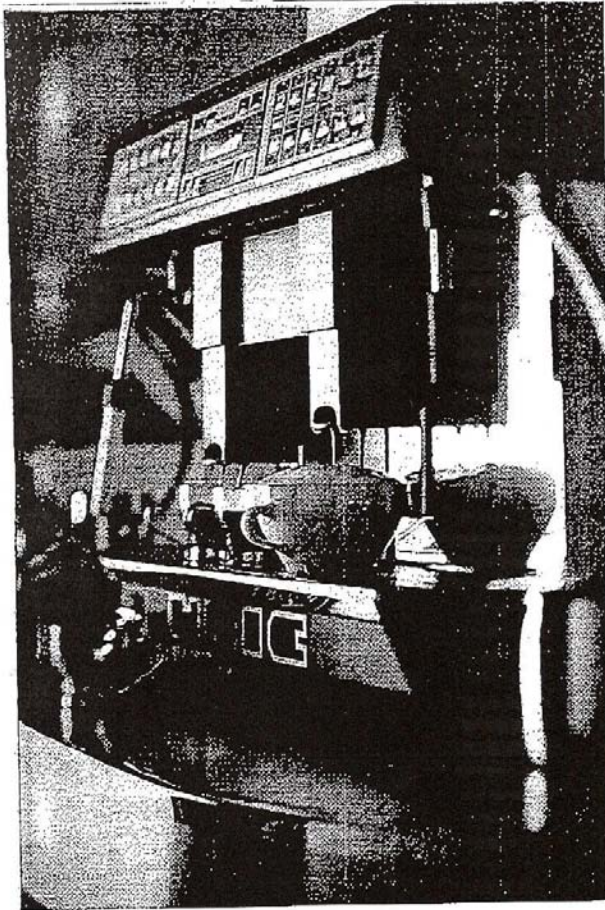


UNIC

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UNIC Dances To Its Own Tango

STAFF REPORT

to Italy and that it also has its own indigenous roasting and machine manufacturing sector, competition for the prize is particularly keen — perhaps the keenest to be found.

It is this backdrop that has shaped a particular coffee mentality along the coast, colored by a long and highly competitive espresso tradition; an unusually large and demanding HORECA and rich home sector; and a local working and business class that must survive on its own merits while serving the ideals of excellence that go with being rich and famous.

Uniquely UNIC

UNIC is one of the local, Riviera espresso machine manufacturers. Shaped by its surroundings, it too has had a long history of serving a wide variety of establishments, from the lowliest to the most demanding. But it has survived by meeting the highest expectations in espresso coffee. It also has a sharp eye for competition and a fixation on perfection as a goal.

UNIC is located near Nice. Since 1919 it has been a leading fixture of the French espresso machine manufacturing community, now reduced to only three companies. For long, far and wide, it has been renowned for its loyal adherence to, technical expertise and many patents in, the piston-based extraction school of espresso brewing. This alone makes UNIC unique. And a pride in uniqueness is a striking characteristic of the company to this day — it shows in the eyes of the Levi brothers, the current gener-

For the rich of all nations, the French Riviera beckons to people interested in lying in the sun, being indolent and absorbing the beauty. For the French people who work here, there is another story; no idling nor laziness for them. For them the sunlight is searing, not soothing, stripping people and things down to their true selves.

For coffee, the Riviera, all along the coast from the old Casino in Menton to the villas in Cassis, is also a gold coast. It hosts a very large and profitable HORECA and home sector that is focused uniquely on espresso and includes a good number of the world's most renowned hotels, restaurants and residences, a concentration unequaled in Europe and perhaps the world. The coffee here is not always better than elsewhere, but it is often made to seem so and it flows in great quantities like water.

For this reason, the Riviera is a prize sales region sought by virtually all espresso machine manufacturers and by numerous roasters too. Given its close proximity

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ation of owners/managers who stand guard of their family tradition in espresso machine manufacturing.

But this traditional mentality is one side of UNIC — a hardnosed, single minded focus on market realities is the other. UNIC, perhaps more than any other company in the field, has been able to fuse the two sides, while following the espresso machine market evolution as close as a hound on a hare.

Dancing the Tango

Actually, UNIC may be one of the more focused espresso machine manufacturers. It has simplified the thrust of its production and marketing down to two concentrated lines: its big new superautomatic Tango and the highly successful small Pony for pods.

Tango came onto the market only about a year ago but has already surpassed its sales goals. It is an interesting, different kind of super automatic machine, partly because it demonstrates, even in its brash newness, the admired old-time attributes of UNIC.

This means that Tango is not a vending machine for espresso coffee, although it can be used like one if the need is there. Tango was conceived and designed as a superautomatic that could either function mindlessly, or give the operator who knows how to use it, as much control as possible over the numerous parameters that combine to give a good traditional cup of espresso. Grind, dosing, temperature, infusion time; control of such essentials can be locked in place on a Tango, or returned to the operator who has mastered its technical virtuositics so as to give a coffee by hand, the old way, albeit with far greater speed and precision.

Yes, one can push a button and immediately get a freshly ground, dosed and infused coffee ready to serve — but yes, one can also program Tango, adjust Tango, run Tango (dance with Tango, if you like) much as on a traditional machine, only with more ease.

In essence, Tango is two superautomatics in one housing. It has two boilers, two whole bean hoppers, two grinders, two infusion chambers. The Tango can be set to have two separate espresso menus, with the potential for up to 12 selections per side or a total possibility of 24 coffee style variations. This variety is refined further by the capability to program two individual grinds and dosing parameters to work simultaneously for either side, or to crisscross sides for some servings as desired. In a self service usage situation, Tango can run on tokens or coins and even be used by two customers at once.

Despite all of its doubling, it plays one trick. The Tan-

go does have its surprises. For simplicity, among other virtues, it possesses only a single serving head. But a serving head that by means of the two separate infusion chambers can fill four cups at once, and if need be with different espresso styles. The system also streamlines the machine's technicalities, servicing and cleaning.

This gives Tango its speed — 400 cups per hour tops. One Tango now running at an establishment on the Riviera is regularly going through 40 kilos of coffee beans per week.

Adjustability and versatility are truly the major themes behind the Tango's design concept, and these pertain to almost every feature on the machine, from cup serving size to the pre-set time that the machine can turn itself on in the morning. It extends to every parameter that comes to play in producing a quality cup of espresso. Tango comes with or without an integrated refrigerator for milk (eight liters in volume), and in colors too, Mango, Azur or a soft gray.

The company puts its own name in large letters on the Tango. Should one want to know its creator, there is no doubt. Tango is an upscale, new generation of superautomatic espresso machines, destined for the fast food market and large volume use in busy restaurants and cafes, especially for a rush hour in lattes or cappuccinos or classic ristretto espressos.

Riding The Pony

The Pony Espresso made the Tango possible. UNIC's continuing success with its small pod-formatted brewer helped pay for the extensive research and development that went into creating Tango. Piston driven, built to professional standards with professional parts, although its market is the home, office or light-espresso-volume HORECA establishment, the Pony gallops on.

UNIC currently ships some 4,000 Ponies annually, virtually all of them to roasters who place them under their own brand name. On the market for the past few years — it was one of the first, mass market pod brewers to be developed — the Pony is regularly kept current with technical revisions.

A UNIC machine, it seems, must have its own personality and the Pony is no exception. Its patented features include the rotating filter holder and pod ejection system. Visually, it is striking for its naked, mobile piston system that when engaged completely covers the pod.

Ponies are built for the quality market, not for price competition. They have found particular popularity in Northern Europe, France and Asia. According to the company, however, the Pony's greatest potential now is seen for the home market in the U.S.A., where it is handled exclusively by IllyCaffe.

The president of UNIC is Jean-Pierre Levi. Mario Levy takes responsibility for design and development. The international export manager is Jeannot Henninger.