

Islander September 2007 Technology Update

New Products for the Autumn.

If you missed it, this year's Monaco Show beat all previous records. It was phenomenal! Every year, it just seems to get bigger and better. When will it slow down? Amongst our many guests from all around the world, there were a few with no previous experience of the super yacht industry, and it was fascinating to see their reaction when they stood on the outer harbour wall and looked back at the Monaco skyline silhouetted above a forest of masts and gleaming hulls belonging to some of the world's largest and most exotic yachts. It is a fabulous sight, and one which many of us in the industry tend to take for granted far too often, myself included....

During the Monaco Show, there were a few new product launches for the super yacht industry, but there are many more scheduled to be launched during the forthcoming autumn boat shows around the world.

The three main shows for these new launches are the Genoa Show from 8th-12th October, Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show (FLIBS) from 25th-29th October targeting the US market and then Marine Equipment Trade Show (METS) in Amsterdam from 13th-15th November. Monaco is very definitely the largest super yacht show in the world now and outshines FLIBS by a long way. Although FLIBS is far bigger overall, the super yacht element is small compared to Monaco.

FleetBroadband - Thrane & Thrane start taking orders

FleetBroadband is the new generation Inmarsat system that will replace the current Inmarsat Fleet products. As the name suggests, the system will provide enhanced data connection speeds with simultaneous voice connection. This system provides limited broadband and needs a very small antenna and is ideal for the adventurous sailing yacht.

The system uses the new I4 satellites launched by Inmarsat. The third and final launch has been confirmed for March 2008. This will then provide the coverage for the Pacific, which has previously been missing.

Thrane & Thrane has announced that its SAILOR series of satcom terminals for use with Inmarsat's next-generation FleetBroadband system are now available for order.

The terminals come in two sizes, SAILOR 250 and 500, and are expected to be type approved in the middle of November. The antennas will be released to the market directly after approval is confirmed, with the official launch of FleetBroadband by Inmarsat expected on November 19th.

The SAILOR 500 system will be able to provide connection speeds of up to 432 kbps with ISDN capability, approximately seven times faster than current generation Fleet77 systems. It utilises an antenna smaller than the mid-range Fleet55, with a diameter of less than 60cm, weighing just 16 kg.

SAILOR 250 FleetBroadband offers data speeds up to 284 kbps with an antenna that's smaller than today's Fleet33 system. The diameter of the equipment is less than 30 cm and weighs in at just 5 kg.

Navico Marine Electronics family – new products

This is the new family name that owns Simrad, B&G, Northstar, Eagle and Lowrance. They have a number of new products being launched at Genoa, FLIBS and METS.

The new **Simrad IS20** instrument range is being launched at FLIBS and METS. This is a mid-range instrument system for mid-sized sailing yachts and power boats. It is designed to replace the current IS12 and IS15 instrument systems. What are the benefits? Well, all the transducers are active, which means you don't have to connect the depth transducer to a dedicated depth display or central processor. The system connects using SimNet protocol which will reduce the installation time and increases the ease of maintenance. Standard NMEA can also be connected.

The new **Simrad AP24 and AP28** autopilots are being launched at the Genoa Show. The AP24 is a direct replacement for the AP16. The key new features are improved Virtual Rudder Feedback VRF™ steering, NoDrift™, depth contour tracking and a new set of steering algorithms with full rate of turn control that provides smooth and precise turns in any condition and improves tack and gybe performance on sailboats.

The AP28 is a direct replacement for the AP25/AP26 autopilot and is a new advanced Autopilot / Information centre that allows you to monitor and control all important steering parameters through it's clearly labeled push buttons, rotary course knob and large display.

Both pilots are SimNet plug and play to match the IS20 system.

A new product that will be an excellent choice for performance sail boats is the **Simrad GB40**. This will be launched at METS. The launch version of the Glass Bridge 40, to give it its full name, will be a complete navigation system using maximised, bonded, full sunlight 10" or 15" screens, Maxpro chart software and pre-loaded charts, tidal information, Ethernet radar, radar overlay, MARPA tracking, Ethernet sounder, AIS, monitoring and entertainment control. This is a perfect solution for twin wheel pods plus a third nav station screen below, using a mini, spreader mounted, 2kW radar radome. It will be even better next year when the B&G performance software will be available as an alternative to Maxpro. The system is complemented by the wireless remote option.

Simrad has also released a very neat Class B AIS receiver and transmitter, the **Simrad AI150**, which integrates with the DSC VHF, so you can click on an AIS target and call them on the VHF. Neat, eh? We needed something to encourage us to use DSC.

So, what's new from B&G? They are launching a new **B&G Rate Compass**. This is a fluxgate with a gimballed rate gyro based on the RC42 platform. The gimball gives "true" yaw rate measurement (no error caused by Pitching). It is "Designed for Sail".

It also outputs heel and trim using Simrad Simnet protocol. It connects using Simnet GFD. It will be available January 2008.

Next month B&G will launch their new **30/30** display to suit 50' plus yachts thus falling between the 20/20 and the 40/40 displays. It will work with the H3000 or the WTP2 systems.

Finally from B&G we have the recently launched **B&G Racevion 3000**. This is a rugged on deck tactical navigation PC. The target market is the Grand Prix Race circuit. It features a touch screen, integrated Deckman, Bluetooth link to H3000 with an "improved" battery life of more than 4 hours, so it's tough luck if you lose the wind and the race lasts longer than that...

Mini VSAT launch

At the Monaco Show **MTN**, the world's leading VSAT service provider, launched their new spread spectrum iDirect service. It was demonstrated running on both the **Sea Tel 2406** and the **Azimuth Unlimited KNS 60** antenna inside the tent! The Sea Tel 2406 antenna, albeit having a 60cm (24") diameter dish, is in an 86cm (34") diameter radome, whereas the Azimuth Unlimited KNS 60cm antenna is in a 79cm (31") diameter radome and is considerably lighter. This is so new that prices have not been fixed, but it appears there will be a saving of around \$20k on the antenna compared to the current Sea Tel 4006 antenna, whereas the service monthly cost is expected to be more than the current larger antenna cost. Both the iDirect spread spectrum modem and the Sea Tel 2406 have come from the military market.

Azimuth Unlimited

We were really impressed with the new range of antennas from Azimuth Unlimited. They are set to compete head to head with Sea Tel and Orbit. In fact, both Sea Tel and Orbit were spotted taking detailed photos of the antenna at the show. The current VSAT service that uses the Sea Tel 4006 could be replaced by a **KNS 85** antenna, thus reducing the footprint required for the radome from a diameter of 60' to one of 50'.

KVH TracPhone V7 with mini Broadband

KVH launched their **V7** at the Monaco Show. This is another new spread spectrum VSAT service but uses an even smaller 60cm (24") antenna from KVH. On paper this could be a very interesting new product with service from SES Americom. Our only concern is that this is KVH's first venture into VSAT, and not yet having seen it working we need some feedback from users to get a measure of how good the service provision and support is. Having installed 50 VSATs and serviced another 40 we know only too well that there are pitfalls.

So this is just a taste of new products. Some interesting developments on existing themes with a heavy emphasis on satellite data communications. I am beginning to think that data communications will become as important to a yacht as water!

We will be visiting FLIBS and will have a stand EF039 in the rather smart Super Yacht Pavilion at METS. We have plenty of free invitations available. Come and see us.

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