

# WORLD's LARGEST HYDROFOIL LAUNCHED



*The first Admiral 350 hydrofoil, Gianni M, was officially launched at the HSC Shipyard in Sicily on March 24  
/ GIUSEPPE PASTORE photo*

*The imposing Gianni M about to be lowered onto the water on March 24 / GERI DI VITA photo*



**J U S T B E F O R E E A S T E R**, on March 24, the first Admiral 350 hydrofoil, dubbed the world's largest hydrofoil, was officially launched in a ceremony at the HSC Shipyard at Trapani in western Sicily. Attending were, among others, city and regional authorities and VIPs as well as of course executives and workers of both the shipyard and Ustica Lines, headed by managing director Ettore Morace. The customary smashing of a bottle of champagne onto the hull of the grand hydrofoil, *Gianni M*, was executed by its godmother Simona Vicari, secretary at the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport.

The vessel has cost in the region of €7 million to design and build, a portion of this sum being EU funds. The development has been carried out by HSC in collaboration with the engineering faculty of the University of Palermo.

Indeed, the 155-ton, 38m, 350-passenger *Gianni M* is not the largest hydrofoil ever built, but it is certainly the largest commercial such completed and active since 1986.

Which is bending the truth a bit as the introduction into service is still a couple of months off. Since a completely new design, including Z-drive propulsion rather than the standard inclined shaft arrangement, an extensive full-scale test programme is now

to follow as well as the fitting out of the vessel. It will enter service with Ustica Lines on June 10 between Trapani and the Italian island of Pantelleria, off the Tunisian coast. One return trip a day, except Tuesday, will be operated until September 30, leaving Trapani at 1340 and Pantelleria at 1610. Scheduled journey time is 2 hours 10 minutes.

**Below :** *Gianni M* is the first Italian hydrofoil to enter commercial service featuring Z-drive propulsion rather than the standard inclined shaft arrangement



## GREEK ORDER

Since our last report, HSC Shipyard has confirmed it is negotiating with an undisclosed Greek company for the building of two hydrofoils of the smaller Admiral 250 design. Whether or not this contract eventuates should be clear very shortly. Competition is tough, however, not least from Australian fast ferry builders. Meanwhile the shipyard has commenced the construction of a third Admiral 250.

Hydrofoils are no strange birds in Greek waters, far from it. Numerous Soviet/Russian Kometas, Kolkhidas and Meteors as well as the sole Tsiklon built have seen service or continue to be operated. A number of Rodriquez hydrofoils were also imported in the 1980s and 90s, having been acquired on the second hand market by various operators, but these have all since been withdrawn.

## HISTORY REPEATING

The current hydrofoil activity in Sicily is history repeating itself. The optimism at HSC Shipyard, which is part of Ustica Lines, bears a strong resemblance to that of the pioneering hydrofoil builder across the island in Messina, Rodriquez, from the mid-1950s and onwards. Directing one's efforts on the construction of hydrofoils was obviously venturesome back then, but is if not sensational then certainly unexpected at this time and age.

While Rodriquez formed its own operating company, Aliscafi-SNAV, to ensure employment for its hydrofoils as well as to promote its products to prospective customers, the reverse is the case with Ustica Lines/HSC Shipyard.

**Below :** With a length overall of 38m and carrying up to 350 passengers, the Admiral 350 is the largest hydrofoil built in Italy / GIUSEPPE PASTORE photo, both



Ustica Lines was founded in 1993 and decided to establish its own shipyard in which to build hydrofoils for itself as well as other operators three years ago.

Having successfully manufactured surface piercing hydrofoils of the PT and RHS series for more than thirty-five years, by the early 1990s Rodriguez was focusing on building fast monohull designs.

However, a hydrofoil revival occurred in 1994 with the appearance of the first Foilmaster. A total of thirteen was completed until 2007, seven of these were delivered to Siremar and the rest to Ustica Lines.

When a new hydrofoil was delivered next it was not by Rodriguez but by Ustica Lines' own shipyard. The first Admiral 250, *Carlo Morace*, entered service in 2014 and was joined by a second, *Ammari*, last year.

#### SIREMAR TAKE-OVER

Another development involving Ustica Lines is the likely acquisition by the company of the fast ferry fleet and operation of Siremar, the other major ferry company in Sicily. A long-time operator, Siremar's hydrofoil fleet comprises three RHS 160Fs hydrofoils built in 1987–88 and the seven Foil-



**Above :** Nearly there...  
This was not the first time the vessel was submerged into Sicilian waters, however  
/ GERI DI VITA photo

masters delivered 1994–2006. Siremar also has two passenger/car-carrying TMV monohulls and seven conventional ferries, but it is understood none of these is part of the deal.

The take-over is expected to be realized at the end of the month or in April **cff**

