



Simon Jones takes a look at some of the eyewear highlights from last month's trade fair season opener, opti Munich



Opening statements

Taking place just six weeks before Mido, the traditional launch platform for spring and summer collections, the timing of the opti show causes a quandary for manufacturers. Full spring and summer collections are normally launched at Mido, which would normally receive finishing touches during January. The result is that for many of the exhibitors, major launches of full collections are fairly rare. Instead, many show off a smaller number of key additions to ranges – often the result of feedback received at Silmo.

Theo Eyewear has always been noted for its extrovert ophthalmic frames and sunglasses, but last season's Gangster collection was more subtle in appearance. Inspired by the Al Capone prohibition era, the heavy-set acetate frames were suitably retro in appearance but featured modern 3D sculpting on the front of the frames.

For 2013, the manufacturer has revisited the collection, but replaced the acetate with pure titanium. 'We wanted to give the look of an acetate frame, but with metal,' says sales rep for the UK, Bruno Drieghe. The new models mimic the shape of the acetate models, but a thinner construction gives them a different feel. The 3D construction is still present, but on the new models the internals have been 'scooped out.' Not only does this add detail to the package but it helps reduce the weight for what has the potential to be a fairly heavy frame,



despite being made from titanium. Danish manufacturer Lindberg was another company consolidating existing lines with a few key new shapes, but a plethora of new colours.

1 Theo Gangster Titanium - (clockwise from top) Montana, Brasco, Ocean
2 Lindberg Rim (l-r) Nicholas, Alisa and Louise



The Rim collection has always been popular among patients who are seeking a well engineered, minimalist frame, but Lindberg says that traditionally, these types of patients have been men. However, in the past year or so, demand from female patients has increased considerably. As a result, the Rim collection now features a number of women's eye shapes, along with new additions to the colour palette and new colour options. One of these options includes the colouring of the lens grooves, which on the face of things might not sound like a major addition, but contrasting choices of colours like purple with gold grooves really stand out.

A number of new sun styles were also introduced, along with two new lens tints. The first is a lightly graduated lens tint option which has proven to be popular in the manufacturer's native Denmark where sunlight is at a premium, while the second is a military derived dark green hue.

Laser prints

Fellow Danish firm Bellinger showed its Blac+ collection – an extension of the carbon fibre Blac range. The new 15-strong line features 3D laser printed nylon fronts, and sales director Jakob Halbo says there is a synergy between the new material and the exotic carbon fibre it is famed for. 'The new material is light, yet strong, so fits with the carbon fibre ethos perfectly,' he says.

Laser printed nylon has a number of additional benefits. Springing in lenses is incredibly easy and from a manufacturing point of view, tooling costs are greatly reduced and new models can reach practices faster. The fronts are available in two colours, black and brown, and have



an interesting rough finish. They are mated to carbon fibre temples with a distinctive plus-shaped hinge and four small screws – the manufacturer's signature. As you may expect from a frame with carbon fibre and nylon construction, models feel very light and balanced on the face – even the larger styles.

One of the few brand new collections was Woow from French designer Face à Face. Described as 'anti-crisis eyewear,' the collection was designed to be a cost-friendly range of frames which retains a distinct feel of quality. *Optician* spent a long time looking at the collection and couldn't help but feel that Face à Face has managed its mission statement with aplomb.

The changes to the production methods are hard to notice. The frames, roughly half the cost of a regular Face à Face frame, are still hand made albeit in Italy rather than France, but the quality of materials is high and more importantly, the frame shapes are on-trend with a selection of bright hues and finishes. The range comprises 20 models in total, split into six themed product families – which can be seen on small round plaques on the inside of the end tips.

German manufacturer ic! Berlin also released a brand new line that was something of a departure from its usual efforts. The new children's collection has seen the company enlist the help of school children to design their own frames at the manufacturer's Berlin headquarters. 'We treated the kids like adults and they really reacted well to the task,' says head of marketing Alex Kleinschmidt.

The children were give free-rein to design their frames on paper, before being cut out and worn. They then sat down with designers and engineers who explained the limitations of what could be produced. The children's

- 3 Face à Face - Rock Me 1, Who's Who 2, Come On 1
- 4 ic! Berlin children's concepts
- 5 Lindberg 8576 U38 and 8577 AF07
- 6 Blac+ +3 by Bellinger



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designs were then adapted into more wearable pieces in keeping with the usual ic! Berlin design aesthetic. Some of the more left-field adaptations made it though to limited production runs, but the inspiration in the main children's collection is clear to see.

While innovation in materials and construction is good for the market, manufacturers like Coppe & Sid like to focus on traditional production values. 'We know that we're not going to reinvent the wheel, but we try to make optician friendly products. This means producing frames with high quality materials and parts, but with a price point that remains friendly,' says co-owner Sid Firoozkoohi.

The latest range from the manufacturer is the Classics collection, which has taken a series of timeless retro shapes and combined them with high grades of acetate and exclusive parts such as Austrian six-barrel hinges. 'We don't worry about what is in or out of fashion, we just design what we like,' adds Firoozkoohi.

Despite the modesty shown from the company, interesting details are still evident. Some of the models in the range feature sculpted bridges which are a hybrid of traditional saddle and key hole along with lapis stones mounted in the temples.

Titanium and acetate

Bevel Eyewear also deals in tradition, but says at its core is innovation and minimalism. Formed in 1999, Bevel has cultivated itself a reputation for manufacturing high quality handmade frames in both acetate and titanium. Eschewing the de rigueur choice of Mazzuchelli acetate, the manufacturer uses Japanese-sourced material which it believes allows for higher quality of product.

At the heart of the new styles is the manufacturer's beta titanium hinge. Constructed from titanium derived from the sex toy industry,

- 7 Julia, Ira and Becky by Bevel
- 8 Chicago and Montreal by Coppe & Sid
- 9 Blue Wave by ic! Berlin
- 10 Christan by ic! Berlin
- 11 Coppe & Sid hinge
- 12 Camaro and Pennant by Rolf Spectacles



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the sprung hinge extends all the way through the temple for strength and aesthetic interest. Until now, the beta hinge had only been deployed on the manufacturer's titanium models, but it has now been added to the acetate range after two years of development. A number of new models have been added for 2013 – primarily larger styles for the German market.

Optician has been monitoring the progress of Rolf Spectacles for some time now. One of the journal's favourite manufacturers of wooden frames, the company has grown in stature significantly over the past two years – evident in both the size of its trade fair stands and the number of practitioners wanting to visit the Austrian firm at the show. Innovation with traditional wooden manufacturing techniques has always been Rolf's ethos, as its wood and stone frames showed in 2011. But for 2013, its wooden frames continue to push the boundaries in an effort to stand out in the growing wooden eyewear sector.

A new 3D milling technique has been introduced on models such as the Camaro, which allows for the creation of interesting shapes around the frame's edges and makes the layers of wood within the frame easier to see from all angles. Elsewhere, a new fully wooden two barrel hinge has been added, which also features a new snap-in-place setting when temples are open and closed.

Optician now sets its sights on Milan's Mido trade show on March 2-4 and Vision Expo East on March 14-17. ●