

Nepcon China Off to Strong Start

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SHANGHAI – Nepcon China opened today with strong crowds and plenty of noise, as usual. The show, many watchers agree, needs a strong showing this year to fend off a challenge from the producers of Productronica, who are mounting a challenge to Nepcon's longstanding supremacy in the Shanghai electronics market.

While all the big name OEMs are here, what makes Nepcon China interesting is its large indigenous crowds and the ample supply of native vendors. Of the Chinese-made equipment alone, *Circuits Assembly* counted 12 printers, six AOI, three SPI, 14 reflow ovens, and 10 wave machines. Also spotted were two x-ray machines, two dispensers, a stencil cleaner, a dicer, and a couple routers, as well as a smattering of microscopes, ESD carts, and rework gear. There was no selective soldering equipment, but there was an axial inserter – the first Chinese-made placement machine this reporter has seen in the past three years.

Many of the usual knockoffs were present, including replicas of DEK and EKRA printers and a Vitronics wave machine. In a bit of irony, one Chinese exhibitor sported a “no photography” sign on its adhesive dispenser.

A handful of EMS firms are on hand, including Circuit Service, Beijing Brio, Panda and FEI Asia.

BTU product manager for electronics assembly Rob DiMatteo, a veteran of Nepcon China, said the opening day was strong. “Nepcon is a good show,” he said. “We've been busy all day.” The much-maligned Everbright Convention Center is sporting certain noticeable improvements, including redesigned electrical that removed many – but not all – of the “speed bumps” common on the show floor in years past. The site has also been painted. For years, exhibitors have been prodding Reed Exhibitions, which produces the Nepcon show, to move or upgrade the Everbright.

Security was also tightened, with fewer watch vendors and other solicitors peddling their wares on the show floor. Nevertheless, the occasional smoker could still be spotted.