

Thrustmaster international offices represented at OTC'09 Houston f.l.t.r.:
 Y.B. Tan, General Manager TM Asia Pacific (Singapore)
 Derek James Kirkup, General Manager TM Middle East (Dubai)
 Simon de Koning, Sales Manager TM Asia Pacific (Singapore)
 Joe Bekker, President Thrustmaster (Houston TX)
 Bert Ault, Sales Manager Thrustmaster (Houston TX)
 Hans Hoek, General Manager TM Europe (Schoonhoven)

Joe (Jos) Bekker of Thrustmaster

The Dutch guy behind the world's largest thruster factory

Early May 2009 Joe Bekker, President of Thrustmaster, officially opened the world's largest thruster factory. The opening took place on Saturday 2nd of May for all employees and Sunday 3rd of May for suppliers, clients and invitees. Due to his Dutch roots, Joe Bekker invited Holland Shipbuilding for an interview during the opening of his factory.

Joe in brief

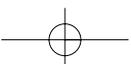
Joe R. Bekker is the founder and President of Thrustmaster of Texas, Inc. Joe is a graduate of the HTS Amsterdam in the Netherlands, holding a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering. He is a member of the Society of Naval and Marine Engineers (SNAME) and the American Society of Naval Engineers (ASNE). When Joe Bekker moved to the U.S. and started up his trading company in Texas in 1984, one of his first orders was a pair of outboard drives for

a barge for the U.S. military. He would have made a mark-up of 15 %, had his supplier not gone bankrupt. The US military made it clear that he had a contractual agreement to supply, and that penalties and black-listing would otherwise put him out of business. With other suppliers quoting well above the original price, the only remaining option for Joe was to build the outboard drives himself. And so he did. To keep things simple in way of power transmission, he used a powerpack on deck, and a hydraulic motor in the tail-end of the outboard drive. The drives turned out successful and are probably still in operation today. Other orders soon followed, and Joe Bekker's company had effectively transformed from a trading company to a production company. The hydraulic outboard drives remain an important product in the Thrustmaster line-up until today, but the range of products has significantly increased. Ever since Joe has been living in Houston, with his wife and two daughters.

Joe Bekker receives the "BEKKER 1" from his employees during his opening speech



Bianca, Jessica, Joe and Corry Bekker





World's largest thruster factory

With 25.000 sqm of chilled water air-conditioned production space, the plant is the largest thruster factory in the world. It is suitable for the production of the entire range of products and in particular the very large thrusters with a rated power going towards 5.000 - 6.000 kW. A 10 m deep test basin will be built in the next phase end 2009 to test the thrusters. The thrusters will be lifted with a 100 ton crane directly from the production hall onto a barge in the 60 million litre water test bed.

The new facility is just across the street of the old premises and is located on their own road; 6900 Thrustmaster Drive. The design of the factory was done "in house" so all the specific wishes of Joe and his staff were implemented.

Also the 2000Hp Thrusters were exposed during opening



For Joe, the employees are the most important shackles in the production chain. Therefore he wants to take good care of them, not only by creating a complete air conditioned working space but also by staying a real peoples person with an open approach and interest for his employees.

The factory consists of four parts: warehouse, machine shop, fabrication / welding department and assembly shop. Besides the new factory a brand new office building has been build just in front of the factory to house all staff, engineering and administration. On the office building a large propeller is mounted which rotates by wind power (Joe's Dutch origin?) and is clearly visible from the main road.

The total investment for this new plant is about 40 million USD. During the official opening the factory was in its finaliz-

A model of the test bassin with barge was demonstrated



ing stage. Due to this it was a perfect place for receiving more than 1000 guests in total. A wide range of products were exposed in the assembly hall during this opening.

The facility will be in use around August 2009 and the workforce will be increased from the current 200 to around 350 employees. When asked why such a big production plant is still built in the U.S. while so many companies place their bets on China, Joe Bekker mentions a number of good reasons. First and foremost, the location in Texas is ideal for most of the customers in the off-shore business.

To them, Thrustmaster is like the shop around the corner, where they can pop in for support and get assistance around the clock in their own language. Other reasons include maintaining a high level of quality, which is all-important in a sector where down-time is simply unaffordable, and the disregard for intellectual property often found in China. Also the level of qualified employees is high and due to the continuous growth it is of great essence to continuously hire qualified personnel which is obtained from the Texas area.

Hydraulic podded drives

Thrustmaster is the leading company in the hydro podded drives. One advantage of hydraulically driven thrusters when comparing to electric drives is that there is no need for frequency drives. The motor and pumps can run at constant speed and the hydraulic drive provides fully proportional propeller control in forward and reverse.

While hydraulic thrusters are more compact and require less maintenance, and are subsequently often preferred for small installations, they do have an upper limit around 1500 kW. The larger thrusters will almost always be electrically powered or directly driven by a diesel. A diesel drive has simplicity as a plus, but it scores lower in manoeuvrability. Due to the nature of the diesel engine, there is little torque available at low propeller speeds and change-over from one direction to the other is slow. The electric motor has the full torque available through its entire speed range, and thus allows for much more direct manoeuvring.

Support

With currently 70% of the production earmarked for export outside North America, Thrustmaster has been establishing sales and support centers throughout the world, a.o. in The Netherlands, Singapore and Dubai. In the near future Thrustmaster will also establish a support centre in Brazil where the offshore market is rapidly growing and the number of offshore vessels will increase to about 40 drillships and about 240 support vessels. For Thrustmaster it is of great importance to have local support offices with qualified local people. Thrustmaster is specialized in the offshore industry and DP market.

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Chilled water airconditioning installation on the Thrustmaster drive



New Horizontal Boring Mill



A part of the exposed range of thrusters during opening: Azimuth Thruster, Retractable Thruster and Propulsion Unit



During the opening, a lot of Dutch company's were represented a.o. Huisman Itrec, Noordhoek, Offshore Ship Designers, The Dutch Consulate, Acta Marine, Ulstein Sea Of Solutions, MARIN, Heerema and more