

Golden Slumber

Commercially viable mattresses are hitting the \$20,000-\$50,000 range. How high can this category, considered by many to be a commodity, go?

Swedish mattress manufacturer Hästens can command \$50,000 for Vividus, its wool, cotton and hand-flailed horsehair mattress. Italian mattress maker Magniflex offers a mattress with gold threads for \$24,000. As a practical, commercial matter, just how much luxury can be built into a mattress?

High-end mattress maker Earl S. Kluff is one of several industry leaders trying to determine the answer to that question. According to Kluff, who makes mattresses under the Kluff, Aireloom and E.S. Kluff labels, "California mattress chain Mancini's started carrying our \$12,000 mattress, and it sold. Now, the same people are buying the \$20,000 mattress. If it's shown, and people can feel and see the value, and they want the best, they'll buy this mattress."

"A \$20,000 mattress, over a seven-year life, comes out to not that much money per day." [Editor's note: \$7.83, in fact.]

Baby Boomers, with bodies in decline and earning power in ascent, have been the primary drivers of this mattress boom. But, according to Kevin Damewood, Vice President of Sales for Spring Air, "Younger consumers are entering the category, and they're looking for quality, longevity and some status."

Stearns & Foster Vice Presi-

dent of Marketing Derek Ritzel hesitated to pigeonhole this market into age or income groups. "Some of our competitors have found that the income of customers is not nearly as important as their desire to find a solution. I grew up in a family of farmers, people who use their back all day, and it's not necessarily a Wall Street trader who will spend the money for a great mattress."

Magniflex, whose product includes the new \$1,500-\$7,000 GeoEthic line, is betting on the green movement to move up its price points, according to National Sales Director Henry Burney. The Gold mattress, if nothing else, generates great marketing: according to Burney, consumers might check out the mattress simply out of curiosity.

Damewood agreed that there's a certain amount of shock and awe to these price points. "You cross a point where people say, 'It costs \$50,000. Gosh, it must be phenomenal.'"

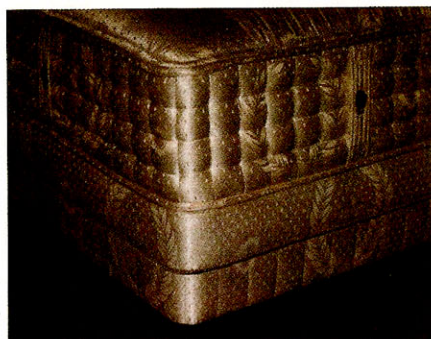
"But," he added, "if you look at what goes into these products, there's not a disproportionate margin. There's a limited supply of loose Arabian horsehair. These beds also are labor-intensive and require different, more complicated distribution networks."

Simmons also is looking to get into the low-end of this very high-end category. The Beauty-



▲ Stearns & Foster's Golden Excellence boasts two layers of the company's fabric-wrapped Pillow Coils™, as well as cushioning layers of latex, memory foam and cashmere fibers; a quilted "inner pillow"; and a durable edge support system. The company ups the luxe with features such as an elegant, embroidered border and 24-karat gold corner guards. The bed retails for \$5,000.

CIRCLE 298



▲ Earl S. Kluff, will be introducing the Palais Royal under the newly created label, "E.S. Kluff: Beyond Luxury." The bed will retail for \$20,000. Finishing touches, such as the signature, labor-intensive, English outer tufting on the top and sides, provide for lasting durability and aesthetic appeal. CIRCLE 300

Rest Black Custom mattress, which is expected to retail as high as \$8,000 or \$9,000, is in development, according to Simmons Vice President of Brand Management Mark Owen. Simmons hopes to unveil the product at the January 2008 Las Vegas Market.

One might expect the demand for luxury mattresses to be limited to high-end furniture stores or mattress boutiques, such as Duxiana. However, according to Stearns & Foster's Ritzel, "More of the tonnage is being done at a Bedding Experts in Chicago than at a high-end boutique."

Kluff agreed that any type of store can move the product, but believes location is a limiting factor. "You need an area where you have a Duxiana around, and the customers are already accustomed to the idea of a luxury bed. Out of the blue, they've never heard of it before? Yeah, it'd be a pretty hard sell in Arkansas. Boca Raton or Bloomingdale's in New York? Definitely."



◀ Gold mattress from Italian manufacturer Magniflex features 22-karat gold fiber, which provides antibacterial and anti-allergen properties; is thermoregulating and odor-proof; and can be customized to fit the comfort levels of the consumer by adjusting the five-zoned memory foam construction as needed. The mattress retails for \$24,000. CIRCLE 299