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STELLA MARIS 72M: TECHNOLOGY THAT IS ALMOST BIOLOGICAL IN NATURE

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STELLA MARIS 72 M

A DIFFERENT LEVEL

With split-level decks and sole to ceiling glazing, some of Stella Maris's appealing attributes are clear to see. What is not immediately apparent however is the degree of engineering sophistication and environmental responsibility she possesses, both of which elevates VSY's latest launch to another level altogether.

By **Craig Barnett** Images **Massimo Listri, Guillaume Plisson, Beppe Raso & VSY**



As we make the short trip out to where Stella Maris rides her

anchor with designer, Espen Oeino, one of the megayacht sector's busiest designers, we're struck by her strong masculine presence, a style usually favored by relatively young Russian owners. Appearing planted firmly on the water, she exhibits a sense of gravitas, and this is subconsciously reinforced by the fact that her full beam is possessed at the waterline and a subtle tumblehome slopes inward to the main deck. Above this the angled facets of the superstructure cleverly conceal the features that make her truly unique; her split-level decks.

Circling the yacht in the tender, evidence of the owner's encouragement to Espen to push the envelope is immediately evident. From her unusual but pleasing blunted bow, through the oversized portholes and into the expanses of sole to ceiling lateral glazing, she's an original and well-executed design. In fact, so well proportioned is Stella Maris, one only appreciates the dimensions of the glazing when a crewmember passes in front to provide a sense of scale. Admiring her metallic grey paintwork, Lorenzo Cerulli, VSY Sales and After Sales Manager, explains how achieving the finish was one of the biggest challenges the yard faced, yet gained the largest satisfactions from the result. "We used a Dupont paint system and as with all large yachts she was painted in sections. With a metallic paint however you can't buff out where the sections meet, so we had to be meticulous with the color match throughout. The result was well worth the hard work."



Natural light and abundant sea views are a highlight of the interior



ALL ABOARD

Boarding Stella Maris via one of the platforms created by her twin lateral garage terraces, we note how the teak lined area offers a full 6' 8" (2.10m) headroom, which increases dramatically as one steps down into the twin tender stowage area. Converting into a discotheque if so desired, the wide access through to the beach club area creates a contiguous space. The beach club proper (extensive in size thanks to the bathing platform created by the drop-down transom plate) is completed with a towel desk, rainforest showerhead and a substantial retractable letter-box re-boarding ladder. It's the perfect shaded retreat for parents to keep an eye on younger guests while they cavort in the ocean.

Making our way up directly into the cockpit via the portside companionway, we discover a large social area. Furnished with banquettes, cocktail tables and wet bar facilities, it makes for a natural reception area. Despite their considerable size, deck hardware including the capstans, cleats and fairleads are unobtrusive,

Stella Maris' windows are so large they required specialist engineering to redirect stresses around them

or maybe that's because we're so distracted by the wall of tinted glass that towers almost 10' (3m) above us. Seeing our reaction, Espen laughs. "Yes the glass plates are enormous, so it obviously took some work to redirect the stresses and loads around the glass." With an absence of visible mullions and the aft quarters of the main salon cut at an angle, we anticipate fantastic panoramic views from the inside. As the architecturally proportioned electric doors swish open, we're not disappointed. Greeted by a reception lobby and portside bar, conveniently placed for serving the salon itself and the cockpit, this area can be partitioned off or left open plan to continue seamlessly through into the salon. Here guests enjoy an airy space with a barely perceptible change in lighting from the shaded exterior, in fact not a single electric light needs to be switched on in the salon during the day. Nobody can possibly venture aboard Stella Maris and fail to be impressed by the 8' 9" (2.70m) headroom. It really is quite extraordinary. Tearing ourselves away from the cinematic view of Monte Carlo to port and the shimmering cobalt sea



stretching to the horizon on starboard, we notice the winter garden feature. Originally conceived to house tall bamboo grasses, the winter garden actually extends through the deck to the skylounge above, at present however it is split into two levels. On the port side of the main salon resides a glass dining table, and while no doubt suitable for formal dinners, it functions equally as well as an informal social hub, much as tables do in a family home. As we settle down on a sofa for a coffee, with the low bulwarks ensuring our view remains uninterrupted, Espen points out the acoustic qualities. "With all these hard surfaces, the windows and absence of fitted carpeting, the aural effect is quite different from what you'd expect, and that's something we're really pleased with. We put considerable effort into

computer simulations and analysis of the acoustic behavior of the yacht during operation and at anchor." Taking up the challenge of sound and vibration reduction, VSY left no stone unturned. Before even cutting metal they consulted with suppliers to ensure components, systems and materials would achieve desired results. "We worked with specialist consultants from day one, isolating and absorbing sound and vibration," explains Lorenzo Cerulli. "We even worked with the glass supplier to come up with a special glass sandwich. At 1,600rpm normal glass would make too much noise, so the laminate includes a layer of a specific density glass to counteract that."

Combined with the usual methods of sound reduction, the team has employed a similar winning philosophy to that of the successful British Olympic team; that of cumulative marginal gains. Variable pitch propeller systems were selected, and double elastic joints isolate the shaft and thrust bearing from vibration of the gearbox. Later, down in the engine room we note how the engines are mounted onto 'raft' structures that 'float' on rubber vibration suppression pads. Wherever possible, equipment and ducting is also mounted and suspended from the deck below, rather than the deck above, thus preventing a transfer of vibration to guest areas. As a result, noise levels throughout the yacht are some of the lowest we've experienced.

Luxury details introduce a subconscious sensory experience





With a hamman and steam shower room, the wellness area is complete and well appointed

TOUR AND EXPLORE

With coffee over we set off to investigate what else Stella Maris has in store, and moving through the central lobby we step down to the guest accommodation deck. With four doubles – which include additional Pullman bunks – and two convertible twins, their equal sizing demonstrates the possibility for charter was considered in their design. Generously proportioned each cabin features three oversized portholes, with two of equal dimensions in the ensuite... a quick glance at a profile photograph of the yacht enables one to determine the accommodation layout. The portholes themselves afford wonderful views from both the pillow and the shower, with electric blinds to protect modesty when in port. As throughout the yacht, flat panel joinery and concealed lighting contribute to the clean contemporary styling.

While quality materials and details abound on Stella Maris, being built 'on-spec' Italian interior designer Michela Reverberi has intentionally, and cleverly, created a 'blank canvas' upon which potential owners can impress their own tastes and personality. The styling is contemporary and simplistic, yet small details are used to engender a sense of luxury that can be further

enhanced at a later date. The marble from which the vanity surfaces and hand basins in the en-suites are hewn is one such example, as are the brushed leather liners on staircase handrails. The details introduce a subconscious sensory experience on occasion, gently reminding one they're on a luxury yacht.

Returning to the central lobby that houses a central glass elevator serving all decks, the shipyard's manager explains how the freestanding platform moves within a glass tube and features invisible beams that halt operation if one inadvertently strays too close to the sides. It's also convenient for wheelchair access. Obviously, given the split-level nature of Stella Maris's deck plans, both the guest and service elevators feature front and rear access. The opportunity to select from one of the seven 'floors' is a subliminal trigger to believing one is on a yacht of larger dimensions.

THE GREEN MACHINE

Exiting in the sub-level, below the waterline to peruse the engineering spaces, VSY's determination to lead yacht builders in the production of environmentally responsible craft becomes evident. In the engine room the exhaust ducting is clad in a heat capture system. This provides warm water for a variety of purposes, from helping reduce generator loads by heating the water for the sundeck Jacuzzis, to providing warm washdown for the yacht's exterior and reducing the water required to rinse salt off. This includes

washing down teak decks fabricated from certified responsibly harvested sources, part of VSY's

Stella Maris' technology is almost biological in nature



commitment to the 'Wood Forever' initiative.

Elsewhere, amongst the laundry facilities, engineers control room, cold storage, garbage freezers and neatly accomplished technical spaces, Lorenzo Cerulli points out the yacht's blackwater treatment plant. "Entirely biological and chemical free," he declares proudly. "This machine is fantastic, there's just two discs turning inside, so there's nothing to break. The results are remarkable too. OK, I wouldn't drink a glass of the water that comes out myself, but if I were to offer you a glass alongside one filled with mineral water you wouldn't be able to tell the difference by sight or smell. You could use it to wash the boat if you so desired. It's systems like this, along with being fitted with particle filters and Tetravalent catalysts on the engines and generators, CFC-refrigerators, Fluoropolymer anti-fouling and garbage pollution prevention, that prove her green credentials. Stella Maris was built to Lloyd's Register Environmental Safety standards and was also awarded by RINA Green Plus Platinum, which is a great achievement." While environmental responsibility is an increasingly important issue for yacht owners, the VSY manager pointed out that each system also pays back in financial benefits.

UPPER CLASS

The split-level arrangement of Stella Maris once more comes into play with the unusual location of the wheelhouse. The half-bridge deck is situated below the owner's staterooms, so while it is raised above main-deck level and enjoys commanding views over the forward technical area, it is not the elevation one traditionally expects. Visibility is not impinged upon however, and a sophisticated CCTV network supplements the wing stations used for close quarter maneuvering. As one would expect of a yacht this size the wheelhouse is a comfortable work environment, with dark leather surfaces absorbing light rather than reflecting it. Touchscreen monitors are arranged in two banks, and there's a separate office for the yacht's communications officer. Despite being certified for paperless operation, those who find it difficult to turn their back on the dividers and ruler will be heartened by the presence of a chart table.

Stella Maris is undoubtedly a 21st Century yacht and her artificial intelligence is almost biological in nature. A skin of no less than 2,400 different monitoring systems covers her vital organs, feeding back information on her health through a fibre-optic central nervous system to the Captain and Chief Engineer. Designed to be as 'future-proof' as possible, each deck





of the yacht features a server room, and the yacht's fiber-optic neurological system is capable of handling an incredible amount of information and upgrades to connected hardware. The dometic system for guests utilizes the same information highway, but channels information back to the Chief Steward. Full 'room service', entertainment and environmental features can be individually controlled by the guest, or centrally by the Steward. Closing the blinds, turning down a/c, ordering a film or a snack, it's all there at the touch of a button. In fact, guests can also be patched into the

The helipad is certified for commercial use, allowing charter flights to land



yacht's CCTV system, which is of such hi-resolution we could zoom in and see the occupants of our favorite waterside table in Monte Carlo! Not all the toys onboard are for the guests however. Equipped with the commercial Kongsberg K-POS system, which combines the GPS with a 260kW Van der Velden bow thruster and 350kW Shottel jet stern thruster (articulating 360-degrees), not only is slow speed maneuverability ensured, but also zero speed. The system combines to offer a Dynamic Positioning (DP) that can hold the yacht on a position and heading with accuracies of up to three inches! This avails the captain of advantages in many different situations: during helicopter landing and take off, for fast and efficient tender launch and recovery, creating a leeway for tenders in rough conditions, holding station in areas where anchor deployment is dangerous or not permitted, and even for creating a load bank for perfect loading of the generators.

WORK AND PLAY

After a serious mental work out in the wheelhouse, we headed back to Stella Maris' more relaxing environs, which aft of the bridge deck includes a sizeable gym equipped with a dozen or so pieces from Technogym. Doors open to either side to allow a refreshing breeze to blow through, or a separate massage area can be portioned off. With a hamman and steam shower room also included, the wellness area is complete and well appointed.



The owner's suite enjoys its own private terrace

Next we headed up to the owner's staterooms. Away from the technical area - where the owner may be disturbed by crewmembers - the higher vantage point improves privacy and views. Entering through a dressing chamber, the mirror-backed door closes behind to seal off the area and engender a very real sense of being in a private apartment. The forward facing berth enjoys unhindered views through more full height glazing, unless the TV that retracts into the headliner is deployed. Suitably decadent en-suites for an owner of this status are distributed in separate 'his and hers' facilities, with one featuring a huge jet tub and the other a 'party-sized' shower. A door to port provides access to a private forward terrace, just the place to enjoy a cigar or company in seclusion. Aft of the owner's staterooms, and down half a deck, lies the sky lounge. Featuring the same full height glazing, the winter garden and views over low bulwarks, the occupants enjoy modern 'skyscraper living' on the sea. Where the majority of TVs elsewhere on the yacht are secreted away, here the 60" screen is fixed, but its auxiliary sound system retracts into the headliner when not in use. Served by a custom made sofa that's backrest can be flipped for facing either way, it makes for a natural cinema area. Again, the sky lounge is very much a blank canvas in terms use, but what's important is the essential building blocks for a highly versatile space. One can't imagine how versatile however, until they venture aft. Here clear glass partitions can be arranged to create an indoor/outdoor dining area. Whether the dining area is opened up to be a part of the aft deck, or closed to be secluded from it, the space can still be described as munificent. There's plenty of space for freestanding deck furniture, and in another delicate touch Espen has dropped a shallow 'V' into the coaming to improve the guests connection with the receding wake. As an indication of thoughtful continuity on this yacht, this V is detailed in the frame of the dining table. Such details abound and in most cases offer improved practicality as well as aesthetics. Take the double rail that tops the guardrail for instance, not only is the circumference more useful than a wide capping rail, one instinctively leans on it and feels like they're on a glamorous ocean liner of yesteryear. The same feeling comes from the wide gangways, the width of which brings to mind the promenade decks of an ocean liner. After the split-level decks, breathtaking salon and

This is modern sky-scraper living on the sea

technical sophistication of Stella Maris, we weren't sure we could be surprised again as we headed up to the sundeck, again we were wrong. Multi-levels are at work again, and even though it's just a step higher than the fore section, the height of the central bar area means the bow does not impinge on the sweeping vistas. Stepping forward we notice Espen has incorporated very neat shaded 'snug' areas in the superstructure, complete with sliding windows to allow a breeze in if desired. Glass panels in the hardtop roof also soften the usually stark demarcation between sun and shade and the aft section hides concealed partitions that can be closed to provide shelter from the breeze while underway. Glass guardrails, wraparound sofas and freestanding deck furniture occupy the forward section of the sundeck, and heading aft one drops down a short



Editor's Note: Stella Maris was allowed to navigate in the Cinque Terre Marine Park for scientific research purposes within VSY's sustainability project for our opening image.

VSY 72M: Stella Maris

LOA: 72.10m (236')
Beam: 12.60m (41' 3")
Draft: 3.70m (12' 1")
Construction type: Steel/Aluminum
Gross Tonnage: 2,114 GT
Maximum speed: 17-knots
Range at 12-knots: 5,500nm
Engines: 2 x 2,680 hp Caterpillar 3516B tier II
Exterior design: Espen Oeino
Interior Design: Michela Reverberi
Naval Architecture: Laurent Giles
Builder: VSY (Viareggio Superyachts, Italy)

staircase flanked by two Jacuzzi tubs to arrive at the helideck. But this is no ordinary helideck. Believing in doing things properly, VSY has elected to meet the exacting standards required for this to qualify as a fully certified HCA helideck. Capable of accommodating an EC-135 Eurocopter - or similar aircraft up to 2.9-tonnes - and certified for day and night operation, we enquired what exactly was required to meet the HCA's specifications? Espen pointed out several of the key features.

"Concealed within the deck is a pop-up automated fire suppression system and the gutter surrounding the deck has a specialist drainage system." Most yachts drain deck runoff through conduits inside the superstructure, and in the event of a helicopter crashing, nothing is surer to curtail your yacht ownership experience than burning Av-gas running inside your boat! Espen continued, "The structural integrity of the helideck has also been reinforced to sustain both vertical and horizontal hard landings, and the 'geometric cone' of the non-obstruction zone was also carefully calculated for the Eurocopter 135." Apart from being assured of operational safety, being certified means Stella Maris's helideck is cleared for commercial use, and can therefore be used by charter guests.

CONCLUSION

As we conclude our tour of Stella Maris one can't help but be impressed by the magnificent volume of this 72m, it genuinely feels like a vessel of considerably longer length. Boasting a colossal 2,114 GT, we mentally compared that with the 1,890 GT of the 72m CRN Azteca and 72m Kogo from Alstom Marine, 1,595 GT of Delta's 73m Laurel and 1,380 GT of the 73m Siren from Nobiskrug. The real estate available on Stella Maris is truly extraordinary, with the headroom no doubt contributing considerably to the impression she creates, as well as her vital statistics. Stella Maris demonstrates the high levels of sophistication of which VSY are capable, with only their third launch. They've not played it safe and produced a traditional yacht, but instead pushed to successfully achieve numerous engineering challenges, ones that many more experienced yards would balk at. Add to this the green aspirations of the yard, which is a true commitment to environmental responsibility and not a marketing ruse, and one can't help but feel that this yacht is special. I