Safety First

Overview

Name: Stand 21

Location: France

Industry: Clothing automobile industry

Product: CorelDRAW® Graphics Suite

WTCC Drivers Franz Engstler and Andrei Romanov, Team Engstler Motorsport

The French firm Stand 21 has specialized in designing and making racewear for rally and Formula 1 drivers since 1970. Today, the company can design a new outfit from scratch in just 20 minutes – thanks to CorelDRAW Graphics Suite.

It's 2.23pm on 1st August 1976 and we're at the famous Nürburgring race track in Germany. The Austrian Ferrari driver and reigning world champion Niki Lauda already has 20 miles behind him. Suddenly, he swerves off the track just after the notorious Bergwerk bend, smashes into the safety fence and is catapulted back onto the track where an oncoming car rams into him. More than 50 gallons of fuel pour out of the wreck and go up in flames. Thanks to several other drivers – and a huge portion of luck – Lauda survives, but suffers severe burns to his head and face. Today, a terrible accident like that would likely have less dramatic consequences, because fireproof race-wear is now mandatory for Formula 1 drivers. This includes balaclavas, overalls, gloves and boots made of Nomex® – a material that never burns or melts.

Keeping cool when the heat is on

The French company Stand 21 has been designing and producing special race clothing since 1970. Along with the suits, Stand 21 makes boots, gloves, helmets and even underwear – all from fireproof material. "If the driver's underwear isn't fireproof, the best suit in the world won't protect him," explains Roya Behiar, sales manager at Stand 21. "There's a good reason for that – the heat would cause the underwear to melt and burn into the driver's skin." The driver's clothes must also be breathable enough to wick out his sweat and keep him cool. Temperatures can get very high in a racing car – and that's without the adrenaline rush.

The suit has up to three layers, and all stitching and seams are fireproof too. The clothes are meticulously made by hand to ensure compliance with stringent safety and quality standards. That's why Stand 21's products are held in such high regard by its 3000 customers, including multiple Formula 1 drivers. "Our suits have been a part of dozens of championship wins

around the world, including ten Formula 1 victories," says Roya Behiar. "Every outfit is customized and we follow drivers' wishes to the letter – literally. Along with logos and sponsor names, we embroider a huge variety of other images onto the suits. One driver wanted a big Bugs Bunny on his back; another asked us for a Tasmanian Devil." This is quite a challenge for Stand 21's specialists, as the pictures need to be embroidered using fireproof thread. "Sometimes we need to source 40 or 50 different thread colors, especially for a complex picture like a dragon," notes Behiar.

Engstler Motorsport Racing Suite Design

Not surprisingly, a customized race suit doesn't come cheap. It costs about $3500 and the whole set of equipment around $5800 – although there's no upper limit. But it's a wise investment, especially as drivers don't have a long wait for their suit. "Customers usually receive their order within ten days," comments Roya Behiar. "Our competitors often take up to ten weeks."

Marcel Steiner, Rally Driver

Racing Suite Design, Marcel Steiner

Ten times faster – a way of life

Being faster than the competition is something Stand 21's customers understand better than anyone. The record-breaking speed at which Stand 21 makes a race suit depends in part on the powerful graphics software used by the designers. At the company's headquarters in the heart of France's Burgundy region, as well as in its European subsidiaries and all global franchising companies, CorelDRAW is the undisputed standard. "We really like Corel PowerTRACE too, especially for designing logos, dragons and other pictures," adds Roya Behiar.

"Sometimes customers turn up with a photo of a car or a paper printout of a logo. That wouldn't be a lot of use to us if we didn't have the Corel PowerTRACE bitmap-to-vector tracer. Now we can just take their bit of paper with a smile and turn a blurry bitmap into a vector graphic. Then we can really get to work on it."

This way of working has huge benefits for customers. During a design meeting between the Stand 21 graphic artist and the driver or sponsor, the suit can be altered at the same time. The logo can be put in a different position, seams altered, sleeves lengthened – in real time, right in front of the computer. "It used to take us six hours to design an average suit, but now we can do it in 20 minutes flat," says Roya Behiar – who's also pretty enthusiastic about CorelDRAW's ease of use and intuitive interface. "When I first got the job at Stand 21, I'd never worked with Corel before. But that didn't stop my boss hiring me. He said: 'You'll get the hang of it in no time.' The great thing is that he was right!"

CorelDRAW®
GRAPHICS SUITE X4

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