Mastervolt Podmaster range win PBO Awards

Propulsion and Regeneration systems win PBO Green Awards

Mastervolt, the Dutch-based manufacturer of premium electrical systems, has won Practical Boat Owner magazine’s Green Awards that recognise marine businesses who have taken steps to reduce the environmental impact of leisure boating and make the industry more sustainable.

Winning the Product Category in the PBO Green Awards, the Mastervolt PodMaster is a highly efficient external electric drive and regeneration system where a powerful electric motor is encased in a torpedo-shaped pod attached to the underside of the hull. The pods can be steered to provide highly efficient directional thrust, making all vessels highly manoeuvrable. Another big advantage is that with no conventional drive shafts, gearboxes or engine couplings to align, the electrical power source can be located virtually anywhere on board.

The PodMaster was introduced to the Mastervolt range after Mastervolt acquired the leading Dutch electric propulsion specialist Bellmann in November 2009, and began to marry its complete power management expertise to Bellmann’s cutting-edge electrical drives.

Marc Persoon, Marketing Manager of Mastervolt, said, “We are delighted to receive the PBO Green Award as recognition of the progress we are making in becoming a more environmentally friendly company and completely endorse PBO’s efforts in raising the importance of ‘greener boating’ to the leisure boating market.”

The PodMaster is now available in a power range from 2kW to 10kW, which can effectively replace a combustion engine from 3hp to 36hp. Since Mastervolt specialises in every aspect of a boat’s power management system, with every component totally compatible and ‘hybrid ready’, the possibilities for a self-contained drive system are almost endless.

The larger PodMaster units also double as regenerators, so when a yacht is under sail,
the torque in the free-wheeling propeller is harnessed to recharge the batteries. When supplemented by solar panels and/or a wind generator, and with the recharging efficiency optimised by the MasterBus system, a PodMaster-equipped boat could be virtually self-refuelling.

However, for yachts where maximum speed under sail is essential, a folding propeller version is available. This can also be coupled to the SailMaster series, where the electric motor is housed inside the hull, with just a slim saildrive leg protruding into the water.

Motorboats can fit single or twin PodMasters, either fixed before a rudder, or fully directional. The steerable versions can be linked to the main wheel, or steered independently. When angled at 90 degrees, for example, the PodMaster effectively doubles as a stern thruster. It can also be fitted as an auxiliary drive or trolling motor for a single-engine powerboat.

For naval architects, the PodMaster provides the opportunity to design a boat around the requirements of the accommodation, without the need to house a large inboard engine. Cooled by the surrounding water, the PodMaster is maintenance-free apart from the usual anode change.

“We’re really excited at the success of the PodMaster,” said Marc Persoon, Mastervolt’s Marketing Manager. “It opens up so many possibilities for boat builders and boat restorers, freeing up internal space and allowing for silent, fuel-efficient propulsion from affordable and renewable sources. Mastervolt’s acquisition of Bellmann has led to a highly productive merging of expertise, and has allowed us to really push the envelope of highly efficient, easily installed electrical propulsion. We’re also actively developing even more powerful units for the future, all designed around Mastervolt’s extensive range of CAN-bus controlled power management systems.”

Prices for the PodMaster range from £4,000 - £10,000 ex VAT, depending on specification and power rating. The package includes the monitoring panel and associated wiring, and the ‘plug and play’ cables between the battery, the control unit and the motor. Only the joystick controller is excluded from the package price due to the wide range of options. The rest of the system can be built from Mastervolt’s range of Lithium-ion or Gel batteries and intelligent battery chargers, all interconnected with the single cable Masterbus communication network.