Miami Boat Show has gadgets galore - Outdoors - MiamiHerald.com

Miami Boat Show has gadgets galore

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More than showcasing thousands of new boats, the Miami International Boat Show, under way through Monday, is bulging with innovations in marine electronics, propulsion and accessories.

Here is a sample of new gadgets on display at Miami Beach Convention Center, Miamarina at Bayside and Sea Isle Marina:

YAMAHA HELM MASTER

More than just a joystick, this fully-integrated boat-control system premiering at the Miami show makes motoring the waterways easier — and maybe more economical.

It is available on 17 Regulator, Grady White, Pursuit, Zodiac, Contender, Jupiter, Everglades and World Cat boats with twin or triple Yamaha outboards of 225, 250, 300 and 350 horsepower for sale at the show.

Helm Master combines multiple functions within arm’s length of the steering wheel. By manipulating the joystick, the operator can move the boat fore or aft, port to starboard, and even rotate it to make docking easier in close quarters — no need for bow thrusters.

An automatic trim control feature positions the outboards in the water to maximize fuel efficiency and ride comfort. The skipper can touch a button to lock in speed similar to cruise control in a car. How well does the new system work? Just before the show opened Thursday, a newbie skipper took a Pursuit 365I equipped with Helm Master for a test drive and easily docked it at the fuel pumps at crowded Sea Isle Marina without banging up the gel coat.

AIRBORN BARE BONES

This portable, lightweight craft invented by avid fly fisherman Richard Swan may be the world’s first inflatable, two-person flats boat.

Weighing 58 pounds and packable in two bags, the Airborn Bare Bones travels in most car trunks and can be packed for air travel. It retails for about $2,450 — much cheaper than the standard $30,000 to $50,000 fiberglass flats boat. Swan said its drop-stitch construction — similar to inflatable stand-up paddleboards — keeps the craft stable for stand-up poling and casting.

Swan said it’s configured so anglers can row it, pole it or add a small electric or gasoline outboard, and the frame also can hold a 48-quart cooler. A pump, pressure gauge and repair kit come with it.

VELODYNE MARINE MARTINI 1.5

This unusual watercraft looks something like a praying mantis when viewed from the front, but looks can be deceiving.

Outdoors
Invented by Silicon Valley mechanical engineer David Hall, who got seasick as a child, the Martini 1.5 is named for the beverage that you won’t spill when you’re riding aboard it.

Two 35-foot pontoons are connected to legs that support an elevated, enclosed helm that can be raised and lowered. Computer sensors placed all around the craft tell servo-motors how to react instantly to oncoming waves, lifting the pontoons up and over them for a smoother ride.

On a test run Thursday in stormy Government Cut, the Martini 1.5, powered by twin E-Tec 150-horsepower outboards, glided over tug and pilot boat wakes at 25 mph and yawed only slightly without decreasing speed in a messy, four-foot chop outside the jetties. Division manager Steve Shonk said Velodyne isn’t looking to sell boats at the show; instead it hopes to encourage boat builders to buy the company’s technology to build their own smooth-riding boats, which he says can be applied to any size or style of watercraft.

**DEEP TREKKER ROV**

With this portable, maneuverable underwater video camera, you can check for terrorists lurking beneath your dock, pick up trash on the bottom of your canal or locate fish underwater and reel them in.

Weighing about 18 pounds and starting at $3,000, the Deep Trekker can be deployed quickly to dive to 164 feet using a tether of up to 364 feet and manipulated with a joystick on four to eight hours of battery life.

Options include a grabber for picking up objects from the sea bottom and a mini fishing rod that you can bait and reel in. According to Deep Trekker’s Jeff Lotz, the ROV has been used to check for holes in open-ocean aquaculture pens, survey the undersides of yachts and, recently, to inspect an FPL nuclear reactor. But Lotz figures it’ll be the next must-have toy for boaters.

**FAST FIND PERSONAL LOCATOR BEACON**

For about $240, an avid offshore mariner won’t suffer too much pain in the purse while hoping he or she never has to use this palm-sized distress signaling unit.

First, you register the beacon with the feds; then, when you flip the lid and pull a lever, the device transmits your unique identification and precise GPS location to the global network of search-and-rescue satellites.

The Fast Find is waterproof to 30 feet, has a six-year battery life and requires no subscription fees.

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