



Crown 5K

Technician team:

Tyler Crouch, model work; Jessica Fernandez, metal work; and Chris Ling, CDT, ceramics and co-owner

Laboratory: Lifelike Dental Studio, a four-employee operation in Temple, Texas; www.lifelikedental.com

An unexpected surprise:

When **LMT** called Chris Ling to tell him his lab was one of the *Crown Challenge's Sweet 16*, he thought we had another message to deliver. "As soon as the crown left our laboratory, I started second guessing myself and wondering if maybe I should have done the occlusal contacts differently. I just couldn't stop thinking about it!" says Ling, who owns the laboratory with his wife, Carrie. "So when I heard **LMT** was on the phone, I thought 'Oh, isn't that nice of them to call me personally to tell me I didn't make it.'"

Position in market: Like many technicians, Chris turned to dental technology when he

couldn't find a profitable position in his degreed field: film production. "I answered a help wanted ad for a technician and the artistic aspect of the work appealed to me," says Ling. "I got the job and one day the owner showed me a magazine photo of a beautiful crown. I remember thinking, 'I'm going to work until I can make a crown that looks like that!'"

Eight years later, in 2005, Chris and Carrie opened their own operation with a focus on esthetics. "Our fees are higher than other labs in our area and 30% of our clients use us just for their more complex or esthetic cases. That's fine with me: we're not going to do all of this work and then only charge \$89 for a crown!"

Marketing opportunity:

To celebrate the laboratory's two-year anniversary, Carrie organized an appreciation dinner to thank its dentist-accounts at a local restaurant, complete with a live band. Chris also seized the opportunity to tell attendees about the *Crown Challenge* and how the labo-

ratory had placed in the final 16. "Afterwards, several of the doctors asked for copies of the magazine and one said, 'I want to put this in my office so my patients know they're going to get a crown fabricated by a top notch laboratory,'" says Ling.

The Lings also plan to contact their local newspaper to have a story written about the laboratory's anniversary and its *Sweet 16* status. "The exposure will build our reputation for quality work and help us toward our goal of being a boutique laboratory," says Ling.

LMT



The Lifelike team plans to use its status as a judges' favorite in its marketing efforts to dentist-clients. Pictured are (standing from l. to r.): Jessica Fernandez, Co-owner Carrie Ling and Tyler Crouch. Seated is Co-owner Chris Ling.



The judges like this crown's glaze and metal collar and report no movement whatsoever on the die. This crown gets the highest points among all the finalists in the interproximal contacts and anatomy categories. "The anatomy is an artistic feat; it actually simulates wear and is incredibly natural-looking," says one evaluator.