



**L E A N , M E A N & G R E E N**

# *Volvo Penta Turns 100*

IT WAS IN THE SPRING OF 1907 IN GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN, WHEN ENGINEERS FRITZ EGNELL AND EDVARD HUBENDICK PUT THE FINAL TOUCHES ON THEIR FIRST COMBUSTION ENGINE, THE PENTA. LAST SPRING, VOLVO PENTA, THE COMPANY THAT FRITZ AND EDVARD FOUNDED, CELEBRATED THEIR 100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY, INVITING 85 YACHTING JOURNALISTS FROM 20 COUNTRIES TO AN EVENT PRESENTED AT THE PICTURESQUE SEASIDE VILLAGE OF STENUNGSBADEN.

Story Jamie Welch Photos Volvo Penta



**A** 45-minute drive north of Gothenburg, Volvo Penta's HQ, the Stenungsbaden Yacht Club was the perfect spot. Here, amongst the rocky fjords, the home port of Sweden's 1992 America's Cup syndicate, were a dozen yachts equipped with the latest products from Volvo, with engineers on hand straight from the Gothenburg factory ready for questions and boat tests. Volvo Penta President Goran Gummeson talked about the company's simple philosophy. A subsidiary of Volvo AB—makers of trucks, tractors, heavy machinery and commercial engines and products—and the number one diesel engine manufacturer in the world (excluding the car manufacturer Volvo, which is currently owned by Ford), Volvo Penta gets full attention from the parent

company, although the marine division is a small piece of the overall pie.

"I asked Volvo AB President Leif Johanssen how Volvo AB—the biggest diesel maker in the world—has been able to keep innovating and creating new and exciting products for its marine division," Goran Gummeson said. "He told me that it's simple: the 'Volvo Way' is all about energy, passion and respect."

That was all the talking Gummeson had to do. He handed the microphone over to Lazzara Yachts President Dick Lazzara, who designed the 75' LSX Quad specifically for a quadruple IPS 600 setup to stunning results. Lazzara introduced the fifth hull in the LSX series (twelve have been sold since last October) before we were given the controls of the

yacht, as well as an Azimut 50, Atlantis 55, and three Windy yachts, among others. Volvo Penta Senior VP of Marketing Paul Dierksen, based in Chesapeake, Virginia, guided the North American contingent of editors and always directed us to the right engineer for each of our questions. Throughout our inspections and sea trials one simple conclusion emerged: the crisp, clear, clean, fast and friendly propulsion and steering systems' beauty is that the intricately engineered components cut through the cold water like a hot knife through butter. Simply put, Volvo Penta made boating fun again, something that the company has been doing for 100 years.

Indeed, before we talk about the current space-age technology that left everyone in awe, it would

JUST AS EDVARD HUBENDICK (SEE PHOTO ON OPENING PAGE) WAS AN INNOVATOR IN 1907, VOLVO PRESIDENT HARALD WIKLUND (RIGHT) AND AMERICAN INVENTOR JIM WYNNE REVOLUTIONIZED BOATING WITH THE AQUADRIVE IN THE 1950S

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be prudent to peel away the veils that hide a rich and proud history at Volvo Penta—which is not as easy as you might think, considering that these are polite people who prefer to let their company's products do their boasting. One of the first major breakthroughs for the Penta plant occurred in 1922 with the introduction of the U2 outboard motor, a practically indestructible engine that was sold in large volumes worldwide. Remarkably, Volvo Penta still receives spare part orders for the U2 engine to this day.

The Fifties were all about post-war economic growth in Europe and North America, where a renaissance of family motor boating was taking place. The new Volvo Penta President Harald Wiklund and American Jim Wynne made history during

that decade. In 1954 Wiklund introduced the world's first series-manufactured diesel engine with turbocharger, and two years later, with inter-cooler. Jim Wynne, an inventor and boat racer, combined the turbocharged inboard engine with the advantages of the outboard engine when he created a propulsion system attached to the transom. Interest from the U.S. boating industry was weak, so he went to Gothenburg and showed his design to Wiklund, who, himself a savvy engineer, quickly recognized its merits. Two days later Volvo signed a contract with Jim Wynne and the resulting 'Aquamatic' drive was introduced at the 1959 New York Boat Show. It was an immediate success, and it took competitors years of catch-up before they could produce anything similar.

In 1971 Volvo's next invention—the Saildrive—was also questioned by competitors, but today, it is a standard solution for auxiliary power in sailboats. In 1982, their Duoprop drive introduced double counter-rotating propellers on the same shaft, a system that greatly improves grip in the water and keeps boats tracking in a straight line. In 1996, Volvo Penta also improved the operating efficiency and reversing ability of folding propellers.

In 2005, with perhaps its biggest revolution of all, Volvo Penta introduced its IPS drive system. Among its many groundbreaking features, the forward-facing propellers, just like those of an aircraft, operate in undisturbed water, which increases efficiency significantly. The IPS also provides better comfort, less environmental impact and fant

**CURRENT VOLVO PENTA PRESIDENT GORAN GUMMESON (BELOW LEFT) UP WITH LAZZARA'S DICK LAZZARA TO CREATE THE QUADRUPLE-IPS-POWERED LSX 75 (BELOW RIGHT) TO STUNNING RESULTS, AS WE FOUND OUT AT THE STENUNGSBADEN YACHT CLUB IN JUNE**



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handling properties. Moreover, the system produces 60 percent fewer emissions than standard diesels. The smoke had hardly dissipated following Volvo Penta's IPS introduction before it introduced the joystick control system, which allows practically anyone to dock a boat using only a few simple intuitive hand movements, an attribute we discovered last year on the 75' Lazzara, a boat bereft of a noisy bow thruster.

Safe and controlled. That's how the yachts responded docking and leaving the Stenungsbaden

Yacht Club last June, where the company flexed its muscles while trumpeting the "lean, mean and green" slogan. Volvo engineers exhibited the versatility of the IPS installations, demonstrating double, triple and quadruple configurations, as with the four IPS 600s on the Lazzara 75 LSX. There also were two new Duoprop stern drives and a gasoline-fueled IPS. Other new products debuting in Sweden included the new IPS 750 and 850 that powered an Azimut and a Windy yacht, the new joystick controls, up to three remote docking station con-

trols, and Volvo's GPS anchoring system that uses dynamic positioning from satellites to keep boats stationary without traditional anchors.

The new IPS power plants give owners of yachts close to 100' the ability to choose the impressive Volvo products, but as we left Stenungsbaden there was more contemplation of what's to come than of what's already been done—and after looking at their 100-year history that's quite a lot of optimism from this journalist for this legendary diesel builder, currently ranked number one in the world. —

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