

First Cut ‘strikes a new arc’ with the local manufacture of Messer welding electrodes



First Cut Director Gary Willis is responsible for the company's consumables division.

Messer Cutting Systems has a long history in South Africa, and its capital equipment is being used by steel processors and fabricators throughout the country. With the conclusion of this new agreement, First Cut has seized an opportunity to take Messer's local offering to new heights.

European principal Messer Cutting Systems has a history stretching back 120 years and is a global leader in the manufacture and marketing of CNC thermal cutting equipment. However, apart from Messer Cutting Systems' excellent thermal cutting equipment, the new relationship has brought about another first for South African manufacturing. First Cut has started manufacturing the complete range of Messer welding electrodes at its factory in Benrose, Johannesburg.

"Because First Cut has always been a manufacturer and distributor of premium quality products, the opportunity to locally manufacture Messer welding electrodes was one we welcomed, as the range very much fits our quality product portfolio," explains Gary Willis, First Cut Director responsible for the Consumables Division, who will be overseeing the sales and marketing of the new electrode range.

"While there are many bottom-range, cheaper brands of welding electrodes imported into South Africa, First Cut is not in that market. Our electrodes are very much a quality mid-range product," he adds.

In themselves, welding electrodes are a comparatively low value product, he explains. "By manufacturing in South Africa, we want to save our customers the cost of

First Cut, a leading South African distributor and manufacturer of cutting consumables and importer of premium capital equipment for steel processing, has concluded an agreement with leading German company Messer Cutting Systems to take over its South African agency.

importation so they can buy a top quality electrode at a reasonable price," he continues. First Cut is already calling on existing customers of the former local Messer company, the rationale being that if they have heavy steel processing equipment, it is likely they will be in the market for high quality welding electrodes.

"At present, we are manufacturing the full range of Messer electrodes. These include electrodes for welding mild steel, carbon-manganese steels, stainless steels and so-called 'problem' steels, where welding has to take place under difficult circumstances or dissimilar types of metal need to be joined together.

"We will also be manufacturing and distributing electrodes for arc air gouging and for hard-facing purposes," he continues.

As First Cut's new electrode range is being manufactured under licence from Messer, the products have to comply with German (DIN), British (BS) and American (AWS/ASME) quality standards – and samples of every batch manufactured are sent to Germany for quality certification.

As a commitment to its customers, First Cut has made a substantial investment in a high quality electrode press; as well as industry standard drying and baking ovens. Both the metal used for the rods and the flux coating are of superior quality.

Manufacturing welding electrodes also broadens First Cut's scope of services. "We have always been an expert in cutting consumables and capital equipment; however to this we have added bending and grinding. With our new range of electrodes, we are now able to supply a high-quality product for use in welding, effectively completing our holistic basket of industrial products and services.

"For anyone producing high quality fabrications or processing premium steel, the choice of Messer electrodes is one without question," says Willis. "For the supply of steel components with quality welded joints, First Cut's Messer welding



First Cut is now manufacturing the full range of Messer electrodes, including consumables for welding mild steel, carbon-manganese steels, stainless steels and the so-called 'problem' steels.

electrodes offer an excellent solution," he concludes. ■

Company background

Since producing its first band saw blade in 1956, First Cut has grown its offering substantially and is able to meet the needs of a vast range of industries through the supply of band saw blades, circular saw blades, hacksaw blades, and other cutting consumables.

First Cut's merger with Alexander and Poole in 2001, an exclusive agent for the Starrett range of cutting tools, was a significant milestone in the company's history, as was its acquisition in 2002 of Band Sawing Services, which meant that the company could expand its services into capital equipment.

Since then, First Cut's capital equipment division has grown exponentially, thanks to its partnerships with some of the best-known global brands. The company's capital equipment division specialises in metal cutting, sheet metal processing, structural (such as CNC bending and punching), and tube and pipe processing. First Cut has also invested substantially in its service programme enabling the company to provide repairs and maintenance services for a wide range of machines, from entry level band saws to state-of-the-art CNC controlled drilling and cutting lines.

Employing 240 people, First Cut is based in Benrose, Gauteng, but has a national footprint and distribution facilities across South Africa. ■