

## **NEW BOATS TAKE CENTER STAGE**

If a boat show's success is judged by the number of new models on display, this year's Progressive Mid-America Boat Show seems certain to be declared a winner when it moors up at the I-X Center.

The sheer number of new models visitors will see will leave no doubt boating is booming! From kayaks to motor yachts, pontoons to ski boats, the show will be loaded with new boats getting their first showing in the Ohio market.

"Boat builders are investing heavily in new designs and improved models," explains show manager Bryan Ralston. "Show visitors will see new hull designs, engines and models boasting the latest in electronics already built-in. It's like none of the major brands wants to be left behind these days."

For example, Clemons Boats will exhibit a record 16 Boston Whalers. Flagship will be the all-new 380 Whaler Outrage. But, on the other end of the size range, Whaler is bringing back two of its iconic models the Montauk 170 and 150, albeit up to today's standards. The Whalers will join Albemarles, Cobalts, NauticStars and Benningtons in Clemons' 30-boat exhibit.

New boats will also be the focus at South Shore Marine as the new Pursuit 408 gets its first Cleveland showing. Along with other Pursuit models, the exhibit will premiere two new Grady White models, a 236 Fisherman and a 216 Fisherman. They'll be joined by the all-new Regal 3300 Bow Rider, 26 OBX and 21 OBX. Moreover, South Shore will be calling attention to its all-new customer showroom just completed in Huron.

The all-new Cruisers Yacht 50 Cantius has been named "Queen of the Fleet" at this year's show, making its premiere in the Skipper Buds exhibit. The "Queen" boasts a large, unique entertainment area aft and luxury accommodations forward. Skipper Buds will also introduce the new outboard-powered Tiara Yachts Sport 38LS that's leading this esteemed yacht brand into new territory. In all, Skipper Buds will feature boats from 17' to 50' in an exhibit that was named "Best of Show" last year.

Visitors are expected to line up to board the new Galeon 385 HTS that will make its first trip to the show from MarineMax, the exclusive North American importer. The 385 HTS is a Euro-styled hardtop express cruiser from English mega-yacht designer Tony Castro, whose designs for Galeon have consistently earned European Powerboat of the Year awards. But MarineMAX, the nation's largest boat dealer, will also exhibit a fleet of Sea Rays and Sailfish center consoles, among others.

While the big boats often garner lots of publicity and show visitors love to climb board, new designs at this year's boat show will be found in every size and style category. Take pontoons, for example – they're the industry's top selling category and the show will reflect it.

Ravenna Marine, for example, will show off the large Manitou pontoon lineup from 18-23 feet. But Ravenna's big news is the first showing of a new line, Thunder Jet. These boats, built of heavy-gauge aluminum, are Mercury-powered and boast models from 18 to 28 feet in Open Bow, Pilot House, and Landing Craft designs. Ravenna will also display Crestliner and Glastron boats.

Meanwhile, Charles Mill Marine, one of Ohio's largest pontoon dealers, will display models from Starcraft, Quest and Sunchaser. Given that "performance pontoons" and tritoons are hot these days, Buckeye Sports Center will lead the way with its display of Apex Pontoons and Harris Flotebote tritoons. Tritoons from South Bay will be shown by Castaway Yacht Sales and G3 Tritoons will be featured by Huron Lagoons Marina, among other exhibits.

Inflatable boats have never been more popular, so it's no surprise Islander Marine Sales will show off the largest selection of Brig Inflatables. Now the world's largest manufacturer of rigid inflatables ranging from an 11-foot yacht tenders to 26-foot high performance center consoles, all three of Brig's series -- the Eagles, Falcons and Navigators -- will be on display.

Overall, the more than 400 boats in the show will surround a wide variety of accessory and service displays ranging from marinas and clubs to electronics and clothing. The special public service exhibits area will include hands on activities, and the line up of boating and fishing seminars is the most extensive in the event's history. It's Ohio's largest winter boat show and more than 45,000 boaters are expected to make the party this year.

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