

How the Rise of the Inverter Changed Welding

- And What It Means for End Users

'No 1 Welding provider to toolshop sector across Europe and how to recapture your customers welding business'

'Old' welding technology meant that welding was perceived as an esoteric skill that required lots of training and then lots of practice to perfect. It also had a frisson of danger attached - with high voltages and lots of sparks that burned tiny holes in your clothing if you did it wrong, they were enough to discourage people from having a go.

With the rise of inverter technology, the heavy, old-fashioned transformer welders are now obsolete. Using advanced electronics, GYS has designed systems that monitor welds in real time and adjust the arc and power before the operator even has time to notice. This is the reason why even I have been able to produce strong and practical welds.

Over the last couple of years, for example, I have mended several gates and a pair of volleyball posts, as well as making small lifting lugs and a couple of decorative brackets using my tiny GYS stick welder. The GYSMI 80P that I use is a shoebox-sized stick welder that costs around £100 and is 'ready to go' out of the box, (welding rods and welding helmet required) and it has taken the fear factor away, so that I now have the confidence to try welding jobs even if my first efforts were workmanlike at best. It is amazing how quickly you improve with a bit of practice.

GYS Electronics and Research Are the Key
 GYS is the largest manufacturer of inverter welding machines in Europe and over the last fifteen years or so, this family-owned French company has done a

great deal to convince the market that welding can be a lot easier, safer and cheaper than many people think, and is therefore accessible to a much wider market that should include farmers, trades, artists, craftspeople, DIYers and homebuilders.



We all use Smart electronics every day, but the addition of Smart technology to welding has revolutionised it. With electronic monitoring of the weld, the welder is effectively assisted to get the right results.

While stick or MMA welding is largely good enough for my needs, GYS has managed to bring the cost of sophisticated MIG welding within the reach of even part time users.

On the Continent...
 On the wider Continent, and especially into Eastern Europe where it seems that having a practical bent

is almost a requirement for householders to deal with repairs etc., welders are widely available in a number of outlets.

In Germany and France welders are routinely sold in massive volumes in the equivalents of B and Q, and independent tool retailers. These outlets seem to have solved the issues of welding mystique and what machines to stock, by engaging with the manufacturers and wholeheartedly taking on the opportunity to increase sales of welding kit - along with all of the consumables that are a necessity in welding.

The key is to have the support of a specialist that has the necessary market knowledge, can advise the retailer on what to stock, provide a comprehensive

merchandised solution, which in fact can be a small range of machines, but also the solution to regular repeat purchases of consumables and accessories. Now in the UK, GYS are that specialist, not only do they manufacture the product but have a full service UK distribution centre with a national sales force of 12 to provide support to the retailer.

But in the UK...
 On the other hand, in the UK we seem to be caught in a bind. Most independent tool shops and 'The Sheds' don't stock welding equipment on the basis that customers don't do welding. But if you don't serve the market how can you tell what they want?

There still seems to be a feeling that even general welding is a 'specialist' skill and therefore only specialist outlets should sell welders. GYS UK is determined to break this cycle and its enlarged sales team is on the case. Guidance and training is available for retailers' staff so that they have the confidence to sell GYS welders.

Putting My Money Where My Mouth Is
 None of the above has any credibility unless I could back it up with practical experience so GYS very kindly loaned me their testing and training facility for a while so I could use the EASYMIG 150A. With a price of around £450 this welder is a three-in-one and so is very versatile. It will do stick (MMA) welding as well as MIG with gas or without gas welding. Since I professed some competence in stick welding I was able to try the MIG options.

The EASYMIG is incredibly easy to set up with room in the side panel for either a 1kg or 5Kg wire reel and the wire feed is



simple to operate through to the torch end. In the workshop a heavy gas bottle was connected, but for site or outdoor use, GYS sells small argon gas containers that are not costly, nor too heavy to carry far.

Having never done any MIG gas welding before, I was given a few tips by Neil, one of the expert sales team before being let loose on some steel. Even my first effort was passable despite failing to keep a consistent distance between torch tip and steel - the welder's electronics simply compensated. After about ten minutes practice I managed a reasonably straight weld joining two metal strips with the required tiny herringbone pattern on the weld.

If ever proof was needed that a good welding machine can make an amateur welder a competent, if workmanlike, welder, then this was it. Welding is a skill that improves with practice and I am pretty sure that I would become a good welder if I did it more regularly. And it's all down to the GYS electronics that gives users the confidence to try welding in the first place. The EASYMIG range is priced from £349 to £499 so there is a machine for every price point and competence level. But the wider GYS welder range is VERY comprehensive and you will be certain to find the best machine for your needs.

Smart technology has levelled the skills playing field in many areas by making many of the tools we use easier to handle and control. The message is clear - GYS has made welding smarter and easier and it is time to get on board with it.

