your people, they look after the business like it was their own. We pay well, we provide excellent accommodation for our operators and we also provide good quality meals for everyone in the factory.”

“We have put together a really strong team of engineers as well,” explains Mr Feteha. “Due to our location, it is sometimes inconvenient to wait for several days if a machine goes down before a technician can arrive from the machinery supplier. What we have done is recruit some excellent young engineers, both mechanical and electrical, and had them fully trained on each machine by the supplier. This way, we can undertake a regular preventative maintenance programme and ensure we lose as little time as possible due to machinery break downs.”

New markets

“We are most satisfied with our investment in the two new Göpfert lines,” concludes Mr Al Ghurair. “We are receiving some strong feedback from customers, who are now seeing what can be achieved in the area of High Quality Post Print and the cost advantages it brings them compared to litho-laminating. We believe this new set-up sets us apart from all other corrugated producers in the region and we are

keen to maximise the advantages for us and our customers.”

About the company

Arabian Packaging was established in Dubai in 1982 and since 2004, has been based in the Jebel Ali Industrial Area 2. Arabian Packaging is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Al Ghurair Group, one of the UAE’s most prominent and respected business Groups.

Active in pearl diving and trading since the early part of the 20th century, the Al Ghurair family formalised its business activities with the creation of Al Ghurair Group in 1960. At that time, Dubai was undergoing significant economic and commercial growth. This development was spearheaded by the Rulers of Dubai, the Al Maktoum Family and supported by the trading skills of Dubai’s prominent business families. Amongst these was the Al Ghurair family.

The Group entered many different fields of activity, creating Dubai’s first cement plant (National Cement), first shopping mall (Al Ghurair Centre) and one of its oldest banks (Mashreq). Today, the Group owns a diverse range of businesses in manufacturing, real estate and financial investments and has operations on five continents.

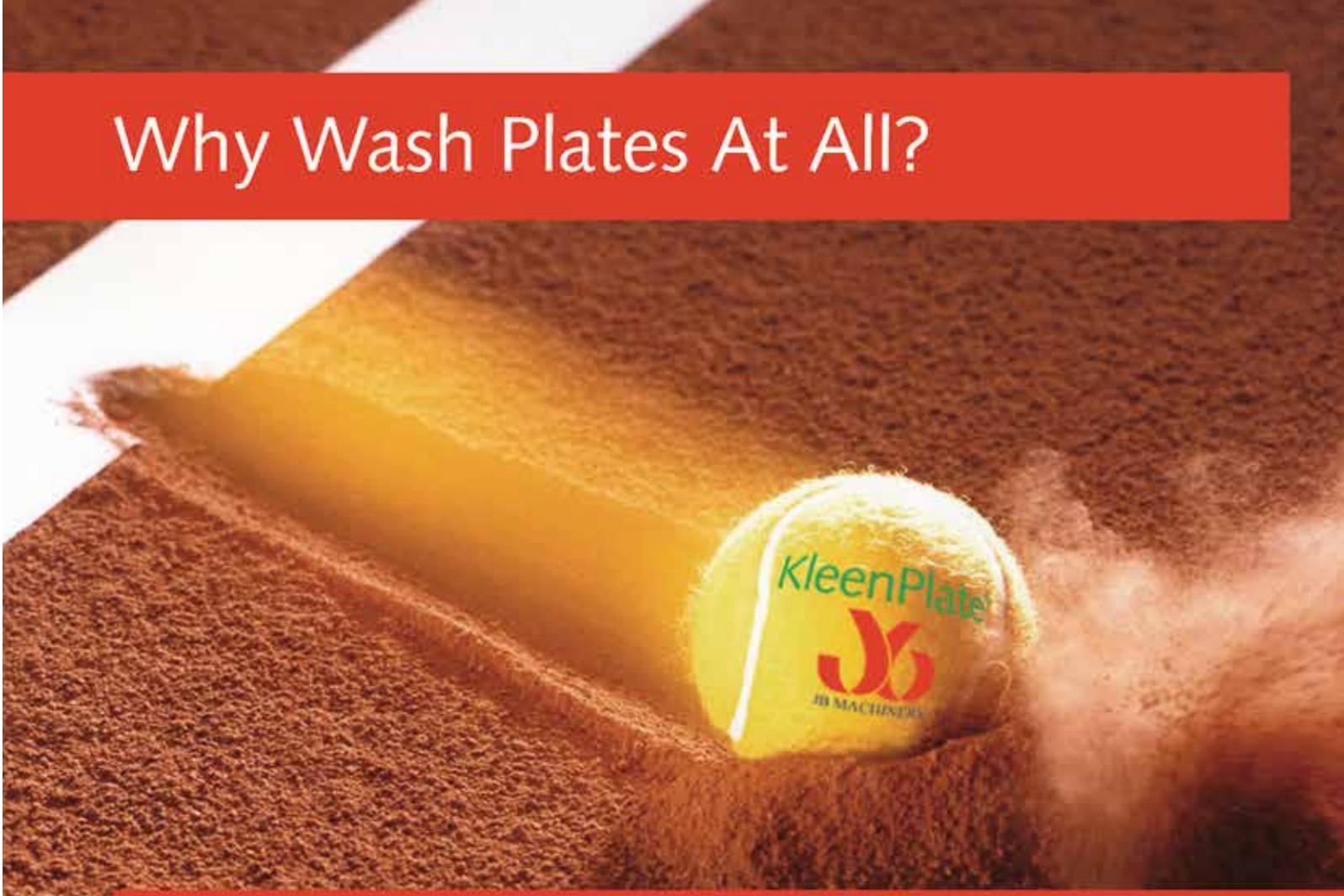
Among its prominent businesses are Taghleef Industries (flexible packaging), Gulf Extrusions (aluminium extrusion) and the shopping mall and mixed used-development BurJuman Centre in Bur Dubai.

Arabian Packaging is one of three packaging companies currently owned by the Group, the others being metal packaging manufacturer Arabian Can Industries and flexible plastics converter Arabian Flexible Packaging. ■



Arabian Packaging makes all its own flatbed and rotary dies and flexo plates, meaning zero disruption in ancillary supplies.

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