

# A refocused Abicor Binzel SA adopts a direct distribution model

*African Fusion* meets Abicor Binzel South Africa MD, Christo Gelderblom, Application Development Manager, Thembinkosi Matyeka, and Technical Sales Specialists, Wessel Papenfus and Johannes Holtzhausen, to discuss the integration of the THERMACUT® product line and Abicor Binzel's EWR2 gas management products.

Abicor Binzel South Africa has been on an aggressive transformation path since early 2023, says Christo Gelderblom, MD of Abicor Binzel South Africa. "We can now offer a complete range of fabrication solutions for manual and CNC cutting; welding solutions for manual, robotic, cobot; fully automated and orbital welding; as well as a range of specialist components – special electrodes, tungsten and molybdenum-based special materials, tailored alloys and pre-and post-welding chemicals," he tells *African Fusion*.

Binzel has been a key developer, manufacturer and supplier for over 75 years, specialising in welding technology, products and system solutions within the ABICOR GROUP. These solutions simplify the daily work of welders, while distinguishing themselves for their high quality, long service life, efficient raw material utilisation, and reduced environmental impact.

"With regard to personnel, we have brought on several specialists in these fields, who have good reputations, industry knowledge and relevant qualifications. We have also changed from relying on an office-based sales force and traditional distributors to a direct customer-centric distribution network with technical support from local and global specialists, which enables us to offer more cost-effective and reliable solutions and services," adds Gelderblom.

Holtzhausen adds that before a customer makes a significant investment in new welding or cutting technology, Abicor Binzel will assess the manufacturing environment

and special requirements. This may involve making demo equipment available for testing at the customer's site or demonstrating the technical capabilities of the product range at its fully equipped demo centre in Kempton Park.

The THERMACUT brand, for example, was previously sold through a distributor in South Africa. However, earlier this year, the Czech Republic-based THERMACUT k.s. terminated the relationship and assigned the sole distribution rights of the THERMACUT product line to Abicor Binzel SA.

"People who are already using THERMACUT plasma systems often use non-OEM aftermarket spares, which are cheaper, but the quality is inconsistent, frequently resulting in very short consumable life. We are now able to aggressively focus on these customers, convincing them that a better local supply of quality OEM torch consumables can positively impact their bottom line. This approach has enabled us to significantly expand THERMACUT sales over the past two to three months," says Holtzhausen.

## SAIW's new THERMACUT HD-125®

In support of the SAIW's renewal strategy, Abicor Binzel SA has delivered a fully equipped THERMACUT plasma CNC cutting system to the SAIW, which will support the needs of the



Johannes Holtzhausen programs the compact THERMACUT EX-TRACK CNC system.

Thembinkosi Matyeka and Wessel Papenfus working on the SAIW's new THERMACUT HD-125® plasma CNC cutting system.

SAIW Welding School. "We have installed a 1.6x3.2 m THERMACUT EX-TRACK® CNC cutting table that can be used for plasma and oxy-fuel cutting," says Abicor Binzel SA's Technical Sales Specialist, Wessel Papenfus.

The cutting table features a water-bed system, which captures and quenches hot metal particles and airborne fumes. This eliminates the need for downdraft air extraction and ducting, helping keep the plate cool and, in turn, reducing distortion.

The THERMACUT CNC system is built around the company's compact EX-TRACK CNC cutting system. "The controller sits on the deck of the track and any cut profile that a fabrication shop needs can be entered into this system," Papenfus explains, adding that the THERMACUT EX-TRACK CNC system can be easily retrofitted onto any cutting table.

The SAIW's system is equipped with a THERMACUT EX-TRAFIRE® 125 HD, a plasma cutting inverter ideal for demanding applications. "This heavy-duty plasma system is designed for heavy fabrication in industries such as shipyards, petrochemical plants, steel mills, steel service centres and general fabrication shops. In addition to plate cutting, the system offers grid cutting, gouging and surface marking.

Key features include gouging with a high removal rate, extremely high cutting speeds, automatic gas identification for air, nitrogen or oxygen, fine, deep, or wide marking, and optional flush-marking applications using current levels below 20 A. "The system offers low investment costs and 20% longer consumable lifetime, which combine to deliver lower operating costs and better productivity.

The maximum pierce thickness for steel plate is 25 mm, but from an edge, the 125 HD system can accommodate a 60 mm plate thickness. "We can offer several differ-

ent plasma machines, though. The smallest is the 45 HD, which can accommodate a 25 mm plate, while the 65 HD, 85 HD, and 105 HD can produce a quality cut through material 38 mm, 45 mm, and 50 mm thick, respectively.

In addition, the SAIW's system is also fitted with an oxy-fuel cutting system that can be used to cut through much thicker plate, if necessary.

Installation, training and ongoing support for all Abicor Group products are now also managed directly by Abicor SA in Kempton Park. "As we did with the SAIW THERMACUT system, after installation and commissioning, we organise training sessions for our customers before handover, making sure onsite teams are fully able to operate their systems successfully," Wessel Papenfus tells *African Fusion*.

## THERMACUT plasma consumables

Well-known for the quality of its torches and torch consumables, THERMACUT plasma cutting torches feature a conventional design, with the plasma torch sized to match the maximum capacity of the plasma power source being used. "The consumables are all torch- and capacity-specific, so we offer torches for each of the four different power sources. As well as the HD range for those cutting continuously, we also offer a standard SD range of plasma cutters for those with less arduous needs, each of which comes with its own set of matching torch consumables," Papenfus points out.

From an aftermarket perspective, he notes that THERMACUT has leveraged its expertise in torch development to produce aftermarket torch consumables for many of the plasma cutting brands operating in South Africa. "We can supply plasma torch consumables for about 80% of the plasma cutting torches currently being used. And these consumables are manufactured us-



The THERMACUT HD-125® plasma cutting inverter is ideal for demanding applications.



As well as offering significant savings, the Abicor Binzel EWR 2 Gas-Management-System takes the guesswork out of optimising the gas flow rate and prevents operators from adjusting gas regulators or flow meters.

ing similar materials and processes as our THERMACUT OEM consumables, so they are competitive in terms of quality and life with OEM equivalents, but more cost-effective," he notes, adding that local supply ensures availability of stock, and that customers with issues have technical support to identify corrective measures.

## The Abicor Binzel EWR 2 Gas-Management-System

Developed to align with Industry 4.0, the Abicor Binzel EWR 2 system utilises a high-speed solenoid valve to regulate shielding gas flow in real time, synchronising it with the welding current. The system can compensate for external factors, such as changes in ambient temperature, a changing gas inlet, or counterpressure from the connected cable assembly, guaranteeing gas consumption savings by controlling gas flow more precisely than traditional systems.

"Savings potential with the EWR 2 can be amazingly high," notes Thembinkosi Matyeka, Application Development Manager at Abicor Binzel SA. He says the system comes with an easy-to-use calculator for shielding gas cost savings, enabling the system's investment payback to be determined in advance.

Recounting a recent success at a local vehicle component OEM in the Eastern Cape, he says: "We came across some older and relatively simple gas economiser units on the manufacturer's automated welding cells, which, according to the OEM's representative, realised a three-month investment payback in gas savings when they were first installed.

"So we presented our EWR 2 solution to another component manufacturer and tested it on one of the 31 robotic stations at the assembly plant," Matyeka tells *AF*.

When tested in normal bypass mode without the Binzel EWR 2 intervention, the

normal gas consumption was 59,45 l per session at an average pressure of 2.97 bar. When the Binzel EWR 2 was in use, consumption per session decreased to 42.87 l at 3.05 bar, resulting in 28% savings. "So you can imagine the savings that will accrue across all 31 welding stations," he says.

The system is easily installed and calibrated to continuously regulate and monitor gas flow and pressure. The gas flow is activated by a Hall-effect current probe on the welding cable and adjusted to match the welding current as closely as possible. It is equally effective for automatic or manual welding processes and can be retrofitted to any existing system.

The Binzel EWR 2 is suitable for all shielding gases and is designed to accommodate inlet pressures ranging from 1.0 to 6.0 bar and flow rates from 2.0 to 30 l/min.

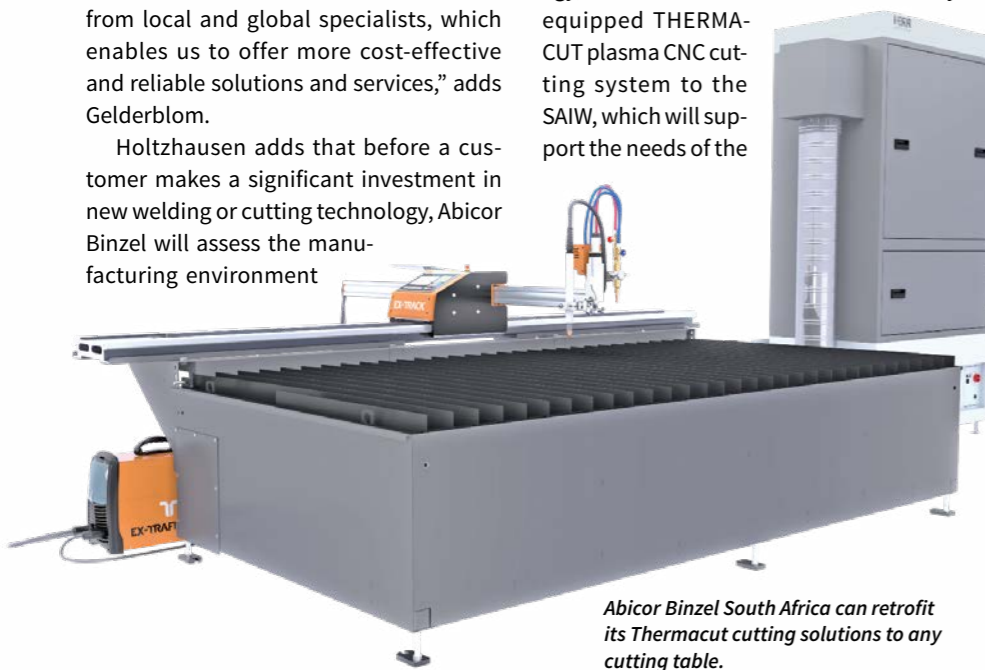
"The system takes the guesswork out of optimising the gas flow rate and prevents operators from adjusting gas regulators or flow meters. It also detects gas leaks, giving an early warning as soon as a hose or connection is compromised," notes Thembinkosi Matyeka.

## The refocused Abicor SA

"Both locally and globally, Abicor is now in a better position to support our customers directly," says Gelderblom. "We are well known across the globe for our welding torch capability, especially the MB40 GMA welding torches, but we have now significantly expanded our welding and cutting offerings, particularly in the automation space.

"We have re-established our presence and are refocused on supporting all of the Abicor Group's brands," he concludes.

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Abicor Binzel South Africa can retrofit its Thermacut cutting solutions to any cutting table.