

Metro Area Composite Services Firm Finishes Hydroplanes, Cars

By Gerald Scott

Next year will mark 10 years in business for Sankuer Composite Technologies, Inc. (SCT), a bustling job shop for composite materials in Sterling Heights.

With 10 employees and 10,000 square feet of working space, SCT is a full-service provider of high-quality composite services, specializing in close-tolerance fabrication and molding, surface finishing, wood shop and clay modeling services.

SCT's roots are in finishing work on hydroplane boats, but today the shop also supports industrial work, auto and auto show displays, all of which seek to tap into SCT's materials weight-saving knowledge.

Patrick Sankuer, Jr., president of the firm, the other day gave a tour of his shop, located off of 16 Mile Road between Van Dyke and Mound in Sterling Heights.

"We do a lot of different things, we started with racing almost 10 years ago and through that, it evolved into other industries," Sankuer said.

"We took what we learned in boat racing - hydroplanes specifically - and then as we progressed, seven-eight years ago, some people presented us with some challenges that was outside of our wheelhouse.

"We were able to take the weight-saving solutions we learned from racing and put them in an industrial place where they were needed and so we've kind of grown out of that necessity."

The shop has an oversized paint booth, just to fit those large hydroplanes from the Unlimited category that look like small aircraft on the water.

Sankuer and his brother recently raced in the APBA Quake on the Lake Competition on Pontiac Lake in the company boat.

"On the hydroplanes there's a lot of woodworking involving. What's similar, though, (between boats and cars) is both entities need weight savings but they need strength, then it's trying to find the compromise of expense at the same time," Sankuer observed.

"Unlimiteds, we put in decks and repainted the U-13 Tubby's Grilled Sandwiches (hydroplane), it's a considerably larger boat.

"At Quake on the Lake, I ran a 4th and my brother ran 2nd. There's vintage boats that we've done restorations and paint work on, a lot of boats that we've done.

"Our customer base is Southeastern Michigan, but today we had a part sent from a hydroplane racer in New Jersey. Pretty much from this side of the Mississippi to the East Coast, is our (hydroplane) customer base. Engines are the customer's worry, we handle the plastic end."

Sankuer's business has evolved such that besides boats, they'll do specialty work in auto, such as if you observe a see-through car hood at an auto show or Autorama, it might be their work. They also do work helping auto show exhibitors to use more lightweight props and displays so as to realize a cost-savings as the display travels from city to city. They can also do a car prototype.

"On this particular (race) car, they had a clay model made and then we made all the tooling to reproduce all the parts on the car with the exception of the hood and doors because by the rules they had to have an OEM hood and OEM doors," Sankuer explained.

"What it was, was a clay model, the we built the tooling off their clay model and then we built all carbon fiber and honeycomb parts out of that."

Sankuer enjoys the wide variety of work that his business now brings in beyond just hydroplanes. During a recent tour, besides hydroplanes, a Cobra kit car and aircraft pieces were on the shop floor.

For a company in Florida they built a composite fuselage for a light sport-aircraft, fabricating

wheel covers, winglets, fenders and front nose, all for these pusher-prop type of light aircraft.

"Another thing that happens is that customers will come to us for reproductions," Sankuer said. "This is a pallet-jack piece that's unavailable anymore. So what will happen is that they'll bring us a piece, we'll reproduce and

we'll make it for them to refurbish machinery.

"We can fabricate pretty much anything. A lot of our customers come to us with designs or ideas, we're a good place for that, we fit a niche market: we're large enough to accommodate but we're small enough that we can work with customers."



Patrick Sankuer, Jr., president of Sankuer Composite Technologies, Inc.

Ford Arts, Beats & Eats Hosts 'du Jour' Event for Charity

ROYAL OAK - On Thursday, Aug. 23 from 6-11 p.m., the Royal Oak Farmers Market will transform into a strolling dinner and sampling extravaganza for the 10th annual Arts du Jour function, which is the official appetizer function of the 2012 Ford Arts, Beats & Eats festival.

The event provides a sneak

peek into the eats and entertainment that thousands of people look forward to experiencing at the annual Labor Day weekend festival in Royal Oak.

Nine nonprofits will receive 75 percent of the proceeds from Arts du Jour and event attendees can choose which of those organizations their ticket benefits.

Morre than 50 of metro Detroit's restaurants, eateries, sweep shops and boutiques, such as Town Tavern, La Dolce Vita and Mitchell's Fish Market, will serve their finest offerings while some of the most talented bands and cultural performers take to two main stages. Call (866) 234-6097 for more info.



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Unscramble a phrase to win.

Fiat Contest Win: Trip-for-2 to Italy

AUBURN HILLS - Unscrambling a phrase will start one lucky winner and guest on a trip for five days and four nights in Italy, at the same location where the FIAT brand's latest commercial, "Immigrants," was filmed.

The contest kicked off last week on the FIAT brand's blog site, www.fiatbackstage.com.

"Amalfi and Sorrento served as the perfect backdrop to our latest commercial, 'Immigrants.' The contest will allow one of our fans and a guest with the opportunity to see and experience the Italian heritage of the FIAT brand," said Tim Kuniskis, head of FIAT Brand for North America, Chrysler Group LLC.

"Immigrants' features colorful landscapes and breathtaking views of the famed Italian coast . . . a once-in-a-lifetime experience that can't be missed."

To enter the contest, participants must unscramble a phrase using hyperlinked keywords located within various blog posts located on the FIAT blog page (www.fiatbackstage.com). Once unscrambled and the phrase is complete, the participant will be directed to a landing page, where the secret phrase can be used as entry into the contest. Eight unique secret phrases will be posted periodically throughout the duration of the contest.

Last month, the FIAT brand unveiled their latest commercial, "Immigrants."

Ricardo Appoints Product Director

VAN BUREN TWP. - Ricardo, Inc. announced the addition of Ali Maleki as its product group director for controls and electronics. Maleki will report to Kent Niederhofer, president of Ricardo, Inc.

"Ali's extensive background in system controls and electronics will be crucial for our continued expansion and market growth in the automotive sector," said Niederhofer. "Understanding complex controls and electronics are becoming increasingly important as automakers push the boundaries of connected car services."

Most recently, Maleki served as manager, software systems and controller development at Fisker Automotive.

Ricardo has an active connected car services and vehicle communications team dedicated to bringing new technology and solutions to market. It specializes in broad areas such as control systems and simulation.

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