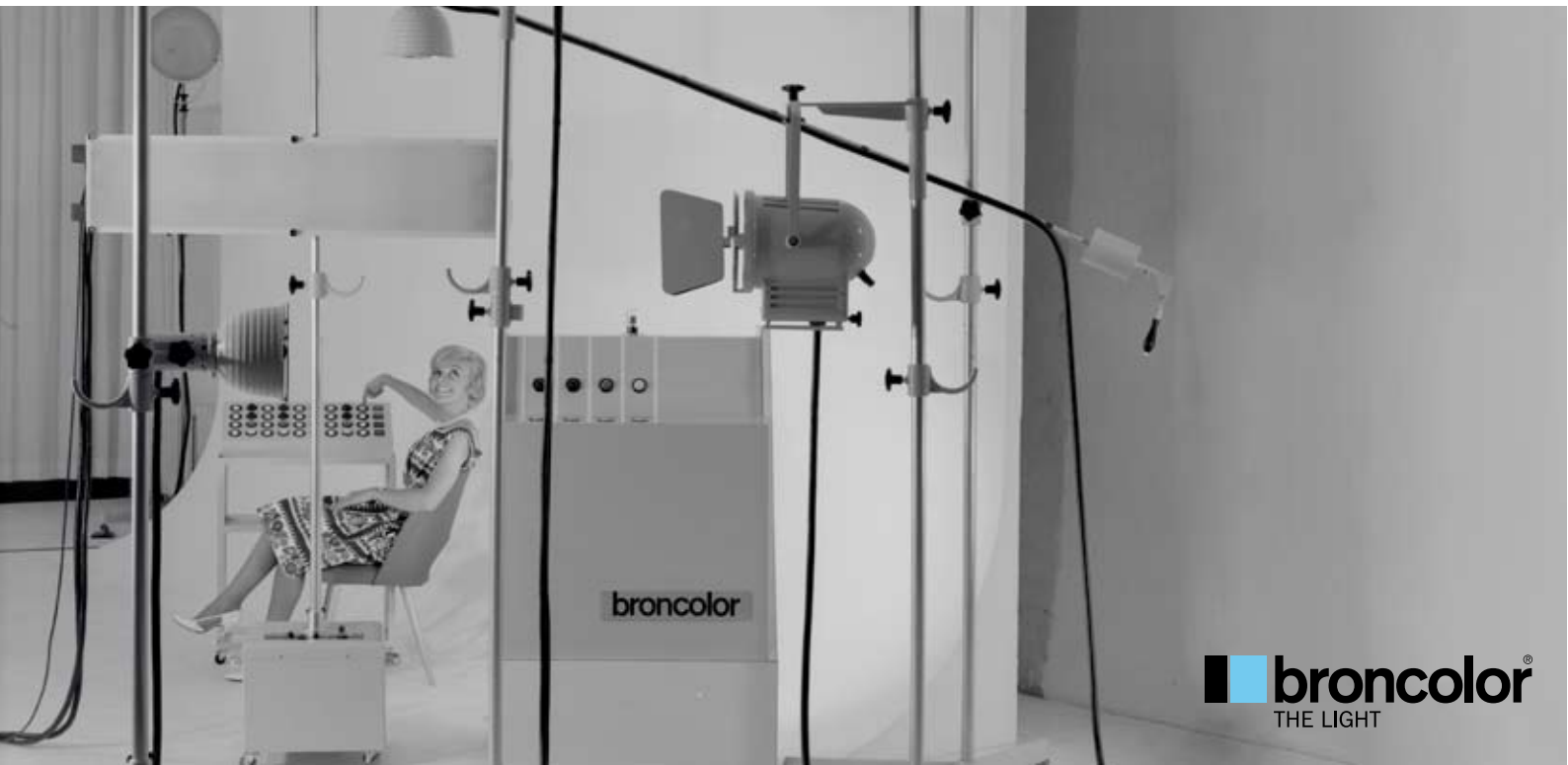


50

LIGHT-YEARS AHEAD



Always in the right light: Bron Elektronik AG turns 50

Bron Elektronik AG has been making lighting and flash systems for photographers since 1958. The company's anniversary slogan – “50 light years ahead” – reflects the fact that its market leadership is based on 50 years of light, so to speak. Its success is no coincidence: Bron is specialised in a narrow but deep range of products, pursues intensive research, develops superior equipment, and is always accessible to customers. A family atmosphere reigns at the Allschwil headquarters, and the company's 90 employees are highly motivated.

The success story really began in 1948 when brothers Pierre and Joseph Bron established Bron & Co. in Basel. They coated lenses, sold X-ray systems, and imported and distributed photographic equipment. A year later, they were appointed Dimitri Rebikoff's distributor of flash units for studio photographers. Rebikoff discontinued production in 1952, but Bron & Co. hired his two employees and began to manufacture the flash units under the broncolor label. A great brand was born. In 1958, the brothers founded Bron Elektronik AG to develop, manufacture, and globally market professional studio flash units. In 1962, they parted ways: Joseph purchased all shares of Bron & Co., and Pierre acquired Bron Elektronik AG.

Pierre Bron



The second generation takes the helm

In the 1970s and 1980s, Bron expanded its distribution network and opened subsidiaries in all major markets. Concurrently, Bron planned and built new production and office premises. In 1990, Pierre Bron transferred the leadership of the company to his son Jacques who has been running it in his father's spirit ever since. Jacques is responsible for management, finance, and administration. Claude Bron, the founder's nephew, joined the company in 1970 and is in charge of marketing and sales. Marcel Griessmann heads up the research and development department. Each of the three senior executives has a clearly defined scope of competence and the upbeat in-house climate reflects the fact that they are good friends. No wonder the turnover rate is so low.

Management: Claude Bron, Jacques Bron, Marcel Griessmann



Extra usefulness, extra added value

Bron Elektronik AG develops and produces its products in-house. This is one of the key reasons for the company's success. At the Allschwil facility which spans about 5,000m², employees design circuitry and mechanical components for lamp bases, power packs, and ballast units. New products are only developed if they are truly useful for the photographer and provide genuine added value. The ideas originate from discussions with users around the world, from feedback given by the two resident photographers who work in the professional environment of our in-house studios, and from the in-depth technical know-how of the developers. "We want to know as early as possible what our customers need, so we're already working on the lighting solutions that will be the benchmark tomorrow and beyond," says Jacques Bron, explaining the ambitions of the developers.

As soon as a project has been green-lighted, all specifications for the future product are defined and listed, including realistic manufacturing costs and budgets for marketing measures. Then, the designers begin to visualise it in keeping with the corporate identity, because all products have to be recognisable as Bron originals; that is decisive for their success. But the designers are at liberty to choose the materials and technologies they feel are best suited. Because of Bron's deliberate policy of low vertical integration, they do not have to consider the capacity utilisation of a machine, so they can choose the ideal material or the most appropriate surface finishing technology for each product.



600 companies supply about 8,000 parts

Bron develops the components on advanced CAD/CAM systems. The detailed data sets generated by these computers are the input for suppliers from all over the world. Some 600 companies deliver approximately 8,000 parts to Allschwil, where they are inspected, warehoused, and administered. Delivery, storage, development, and production are optimally co-ordinated.

An entire floor is dedicated to the assembly of circuit boards and the polymer shells of the flash units. Because of differences in line voltage, frequency, and safety codes,

certain flash units have to be produced in as many as 13 versions. In a separate room, a robotic system places surface-mounted devices (SMDs) on the circuit boards. These components, mostly resistors and capacitors, are much smaller than their conventional counterparts and have flat terminals rather than legs, so they are soldered directly on the boards. The circuit board does not have to be drilled, thus simplifying and expediting automatic circuit assembly processes. This is the technology that Bron uses most often now.



Zero tolerance in quality

Because absolute precision is decisive for the legendary quality of all Bron products, the company's engineers deploy laser-guided pick-and-place systems. Subsequently, they test each flash unit, each power pack, and each monolight under real-world conditions. After all, broncolor offers a two-year warranty for each product. "Our production tolerances are extremely tight," says technical director Marcel Griessmann, "so the service lives and resale value of our products are much higher than average. When it comes to quality, we tolerate no compromise."

The benefits of these tight tolerances go beyond quality and longevity. They are manifest in the extremely neutral colour spectrum of all studio flash units, whose UV constituents are almost totally eliminated. Another advantage is the constant colour temperature of 5,500 K across the entire control range based on the Colour Temperature Control (CTC) feature of all Grafit A power packs. This allows the photographer to repeat a shot in the studio with precisely the same parameters.



VISATEC®
by bron

the second product line

brnecolor studio flash systems for professional photographers are still Bron's best-selling flagship products. But the VISATEC line introduced in 1993 is evolving briskly as well and constitutes a growing part of the business. VISATEC allows Bron to give portrait and wedding photographers, photojournalists, and ambitious hobby photographers access to the know-how of professional photography. The flash units feature superb craftsmanship, are easy to operate, and offer ample performance.



kobold
by bron

the perfect match

About 15 years ago, Bron resolved to develop HMI continuous light sources for photographers. The objective was to harness the power of metal halide for as many reflectors of broncolor studio flash systems as possible. The target group consisted of photographers who use digital cameras with micro-scanner backs. In 1998, this development effort resulted in the first lamp bases for the broadcast market which became vastly popular not least because they were splashwater-proof.

A year later, Bron acquired ownership of Kobold Licht GmbH in the Bavarian town of Wolfratshausen. Thanks to this move, Bron was able to offer its customers a complete

range of continuous-light products: halogen, fluorescent, and HMI. Today, Bron Kobold GmbH in Wolfratshausen still manufactures all Kobold lighting units as well as metal components for certain items of equipment in the Bron Elektronik AG product line. The world's leading TV broadcasters use Kobold equipment, especially in electronic news gathering (ENG) and mostly for reports or interviews. Armed with this know-how, Bron was able to develop daylight systems for large trade fairs, fulfilling even the loftiest expectations of light designers and stand builders. These systems allow exhibitors to present their automobiles, fabrics, or garments in the very best light.

kobold, HMI DW200



Domiciled in Allschwil, at home in the world

Twenty staff members are responsible for marketing and distribution. They author operating instructions, brochures, and sales folders, keep the www.bron.ch website updated, organise seminars and workshops for photographers, and prepare trade fair exhibits. The marketing and distribution functions are centralised at Bron's headquarters.

About 96 percent of all products are exported to more than 60 countries. The principal markets are Europe, North America, and – with growing importance – the Far East. In Germany, France, and the USA, Bron operates its own or

co-owned dealerships. In other countries, Bron works with specialised partners. The company's main customers are advertising and fashion photographers around the world, as well as large corporations or museums with in-house photo studios. These highly discerning customers rely on broncolor for studio lighting that offers high-fidelity colour reproduction and gives the photographer full colour temperature and light control.

Bron Elektronik AG



A unique service: Worldlight

Worldlight is the name of the global rental system that Bron launched with more than 200 partners. Photographers whose turf is the entire planet no longer have to carry along their entire equipment when travelling, because they can rent a professional flash configuration on location.

This gives them the right resources anywhere and at any time, and the voltage rating is matched to the local grid. Moreover, these modern nomads can always rely on a knowledgeable local contact for advice and hands-on assistance.

K-King Studio, Beijing



Self-evident: Training and counsel

Bron converted its former factory rooms in the centre of Allschwil into seminar rooms with a professional photo studio. This is where sales engineers and photographers alike receive basic and advanced training. By conducting lighting seminars, the two resident photographers regularly bring

their colleagues up to date, both at home and abroad. For many years, Bron has also been collaborating with photo academies in all major markets. It supports meanwhile over 200 such schools in specific class projects and with privileged terms.

Workshop in Allschwil



Outlook: Light has a bright future

“Our value-oriented product policy will strengthen our position as a competent partner in the domain of lighting,” Jacques Bron affirms. “Digital photography has changed the photo market and helped us leverage our product advantages. Light is the signature of every photographer, camera operator, and light designer. Thanks to ongoing

dialogues with users at trade fairs, exhibitions, seminars, and customer visits around the globe, we’re in touch with the market and can better anticipate trends. The demand for images, both still and moving, is growing. That’s why we keep seeking new solutions. Bron believes in the future of light.”

Photography: Bernd Ebsen, Germany



50 years of history in a time capsule

- 1958** Pierre and Joseph Bron establish Bron Elektronik AG.
- 1962** Pierre Bron acquires all shares of the company.
- 1970** Bron Elektronik establishes a distributorship in Germany.
- 1977** Bron Elektronik establishes a distributorship in France.
- 1980** Bron Elektronik establishes a distributorship in the USA.
- 1982** Bron Elektronik moves to its new production centre in the Allschwil industrial zone.
- 1990** Pierre Bron hands the helm over to his son Jacques.
- 1990** The second construction phase ends with an office wing adjacent to the production centre.
- 1993** Bron Elektronik introduces VISATEC, the second product line after broncolor.
- 1999** Bron Elektronik acquires all assets of Kobold Licht GmbH, now named Bron Kobold GmbH; the company continues to manufacture Kobold products in Wolfratshausen (Germany).
- 2002** Bron Elektronik establishes Bron Kobold USA as the US distributor of all Kobold and VISATEC products.
- 2005** Bron Elektronik develops the new Kobold Event line for the trade fair market.
- 2008** Bron Elektronik celebrates its 50th anniversary.

Studio Maul & Co. in Nürnberg



Milestones in technical evolution

- 1962** Bron uses electrolytic capacitors for the first time to reduce the weight of flash units.
- 1965** Bron begins to use printed circuits in flash units, making them easier to manufacture and service.
- 1968** Bron launches the world's first monolight at Photokina.
- 1968** Bron produces the first flash unit with symmetric and asymmetric power distribution.
- 1971** Bron introduces the Hazylight area lamp.
- 1976** Bron introduces infrared flash synchronisation (power pack 404).
- 1980** Bron introduces infrared remote control for power packs und large-area lamps (Servor).
- 1982** Bron introduces the impact flash unit with polymer shells.
- 1984** Bron launches the first microprocessor-controlled power pack (Pulso).
- 1996** Bron introduces the first power pack with selectable flash duration and stabilised colour temperature (Grafit A).
- 1996** Bron launches the first power pack that can be controlled with a PC or a Mac (Grafit A).
- 1998** Bron introduces the first weather resistant HMI continuous light for cinema and television (Bron 400).
- 2002** Bron uses RFS for the first time to remotely control power packs with a PC or Mac using radio frequencies.
- 2006** Bron introduces the Verso power pack with a revolutionary battery concept featuring short recharging times.
- 2008** Bron showcases its latest developments at Photokina.

Product Highlights

