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The sweet sound of locks clicking into place

After its success on the American market, FAP has reasserted its presence in Europe with a new generation of basic locks while also looking to the high end with an automatic version of the Ghost model.

Attendance at the Düsseldorf Caravan Salon is important, even crucial, for all businesses in the European recreational-vehicle sector, vehicle manufacturers and component producers alike. FAP's presence cannot pass unremarked, given the innovations unveiled by this firm from Florence, the leading maker of locks for motor-homes and caravans. There are two novel features, and they



Lapo Ermini, FAP General Manager

build on the FAP range's centrepiece: the **Ghost** locking mechanism for camper doors. Launched three years ago after a battery of rigorous lab tests simulating 5 years of actual use through 12,000 closing cycles, this lock takes its lead from the mechanisms used on cars, both in their

operation and in their quiet action. The product is

easy to install flush with the door

and works using a

patented system of

plastic-coated metal

levers that offers one or

even two locking points.

An automated version is now available, with a door-locking servo-mechanism

that



cannot fail to impress; it could even become a strong selling point for recreational-vehicle manufacturers and vendors. "While the Ghost lock was designed for high-end vehicles," explains Lapo Ermini, FAP general manager and the founder's grandson, "the new offering, known as the Self Closing System, goes further still. It aims right for the top of the camper market, even though it could clearly become an attractive optional for mid-range models."

The concept is simple: just rest the living-compartment door on its frame, and the door will close on its own; a similar system is used on the latest cars. So now,

camper users can close the door without needing to slam it. With the Self Closing System, the door

need only be gently pushed to. As the first stage of the mechanism kicks in, a sensor activates an electric motor that

positions the lock plates into the frame and securely fastens the lock. Naturally, the mechanism

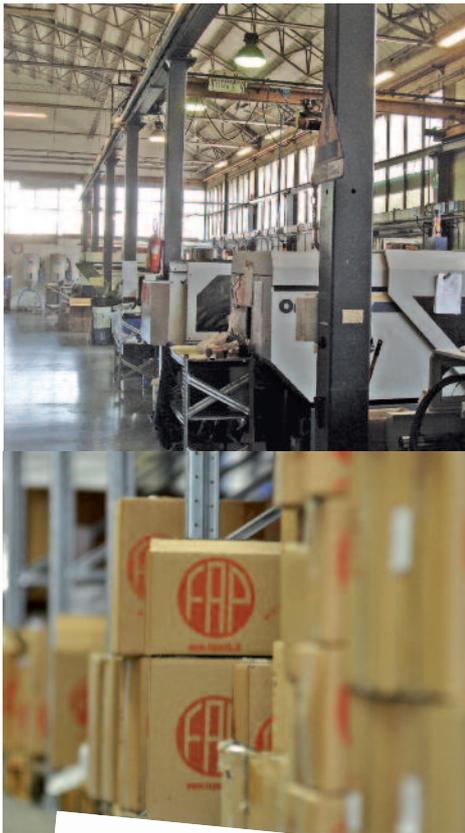
also enables the door to be closed in the traditional manner, by pushing it firmly all the way. The

Self Closing System does not trigger then, and Ghost behaves as usual, emitting the characteristic closure noise. And this is no minor feature. For when a well-crafted, "reassuring" sound accompanies a precise, smooth closure, customers perceive the product in a positive light and immediately consider it to be of superior quality.

The second innovation is called **ONTOP** and is surely destined for a wider, less elite market. It is a lock – or rather, the part of it

inside the living compartment – that will replace the more traditional, old-style locks





Company Profile

FAP has been producing plastic components for nearly half a century. The founder began looking to the camping sector in 1968, prompted by two leading entrepreneurs who helped to shape the Italian caravan sector – Luano Niccolai of Rimor and Giovanbattista Moscardini from Laika. In 1982, the company branched out into the rail industry, which it still supplies with furnishing components for carriages. The headquarters, including the technical department, production line and warehouse, is in Florence, spanning a covered area of 4000 m². FAP is a long-time leader in Europe for its camper and caravan locks, with 80% market share and partnerships both with vehicle manufacturers and with the most successful door makers. In 2011, it launched the Ghost lock, the top of its range and a real beacon of excellence in the sector, with a mechanism offering two locking points.



in the FAP range. *“The new ONTOP system,”* says Lapo Ermini, *“has the same mechanism as Ghost, but it is all compacted into the internal part of the lock. You could say that ONTOP is a more economical version of Ghost.”* The new lock can be installed flush, independently of the door design with its thermoformed cover. This new solution offers a high-class locking mechanism even on entry-level campers. And the sound is important here, too, for the lock plates are covered in plastic, making the lock quieter to close, which is a step forward for a basic, economical model.



Leonardo conquers America

A long-established presence in the European market, FAP has recently spread its wings and ventured stateside, where recreational vehicles have long enjoyed enduring popularity. More than a new opening, the move has proved something of a triumph, as a rightly proud Lapo Ermini, FAP general manager, tells us: *“We came to the US in late 2012, to test the water with the manufacturers, beginning with a series of experiments. We made our first foray in November 2013, starting by supplying caravan locks. I anticipate that, by the end of 2014, in just one year on the American market, we shall have achieved greater volumes than we do in Europe. It is a more than flattering result, one that has exceeded all our expectations.”* This achievement now makes FAP the world's no. 1 manufacturer of locks for recreational vehicles. But what made FAP locks go down so well? Lapo Ermini continues, *“It was a real revolution. Before, the American manufacturers only used*



metal; but the plastic-material technology that we exported provides technically more modern locks.”