



Two of CRN's most recent launches are the 80m *Chopi Chopi* and the 60m *Jade*, both built in steel and aluminium

Ancona's finest

Italian-based CRN specialises in high-volume yachts built on a proven engineering platform, and has recently reorganised for greater efficiency

JAKE KAVANAGH REPORTS

Since its integration into the famous Italian Ferretti group in 1999, CRN has experienced something that sales director Luca Boldrini describes as “vertical growth”. The brand was reinvigorated following a period of relative dormancy, after new, streamlined working practices were introduced. These ranged from a shortening of the supply chain and a redesign of the yard layout to investing in a new R&D department and teams of specialist personnel. The investment has clearly paid off, because last year CRN launched one of the largest yachts ever built in Italy, the award winning 80m (262ft) MY *Chopi Chopi*.

Based in a modern shipyard in Ancona on the north-east coast, CRN was in a state of heightened activity during our visit in mid-May. Dominating the landscape was the 73m (240ft) steel and aluminium project CRN132, angled at 20 degrees on the central slipway and going through the final fitting out prior to her scheduled launch at the end of the month.

Meanwhile, another recent launch, the 61m (200ft) CRN133 was moored side-to-side against the quayside, her unique interior receiving its finishing touches under the watchful eye of her seasoned captain.

In the tall, aluminium-clad construction halls that flank the huge open area of reinforced hard standing, two more new builds were well underway. The smaller of the

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two, CRN134 was a 55m (180ft) design by Nuvolari & Lenard, while directly opposite was CRN131, a 74m (243ft) yacht from the drawing offices of Zuccon International project. In the metal shop in the southernmost yard, cutting had also begun for the plates for two more yachts, one of 68m (223ft) and the other of 77m (253ft).

Because CRN is part of Ferretti, it was no surprise to see two more yachts from the group's portfolio afloat and awaiting delivery. One of these, looking dangerously fast and sexy in her silver-grey colouring, was Riva's new 37m (122ft) flagship, the aluminium-hulled *Riva Mythos*. Close by was a 38m (124ft) Custom Line yacht, a model from a range built exclusively in composite. Clearly, business was good, with plenty of orders to keep the 1,000-strong workforce busy well into the future.

Collaboration with Riva

CRN was founded in 1963 by the entrepreneur Sanzio Nicolini, who named his new venture *Costruzioni e Riparazioni Navali*, although CRN rolls off the tongue easier. Yacht building began in an old warehouse in Ancona, a town with direct access to the Adriatic, and also home to a busy commercial harbour.

Nicolini decided to build exclusively in steel, highly unusual at the time as wood was



CRN has a modern 80,000 m² yard in Ancona, with direct access to a 250m deep water marina

the material of choice. Nicolini targeted the top end of the leisure market and stayed focused on the most discerning clientele throughout. By the end of the '70s his yachts were already measuring 20m (66ft), and immediately recognisable by their distinctive styling and signature bow.

Nicolini met another yachting pioneer Carlo Riva in 1970, which led to an eight-year collaboration. In 1973, the Rome-based entrepreneur Giandomenico Palmerini bought his management skills to the yard. Palmerini eventually became a major stakeholder and relocated the business to its current deepwater premises in 1980. Throughout this period, a succession of ever-larger

TOP VIEW LAMBERTO TACOLI

Celebrating his 50th birthday this year, Italian-born Tacoli began working for a Bologna-based trading company in 1987, specialising in the Far East. His entrepreneurial activity led to him purchasing a share of Custom Line S.p.A, which became part of the Ferretti group that same year. Tacoli remained on the management team of Custom Line until it merged with CRN in 2001, and was then promoted from sales director to CEO. In 2006, he became chairman of CRN, a post he still holds today. In 2009, Tacoli joined the Ferretti Group board of directors, and in July 2012 combined his role as chairman of CRN with that of CEO. As he explained to SB, he sees flexibility as the key to CRN's ongoing success.

"I think considering the difficulties in the industry as a whole in the last few years of recession, we have succeeded due to three main aspects. First, we have concentrated purely on the larger custom contracts, which have continued to be sought after by clients. Part of



CEO Lamberto Tacoli has enjoyed a long career in the superyacht industry

"We continue to look at new markets for the brand. In January business was good with Russia and the Ukraine, although the political situation there is causing concern, but Russia remains a very interesting market for us. Our connection with China through our major stakeholder Weichai Group is a great asset, and we have recently received a letter of intent for a 68m destined for a Chinese customer. I think that with the right approach and with some patience, we will see the market

Compared to a few years ago, many owners are downsizing their aspirations from 100m+ projects to the 60-80m range, which still remains a big yacht

that has been the development of the larger 13.5m-wide engineering platforms as typified by *Chopi Chopi*. We've just launched two new builds, one of 73m and one of 61m, and both very different from each other in every aspect. I think this shows just how flexible the yard can be, and flexibility is what interests clients. The last aspect is that we work very closely with those clients to satisfy their requests. Everyone involved in each project has a good feeling from this.

"We have seen a few trends in our clients. Compared to a few years ago, many owners are downsizing their aspirations from 100m+ projects to the 60m-80m range, which still remains a big yacht. One of the factors in our favour is that our yachts have good proportions in terms of length and volume, offering good GRT value.

there grow significantly in the next five years. Meanwhile, we are renewing our focus on the US market, and we see many good opportunities to expand the brand into Eastern markets.

"Although we have built many yachts in composite in the 40-50m range, the CRN brand will continue to be built with steel hulls and aluminium superstructures. One of our strengths is that we offer a real opportunity for owners to have a fully custom yacht built outside Northern Europe, but with the same — or better — standards of quality and innovation. So, for us, the future is looking good. We will be presenting our new 61m and 73m at the Monaco Boat Show, a great boost for our portfolio, and we also have some surprise new products in the pipeline." **SB**

yachts was produced, mainly for clients in the Middle East. However, when the Gulf War began, there was an immediate impact on sales, so the yard diversified into refit and commercial work but continued to build a limited number of yachts.

In 1999, following a proposal by the current CEO Lamberto Tacoli, CRN was purchased by the Ferretti Group. This was to become a major symbiosis, as CRN would bring metalworking expertise to a portfolio that was exclusively fibreglass. In 2002, CRN consolidated its position by acquiring the adjacent historic shipyard Mario Morini. During this time, the concept of building a customised yacht onto a proven engineering platform was devised. This led to faster delivery times and in 2005 CRN also began to build yachts in composite as part of the Customline range.

“Initially, we had overlapping management and infrastructures, so between 2000 and 2004 we focused on rebuilding and modernising the shipyard and streamlining the management,” says Boldrini. “Then we had to reshape the brand, which had perhaps become a little faded. We had to get back on the market and approach new clients, despite not having a new yacht to show. But many took us on trust, and after the first few deliveries we enjoyed a great deal of repeat custom.”

In January 2012, SHIG-Gruppo Weichai spent €374m to become the majority stakeholder of the Ferretti Group, which also guaranteed 75 per cent share of CRN. A year later, CRN launched its biggest yacht to date, *Chopi Chopi*, and some 4,000 locals turned out to watch.

Close to nature

In the fiercely competitive 40m-90m (131-295ft) range of yacht construction, CRN feels it has



Now open plan, the technical office is staffed by 25 engineers divided into the New Project Team and the Platform Team

FLOODED DOCK

Bringing the sea right into the internal living space is the floodable garage. The side hatch of the garage lifts hydraulically, filling the internal basin with water with enough depth and space to accommodate an 8m Riva Iseo tender. Guests can transfer easily, and when the tender is absent the pool can be used safely, even by children. A functional area has cleverly been turned into a unique living space.



PIONEERING BEACH CLUB

First introduced on the 60m yacht *Blue Eyes*, the Beach Club makes full use of the yacht's generous beam and volume. The open stern provides a sunbathing area and lounge to the highest quality. CRN proudly notes that many of their pioneering ideas have since been adopted by other shipyards and become a standard in the industry.

60M MY JADE



an edge. This comes from the large internal volumes available with no compromise on performance, and some remarkable engineering solutions to allow owners to live as close to the sea as possible. The 60m (197ft) *Jade*, for example, has a flooded garage normally only seen on tank landing craft, allowing the tender to be driven right inside the hull in calm weather. While this close proximity to the sea is a great bonus to charter customers, few will experience it. This is because CRN owners, 76 per cent of whom are repeat customers, very rarely offer their yachts for charter. Instead, they prefer to equip them for personal enjoyment, so the level of customisation is particularly high and uniquely individual.

It is the question of volume, however, that

most animates Boldrini: “When we arrived with *Ability* at the Monaco Boat Show in 2006, for example, we were moored right next to a brand new Dutch-built yacht measuring 53.5m and with a 9.6m beam. She displaced 650gt. Our vessel was 54m with a 10.2m beam and displaced 980gt. Visitors were saying ‘No way is your yacht the same length!’ I asked for a tender to be kept permanently launched so I could take them out into the harbour to view the yachts head on. Then you can see why we have so much extra volume. We take the width much further forward and rearwards. This gives you a lot of extra beam, so we were the first to introduce the beach club concept. In *Chopi Chopi*, there was so much extra space forward that the crew asked if they could have a gym there.”



OWNER'S BALCONY

CRN is keen to bring owners close to the environment, and developed the balcony that was integrated into the owner's suite. Furnished with chairs and a coffee table, the balcony is intended for use when the yacht is under way, and allows the guest to enjoy breakfast or leisure time in complete privacy as the seacape slips by beneath.



ADVANCED JOINERY

Thanks to its in-house joinery team, CRN can supply each yacht with a totally unique interior fitout, as seen in this stateroom. CRN's Interior Design and Décor Department has a team of architects and designers to realise owners' desires, and works closely with renowned external designers and architects. A specialism is incorporating original works of art.

Boldrini is keen to point out that whilst a CRN-built yacht may have more volume than its rivals, this is done without sacrificing styling or performance. "We try to replicate our engineering platform from yacht to yacht, but in a different way from our rivals," he says. "We only keep the central part, so the engineroom — the biggest cost — is untouched, as are the engineroom bulkheads and the volume of the lower cabins. But beyond that, everything else is up to the owner. Our hulls are very different from our competitors, allowing the owner to be far more creative with the extra space available."

Boldrini also suggests to brokers that their usual equation for calculating costs is flawed. "Brokers ask us the length, and the tonnage, and then try to calculate our cost per tonne,

but this simple formula overlooks how that tonnage is used," he says. "For example, if you have a large pool that converts into a helipad, then that use of tonnage will be vastly different from a similar-sized yacht that just has a pool. Some clients will consider a yacht's dimensions, without fully appreciating how the space has been used."

Streamlining production

CRN makes just about every structural

component on site, from the initial cutting and assembly of the plates right through to the joinery and metal work. As part of the restructuring in 1999, it bought in the joinery firm of Zago, allowing the custom interiors to be created in-house.

Our brief tour of the yard showed just how flexible it could be, with everything in one location. Apart from a large area of hard standing, and 25,000m² of covered sheds, the yard also has direct access to a deep-water marina, with a number of stern-to berths and a large pier. This allows easy access for cranes, and the large central slipway and mobile travel hoist allows vessels of up to 2,500 tonnes to be launched with relative ease. For owners and agents who wish to fly in, the nearby international airport is just 20 minutes away, and can cater for private jets, while the yard itself has a helipad on the hard standing. Visitors are entertained in a beautifully crafted meeting room, the joinery reflecting the high standards available in the yachts themselves.

Touring the yard in one of the electric golf carts available for VIPS, we were able to glance into the modern halls, and also

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80M MY CHOPI CHOPI

AIRY ENVIRONMENT

With an interior design by Laura Sessa, realised by Zago, the whole emphasis of this yacht has been of great spaciousness, and an airy environment, special use of light, and painstaking care with details to enhance a feeling of wellbeing afloat. Most critical to CRN's philosophy is close contact with the sea, which in itself presents many challenges on a steel yacht.



viewed the extensive crews quarters and project managers offices located nearby.

"Most Italian yards have a small workforce and rely on subcontractors for the rest," Boldrini explains. "That works well at the epicentre of yacht building, such as at La Spezia where Ferretti has one of its plants, but we are on our own out here. Instead, we have a much larger permanent workforce, with some 300 staff at the yard, and another 125 with the joinery firm of Zago. Then we have another 600 or so subcontractors, giving us a large skillset to call upon."

Although Italy is heavily unionised, there are very few disputes in a deflated labour market. CRN has devised a shift system whereby the construction teams work in the cooler mornings, from 0630 to 1430, and the management and service sectors, including some subcontractors, start later and work into the afternoon.

Everyone pulls together to ensure that a project is launched on time, as we witnessed with CRN133. The project manager, Gianluca Ciniero, took a few minutes out of his schedule to give us a brief tour, pointing out the high

LARGE VOLUME

As with all CRN steel yachts, *Chopi Chopi* was built on a proven engineering platform. These are supplied in a series of set widths of either 8.6m, 9.6m, 10.2m, 11.2m, 12.5m and 13.5m for fast and well-defined manufacturing. In *Chopi Chopi's* case, there was so much volume in usually 'dead' spaces onboard that the crew were able to have their own gym.



level of the ceilings, nearly 2.8m, and the differing internal decors that hold several engineering challenges of their own. The staff, with many of the subcontractors in logoed waistcoats, bustled cheerfully around us.

"Our subcontractors have grown with us," Boldrini says. "Some, such as the paint specialists, work with other well-known yards throughout Europe, so they pass on the best practices they have picked up. We also

work hard to develop our own systems for better efficiency." The newly reorganised technical department, overseen by technical director Ferdinando Pilli, has also allowed for better working practices, especially with some of the unique engineering solutions CRN has developed to meet client demands. Project CRN132, for example has a fold-down mast and exhaust assembly so the yacht can fit a boatshed designed for a smaller model. Apparently, it was easier to lower the mast than to raise the shed.

"In the past, the schedule was often set by the artisans, who would take as long as they needed," Pilli explains. "Nowadays, owners want to take delivery as quickly as possible, so we have streamlined every department to need less time. Some solutions are simple,

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HI TECH CONNECTIVITY

Every CRN yacht has a tailor made entertainment and technical platform, built in collaboration with Videoworks and Intel. These range from *Chopi Chopi's* innovative 'My Concierge' staff call system, operated through an iPadMini, though to the 'Active Noise Cancelling System' found on the 60m *Darlings Danama*. Background noise is annulled by a series of speakers that 'fill in' the sound troughs.



CRN invested heavily to upgrade the facilities at the Ancona yard by building new construction halls



All CRN hulls are built in steel with the plates CNC cut on site. The superstructures are all aluminium

letters of intent have been signed for two 46m (151ft) yachts. Meanwhile, CRN has also presented the Dislopen range, (Displacement Open Yacht), a portfolio of steel and aluminium vessels designed by Zuccon International Project. Currently offered in three models of 46, 52 and 62m (151, 171 and 203ft), Dislopen will "marry the shape and style of a high performance open boat with the comfort and volume of a large displacement vessel." As always, proximity to the sea is a key element.

CRN's outlook is probably best summed up by Boldrini's view on why the yard continues to inspire new owners, and draws back others for ever larger and more complex projects: "Italians are known for their passion and for making beautiful things," he says. "Quite simply — our yachts evoke emotions."

And volume, of course. Don't forget the volume. **SB**

WATCH SOME SHORT

promotional videos taking you on a tour of both the 60m *Jade* and the 80m *Chopi Chopi* shortly after their launch



OWNER'S DECK

With many owners requesting a high level of privacy, *Chopi Chopi* has six decks, with one of them dedicated totally to the owner. This yacht also has a sub lower deck, dedicated to technical systems such as equipment storage, laundry and domestic utilities.

such as getting rid of the cubicles in our technical office to make it open plan. Now we can all see and hear what is going on in other sections of the project, which encourages constructive input. We also have more progress meetings between each department."

Although owners are very aware of the environment, green initiatives are not, at the moment, the main focus of the new projects of the shipyard, but CRN always works to ensure its owners the best current solutions.

One area where they do want the very latest technology, however, is in the entertainment and navigation systems. "We have to put these in last of all," Pilli remarks. "We ensure that the entertainment systems are fully upgradable with the minimum of

disruption, as electronics become obsolete very quickly. We use Videoworks, a global company with a branch in Ancona, and they are very good at keeping us abreast of the very latest equipment."

The future

With no less than four major projects under construction, and two more under way, CRN is certainly on a roll. However, rather than rest on its laurels, the company has launched two new designs aimed at the entry-level market for sub 500gt. The new 40m (131ft) and 46m (151ft) yachts, the Conero and SuperConero respectively, will be made from steel and aluminium, and will reflect many of the amenities usually only found on the larger yachts. Two

Named after one of CRN's earlier successes, the 46m SuperConero concept is aimed at owners who 'are passionate and knowledgeable, and appreciate the characteristics of detailed design and of the many amenities, some of which are only found on larger yachts.' For example, the SuperConero will have the same floodable tender bay found on the 60m *Jade*, and along with its smaller 40m Conero model, will have retractable balconies that can be used under way. Each has been designed by Studio Zuccon International Project and will feature large areas of glass to maximize the enjoyment afloat



SUPERCONERO 46M

TECHNICAL DETAILS

- ▶ **Model name:** SuperConero
- ▶ **LOA:** 46m (150.1ft)
- ▶ **Beam:** 8.4m (27.6ft)
- ▶ **Draft:** 2.6m (8.6ft)
- ▶ **Displacement:** 450t
- ▶ **Engines:** 2 x CatC32 1081kw
- ▶ **Top speed:** 15kt
- ▶ **Cruising speed:** 13kt
- ▶ **Fuel:** 60,000l
- ▶ **Water:** 12,000l
- ▶ **Generators:** 2 x 125ekW @ 50Hz
- ▶ **Guests:** 10
- ▶ **Crew:** 7
- ▶ **Naval architecture:** CRN Engineering
- ▶ **Designer:** Zucco International Project

YACHTS DELIVERED SINCE 2008

Name	Power/sail	Length	Designer	Launched
Maraya	Power	54m	Zuccon International	2008
Romance	Power	57m	Zuccon International	2008
Tacanuy AS MS	Power	54m	Zuccon International	2009
Blue Eyes	Power	60m	Zuccon International	2008
Azteca	Power	72m	Nuvolari & Lenard	2010
Mimtee	Power	60m	Zuccon International	2011
Darlings Danama	Power	60m	Zuccon International	2011
Jade	Power	60m	Zuccon International	2013
Chopi Chopi	Power	80m	Zuccon International	2013

YACHTS UNDER CONSTRUCTION/ON ORDER

Name	Power/sail	Length	Designer	Launch
CRN 131	Power	74m	Zuccon International	2014
CRN 132	Power	73m	Omega Architects	2015
CRN 133	Power	60m	Francesco Paszowsky	2015
CRN 134	Power	54m	Nuvolari & Lenard	2016