Bennington Looking For Continued Growth In 2012

A number of Bennington Marine dealers took time out of the busy summer season to attend the company's 2012 product line introduction and open house. Held in Elkhart, IN in late August, the event afforded an opportunity to review the company's 2012 product line through a range of indoor and outdoor boat displays with daily walk-throughs, numerous vendor displays featuring partner engine companies, plus tours of the Bennington manufacturing plant and daily web update presentations.

The company presented eight models for in-water testing at nearby Diamond Lake, including a 2575 QCW I/O with Elliptical Sport Package, powered by a MerCruiser 350 Magnum, and a 2275 GS powered by a pre-production Mercury 150L.

One highlight of the event was the unveiling of the company's Q 25 concept boat, cloaked in a unique colour scheme with a matching Yamaha F300 V8 outboard. Topped with a forward-raked, tubular aluminum wake tower with overhead LED lights and speakers, the concept Q25 featured a unique diamond-stitched interior upholstery that Bennington Design Director Trent Eekhoff notes is suggestive of a European sports car. "The response to this boat has been overwhelmingly positive," says Eekhoff. "We focus on trying to understand the market and who the Bennington buyer is, and what their expectations are. This concepts speaks to come of the feedback we've received."

The event also provided dealers with a unique opportunity to test-drive a pre-production version of Mercury Marine's newest 150hp four-stroke outboard, before its official introduction at the International Boatbuilders Exhibition and Conference in October.

"The Bennington pontoon business has been gangbusters in eastern Canada," says The Dockside Group's Bob Spencer, representative for Bennington in eastern Canada. "A growing number of people are looking away from fibreglass boats to pontoons. The performance of pontoons, especially larger boats with a third log and a large 250 horsepower engine, is truly surprising. You can easily seat 10 or 12 people, and store as much gear as you like. The kids aren't confined to a seat – they can fish off the front end or swim off the back end, and be perfectly comfortable doing so. The furnishings in pontoons are top-notch, so you have options you don't necessarily have in a traditional boat design. So it is a hot segment. In Canada we're probably two to four years behind the US in terms of product maturity. Those three-log pontoons with the larger engines have been commonplace in the States for a few years, but they're just now starting to take off in Canada. I think all of our dealers in Canada have begun selling them, and a few are stocking them. The proportion of high-end models to promotional boats is growing."

business briefs

SEA RAY SIGNS NEW BC DEALER

NR Motors, Prince George, BC, has added Sea Ray to its product mix.

Marine Sales Manager Gary Rawlings notes that Sea Ray is a perfect fit to complement the dealership's existing brands, which include Bayliner, Lund, Harbercraft, MasterCraft and Campion. "We were looking to pick up an upper-end boat to compete with other dealers of the Chaparral and Four Winns brands," said Rawlings.

ONTARIO DEALERSHIP RECOGNIZED

Scout Boats recognized its top dealers from around the world at the company's 2012 dealer meeting, held in September in Charleston, SC. Walkers Point Marina, Gravenhurst, ON, was named among Scout's Top 10 sales leaders.

CMP ACQUIRES ROCNA ANCHORS

Vancouver-based Canada Metal Pacific (CMP) announced in late September that it has acquired Auckland, New Zealand-based Rocna Anchors.

"We have been searching for a line of anchors and anchoring products to complement our CMP anchor chain," said Canada Metal Pacific President, John Mitchell. "We are very excited to bring Rocna Anchors into the fold. Their superior performance fits well with our focus on innovation and quality products."

"I am impressed with the manufacturing, engineering, and quality control capabilities of Canada Metal Pacific," said Peter Smith, designer of the Rocna anchor. "I look forward to working with them to continue Rocna's growth as the highest quality, best-performing anchor available."

→ p.22