
Diving in New Orleans

Random Scatterings goes to DEMA

Not much new at the DEMA show this year, as usual; the emphasis was on fashions. Black is the “in” color, with technical diving setting the trend. At least half a dozen tech wannaBCs, with lots of metal D-rings, clips, pockets, and so forth. Streamlining and low-drag is out, at least this year, as bright, highly visible colors take a back seat to macho. Some changes on the dive computer front, with lower-priced models having many more features than in the past. Suunto introduces the **Favor**, a unit with most of the features of the Solu-

tion (except a computer interface) but at a much lower cost, and more deco information than the Companion. USD comes on strong with the **Matrix**, a little jewel that nobody seems to have any complaints about and that users flat-out love for its clear display and low retail price. **Benemec**, makers of the Mares Divemate, shows (via the intended distributor, DiveRite) a mockup of a heads-up dive computer that mounts on top of an ordinary mask, sitting in front of one eye like the doodad *Star Trek's* Picard wore when he was a Borg.

Scuba Sleuth?

A few months back, two women popped into Sausalito's Harbor Dive Center and launched into a shopping rampage. Asking proprietor Jack Kuhn all sorts of questions, they quickly bought two head-to-toe sets of serious gear: AGA full face masks (who uses these?), OTS communication devices (or these?), USD Computers, Polartec Skins, and everything else you can imagine, with all the bells and whistles — a five-figure purchase.

Research, said one of the women.

After paying, they left without the gear, saying they would call to have it shipped to Richmond, Virginia, where they would get certified.

A month later Kuhn got a call. They were coming to town in a couple of days and wanted to get private certification. He quickly lined up instructor David Carlos for pool classes and open-water dives in the chill waters of Monterey, where they provided top-of-the-line accommodations for Carlos. The women fared well, then returned to their ritzy San Francisco hotel via limousine, still wearing their wet suits.

Whatever research gets conducted with that pricey gear will be explained by Dr. Kay Scarpetta, the medical examiner who is the heroine in six novels, including *Body Farm* and *From Potter's Field*. You see, the two high-rolling customers were 39-year-old novelist Patricia Cornwell and her personal assistant. Cornwell's books have sold millions and are translated into several languages.

In Cornwell's seventh book, *Cause of Death*, due out this summer, Scarpetta probes the mysterious diving death of a fictitious Associated Press reporter. Cornwell says she took up scuba diving so she could make the underwater scenes more realistic. Sounds like a good read to me.

B. D.

Regulators continue to get more plastic parts in the second stage and heavier/clunkier first stages, but no revolutionary trends noticed. . . . Lots of variants on the standard fin, including a number of very long and weirdly vented models, supposedly intended for spearfishermen and deep-diving breath-hold record and coffin seekers. Some significant leaps in the photo department, with **Light and Motion's** fiber-optic strobe cords (wet connections, cut to length) attracting a lot of attention. Long-roll film backs for **Nikonos IV** and **V** cameras (250 frames) also hot numbers, though both of these items are still vaporware.

The biggest travel news was that Australia's Mike Ball (*Supersport, Spoilsport, and Watersport*) bought the **Telita** in Papua New Guinea. His plan is to introduce a new boat to PNG in another three years and use the **Telita** to explore new territory. . . . Looks like **Pirate's Point** on Little Cayman is getting a new dive boat — a big 42-footer that had a starting price tag of \$169,000. Gladys, if you're trying to keep up with the new competition, I hope you're going to start offering three dives a day on that slick-looking dive boat. . . . **Plantation Beach**, on Cayos Cochinos, Honduras, has a new Pro 42 dive boat that they now also use to get divers to and from the island. The 1½-hour boat ride makes connection to the island a lot simpler. Even with their tacky brochure, I'm curious about **Club Carib** on South Caicos (800-581-2582 or on the island at 809-946-3444). I've been saying for years that the diving is good here (a little deep, but excellent sea life), but there's no place to stay. Nothing to do but dive here, but that's not all bad. If someone beats me there, let me know if it's worthwhile.

J. Q.