



Lenses ride high

No longer playing a minor role at Silmo, lens manufacturers made sure they had their time in the limelight. **Chris Bennett** reports

Lenses always have a tough time at Silmo, having to compete with new frame collections from major manufacturers. This year, however, lens makers fought back by emphasising their new technologies. This largely focused on personalised progressives and coating materials, plus a few tie-ins with frame makers.

The biggest official launch at the event was Carl Zeiss Vision's GT2 3D lens. This progressive aims to add another dimension to vision and plug a gap in lens design by concentrating on the role of binocular vision in spatial awareness. This is achieved through Zeiss's range of dispensing tools and through using the GT2 3D to create perfect pathways of vision.

Good vision is maintained in both eyes, enabling them to work together, says Zeiss. It claims a 40 per cent increase in the binocular vision performance for the lenses. This reduces higher-order aberrations, improves spatial awareness and increases adaptation. Product manager Rolf Herman says the wearer has to be able to see what the benefits of a lens are if it is to command a premium price.

These benefits are derived from measurements obtained from additional equipment, which are then added to the subjective refraction to create a pair of lenses that are optimised binocularly and not monocularly. Wavefront analysis of the aberrations within the eye, the eye's performance in lower light levels and the way the user views objects are all pieces of information that can be used to generate a truly individualised free-form lens.

Zeiss was also keen to show off its Ultra green, grey and brown sun lenses and its tie-ins with frame makers. Visitors to the stand were treated to a lie down in the iCube, a room which explains the thinking behind the new lens by using a video projected onto the ceiling.

For the fashion conscious, Zeiss announced a link with Chrome Hearts and the use of its Gold Et and Bluez anti-glare coatings. For sports fans



Rodenstock's Impression Freesign: nominated in the Silmo D'Or lens category

Zeiss has put its lenses into Giro sports eyewear. This boasts a range of lenses and coatings for sports from cycling to mountaineering.

Rodenstock saw its Impression Freesign individual lens nominated in the Silmo D'Or lens category. This lens, used with a range of dispensing tools, allows practitioners to create a bespoke Impression Freesign lens. Additional measurements are added to the prescription and other adjustments – such as the ability to move the position of the viewing zones – are brought together to create a one-off lens for each customer. Rodenstock has its own proprietary methods for taking measurements which allow the lens to be individualised.

Cutting your lens to fit

'Just as a standard-sized suit or pair of shoes does not fit everyone, the same is true of lenses and Rodenstock is keen to help practitioners ensure that the very best vision is brought to all. This is the way to build loyalty within a practice,' says Sean MacGillavry, director of Rodenstock Europe.

BBGR is a firm that takes a different view to cluttering up the practice with additional equipment, says commercial director David Real-Firman. He says one of the objections he hears from opticians is about the extra equipment lens makers want practices to house. Practices facing cost and time pressures need simple tools, he argues.

BBGR's personalised lens, the Anateo, another Silmo D'Or nominee, is promoted along with a simple inclinometer to take all of the additional measurements. According to Real-Firman, Anateo has been a great success and two chains in the UK were considering its use.

He believes the industry should do a better job of educating opticians and the public about individualised and free-form products. Many customers simply didn't understand the differences between lenses when companies used terms like individualised, personalised and digital. That meant one-to-one contact with optical professionals was needed to help them explain these complex issues to the public. And opticians are keen to learn, he says.

'More and more opticians are saying free-form is a way of differentiating themselves but you have to have good designs and you have to understand the manufacturing process,' he comments.

Tailored progressive lenses were also front of stage on the Essilor stand. It won the Silmo D'Or lens trophy with its Varilux Physio Fit.

Sonsoles Llopis Garcia, product manager from Essilor International, explained the Physio Fit takes a slightly more 'German' approach to the individualised lens than is usual from the French lens giant. 'This is a physiological lens which takes into consideration the movement of the eye and head rather than just the eye,' she says. The free-form surface is generated on the backside of the lens and the optician has to supply five crucial additional measurements to the lab. The key to the system for taking those measurements is a clever but simple tool.

'We are happy to have developed this universal measurement system because no one else has a device which will take all five measurements in a single tool,' Llopis says. She was particularly proud of the way pantoscopic tilt is measured using a bubble trapped in liquid.

A lens firm mixing the technicality of lenses with style is Maui Jim. Despite its stand being awash with dancers and hula girls, UK sales director Sean Collins explains that the lenses are the real selling point. 'We will go to the BCLA or Optometry Tomorrow because we are a technical product,' he says. To get the point across he uses a polarising demonstrator light box to show off the AR-coated colour-enhancing polarised lenses in all Maui Jim product.

The Silmo D'Or's lens shortlist also found a place for Seiko's Orgatech lens. This was the focus of Seiko's stand at the show, explains David Nicoll, international sales at Seiko UK. 'This is a totally organic high index lens and it can be heated up to very high temperatures without any



problems,' he says. To prove the point Seiko was boiling an Orgatech lens throughout the show live on its stand to demonstrate the lens's robustness. The secret behind Orgatech is the removal of all inorganic compounds. Coatings usually contain small traces of inorganic compounds which expand and contract at different rates to the lens substrate under temperature change. This results in cracks and other imperfections during changes in temperature, drilling or high pressures. Orgatech will withstand high temperatures, adheres better and is highly scratch-resistant.

Another firm boasting a Silmo D'Or nomination with an individualised progressive was Optiswiss. It was nominated for its colour neutral Optiplas iMax coating for lenses with an index of 1.6.

International sales assistant Nicole Frey says iMax makes for a better looking product. This is because its coating does not have a coloured sheen, as seen on most other coatings. She did admit that patients and opticians were split on whether they wanted a colour reflection or not. Some people want others to know they have a high-tech AR coating and a reflection proves

that one has been added. 'We think that the market wants a reflection-free lens. It's a technically different thing and it's exciting.' In the UK, Optiswiss products are distributed by Norville.

High-definition lenses

The main attractions on the Anglo-Italian stand were the new Centurion range of high-definition lenses from Mexican lens maker Augen. These use Augen's patented digital free-form technology. Anglo also launched the latest additions to the value-for-money VTI family of semi-finished progressives. More polycarbonate came in the form of iView and ShotView. These poly lenses have been specifically introduced for cases where both cost and safety are important.

Anglo also had additions to its finished range of polycarbonate 'easy clean' product featuring the most up-to-date superhydrophobic anti-reflection coating. Managing director Bob Forgan says these make the lenses up to 10 times easier to keep clean than standard multicoated lenses. 'Even though the material only has a minute market share in the UK compared to the US, polycarbonate-finished lenses are still a popular choice for rimless glazing and

benefit from a top quality coating,' he says. Forgan says there was only one topic on everyone's lips at the show, free-form. 'From a lens perspective all the talk was about free-form and this technology is rapidly becoming the norm in certain countries.'

Perhaps alone in its quest at Silmo, Transitions was taking an educational approach. It was using its stand at Silmo to consolidate its position among eye care professionals through online training. Roland Allen, business director for Northern Europe, says understanding the healthy sight story and Transitions' products is crucial to retailing them successfully. While many successful practices are familiar with the training tool, Transitions wanted to get that message across to all optical practices. A single website (www.transitionstraining.com) acts as a portal from which each country can access individualised programmes such as those fronted by Nicky Hambleton-Jones in the UK. Allen says the UK site uses a series of selection guides and questionnaires to provide the optician with as much support as possible. 'This is designed to give the optician pointers and also to get customers to think about the type of lenses they need.' ●

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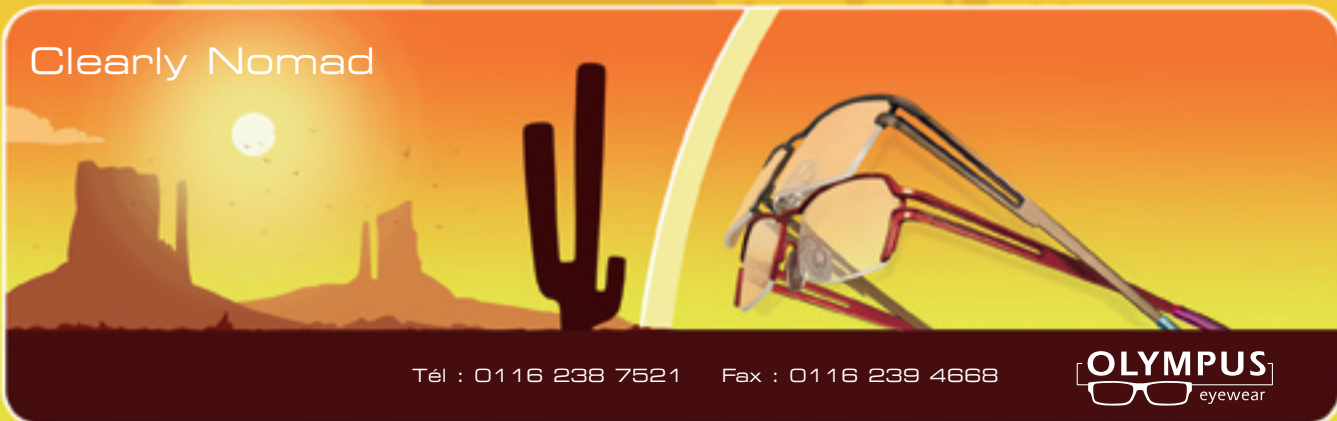
Nomad pursues its journey across shapes and colours. With the release of its new Colorado concept, frames now display their full character thanks to a highly graphical Nomad print on the end tip.

With a choice between 8 models – 6 full-rim and 2 semi-rimless versions for men and women alike – the Colorado concept is available in 2 sizes that allow progressive lenses to be fitted in. All of these frames have been perfected with dichromatic associations of new spicy colours : fuchsia / light brown, khaki / dark brown and red / orange.

Inspired by the carved shapes of great landscapes and sceneries, Nomad's idea of a relief-like design appears in the hollowed-out dip of the temples, which also takes part in the lightness of the product.



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