



ESAB South Africa refocuses for growth

African Fusion talks to Chris Eibl, who has returned to formally re-establish ESAB South Africa as the premier supplier of the world leading ESAB brand in Southern Africa, about the entity's expanding facilities at Howden Africa and his vision for better servicing the welding industry.

For the past two years, ESAB's local activities have been managed from offices at Howden in Booyens with ESAB South Africa as a division of Howden Donkin. "ESAB is 100% committed to the Southern African market and by partnering with its sister company Howden, who is a top company in South Africa, bodes well for continued stability and support of the ESAB product and service offerings to its current and future customers. We are able to tailor our local offering to customer needs and opportunities and to return to growth," says Eibl.

"So ESAB is back with a view to becoming even stronger than we were under the ESAB Africa banner," says the man who started ESAB Africa Welding & Cutting. "ESAB South Africa is busy resourcing so as to specifically service the welding needs of South and Southern Africa," he adds.

"We are restoring the competence we have had in the past in South Africa: by resourcing and appointing the right personnel; setting up a demonstration area; beefing up the servicing and support of our machines and putting the structures in place for servicing clients and managing their needs," Eibl continues, adding that ESAB is also launching new products, which are being introduced into the local market in Quarter 1 of 2018: the Renegade range of portable MMA/SAW and TIG/GTAW the Rebel MIG/GMAW range, along with the ESAB's Edge gas cutting equipment, for example.

"Through acquisitions, we also have some new brands available to us; Victor for gas and plasma cutting equipment; the Stoodly range of hardfacing consumables; and, most recently, ESAB has acquired Sandvik Welding, which gives us access to the stainless steel and high-alloyed nickel-based wire consumables manufactured in Sweden," he reveals.

An early priority for Eibl is to re-establishing an ESAB demonstration centre as a showcase of the company's welding capabilities. "We have missed having a facility for customers to visit.



ESAB's modern submerged-arc welding solutions rely on its flagship Aristo 1000 AC/DC welding power source.

Our new facility here at Howden will showcase our latest machines and technologies so that customers can come in and try things out. We will also use it to develop and demonstrate specific welding applications and procedures for customers.

"All of our modern arc welding processes will be available: our tandem welding and twin wire solutions using Aristo 1000 AC/DCs and A6 submerged arc tractors as one example, to enable customers to test our equipment and consumables and quickly find cost-effective whole welding solutions," Eibl explains.

In addition, ESAB's in-house welding facility for special consumable testing will be fully re-established. "We will be producing customer-specific and standard tests certificates on every batch of premium consumables we import," he tells *African Fusion*. "Many clients require client-specific conformance certificates for some of the consumables they use. We will however be testing all of our consumables, across the board, so that even clients who do not require certificates will have automatic access

to certificated high-quality ESAB consumables," Eibl notes.

"With the up skilling of our employees in the technical aspects of our welding offering and beefing up our sales resources and customer service advisors, we are

investing significant amounts of money and resources in the local entity.

"We have now completed a comprehensive re-evaluation of our product range and stocking levels with a view to better supporting our growth efforts and we believe we have an optimised range that will minimise delivery times for clients while keeping costs within a sustainable window," he says.

"ESAB is one of the few leading global companies that is able to provide a complete solution from the power source to the filler welding consumables, gas equipment and all associated accessories. Many of our competitors manufacture and supply only filler welding consumables or power sources and are therefore not positioned to offer complete solutions to customers. When things go wrong, each separate supplier of the power source and welding filler consumable ends up blaming the other leaving the customer as the piggy-in-the-middle. With ESAB product being used from the power source to the welding filler consumable, ESAB is able to optimise the arc and takes full responsibility for the performance of the ESAB solution," he states.

Results are already beginning to show, Eibl says, citing a recent multi-million rand success. "Gibela, the con-



Renegade machines are "a step-change in terms of portability" and are suitable for anyone needing portability with high performance.

sortium currently manufacturing new locomotives for PRASA, has chosen the ESAB Origo MIG 4002 CW, complete with the advanced U82 Plus pendant control as its welding workhorse," he reveals. "These machines are fully digital, multi-process, multi-featured power sources and they will be used to do stainless and mild steel welding on the new locos."

Renegade: a step change in portability

Renegade is ESAB's new TIG and MMA inverter-based power package. This modern machine is suitable for applications across the whole spectrum of industries.

"Renegade machines are suitable for anyone needing portability with high performance. These are a step-change in terms of portability. Previously, machines had to be down-spec'd and de-featured in order to achieve portability, but Renegade offers the very high levels of quality, consistency, reliability and welding performance of a premium welding power source," says Eibl.

"ESAB's Renegade package is ideal for anyone who needs to do high quality work in the field without having to organise transport to move equipment," he informs *African Fusion*.

Renegade runs stick, TIG and arc-air gouging and boasts the widest input power range on the market, making it



ESAB South Africa will focus on its premium consumable range, such as its ASC-coated Aristorod 12.50 copper-free wire for advanced MIG/MAG welding.

capable of switching between single- and three-phase supplies from 208 V to 480 V automatically, delivering precision welding current output of between 5.0 and 300 A. In addition, Renegade power sources can function off welding cables and work leads of over 100 m, with minimal power loss – and a remote amperage control extends operator range by providing extreme accuracy over these long distances.

At 15 kg and measuring 460 × 200 × 320 mm, this 300 A unit is the most compact and lightweight welder in its class. "Renegade redefines the onsite welding machine. It has three handles to make it easy to grab, pull, or push it and padded straps to allow it to be carried over a shoulder into hard-to-reach areas with limited access," Eibl says.

Notable features include:

- **Automatic voltage detection:** There is no need to rewire every time the machine is plugged in.
- **Excellent cellulosic performance (E6010 and E6011):** The unit provides higher arc voltage and longer arc length for a soft arc with impeccable starts and stops.
- **High-speed machine-to-arc communication:** Renegade reads the arc faster than most machines, equating to better control, a more stable arc, and virtually no spatter.
- **Arc gouging:** The machine can accommodate gouging rods of up to 6.0 mm.
- **Hot start:** The unit automatically increases current output to avoid sticking.
- **Arc force:** A feature that provides a softer, crisper arc.
- **Intuitive interface:** The machine's digital readout display, along with large buttons and controls, make



Gibela has chosen the ESAB Origo MIG 4002 CW as its welding workhorse for the manufacture of the new locomotives.

it easy to set parameters and read them from a distance.

• **Cable management:** An integrated latch system helps control cables so they can be secured to the machine, making it easy to pack up and go. While the welding industry is depressed, Eibl remains cautiously optimistic. "Real progress is now taking place in the railway industry and if the renewable energy agreements are signed by Eskom the wind tower business can be back on track. Oil and gas in West Africa is starting to come back, too, which does impact on our business a little," he notes.

"We are fortunate in that our product range covers all industries, from power generation, shipbuilding and petrochemical plants to automotive and its supporting tiered manufacturing industries. We are able to switch our focus very quickly.

"We are back," concludes Eibl, "and more determined than ever to restore the ESAB brand in Southern Africa to its rightful place as one of the leading welding equipment and consumable OEMs in the region." ■