

Still innovative after all these years



At a time when dental patients were receiving treatment in modified versions of barber chairs, German manufacturer Ritter became the first company to produce a dedicated dental chair in 1887.

By Danny Chan



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Founder Frank Ritter displayed his innovation at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893, from which time Ritter's dental equipment had gained universal acceptance throughout Europe and the United States. Not contented with that solitary achievement, Ritter soon trail blazed the industry with yet another outstanding contribution. In tandem with improved understanding of oral pathology and dental practice techniques, the early 20th century had witnessed tremendous growth in dental equipment, resulting in an ever increasing need for space in the dental surgeries to accommodate the influx of equipment. Once again, Ritter rose to the challenge developing an all-inclusive treatment system, which makes available to the dentist all necessary equipment and tools, based on an ergonomic design that lessens workplace injuries. In 1917, Ritter released the first-ever dental unit. The basic design and principles of that integrated system has provided the blueprint for every treatment unit manufactured since.

Like all companies with a long and distinguished history, Ritter has undergone several transitions, yet it still stands as one of few remaining German-owned and -operated dental legacies. Ritter has not abandoned its core philosophy of combining quality with advanced features and ergonomics. With equipment production centered at the Zwönitz facility in Germany, Ritter products are being sold in over 55 countries – including Australia.

Ritter support in Australia

Since 2000, Gritter Dental has represented Ritter equipment in Australia. Beginning in 1963, the dental equipment specialist has been providing a full range of equipment ranging from dental operating systems and digital imaging

units to suction systems and handpieces, as well as full service components for a range of brands.

Although Ritter systems have long been serving the Australian dental market's needs for reliability and advanced features, it helps to have the expertise of Gritter's in-house service department, along with its Gritter Point service networks of dealers and service technicians, located Australia-wide, as Leon Gritter, Managing Director, Gritter Dental, explains:

"The Australian dental market poses unique challenges to the equipment supplier due to its size and widely dispersed population. For example, the need to cover great distances when providing equipment support and the long service life of dental systems are challenges peculiar to the Australian market.

"At the same time, Australian dentists follow the latest trends in dental techniques, and therefore demand equipment that can provide the features that allow them to perform comprehensive dental procedures with ease."

Critical Contact details

The Contact model range, Ritter's core line of dental systems, is one of the more popular amongst Australian dentists. Built with quality materials, including in-house manufactured electronic controls; the Contact range boasts an array of sophisticated features across three model levels.

A unique feature of the system allows up to four dentists to have their own preset settings to control all aspects of the dental system's operation. Each user is able to specify preferences such as instrument speeds and functions, in addition to more basic control functions like individual chair controls. A simple push of the button calls up all the preset functions tailored



to the individual preferences of the current operator.

The minimalist design of the control panels offers a straightforward interface, whilst providing comprehensive controls. Even in the middle of a complicated dental procedure, LED displays show all instrument functions clearly and provide an intuitive and easy-to-operate system. All critical components are designed for easy disinfection; through removable panels (including the cuspidor bowl), smooth surfaces and clean edges. Functions such as waterline flush are adjustable so the clinician can vary the run time to suit each instrument.

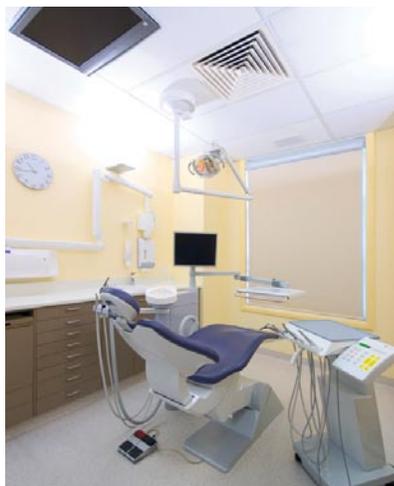
The modular design of the Ritter Contact systems provide a framework that easily accommodates add-on components such as multimedia control system (with intra oral camera) as well as more advanced features such as saline pump system for surgeries inclined toward surgical procedures.

What the users say

From the baked enamel paint finish to the finely engineered internal components, the Contact line conforms to Ritter's high quality standards. Even a skeptic like Dr Mark Casiglia had to admit that the German make was true to its pedigree, although some convincing discussion was still necessary. In overcoming his initial apprehension, the Sydney-based owner of Apple Dental describes his experience:

"I was hung up on the construction quality. The Gritter personnel pulled a unit apart to show me, and I needed no further convincing. The materials appeared to be what you would expect from a high quality German company – solid. I also wanted a comprehensive control system for my instrumentation, and what I found was better than expected."

Dr Casiglia went on to purchase



three Ritter Contact World dental operating systems with cart style delivery and ceiling mounted operating light. That was in April 2007, and he has been using the systems "continuously since".

Describing Ritter systems as "quality, reliable equipment with no-fuss, reliable servicing", Dr Casiglia needs little nudging to compliment his dental units:

"I love the cart system which I can stow out of the way when not needed and bring in nice and close when working. I cannot live without the graphic user interface that shows me exactly how my instruments are set and allows fine-tuning at any time.

In terms of user-friendliness, aesthetics and value-for-money, Dr Casiglia reckons his dental units have them in spades:

"It's hard to imagine an easier system to operate. Patients continue to comment on the beautiful equipment I have. I love the clean, streamlined, modern appearance of the equipment. There are a lot of other units available around this price level but I felt not all equipment has the same combination of quality construction, instrumentation control and sharp looks as the Ritter."

Equipment servicing and support is another reason for Dr Casiglia's loyalty towards Ritter systems. For over 14 years, Dr Casiglia has relied on the expertise of Gritter Dental, for all his fitout and equipment needs, including those for three new practice set-ups.

"They supplied all my technical equipment and helped with the design of the infrastructure relating to the dental equipment. It would have been really difficult without their knowledge and help. You can't fault Leon and Gritter Dental – they're always cheerful and helpful. I highly recommend their services."

Another Gritter client and busy practice with three Ritter systems are the Smiles Plus clinics operated by Dr Phil Mazidi and Dr Nathan You. Dr Mazidi set up his first practice in 2004, with all the equipment provided by Gritter Dental. Core to the equipment was the Ritter Contact Lite, of which he has since purchased a second unit.

Recently they established a new clinic located in Glenorie and didn't hesitate to invest again in Ritter equipment. Says Dr Mazidi: "Overall, it's a good value chair with all the attributes of user-friendliness, robustness, great features and upgrading options. We've already purchased two more units so far. Should we expand and require more chairs in future, we

will buy the Ritter Contact again."

Scoring Gritter Dental 8 out of 10 on customer service and after-sales support, Dr Mazidi says they have experienced very few problems with the Ritter equipment, but adds: "If there is a problem, Leon Gritter and staff always get onto it quickly to minimize inconvenience."

Inconvenience was a huge factor for Dr Maria Cavanna, principal dentist at Danthonia Healthcare, as she contemplated on which equipment and supplier to go for. Located in the country region of Inverell, Danthonia Healthcare is at least six hours away from any metropolitan-based service provider.

"A major consideration was robustness, as we are rurally situated and getting someone out to repair the equipment would be costly in terms of clinical time lost," Dr Cavanna explains.

Through the Internet, Dr Cavanna found Gritter Dental and in turn, was introduced to the Ritter system. Her practice owns two Contact Lite dental chairs, with the cart delivery system, and Planetlite operating lights.

She assesses the units and equipment supplier: "The chairs are very comfortable, earning many unsolicited compliments from our patients. We have not had many problems with them – the few issues we had were quickly fixed. The chairs look simple but elegant, and are easy to operate, adjust, and clean.

"Gritter Dental are always quick to respond to any questions or problems, and we know we can get any replacement parts or associated supplies quickly."

Describing her overall user experience with Ritter equipment as being "very positive", she adds: "Everything works so smoothly and reliably. We know we can rely on the units in our busy country practice. I am glad that we chose this equipment."

Glowing feedback as these undoubtedly resonates with Ritter's hordes of loyal supporters around the world. While many of their newer admirers may not be familiar with its glorious history – 123 years in the making – they are certainly well acquainted with and appreciative of its latest product offerings.

For all its pioneering titles, Ritter is still better known for what it continues to do, than what it has achieved in the past. With solid distribution partners the likes of Gritter Dental and its continued pursuit of new innovation, it seems Ritter is not quite finished writing its own history. ◆