

## **Islander November 2007 Technology Update**

### **Frequently Flooded Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show**

It's not only Mallorca that suffered from torrential rain during October. During our visit to the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show (FLIBS), my colleagues and I experienced some spectacular downpours with associated thunder and lightning, resulting in a complete washout on Saturday, usually the most popular day for Joe Public and his family.

At one point during one of these hour-long downpours, whilst everyone was sheltering inside the Super Yacht tent, the water level outside built up to such a level that it suddenly burst through the side of the tent, directly behind the super Yacht Sydney and Australia booth, sending a deluge of water down through the aisle of the tent, taking with it paper cups, magazines, beer cans (of course) and all sorts of debris. Our friend Richard Morris, in charge of Super Yacht Sydney, certainly had his work cut out, bailing, mopping and trying to retrieve what he could from the soggy remains of his stand.

By late Saturday afternoon, the entire exhibition looked like a disaster area, and we were all wondering whether the organisers would abandon all thoughts of resurrecting the show for the remaining two days. However, with good humour and superb organisation, they brought in an army of cleaners kitted out with submersible pumps to drain the XXXL American puddles, and managed to get everything cleared up overnight. For most of us, it was a case of shoes off and trousers rolled up – at least it wasn't cold. It was "business as usual" on a very sunny Sunday morning!!

### **Impressions**

The show was as busy as ever with 90% sports fishing boats and sports boats. The other 10% was split between sail, super yachts, diving, fishing and even luxury cars. This year's luxury car show provided a welcome diversion from all those yachts! The latest models of almost every super car you can imagine were on display outside the Yachts International Pavilion by the Hall of Fame marina.

There were plenty of strange devices for entertaining yourself afloat, as I reported on last year. However my main focus of interest was the super yacht designers' and builders' area with the associated electronics booths.

The major change in the electronics tent was the absence of Larry Smith Inc. The whole electronics tent used to be named after Larry Smith Inc, but due to their bankruptcy in January the sponsorship went all up for grabs. Word on the street has it that, as soon as news of the bankruptcy was announced, one company contacted Show Management and were told that they could have "the Larry Smith space". They were then gazumped by another firm offering a new Chevy to the organisers, The Chevy offer was then itself massively trumped by a figure which I am sure is so exaggerated that I'm not even prepared to put it in print.

## **New technology Navigation**

The electronics tent was buzzing all through the show with new developments and some very interesting new products.

After my report last month about the new stable of products from Navico and particularly Simrad, it was interesting to see that they are holding back the launch of the new Glass Bridge 40 (GB40) for METS. It's always gratifying to see Europe getting ahead of the USA occasionally when it comes to product launches! Simrad launched the new AP24 and AP28 autopilots at Genoa, and had the new AIS at FLIBS. The AIS AI150 Class B receiver was up and running at the show, but can't be sold in the US until it has FCC approval. So next week at METS we should see the whole range.

The main Navico US brand Northstar had their own booth with their 8000i combined Navigation and Entertainment system. It is really very impressive and absolutely ideal for the sports fishing market. Basically, this US sports fishing market is the largest market place for most of the Raymarine, Furuno and Northstar type products.

However, you really must see the new Furuno Navnet 3D. Furuno had a guy continually running 20 minute presentations to the passing crowd with a boom microphone. It was very impressive and certainly does add "a new dimension" as their banner headline goes. You can see for yourself on [www.navnet.com](http://www.navnet.com)

## **Communications**

I met numerous people using the iPhone during my time in the US from whom I received conflicting reports. Having tested one briefly, I think the user interface is excellent, I liked the touch screen, but only a 2Mb camera! It will be interesting to see how well it does in Europe post the launch in November as there are many more sophisticated phones available than the iPhone. In every country it is being sold tied to a network provider. The price appears to be around €380 with a locked in contract with only one service provider.

Two weeks ago Apple announced their sales result for the last quarter and they reported sales of 10 million iPods and 1 million iPhones. Staggeringly successful!

As expected, there was lots of excitement about the new Inmarsat Fleet Broadband which will be launched by Sailor on 16<sup>th</sup> November, with the new 250 at 28cm diameter and 500 at 63cm. The final Inmarsat I4 satellite will be launched in March 2008 which will then provide world wide coverage for Fleet Broadband. We have had our team training for Fleet Broadband in preparation for the launch and by all accounts we are all favourably impressed.

Iridium is investing heavily in a whole bundle of new satellites which will also put them in the "broadish" band category. When complete they will have a 128kbps offering which when compared to their current 2.4kbps will be staggering enhancement. We have yet to find out whether or not this will use the same fixed omni antennas.

We saw a new Globalstar tracking device that looked really good, although its success is rather dependent upon Globalstar securing funding for the replacement constellation of satellites which they need. I wonder whether this will happen.

For the first time there was a Vizada booth at the show. This is the new name given to the merged operation of France Telecom and Telenor from Norway.

The VSAT service providers were quite thin on the ground. The Vizada guys didn't have many answers to my questions about VSAT, and the new GMC system showing the extraordinary rotating Orbit antenna was tucked away to one side of the National Marine booth. MTN and KVH both had a large presence. MTN were in the US Super Yacht section and had their new mini 60cm spread spectrum VSAT with the new KNS 85cm dish that will do the same as the Sea Tel 4006 with the 1m dish. KVH were showing their new mini VSAT V7. I understand this has now been installed on a few yachts in the US, but is not yet available for Europe.

The emphasis on VSAT was much greater at the Monaco Yacht Show than at FLIBS. It's quite interesting talking to Sea Tel, as they tell me that the majority of their large antenna sales, whether VSAT or TV, are through their European dealers. This falls in line with the fact that 69% of all new builds are taking place in Europe. However, the recent dollar crash may soon see that change with a swing toward the US.

At least we European visitors were able to take full advantage of the favourable exchange rates when it came to the annual shopping trip for friends and family in the giant shopping mall at Sawgrass Mills!

The big social event of the show was the massive National Marine Supplies BBQ on the Saturday night, by which time it had fortunately stopped raining. E3 and Pinmar helped sponsor this event for over 3,000 people from the yachting industry. During the evening and throughout the show, we were pleased to bump into a few familiar faces from Palma such as Remy and Eva from Pinmar, Phil from Yacht Help, Diego from Astilleros and Pete and Stephen from Global Marine Tracking.

Just back in town for a few days, and now off again to METS Amsterdam! See next month's report...

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For any answers, questions or information on any of the above, please contact us.

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