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The Superyacht

TRUTH • OPINION KNOWLEDGE • IDEAS AND EXPERT INDUSTRY ANALYSIS



REPORT

SUPERYACHT INDUSTRIALISTS

TSR speaks to MTN Communications' managing director and recently elected ISS president Derik Wagner.

TURNING TANKOA AROUND

Following a tumultuous history, Tankoa shipyard is back on its feet after two recent sales.

LIGHTING UP YOUR LIFE

A look at what there is on offer and the latest developments in the underwater lighting world.

GROWING A BACKBONE

The importance of future-proofing AV technology on board in order to stay up to date.



Walkabout in Western Australia

The Superyacht Report recently travelled to Perth, on Australia's west coast, where Echo Yachts had just completed the refit of 61m *White Rabbit*, which sees its 10th year in operation, while neighbouring Silver Yachts was applying the finishing touches to 77m *Silver Fast*. There was also an opportunity to see bespoke tender manufacturer Vikal International, with all three yards offering insight into their latest projects.



MARK STOTHARD

While Europe continues to try and find a way out of a Greek economic melt-down and the political stresses in Russia and its relationship with the Ukraine, Western Australia has its own challenges as the oil, gas and mining sectors continue to fall on hard times. While businesses mitigate the strength of the Australian dollar and its effect on competitiveness in the global market, additional action may be needed to secure new business in the future.

“Australia is about to go through some tough times that we haven’t had before because of the artificial pump-up from the oil, gas and mining boom,” explained Mark Stothard, one of three

directors at Echo Yachts, which was established in 2014 following investment from a Singapore-based family. “It was really good at the time because you could do well in these sectors, but it took the government focus away from tourism, manufacturing and other industries. Now they are looking at each other asking, ‘What now?’ Federal and state budgets are out the door and I read in the paper this morning that the state government has a two-billion-dollar hole in its budget.”

While this change in its primary sector has had a negative impact on the region, it has been an opportunity for the marine sector to regain some of the skilled workforce lost during the boom

PREVIOUS PAGE: *SILVER LOFT*
UNDER CONSTRUCTION
BELOW: WORK UNDERWAY ON
ECHO YACHTS’ 46M





WHITE RABBIT, REFITTED BY ECHO YACHTS



“We are the only shipyard in Australia to offer all three disciplines [steel, aluminium and fibreglass], and it is working for us.”

– Mark Stothard, director, Echo Yachts

years. With stiff competition from European yards, employing the right team becomes crucial to ensuring high quality, with Echo Yachts planning to expand its 250-strong workforce by 50. While the main project for the yard is its 84m aluminium tri-hull superyacht – which when delivered in the final quarter of 2017 will be the largest of her kind – approximately 30 per cent of its workforce is also dedicated to building a 46m shadow vessel.

Unlike its larger sibling, the shadow vessel will be constructed in fibreglass, featuring a simple and tidy interior, and finished to a ‘live aboard’ rather than ‘superyacht’ standard, similar to that of 50m cruise liner *True North*. Stothard pointed out that the construction of the hull involved the largest infusion undertaken in the southern hemisphere. The project is due for delivery at Easter 2016.

When asked about the future and potential for the shipyard, Stothard

was confident in the appeal of its multi-skilled team, which can build in steel, aluminium and fibreglass. In addition to engaging in conversations with superyacht clients and building relationships with design studios – such as Sam Sorgiovanni Design, which produced the exteriors of the 84m and 46m – the shipyard is also working on commercial projects, including fast ferries. “We are the only shipyard in Australia to offer all three construction disciplines, and it is working for us,” he said, quoting the company slogan ‘daring to be different’ and suggesting that Echo Yachts could offer everything to everyone by adapting to the needs and requests of a client. It is a business plan that sees the yard work in a number of different fields and allows it to work on any project for as long as they are needed. “Our steel boys are constantly working for the oil and gas industry still and that is bread and butter work.”

A mile down the road is Silver Yachts, which recently delivered yard owner Guido Krass' *Silver Fast*, along with two custom 7.4m tenders powered by 220hp Volvo-Penta engines, designed by Espen Øino International and constructed from aluminium. At the time of *TSR's* visit, finishing touches were being added and calibration of the engines was underway, as the team prepared for delivery. *Silver Fast*, now for sale through Burgess, is the final refinement of the 77m hull and includes an additional 1.5 tonnes of electrical systems and equipment. Added to this is a finely tuned engine room with more powerful engines, generators and an air conditioning system. Even the fuel manifolds have been examined to see how they could be installed more effectively.

"This boat has a new gearbox mount arrangement, which attaches to the structure in a different way from the previous boats," explained senior naval architect at the yard Nick Stark. "This new design feature should further reduce vibrations, increase comfort and make the yacht much quieter."

The next hull in the series, 84.5m *Silver Loft*, is not only longer than the previous platform but it also signifies a departure from the ultra-sleek superstructure in favour of a more rugged explorer look. Retaining the signature elongated stepped windows from the sundeck to the owner's deck, this new design is more in line with

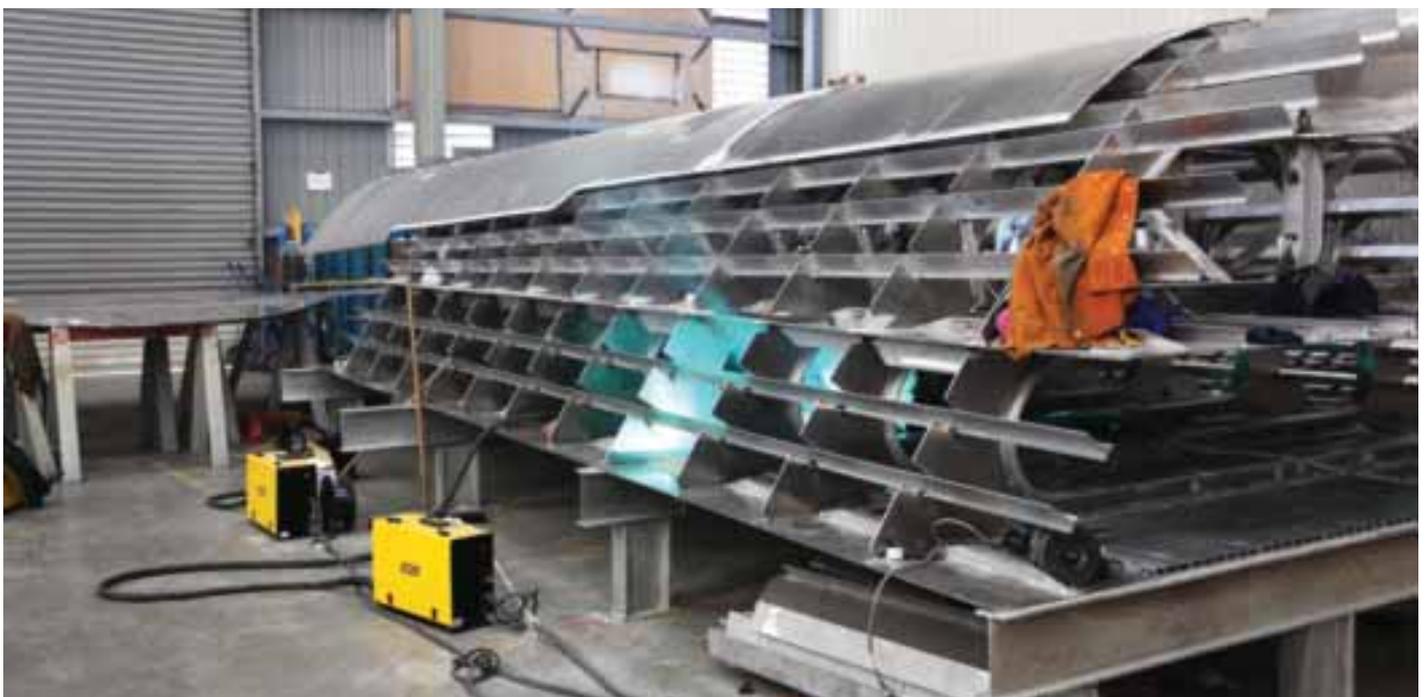
Krass' personal taste. "This project is much more fitted to what Guido wants; it promises to be a boat that's going to be picked up and thrown around the planet, which is what it's for," said Stark.

Krass has been toying with the idea of extending the vessel to 85m – having already extended it by a metre and a half. However, with the shed limited to 84m, even adding the proposed half a metre will require careful planning, as construction continues on the project and the next in the series: hull six.

While the additional length of *Silver Loft* is significant, the real benefit is in the gross tonnage, which is 50 per cent bigger than *Silver Fast* thanks to an increased waterline length of 16m by opting for a plumb stem. >> continued on page 38



SILVER YACHTS' 84.5M SILVER LOFT



SILVER FAST

Achieving a top speed just shy of 29 knots and a range of 6,000nm at 14 knots, *Silver Fast* is the most advanced ecofuel-efficient vessel in the Silver series.

Nick Stark, senior naval architect at Silver Yachts, walks us through the features of the new 77m.

“This series has been an evolution, and because of this there hasn't been anything in particular that has been problematic or an issue, which is very encouraging. To be able to go through it and have the opportunity to improve the things that were not as they could have been in the past is of great satisfaction.

Starting from the beach club, a recess in the floor conceals a treadmill, which is close to a salon-style space, dive store, sauna and a dayhead. It leads nicely into the engine room where we have three Northern Lights generators and two MTU 16V 4000 M90 engines that produce 2.7mW of power per shaft. All the plumbing and wastewater-treatment systems are pretty much the same as on the other boats but there have been little tweaks here and there to make everything just that little bit more refined.

There are three levels for guests to enjoy. Four guest cabins are located on the lower deck with three larger VIP cabins situated up and towards the front, and then the owner's suite is on the owner's deck at the front. All of the portholes have covers rather than deadlights, which was quite a battle and something we pushed for over a number of years. What we have now are clear deadlights, which are made of ballistic glass. So an ammunition-proof inner layer will take any force that hits it, once the outer 90mm layer lets go, which it never will. Cool leather porthole covers provide a much neater black-out solution than having a huge lump of steel.

The interior of the yacht, which was designed by Vain Interiors, is more of a matte finish throughout, whereas the last boat had a lot of gloss. There are unsung levels of detail on this boat. Even the door hinges are a beautiful example of the engineering, as it can be adjusted in so many different directions. The complexity is just extraordinary and the doors have drop seals for enhanced privacy but it means the doors are heavy and need serious structures to keep them in place.

All of the panels are aluminium honeycomb; even those that look like wood aren't wood. It's aluminium metal with a thin layer of wood veneer. We need to do that for weight and to meet fire regulations. Being an LY2 yacht, it comes from the heritage of the SOLAS boats that we built in the past. Hull five will also be a SOLAS boat. This demands quite punitive requirements for the fire restrictions, because it comes down from cruise liners (the commercial industry), rather than up through the yachting industry.

The main salon is a cool space and features a sliding glass panel that closes off the library from the main space. It is a simple solution for when you've got kids and you want to have some quiet time.

The sundeck is a nice, private space. The Jacuzzi comes with a carbon fibre cover so you can use it as a dance floor when not in use. This deck also includes a bar, custom fridge and a TV, and there is also a built-in barbeque and additional storage, with seating at the front. There are other things that you won't notice on the boat, such as the satellite domes. Normally they're white, so painting them black, or dark grey in this instance, means they will suffer problems from heat. To solve this we fitted them with air-conditioning.

All the boats we have are built to go fast, have a shallow draught and are high performance. Because of these features, the acoustics have always been somewhat of a challenge, but we are getting better and better at it; on this boat, the sound levels are just splendid. ”

PHOTOS: GUILLAUME PLISSON







“The cool thing about aluminium is that the attention to detail is crucial. It’s not only an act of beauty but it’s structurally necessary.”
– Nick Stark, senior naval architect, Silver Yachts

The key feature of the design is the long expanse of glass that extends along the majority of the upper deck. When desired, the air-conditioned interior can be exposed to the exterior by retracting the floor-to-ceiling windows. This space overlooks a large working deck, which is home to a couple of large tenders, launched and retrieved by crane. Above this deck is another large open space, which can serve as a secondary helideck, while a Jacuzzi is concealed under the mast structure.

“It’s very functional but it’s got some cool entertainment spaces,” Stark commented.

As we walked through the skeleton of *Silver Loft*, Stark pointed out how the only steel used on the vessel is in the pillars, as using aluminium would require additional layers of fire protection and would add to their size – imposing on the space.

“The cool thing about aluminium is that the attention to detail is crucial,” Stark explained. “It’s not only an act of beauty but it’s structurally necessary. For example, if any of the connections aren’t properly made with a very smooth joint to the primary structure, it will break, and fixing this when the boat is in service is a nightmare. This structure is designed to progressively weaken the bottom of the frame so you don’t get a sudden change in stiffness, which will crack the tank top.”

As progress is made on *Silver Loft*, a final decision on what hull six will become is still to be made. At the time of writing this 83m was being considered as an exploration vessel or ‘Silver Square’, which would be more in line with the exterior styling of her smaller sister *Silver Fast*.



From all-aluminium to composite construction, *TSR's* tour round Perth included Vikal International, based in Bibra Lake. The yard was conducting sea trials on its new 11.3m limousine tender, which is to be delivered along with an open sports tender of the same length to a 100m-plus project in Germany. Designed in collaboration with Martin Francis of Francis Design, the boats offer a clean and elegant interior, and innovative features developed especially for the client. For instance, aft of the open tender is a bespoke water lift system, which has been fabricated to aid guests back onto the boat after a swim.

This fibreglass platform, which is fitted to a three-stage hydraulic ram, sits flush against the transom when not in use but can extend past the buckets of the Hamilton 292 waterjets – which are connected to twin 435hp Volvo diesel engines, and reach a top speed of 42 knots – to raise or lower guests into the water.

“Anything that we require in stainless steel usually has to be custom made,” explained Gunnar Vikingur, managing director of Vikal International, as he

showed us around the boatyard. “The things we require can’t be bought, so we make what we need in our metal workshop. We have the facilities here to make anything we might need in aluminium, steel (which is rarely used), stainless steel or titanium.”

The inclusion of HamiltonJet’s new generation electronic control system called Blue Arrow allows crew to easily manoeuvre the boat using a MouseBoat controller, reducing the chances of damage when operating within a marina or close to the mothership. The system is only available on HamiltonJet models bigger than the 274, while Volvo Penta offers its own version – fitted to the limo tender – that controls boats fitted with propellers: shaft or pod drive. “It is the same kind of system,” said Vikingur.



HAVING ITS OWN METAL WORKSHOP GIVES THE YARD MORE FLEXIBILITY WITH ITS CUSTOM PROJECTS.

“The things we require can’t be bought, so we make what we need in our metal workshop.”

– Gunnar Vikingur, managing director,
Vikal International



AFT OF THE 11.3M LIMO TENDER



LIMO TENDER DURING SEA TRIALS

On the limo tender, the engine hatch, which comprises three panels, has been designed and engineered in a way that provides full access to the twin 400hp Volvo diesel engines underneath, even when on board the mothership. The two side panels, which bend 90 degrees along the middle to form the side of the superstructure, open upwards, leaving a central panel that is double pivoted – allowing it to be opened in either direction or removed altogether. A glass sunroof aft of the tender, a third of the length of the roof, provides easy access to the salon and is powered by the same small electric engines found in car seats. To compensate for any weakness this opening causes, carbon fibre has been used to provide additional structural support.

In addition to this, the yard is building a 10m limousine and open sports tender for a Russian client on his third superyacht. Despite being smaller in size and fitted with smaller engines and water jets, they are stunning and highly equipped boats designed by Sam Sorgiovanni Design. “These boats have about a year to go before they are completed and the open tender also has the same bow door system as

the 11.3m,” said Vikingur, who has incorporated hydraulically operated bow doors on his boats over the past 10 years and believes himself to be the only builder to have a fully automated system to deploy the door. “The whole bow unfolds and is controlled by hydraulic locks and rams in the bottom of the boat that push the whole thing out. It’s quite a sophisticated set-up.”

With private backing, the next two years look secure for the superyacht builders, as Vikal International continues work on its 10m boats, which are due for delivery in 2016. Since our visit to the boat builder, Vikingur has revealed that its order book has grown by 50 per cent with more potential work in the pipeline. The Australian is also working on a proposal for a new tender design that could offer owners a new solution to overcome a particular aspect of the restrictions imposed by regulation societies. At the same time the company is working on a new marketing strategy to enforce its digital presence – an aspect of the builder’s portfolio that hasn’t demanded investment in the past.

“Marketing is important for the longevity of our business. I think that became much more important once

I realised that my son wanted to take over the business,” said Vikingur. “This new project we are working on is exciting and I have more than one client interested in taking it further. It would still be a big risk for us just as the convertible roof tender we delivered a couple of years ago was – but the finished boat was stunning and still works beautifully.”

Although the marine sector in Western Australia appears buoyant, the recently reported news of 300 job losses at Austal shipyard is something to take note of. While this action was taken in response to the completion of a big project, the added challenges of a stronger Australian dollar will require careful planning and strategies for the future, and we will have to see how this impacts the marine market in the coming years. ■



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WITH SUBJECT: WALKABOUT IN WESTERN
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