THE BEST OF 2014 AWARDS ISSUE

THE YEAR’S BEST OF THE BEST FROM WORK BOAT WORLD
THE BEST OF 2014 AWARDS


However, in 2013 we started doing something a little differently. Opening the category to equipment and service suppliers as well as builders and designers, we introduced the first inaugural “Best of the Year” awards. The issue was a success, and we are therefore pleased and delighted to present the awards again for 2014.

The rubric governing the award selection and judging remains unchanged from the previous year. For the best vessel builders and designers, the 130 vessels reviewed in 2014 was our list of nominees and the vessel’s type was the award category. Encouragingly, an increased number of designers were award recipients this year.

On the supplier and services side, our multi-faceted award criteria once again came into effect, including product quality, commercial success during the year, and expertise and innovation (an especially important quality this year given the rise of LNG and incoming emissions regulations).

To this year’s lineup of award recipients, we offer our congratulations and wish an equally prosperous 2015.

WORK BOATS REVIEWED IN 2014

In the centrefold of this issue you will have noticed a large chart documenting every one of the 130 vessels reviewed within the pages of Work Boat World in 2014. The list is comprehensive and paints a valuable picture of the current state of the global work boat industry.

2013 saw vessel designers and naval architects from Asia overtake their established European counterparts. The balance was then evenly split between North America and Oceania, with Australia’s world-renowned ferry designers ensuring the Pacific region remains competitive on the global stage. In 2014, however, the distribution changed somewhat.

Meanwhile the builder category saw the Asian builders still out in full force with almost 48 per cent of total deliveries being built at Asian yards.

Steel was by far the preferred building material and the offshore industries again showed their dominance in driving vessel orders, comprising 43 per cent of all orders. For the remaining orders, tugs accounted for 25 per cent, whilst patrol/pilot/rescue craft claimed a 12 per cent stake. Passenger craft, meanwhile, came in at 10 per cent.

DECIDING THE 2014 AWARD WINNERS

When it came time to decide the winners for 2014, we turned to the blueprint originally devised two years before. Again with only minor tweaks and improvements, the judging criteria have remained largely unchanged.

For the best marine equipment suppliers and manufacturers, market success and sales remain the chief guiding principle. It continues to be our belief that quality of product and degree of service and after sales support are all intrinsically tied to market share and sales. After all — in this industry, one does not gain dominance through mediocrity.

For the builders, we again utilised the same mixture of innovation, styling, finish and build quality first implemented in 2012. Other benchmarks considered include feedback from the client and overall market trends and evolutions – is the vessel or product a daring new proof-of-concept, or a classic refinement of a well-established category, for example?

With these selection criteria in mind, we have again noticed some key trends in our award winners compared with last year. For a start, several of 2013’s award winners have retained their titles in 2014. This isn’t surprising, as the best are at the top for a reason, and are unlikely to relinquish their crowns without some truly spirited competition from a contender.

An ongoing and interesting phenomenon, particularly in many of the builder categories, was the relative elegance and simplicity of many of the winning products. Many of 2014’s key vessel deliveries displayed a purity of concept and function, with cost and straightforwardness prioritised over versatility for versatility’s sake.

This development, whilst not applicable to all the award winners, is certainly refreshing in the current global context of increasingly complex (and expensive) specialised work boats.

Anyway — just as they did last year, our 2014 awards pay tribute to the builders and equipment suppliers that together have worked so hard to get the industry to where it is today. As always without their collective dedication and commitment, our industry would not be enjoying such bright prospects in the near future.
The Damen Group had done it again. While it is undoubtedly the biggest and most prolific builder of work boats, it remains on top because it continues to produce what the global industry wants. Invariably, it does that on-time and on-budget.

Work Boat World has known and followed Damen for over thirty years, which is roughly half its modern life. Without going into the detailed history of the company - which is fascinating in itself - Damen has always been innovative but within a firm set of philosophical guidelines. It has always built on spec, sometimes very extensively so. It has always thought and operated globally. The world is its market and, more recently, it has invested in, or joint-ventured with, a number of shipyards in an ever-widening range of countries.

Standardisation or semi-standardisation has always been a Damen trait for obvious reasons. However, it has never gone anywhere near the Henry Ford offering of "any colour, as long as it's black". Hulls and main steelwork have been standardised but equipment, furnishing, propulsion systems and, especially, paint schemes have been up to the customer.

Advantages of this oft-imitated standardisation approach, according to the company, includes a fast response time to customer requests, competitive pricing, short delivery times due to a large stock of equipment, reliability of product, continual product development, low maintenance costs, and high resale values.

"Building for stock, and selling from stock, are Damen hallmarks," said a company spokesperson. "In short, when Mr. Kromer Damen took the wheel in 1969, he sometimes bought back a vessel from one client (for whom he then would build a new one) in order to sell it to another client who had an immediate need for it. This was inefficient. Hence, a system was devised, which works to this day, in which the best-selling vessel types were built in series and kept in stock."

2014: A good year for Damen

According to Damen’s head of communications, Jan-Hein Boerhuijn, 2014 was a good year for the company, with sales up year-on-year by as much as 30 per cent.

Further, the company’s plans to up the ante in the offshore industry have shown signs of fruition, with the innovative "Walk2Work" offshore personnel transfer vessel under construction, as well as two cable-laying configured Damen Offshore Carriers on the blocks. The yard’s PSV program also remains strong.

"We’re building frigates for Indonesia, we’ve sold high-speed patrol vessels, and to the small vessel section a new range of RIBs are on their way," said Mr. Boerhuijn.

All the Damen people we have met over the past three decades have been proud of their company and the vessels it builds. They are impressive people representing a very impressive organization. Obviously, Damen is a very important asset in Work Boat World. It has been since our beginnings. In making this article, however, we have ignored that fact. Damen’s ongoing global success through good times and bad, and its flourishing while so many of its competitors have fallen by the wayside, speaks very eloquently for itself.

‘GUARDIAN 1’

A development of Damen’s now well proven and well-known Sea Axe bow concept, ‘Guardian 1’ is, like many vessels described here, very versatile. Specified by its Nigerian owner as a combined crew/supply/patrol boat, she is a very useful vessel for that turbulent part of the world. Aluminium hulled and triple engined, but really quite simple in concept, ‘Guardian 1’ is fuel efficient and very capable and fast. She also has great potential for a number of other roles.

DAMEN SHIPYARDS

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