

## Electronics: VHF's Galore

The number and variety of marine VHF radios on the market today is overwhelming. Beyond the major difference of mounted versus portable, the choices cover a wide spectrum with regard to features and price. To review this large group of products, *PS* split it up based on type and price, reporting on them throughout 2008 and 2009. Three top VHF performers made the Gear of the Year line-up: the mid-priced, fixed-mount Standard Horizon Matrix GX3000S, inexpensive handheld Cobra HH325VP, and the expensive Standard Horizon HX850S handheld.

### STANDARD HORIZON MATRIX GX3000S

Among the 10 new mid-priced fixed-mount VHF's we reviewed in the February 2009 issue, the Standard Horizon Matrix GX3000S ranked above the other \$145 to \$220 radios from Cobra, Raymarine, West Marine, Icom, and Uniden, and Standard Horizon. At the high end of mid-priced radios, the Matrix has features usually found only on top-of-the-line units, and its features outweigh the added cost. It has full DSC capability and can send and receive position data when connected to a GPS. The Matrix also features a powerful 30-watt hailer/foghorn, and it displays time, speed, course, and latitude-longitude. The Standard Horizon Matrix earned a spot on the Gear of the Year list with its highly rated performance, a large display, easy operation, and multiple value-adding features.

### COBRA HH325 VP

Basic handheld and fixed model VHF's priced below \$100 were reviewed in the April 2009 issue. The Gear of the Year awardee that topped this class was the Cobra HH325 VP portable VHF. Cobra's mid-sized MR HH325 beat out radios by Midland and West Marine. A few notable features of the HH325 are its battery-saver mode and signal-strength meter. The HH325 transceiver performed about average, and audio

performance was Good. The Cobra HH325 offers solid construction, a large easy-to-read display, decent performance, and unique features for the money.

### STANDARD HORIZON HX850S

Shelling out a few extra bucks for a high-end handheld VHF (\$140 to \$350) will get you added features and upgrades. We tested eight radios in this category in the July 2009 issue, with the GPS-equipped Standard Horizon HX850S taking class honors over other Standard Horizons and radios from Cobra and Uniden.

The \$220 HX850S floats, runs on a lithium-ion battery, and is waterproof. It was one of only two tested with full DSC capability, and it offers an SOS strobe light. Audio performance was outstanding. The HX850S's most notable feature is its built-in GPS. GPS information can be displayed in two modes. The position mode shows time and latitude/longitude while the navigation mode adds the boat's speed over ground (SOG) and course over ground (COG).

Battery life was the radio's main drawback: It logged only eight hours, a tradeoff for a radio that floats and has full-function GPS and DSC.

This innovative handheld earned its Gear of the Year designation for combining a floating VHF, top-notch performance, and full DSC capability.



Standard Horizon  
Matrix GX3000S



Cobra HH325 VP



Standard Horizon  
HX850S