A look back at MicroTech 2017:

Did you get your customer at MicroTech 2017? Did the multi-national speakers seem to get younger and younger? Or did you just enjoy the fantastic stripy ties the speakers wore?! Whatever your view, a lively MicroTech 2017 seemed to reflect the optimistic mood in the industry and the country.

MicroTech 2017 was “kicked off”, in true British style, with a curry evening at the Steventon Hotel on the previous evening. Whilst participants discussed beer, food and the state of the industry, no one could quite believe that 2017 was so good. Many agreed that they seemed to be metaphorically keeping their “fingers crossed” as they kept back past memories of the recession of 2009. A Dutch guest complimented the “fine cuisine” of our British curry, was too much beer served?

From the start of the conference, the exhibitors’ room seemed effervescent with conversation across the stands and between earnest exhibitor and inquisitive customers, whilst old and new acquaintances were made through conversations over cups of coffee in the centre space. Many fruitful discussions must have been had and should surely have led to some decent customer contact, if not orders.

The conference began with a keynote presentation from Grace O'Malley about trends in packaging drawn from iNemi road maps. Grace delivered an authoritative and informative background to the industry… but failed to follow the day's trend for impressive ties. Alan Evans, Unisem (with a casually loose tie) followed with a presentation about a new and novel form of substrate called a "moulded interconnect substrate". Dear reader, close your eyes, does Alan have an alter ego on the radio as the comedian Mark Watson? Sebastien Holtkämper took us up to the coffee break with a confident presentation on Hesse Mechatronic heavy and fine gauge wire bonding. It's not just policemen but IMAPS speakers, like Sebastien, that seem to be getting younger.

The second session of the morning was academic and started with an explanation of the new compound semiconductor cluster in South Wales. Rob Harper explained, with Welsh pride, the extensive breadth and depth of the cluster infrastructure and admitted that it had taken him "a while to get his head around it". Could the speakers get younger? It seemed so. A youthful Heidi Lunden gave a professional presentation on a novel glass hermetic sealing system from Primoceler and also went on to win the best poster award. Tipping the balance again towards youth, Maria Alafogianni discussed research on resistor laser trimming at Northumbria University. Breathless after a late bus from Strathclyde University, Selda Ortekus stepped straight onto the stage and explained her perydynamic modelling of "the Hygro-Thermo-Vapour effect on polymeric package material" (or, to you and me, the "popcorn effect" on reflowed packages).

The AGM was held prior to lunch. With her recently inherited egalitarian title, Suzanne Costello, the "Chair" retired and welcomed: the new Chair, Chris Hunt, and the future chair Anne Vanhoestenberghe. The committee and new members were duly elected unopposed (…was it the proximity of lunch?).

Too excited to eat all the sandwiches, the audience rushed back to the afternoon session to hear Rolf Aschenbrenner talk about Panel Level Embedding. The mighty Fraunhofer IZM are leading the charge from round substrates to king sized pcb-like panels for package production. Urs Berger, fresh out of the desert from Albuquerque, gave examples of product made with additive printing machines from Optomec. Sporting a fabulous pink, white and blue striped tie, Thomas Oppert detailed the Pactech solder ball jetting process.

After the final coffee break, Ignas Van Dommelen talked about Sencio's alternative moulding process and highlighted the move that packages are making from components to systems (but didn't mention British curry). Keith Bryant showed the level of microscopic detail that new Xray equipment can provide. Surely he acquired his tan from the reflected light of his brilliant gold and orange tie?... no wonder he is from the SMART Group. The final session was drawn to a close by Slava Djakov who detailed the "growing pains" of the small hi-tech Microvisk and their MEMS based disposable bio sensors. The best academic poster award followed and was the final event of the conference.

Thank you very much the organisers for a good event. Thanks also to all the speakers, who, having shown so much youth, style and knowledge, have convinced the author to buy a bright new stripy tie. So that made Irish, Welsh, German, English, Scottish, Finish, Dutch, American, Turkish, Italian and Serbian speakers...who cares about Article 50?

We all went away wiser from MicroTech 2017.

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