

HARD COPY

On Boredom
And New Adventures

CLOSED

THE BUTTON

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Every pair of Closed jeans is 100% Made in Italy – and we mean it! Even the brass buttons and rivets for our jeans are crafted in Italy – in the Cobrax button factory in Padova, to be precise. While high-tech equipment and robots are also used, the 177 employees also complete many production steps by hand under high safety standards. They punch out the individual button components from brass strips, emboss our logo on them, polish and assemble them into a finished button. Most of the buttons are then coated or treated with chemical solutions to achieve specific colours. All brass scraps are collected, melted down and reused. Since 2008, Cobrax has been part of the Riri Group, a leading international manufacturer of zips, (press) buttons, rivets and metal components. We have been working with the company for more than 20 years now – and no Closed jeans would be truly complete without at least one of their beautiful buttons. Let's take a closer look at how they are made.



Andrea Norido joined Cobrax (then called Micron) in 1986. Back then, the company only had 14 employees. Andrea learned everything from scratch. Today, he manages the printing department – and loves the technical aspect of his job.

GS/ What brought you to the company in the 80s?

AN/ A friend who worked at Cobrax told me about a vacant position. I was studying at the time, but had been looking for a job. Coming from a big family without an ideal financial situation, I knew it was better for me to start working right away. I am the oldest of five siblings and I felt responsible for my family. When I arrived at the company, I had no experience at all – I learned everything I know from scratch and have been with the company ever since.

GS/ How has the company changed in the past 35 years?

AN/ The company was called Micron when I started and we were a team of 14 people. In 1989, we became part of Cobra (the name changed to Cobrax later) and went from a small artisanal company to an industrial manufactory. Since 2008, we have been part of the Riri Group. Not only the size of the company and the number of employees changed in the last 35 years, but also the technology. The printing department, where I work, saw the biggest changes. The materials and techniques became much more innovative. We now use high-end printing methods. We still complete many of the production steps manually, but in 1986 there were no machines, no

electronic devices. All of these changes have accelerated production times.

GS/ Do buttons still fascinate you after all this time?

AN/ Yes! It's such a vast world. Before I started to work at Cobrax, I had no idea about the complexity of buttons and the amount of work that goes into them.

GS/ What do you like about buttons in particular?

AN/ The final result. To me, buttons are little pieces of jewellery. Every single one is beautiful. They are little pieces of art. Buttons fascinate me because I appreciate the research and work behind every single one of them.

GS/ How would you describe your typical working day?

AN/ Intense! It is never boring. I start every morning with a meeting with two colleagues who are heads of different departments. Every morning we receive our production schedule. We go through the list together, check orders and tasks, and organise the day by defining priorities and schedule everything. We also manage our team and colleagues, for example, by planning shifts (we have two daily shifts) and finding solutions for issues that come up. Every day can be full of surprises – and that makes my job very exciting!

HOW A CLOSED BUTTON IS MADE

step by step, explained by Andrea:

Step 1 We put in a moulding command into our moulding machine – it includes the diameter of the button, the brand name to be embossed on it, the date and other specifications. The command ensures that all components of the buttons are finished around the same time to ensure a seamless production. For every Closed button, five parts are required: nail, cap, shank, inside core and another cap.

Step 2 One of our operators prepares the equipment for the moulding of the buttons according to the processing note, which includes all relevant specifications for each client.

Step 3 The operator moves on to the press machine. Brass is used for all the buttons. The machines cut the brass into strips first, then the buttons components are cut. Only a few pieces are pressed at first. These samples are subjected to quality control and then, if they comply with the client's specifications and our high quality standards, we proceed with the moulding of the buttons.

Step 4 The moulding of the pieces with the machine starts. While the buttons are moulded, the results are constantly controlled by one of our inspectors who use magnifying glasses for this step.

Step 5 After the moulding is completed, the components of the buttons are subject to another quality control. The inspector also makes sure that the number of components is exactly right for the subsequent production phases.

Step 6 The components are de-oiled in centrifuges and transferred to the next department.

Step 7 The button components are washed with special washing machines to get rid of any production residues. After that, the pieces are smoothened.

Step 8 A galvanic treatment follows if the buttons are to be a different colour than the natural brass. The chemical reaction changes the colour of the material.

Step 9 The different components are finally assembled – the button comes together!

Step 10 After a final quality control the finished buttons are packed and shipped to the customer.



GS/ How many buttons do you finish every day?

AN/ It's all team work – we constantly work together and that is why we work so well. The numbers vary, but we finish about 25 orders per day. Every order includes the production of caps (the top part of the button with the brand's logo) and under parts (the hidden part). In January and February 2021, we produced 35 million pieces (both caps and under parts). Incredible, isn't it?!

GS/ Which part of your job do you like best?

AN/ I love the technical aspect – the machines and the complexity behind them. I also love the responsibility that I carry as a department manager and the organisational aspect of my work. I am very happy that I can be a point of reference for my colleagues and that they regard me as an expert. However, you know... that comes with age!

GS/ What about your free time?

AN/ I love swimming, but unfortunately, because of Covid the swimming pools are all closed. I miss it so much! Water is my element and I feel the best when I am swimming. Before lockdown I was in good shape – I swam 60 lengths in 45 minutes – that's not bad! Until I can swim again, I keep fit with long walks and bike rides... but I can't wait to be back in the water!