

## **Feintool Leverages Arku's Tandem CompactFeed® Line**

Lyss, Switzerland-based Feintool AG is the world's leading technology group specializing in the development of fineblanking systems and the production of precision, ready-to-install fineblanking and forming components, notably for the automotive industry. Feintool maintains close partnerships with its customers across the entire fineblanking and forming process, from component design, toolmaking, and system construction to large-scale series parts production. In addition to fineblanking, the Feintool Group also deploys other key processes such as precision forming and orbital technology; additionally, it's the world's only supplier of all-round solutions for the cost-effective manufacture of complex precision components.

When the company installed the latest generation of its fine tool fineblanking press, the HFA 8800 Speed, at its Cincinnati, Ohio manufacturing facility, the challenge was to fully leverage the press capabilities by processing coil material of various thicknesses in a single line. Feintool turned to Baden-Baden, Germany-based Arku Maschinenbau GmbH, the world's leading expert in leveling, to meet the challenge.

### **Through Thick and Thin**

Feintool's U.S. operation specializes in seating and drive train/transmission parts for the automotive industry. About 95 percent of its parts go into this demanding sector. "If you use a large tonnage (880 tons) press like we do, the press itself is huge," says Lars Reich, vice president, sales and marketing, for Feintool's U.S. operations. The press has the ability to produce parts at 1/1000-inch thickness.

"The problem we have is handling various materials for the different parts we produce," he continues. "We may have a part that's 120/1000 inch that's formed from a large strip, and we need a straightener that can make that material flat. The next job may be 500/1000 inch, but the straightener that handled the first job is not suitable to run the thicker material. That's the crux of the problem. We

would need two straighteners, but to run two lines to accommodate them would be both space and cost prohibitive.”

Feintool chose a tandem configuration of Arku’s CompactFeed® line to solve the problem. “With this tandem configuration, we got the best of both worlds,” says Reich. “In the line, we have a precision straightener that can handle up to 21 rolls of the thin material, followed by a second straightener that can handle up to nine rolls of thicker material. We are achieving optimum flatness over the whole range of material thicknesses.” Now, when Feintool processes materials up to 160/1000 inch, it uses the smaller straightener; for thicker materials, it uses the larger one.

### **Maximizing Asset Utilization**

The fineblanking press Feingold installed is very expensive, in the \$2.5 to \$3 million range. When a company makes such a serious investment, it wants to be sure to employ its full capabilities. “If we didn’t have this tandem straightener solution, we could not use the press for all our products,” notes Reich. “We would have to limit the machine by the straightener—and that would be totally unacceptable. It’s akin to undersizing an engine in a high-performance car. You would have a highly engineered machine, but couldn’t really drive it as it was designed because the engine would limit the performance. With the tandem straighteners, we can ‘drive our press’ the way it was meant to be used.”

This capability allows the asset to be leveraged fully, and enables Feintool to perform the full range of work necessary to meet the demands of its automotive customers. For example, if the company had only one straightener for the press, it could not produce clutch blades on the machine. “Now we can go from clutch blades to seating parts to parking poles,” says Reich.

“If a stamper company like us has large tonnage presses drawing thick and thin material, they would have to compromise without a solution like this,” he says. “With the Arku solution, we can be highly specialized without having to jeopardize our asset performance.”

## **Other Advantages**

The HFA 8800 Speed fineblanking press with the tandem configuration of Arku's CompactFeed line has been in operation at Feintool's U.S. facility since January of this year. Feintool made the decision on the equipment approximately eight months earlier; according to Reich, the implementation proceeded "without a snag." "The overall production and quality has been outstanding," he says. "We see excellent flatness results, and this can be a significant challenge when working with thin materials." Since automotive customers are unstinting in their demand for quality, this result is key.

Reich also cites how easy it is to operate and maintain the Arku system. The precision levelers form the heart of the feeding line. The CompactFeed® is equipped with a hinged leveling unit that enables thorough cleaning of the leveling rollers and rapid threading of the sheet metal strips. The ARKU feeding lines for fine blanking presses enable coil change times of less than 5 minutes. "The levelers open quite wide for cleaning," says Reich. "This means easier maintenance, less time and labor investment, and lower costs associated with these processes."

A further advantage is the seamless integration between the Arku system and the press. "What we do in the fineblanking press is retained in memory and available for the next job," explains Reich. He notes a 30 to 40 percent increase in uptime due to this feature. "The press and feed line really become one, because they have the same control architecture. So we can save a job on the press and it provides all the setup parameters in the machine memory. When we move to the next job, we simply call up the tool number and everything is there. This represents a significant time savings when compared to more manual systems, such as our previous one."

## **Service and Support: Right Every Time**

Reich gives Arku's U.S.-based operations high marks for service and support throughout the process, from specification to implementation to ongoing operation. "Often when sourcing a piece of equipment from overseas, there may

be service and support problems,” he says. “This was definitely not the case with Arku. Their U.S.-based staff was always at hand, whenever we needed them. Combined with the fact that we believe this is the best equipment available, we have a combination that works—effectively, efficiently, and competitively—in a market where competition is always high.”

He sums up by saying the system has allowed Feintool to be more versatile in meeting the needs of their customers. “Whatever challenge we’re presented with, now we can be right every time,” he concludes.

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## **SHORT VERSION**

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When Feintool AG installed the latest generation of its fineblanking press at its Cincinnati, Ohio manufacturing facility, the automotive parts supplier turned to Arku, the world’s leading expert on leveling, to meet the challenge of having that press handle coil materials of various thicknesses in a single feed line.

“The problem we have is handling various materials for the different parts we produce,” says Lars Reich, vice president of sales and marketing for Feintool’s U.S. operations. “We may have a part that’s 120/1000 inch that’s formed from a large strip, and we need a straightener that can make that material flat. The next job may be 500/1000 inch, but the straightener that handled the first job is not suitable to run the thicker material. That’s the crux of the problem. We would need two straighteners, but to run two lines to accommodate them would be both space and cost prohibitive.”

Feintool selected a tandem configuration of Arku’s CompactFeed® line to meet its production challenge and fully leverage the capabilities of the 880-ton HFA 8800 Speed fineblanking press. “With this tandem configuration, we got the best of both worlds,” says Reich. “In the line, we have a precision straightener

that can handle up to 21 rolls of the thin material, followed by a second straightener that can handle up to nine rolls of thicker material. We are achieving optimum flatness over the whole range of material thicknesses.”

By implementing the Arku solution, Feintool is now able to:

- Save space by minimizing the necessary footprint and allowing all production to take place in a single line.
- Save money by eliminating the need for additional equipment.
- Improve the speed of production and maintenance through an easy-to-use integrated solution.
- Improve flatness and meet the stringent quality demands of automotive customers.
- Maximize capital asset utilization.
- Maintain or improve competitive market position.

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