

HAIR TODAY, GONE TOMORROW

Fully automatic stretchwrap system ensures product is shipped on time at Montreal-area hair care company

By ADAM EMERY

FOR THREE DECADES Cosmair Canada Inc.'s Montreal-area plant has been producing a variety of hair care products for distribution across Canada and the United States. Owned by the L'Oréal Group, popular name brands such as *L'Oréal* and *Redken* are all made at the 125,000 square foot St. Laurent facility.

With the L'Oréal Group's recent decision to make Cosmair one of its main production centres for North American products destined for both retail store shelves and hair salons, \$25-million was pumped into the facility to totally renovate and upgrade the manufacturing plant.

"The processing unit where they do the dyes and shampoos has been redone from A to Z in the last year and the production floor has been totally redone," warehouse manager Eric Lessard says. "Basically, we just kept the walls and changed everything inside."

Lessard estimates that before this year's renovations, which include MAB and PRB palletizers, a Kronos labeler and Ronchi fillers, the plant was shipping 20-million units a year. With the changes, this year's output should exceed 40-million and Lessard estimates they will hit 50-million units for 1998.

Before the upgrades, one of the major stumbling blocks to getting the product shipped on time was the antiquated stretchwrapper they used to package loads before they were loaded onto trucks for delivery.

"The thing was at least 20 years old," Lessard says. "It was so old nobody even knew who made it. The operators just couldn't keep up and the distribution centres were expecting stuff fast. The trucks would come in and wait for an hour at least for the loads to be ready."

What Lessard does remember about the previous wrapper is that the operator had to do much of the work by hand. "With the old technology, all the pallet-wrapping operations had to be done manually, including attaching the film, cutting it, and so on," he says. "It was a time-consuming job."

Cosmair found a solution to their shipping problems when they included a Wulftec Twister-200 automatic stretchwrap system as part of its overall upgrade.

"With the Wulftec equipment, we were able to elimi-

nate problems with trucks having to wait," Lessard says. "Before we could only handle about 20 to 25 loads per hour and now we're going roughly 60 loads — that's three trucks per hour."

Lessard says they chose the Wulftec wrapper because it was built to withstand the rigors of high-output operation.

"This piece of equipment was built strong," he says. "All the electric panels are very well designed and we haven't had a problem with it since it was installed in early March."

The Twister-200 has integrated control circuitry to provide flexibility in regulating wrapping force. Spring loaded pressure loaders ensure positive tracking of the film against both prestretch rollers. An electronic film tension sensing system provides immediate corner compensation using a closed loop analog sensing feedback system. An autoheight phototeye is mounted on an external slide track for quick adjustment of any overwrap.

The low-maintenance equipment has eliminated the need for film threading, which does away with any risk to the operator who used to have to put his hands near moving machinery and risk injury. Now, Cosmair's operator can lay the film on the carriage gate and close the panel.

The wrapper also has a drop-away film clamp system to ensure clean film release by opening inward instead of outward where it would tangle in the wrapover film used to secure the film tail.

The automatic load height sensing system reads the pallet height automatically and controls the film carriage travel regardless of the load height variations.

Lessard describes training on the Twister-200 as quick and easy. "We had our employee working with the equipment an hour and a half after it was installed," he says. "He was up to speed right away. Our employees are much happier with this equipment."

Lessard says it is an added bonus that, in choosing a Wulftec stretchwrapper, his company has also given some business to a Quebec-based company (Ayer's Cliff). The equipment was sold by Emballage Jean Cartier, of St. Cesaire.

"If we can get a good piece of equipment and encour-



Twister-200 stretchwrapper tripled wrapping productivity with minimum training time for the operators at Cosmair in Montreal. Bottom left: Operator places pallet loads of product on conveyor behind Wulftec stretchwrapper.

age the local economy, we think that's definitely a good thing," he says. "Wulftec also takes a European approach in their designs, which means their electronic designs are in line with our other equipment."

Once the kinks have been worked out of the reorganization process at Cosmair, Lessard says the plant will eventually be able to attain an output of 100-million units a year.

"We think the Wulftec wrapper will be able to grow with our company's needs," he says. "One of the major advantages to going fully-automatic was that we now have the ability to add conveyors and have 20 pallets behind it. That will help us in the future. We wanted to buy something that would not be outdated in two years from now. We wanted it to be able to grow for the next 10 years." □

For more information on:

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| Wulftec stretchwrappers | Circle 408 |
| MAB palletizers | Circle 409 |
| PRB palletizers | Circle 410 |
| Kronos labelers | Circle 411 |
| Ronchi fillers | Circle 412 |

Photography by Clifford Shearstedt



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