

## LATEST NEWS

Mike James, Managing Director of Bio-Productions Ltd, receiving the Green Apple Environmental Gold Award from David Bellamy OBE at the House of Commons, London, England.



# green with envy!

Mike James of Bio-Productions, winners of the Green Apple Environmental Gold Award, exposes some of the hyperbole that is currently influencing buying decisions in the cleaning and hygiene industry.

THE GREEN ORGANISATION 

**A**t Bio-Productions, we are often asked to comment on competitors' "green" products. Whilst it is flattering that some of our customers regard our opinion as unbiased and credible, perhaps even worth listening to, we are (after-all) either praising or criticising companies products.

**Because this is happening more frequently we have decided to review some of the marketing terms that these companies frequently use to sell "green" products, and also explain what we believe applies and why.**

Later on we attempt to explain in layman's terms, some of the reasons for taking the stance that we do. We have resisted quoting directly to illustrate the obvious flaws in sales literature, as this could result in litigation, although some sales presentations are so flawed as to be dangerous - or hilarious - and either misinform or mislead, depending on your view point.

From the outset, Bio-Productions set out to produce safer-to-use cleaning products for the professional (janitorial) cleaning industry.

Although some of our products have been sold into the retail (domestic) market, we do not seek business from this sector. Instead we prefer to create, manufacture and distribute effective cleaning products as viable alternatives to conventional cleaning chemicals which, although they have been used for many years, never solved the problem.

An illustration of this is our non-paradichlorobenzene urinal block.

These were developed to provide active cleaning of the urinal pipes as the traditional method of curing washroom odours had been to use a carcinogenic crystal puck and powerful, toxic detergent cleaners, combined with aerosol dispensers misting perfumes to mask the smell of putrefying waste in the pipes.



Today, Bio-Productions produces more urinal blocks than any other European company and almost all the companies who manufactured pDCB blocks now make a non-pDCB alternative. They lost market position by refusing to address the real problem, that of actually cleaning the urinal; and with a safer product.

By creating "safer-to-use" cleaning and maintenance products, we at Bio-Productions were immediately labelled as "green, environmentally friendly" etc. We didn't set out to market ourselves in this fashion, but before long we found ourselves

winning environmental awards and being mentioned in approved product lists by auspicious organisations including Friends of the Earth.

Indeed, just recently we won the Green Apple Gold Award, but the fact remains that by producing products which address the problem, and are less dangerous for the users, we have been able to lessen the impact on the environment at the same time.

Someone asked us recently for an environmentally friendly disinfectant, or insecticide. We don't believe this is possible as the very task is going to have a negative impact upon the environment. However, if we've a problem which needs controlling, such as the killing of germs, or the eradication of destructive pests, then the responsible use of a suitable product will be the only way to improve the situation; with as little damage to the environment as possible.

## **So, what are we seeing today and what claims are being made?**

### **Safe**

This is a word which should NEVER be used in association with cleaning chemicals. The fact that one formulation is less aggressive than another hardly renders it safe and use of the word in this context is irresponsible and would hardly ever be applied by a qualified chemist.

### **Natural**

Although there are opportunities to use "natural" substances in the manufacture of many cleaning materials, some of the processes or other components may result in the finished product being anything but natural.

Bio-Productions was one of the first (possibly the first) company in Europe to formulate a cleaner based on the solvent extracted from the peel of citrus fruits. However most, if not all, the "orange" cleaners on the market are based upon conventional petroleum solvents with a colour and fragrance of orange, or lemon or flowers added – which hardly makes them "natural".

### **Contains no "... whatever**

This alarmist sales angle is often used in an effort to assure the customer that a product does not contain something, which by inference may be in other products on the market. The fact is that the "something" or "whatever" would not be used in a formulation anyhow, or as is more often the case, would be impossible or impractical to include.

### **Environmentally friendly**

This statement is without doubt pandering to the market. The fact remains that just about every cleaning process creates waste and it is the disposal of this waste which is unfriendly to the environment.

The yardstick for assessing the damage to the environment caused by cleaning products is biodegradability; and just about everything is biodegradable – if given long enough. However it is the impact on the environment that the product will create while it is being degraded by the environment that actually matters.



## Biodegradable

As an example let us consider what would happen if we poured a cleaning agent into a stream or lake. Initially we'd probably inflict damage on the livestock in the water. Then the bacteria in the water would work on the toxins, breaking them down. While this was happening they would consume more and more oxygen from the water, depriving the other livestock, which may die from lack of available oxygen. The chemical would eventually have been degraded – but at what cost to the environment?

Sunlight and bio-activity will degrade almost everything, but we need to be aware of the impact to the rest of the “environment” whilst this process is underway.

## Waterless

As the originators of the first non-pDCB urinal block, formulated and designed to clean away the cause of both blockages and odours from urinals, we naturally did a lot of trials and development work, before launching our biological blocks. These fulfil the requirements of odour control and pipe cleaning and also enable the user to reduce the amount of water used

for flushing urinals. The average saving is almost 100,000 litres of water per urinal per year, simply by reducing the frequency of flushing. This is obviously regarded as environmentally friendly, as it saves water and power. Indeed it has contributed to some of our awards.

A number of products have subsequently appeared on the market which emulate Bio-Productions biological urinal blocks. These claim to provide the same cleaning action and odour reduction, but the claims often suggest eliminating the need to flush entirely.

These waterless systems may provide “relief” for a few weeks – even longer in some cases, but without exception they fail to address the problems of inorganic, insoluble solids building-up within the drainage system, ultimately causing blockages beyond the urinal trap.

Urine obviously contains all the liquid waste from the body and within this waste are a number of mineral solids and fats. Whilst by reducing flushing it is clear that the amount of calcium may be reduced (from the flush-water) there are also salts evacuated from the body in the urine. These salts, together with the mineral salts and fats congeal as a hard solid in the pipes. When bacteria are introduced, the fats are degraded and the solids become softer (not unlike mashed potato); but unless water is used to purge these solids away, this unstable mush remains, completely blocking the pipe. It is our opinion that, by reducing the flush to only about 3 to 5 times a day and so purging these solids whilst also saving considerable volumes of water, it is quite possible to maintain clean pipework beyond the urinal trap.

## Bacteria, Microbes, Enzymes and all that stuff!

There is much confusion about biotechnology and most companies offering products containing bacteria, buy a concentrate which they blend into their formulations. At Bio-Productions we manufacture using selected strains from different sources, specifically chosen for their ability to work on or within a certain area.

Unfortunately the concentrated cocktail used by our competitors comprises the same five strains of bacteria – for whatever task you have ...

It is clear that though bacteria are fairly adaptable and will (given long enough) degrade most organic matter, the enzymes they produce are specific. This means that (for example) the bacteria that produces a wood saw enzyme – for cutting up wood, will find it difficult to cut up metal. Just as the bacteria that produces an enzyme for cutting up bread and pasta (amylase enzyme) will find it difficult to cut up fat (lipids). This technology becomes even more involved and complex when you start to look at the things that make-up urine and the waste in urinal pipes and traps.

Just by having billions or trillions of bacteria doesn't improve the situation either. We could compare this with the scene at a bar, when people chatting at the bar prevent other people getting to the bar. Some of the less active bacteria, which are not attracted to the item to be degraded (food), prevent those bacteria that can break it down and eat it from getting at it.



*It is far more productive to use the correct strains of bacteria and allow them to feed and grow on site.*

*They say that emulation is the sincerest form of flattery, so we at Bio-Productions should be flattered.*

*Well actually we're not! Instead we're worried.*

*Because flattery isn't always emulation, it is sometimes disastrous.*

*So do be careful out there.*

*There are orange products – blended with petroleum derivatives; biological products which can be dangerous when sprayed and urinal blocks that eventually block drains.*

**So be sensible and be safe and use the genuine article, from Bio-Productions Naturally.**



**for a greener world**

**If you'd like further information about any of the issues raised in this document please call or email us.**

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