

# Leather sources pleased with market activity

By Joan Gunin

LAS VEGAS — Stationary leather upholstery resources at market were encouraged by the positive reactions generated by new products shown here last week.

Newcomers to the category mingled with existing players.

Jerry Ding, sales manager for contemporary California resource Moroni, was in a larger showroom and said he was “surprised by the turnout. We are very excited to be here.”

Craftmaster’s opening of a West Coast warehouse facility for imported leather seating proved a hit with retailers. The collection of eight best-selling styles from High Point plus two new frames retails at \$799 to \$999.

“The pricing is better because of such factors as freight and, coming out of the warehouse, demonstrates a savings of 5% to 10%,” said President Roy Calcagne. “The leather program, begun two years ago, has been very successful for us as a company.”

At Soflex, President Tom Schmidt was pleased because



several large independents picked up its warehouse program. On the container-direct side, Schmidt said dealers were impressed with a group of transitional frames in better leathers. About 75% of what it introduced here will stay in the line, he said.

“Overall, we were pleased and excited by the results because the amount of effort we put through here (in two showrooms) was worth it,” he said.

Chinese upholstery maker Kuka, in its U.S. market debut, exhibited 85 upholstery slots spread over 46,000 square feet. Company consultant Jeff Baron called showroom attendance “unbelievable.”

“While a lot of important buyers apparently don’t do Las Vegas in July, the quality of those we did see was phenomenally good, amazingly good,” he said. “Even if Kuka is relatively unknown, it seems like

Case goods source New Classic Home Furnishings has expanded into leather upholstery with product from China, including the contemporary Jackson, featuring top-grain leather covers mixed with splits in one or two married SKUs. The line is geared to retails of \$799 to \$999.

a lot of retailers know what we are and know the product and are extremely happy at the chance to buy it.”

New Classic, a 20-year-old Chinese case good producer long involved in OEM, joined the leather category with seven stationary frames retailing from \$799 to \$999. National Sales Manager Robert Jarrard called the leather intro

“superlative” despite the state of the industry and the economy.

He attributed its success to bestselling looks, consistent construction story, pricing and California warehouse availability.

Similarly, newcomer Leather Living, a stalwart at Toronto markets, offers a full complement of better seating and brought 30 stationary frames here. The sofas, produced in Brompton, Ontario, retail from

\$995 to \$2,400, said President Parm Dhaliwal, whose family owns the company.

“We came here to expand our market share,” Dhaliwal said. “It’s becoming more competitive overseas because of freight and other costs. We are here to provide consumers with a North American resource.”

At Emerald Home Furnishings, Marketing Director Kacie Bray said, “We sent our full staff but Tuesday’s traffic was so hectic we did not have enough reps to cover all comers at once. A lot of our regular customers come to our open house but we saw a lot of new customers, too.”

Hamilton Spill emphasized modular styles as an alternative to sectionals, because of cost savings realized by shipping smaller, lighter modular pieces. Hamilton Spill continues its push into fabric cover options and more opulent looks, said Gary Harmon, vice president.

# Fast-turning entertainment items grab attention

By Larry Thomas

LAS VEGAS — Items that can sell — and sell quickly — garnered the most attention here in showrooms featuring entertainment furniture.

Executives said traffic-starved retailers were looking for items that can deliver demonstrable benefits to the consumers who do walk through the door. They also said dealers weren’t nearly as price-conscious if they could be convinced the item wouldn’t gather dust in a warehouse.

Plus, retailers seemed committed to keeping razor-thin inventories, relying on resources that can quickly re-stock a warehouse as needed.

“They are not all that interested in price. It’s all about turns,” said Karl Eulberg, senior vice president of sales and marketing at Kathy Ire-

land Home by Martin. “No one wants to tie up their money with a bunch of inventory.”

Eulberg and other execu-

tives said retailers still see plenty of sales opportunities for entertainment furniture because flat-panel TV sales continue to be strong. In ad-

dition, they believe the upcoming February conversion to digital television broadcast signals will force many consumers into the market for a

TV with a digital tuner.

“We decided that the time is right for us to get serious about the category,” said Jay Foscue, senior vice president of merchandising at Klausner, which had five new wall systems. He said the company will have at least 10 wall systems by the October market in High Point, and said the models introduced in Las Vegas will soon be available for two-week delivery from Klausner’s Vietnam warehouse.

“We received very good feedback on our entertainment program,” he said. “People seemed to like the ability to get a mixed container with our bedroom and occasional groups.”

Eulberg said Martin received positive feedback on new TV consoles that are 36 inches tall — four inches higher than others in its line — while Parker House was see Entertainment, p37

## Avenue Six adds entertainment

LAS VEGAS — Avenue Six, best known for its ready-to-assemble upholstery, made its debut here in the home entertainment category.

The company offers about a dozen consoles and related entertainment pieces, and said more could be added if interest in the category remains high.

“We wanted to broaden our product offerings beyond upholstery,” said Paul Reitzin, president. “These are small-scaled pieces for smaller urban homes, condos and apartments.”

Reitzin said the new items, which retail for \$299 to \$599, are in stock and available for quick delivery. The consoles feature contemporary and transitional styling. One model is white with black doors and has a UV finish.



The new Metro TV console from Avenue Six features a white finish with UV coating.