



Featuring frames

Optician reports on New York's Vision Expo East exhibition and some of its technology highlights

Changing the venue of an international optical trade show has yielded mixed feedback from visitors and exhibitors in the past. When Silmo moved to the outskirts of Paris from the city centre, many visitors bemoaned the extra travelling to the new location and the lack of atmosphere in the area. Visitors to Mido say many of the same things about the Rho FieraMilano venue on the outskirts of Milan. The same complaints cannot be



Big things in the Big Apple

levelled at the International Vision Expo East exhibition in New York which takes place in mid-March. Located near the Hudson River, the Jacob Javits Center venue is only a 10-minute walk from iconic sites such as Madison Square Garden and a walk of 20 minutes from Times Square. *Optician* stayed in the trendy Chelsea area of Manhattan and walked to the event every day in under 20 minutes along the Highline walkway. Atmosphere and convenience are two qualities the show has in abundance.

But that's not all, according to Tom Loughran, group vice president for organiser Reed Exhibitions: 'International Vision Expo East continues to be the best place to learn about the latest trends and discover the largest selection of products in our industry, whether it's best practices in business, high-fashion eyewear and accessories straight from the runway, or innovative technologies and medical products designed to take your business and practice to the next level.'

'There's no other place in the Americas where you can meet under one roof with thousands of vision industry colleagues, take education,

and shop this many products at show-exclusive pricing.'

This year nearly 15,000 delegates visited the four-day event, during which they could have seen 575 exhibitors and nearly 5,000 brands. Visitors braved sub-zero temperatures and snow, along with the New York Half Marathon on the final day of the event. To minimise disruption, organisers took a number of steps, including providing alternate walking maps and placing marathon ambassadors in hotels. Despite the disruption, Ross Brownlee, president of Safilo Americas, says the company experienced a successful show. 'The show continues to present an excellent format for customers to get together and share some of the excitement that we aim to bring the industry. The energy around Safilo's fashion shows was infectious. We were delighted to successfully showcase Polaroid sunglasses to the optical world and also to present the new design philosophy of Carrera, both of which gained immediate traction with the trade.'

Mike Hundert, CEO and chief creative officer at REM Eyewear, which designs and manufactures

eyewear brands such as Converse and John Varvatos, also reported a successful attendance. 'This year's Vision Expo proved a valuable forum where we found a robust interest in new designs as retailers work to ensure their product assortments are relevant for today's quickly evolving consumer fashion tastes,' he said.

Reality bytes

With augmented reality eyewear set to be the next big movement in the optical industry and Google Glass hype approaching maximum levels, a timely addition to this year's event was the Eye 2 Zone hosted by *Vision Monday*. Described as 'an area of self discovery,' delegates could explore the ever expanding scope of eyewear and how its role in everyday life could change over the next few years thanks to developments in technology.

'International Vision Expo has seen a strong pattern of growth over the past few years, and the idea behind the Eye2 Zone was to introduce a new segment to attendees that would educate them, and thereby the consumer, on the exciting possibilities technology has on our industry's products and services,' says Andrew



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Karp, editor of *Vision Monday's Eye2* e-newsletter and curator of the Eye2 Zone.

Seven manufacturers showed their latest products in the zone. Some, like the Z3 GPS MOD Live by Zeal Optics will, on the face of things, be familiar to practitioners. The goggle, based around an automatic polarised lens handcrafted in Japan, has been designed with performance in mind thanks to an impact resistant frame, anti-fog properties and 100 per cent UV protection. The lens also changes in varying light conditions, reducing the need to change lenses. What makes the goggle interesting from a technical perspective is the new Mod Live GPS system which can track speed, altitude, GPS position, jump stats, temperature and distance travelled. A 16:9 widescreen movie format in-goggle display connects with smartphones to view caller ID, text messages, buddy tracking, trail maps and navigation.

The Sportiiii device from 4iiii bridges the gap between current eyewear offerings and technology. Designed to provide visual and audio feedback to the wearer during physical activity, the device can fit to virtually any pair of glasses says the manufacturer. Colour LEDs and voice prompts provide performance feedback to the wearer without distraction during physical activity. When used in conjunction with the 4iiii app, prompts can be personalised for preset targets.

A company famous for the quality of its optics, Carl Zeiss, has also positioned itself at the forefront of the augmented reality eyewear revolution. The manufacturer showcased its Cinemizer multimedia video glasses, which feature OLED screen technology. The device is said to offer a mixture of 3D movie viewing, high image quality and stereo sound. It projects an image equivalent to a 40-inch screen in the glasses. As well as TV uses, the Cinemizer can be connected to an Apple iDevice or smartphone, game consoles and Blu-ray players.

Other technology-based eyewear highlights included the prototype augmented reality contact lens Innovega from iOptik and the PSio AVS from PSio. The Innovega lenses, initially designed for military use, feature a head-up display, beamed on to a spectacle lens, which can provide real time information. A visualisation video from the manufacturer hinted at *Minority Report* style use, with



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The Cinemizer offers a mixture of 3D movie viewing, high image quality and stereo sound

integrated books and live information which can change according to the location of the wearer. The PSio device takes a more laid back approach to technological developments, with coloured rhythmic lights and sound

aiding a state of relaxation. A range of self help sessions can also be downloaded to the device. ●

● Next year's International Vision Expo East will take place from March 27-30.