BEYOND THE HORIZON

HORIZON HAS BECOME AN INSTANTLY RECOGNIZABLE GLOBAL BRAND. WE GO BEHIND THE SCENES AT THEIR TAIWAN YARD TO PEEL BACK THE LAYERS ON THESE COMPLEX YACHTS.
STORY AND PHOTOS BY TOM SERIO

You don't become a renowned global yachtbuilder by accident. It requires commitment, which was on display during my visit to Horizon's open house in January. The company brought together their international dealers, key vendors, clients and a few journalists to see their operation first-hand and climb aboard their latest offerings, including private tours of four enormous facilities. Guests toured their manufacturing operations and metal and woodwork displays and interviewed Horizon CEO John Lu and Dutch designer Cor D. Rover, who collaborated on the new FD series. I instantly realized just how far the Horizon brand spans by the many different accents and languages I encountered during the three-day excursion.

Nestled in the southwest coastal area of Taiwan, the Horizon Group operates

Horizon CEO John Lu (above) and designer Cor D. Rover collaborated together on the new FD Series, which includes the high performance piercing bow in turquoise (right).

four dedicated yards plus the town marina in Kaohsiung. Founded in 1987, Horizon has committed to not just building fine yachts, but utilizing operating efficiencies across production lines. Nowhere is this more apparent than Atech Composites, Horizon's in-house hull and superstructure builder.

As the customizing arm of Horizon, Atech employs a number of systems to minimize waste and environmental impact. One example

The SCRIMP (Seemann Composites Resin Infusion Molding Process) uses a vacuum to pull liquid resin into a dry lay-up (left) to build high-quality fiberglass hulls and components; a technician readies an MTU engine for installation (above).

is their patented 6D infusion technology, which uses a 3D macro girder and transverse framing with 3D microstructure glass fabric for consistent resin infusion.

Atech also incorporates several technologies from the aerospace sector. The 3D optical coordinating measurement system precisely measures the dimensions of plugs and molds, so designers can compare their drawings to the actual molds and quickly identify any irregularities. And when inspecting finished hulls, Atech uses laser shearography to detect defects in fiberglass components, including disbanding, delamination, voids or cracks. It's much easier to repair a defect at the yard than at a subcontractor thousands of miles away.

Atech also brings innovation and technology to other diverse national sectors, including transportation, offshore wind turbines, defense, aviation, automotive and infrastructure. They touch everyday services including light rail and mass transit, bridges, unmanned aviation vehicles and even carbon fiber electric race cars. Partnerships like this one speak to the seriousness of Horizon's boat building operations.

John Lu's ambitions aren't confined to the massive shipyard sheds alone. He supported the rebuilding of the city marina, which is now the first private luxury marina in Taiwan. This effort enhanced the waterfront area of the port city and gave Horizon a place to dock and show off their line of yachts.

With an engineering background and a degree in naval architecture, Lu is a hands-on CEO who took an active role in collaborating with Cor D. Rover when designing the FD (Fast Displacement) line of yachts—it took them five years to research and develop the line. According to Rover, his initial conception of the FD design "looked chunky, but the performance was high."

"I would like to try, dare to be different," Lu explained. With lines like no other Horizon, Rover created a plumb bow with a broad beam and expansive freeboard, a sure departure from the traditional styles. It worked. Sales support the argument, as did the reactions of owners and dealers at the open house, where Horizon showed off the new FD102, FD75, FD87 and FD80.

Rover explained that the design of this line is new from the keel up. The Horizon team focused their attention on what they call the "high performance piercing bow," which is adept at cutting through waves as well as creating a more stable ride in rough conditions.

Seeing the sheer magnitude of the Horizon operation firsthand, talking to seasoned employees and an international cadre of dealers and owners alike, I understood that this is a global brand with ambitions that stretch far beyond the horizon. ❐

An FD87 and FD102 at the Horizon City Marina with the Kaohsiung Exhibition Center in the background.