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EXCLUSIVE

Who is...Mobilvetta

Just 12 months ago, Mobilvetta had no presence in the UK. By this time next year, it aims to be Britain's best-selling A-class brand. We find out how

IT'S HARD TO believe that it has only been a year since Mobilvetta returned to the UK, this time imported and sold exclusively by Marquis Leisure, Britain's largest dealer group.

The launch at last year's October NEC motorhome show was organised quickly. Normally Marquis would develop a prototype range and go through several stages before launching, but not this time. "We have a timeline from concept to launch and that is nine months," explains Marquis MD, Mike Crouch. "But Mobilvetta was concentrated into a much shorter timeframe. The NEC timeframe and the current market forces dictated a faster pace than we would have liked."

As a result, there was minimal marketing and two of the three prototype models on display arrived direct from the factory in Italy to the show. It was a risk, but it seems to have paid off. "You're always nervous putting any new product into the marketplace... you ask yourself questions like is it the right price, the right aesthetics, is it the right specification and, until you've sold your first one, you have hope but no expectation," explains Mike. "But from day one, there was exceptional consumer interest... the response has been exceptionally positive."

All the 2017 right-hand drive models Marquis could get (it has exclusive worldwide distribution rights on all RHD Mobilvettas) have been sold and it is likely it could have sold more this year if more RHD models could have been obtained.

ANOTHER BRAND FOR THE UK

It is a risk importing another brand into the highly competitive UK market. But, the market is also extremely buoyant with record sales and demand outstripping supply in some areas.



"The objective is for Mobilvetta to be the number one A-class brand in the UK"

Mike Crouch, MD, Marquis

And there were other reasons closer to home that led to the arrival of this Italian brand and its three new A-class motorhomes.

"An A-class was an obvious extension to the portfolio offered by Marquis. The strategy was to create the standalone A-class brand for Marquis," explains Mike. "So it was natural to look at Mobilvetta, which has a strong brand pedigree, not only in Europe but in the UK."

As Mike terms it, there was also already "an opportunity" to work with Mobilvetta when he went looking for an A-class manufacturer.

This is because, at the time, the French motorhome manufacturing giant, Trigano, had a share in the Auto-Sleepers Group, of which Marquis is the retail arm (Trigano has since bought the Auto-Sleepers Group). Trigano also owns Mobilvetta.

"It was an opportunity that was rekindled with the close links with the Trigano Group," says Mike. "Working with Mobilvetta has been very positive and refreshing. Mobilvetta worked with us on the development of these three models."

A YEAR IN

Mobilvetta has now been back in the UK for just a year. "It is still early days," says Mike. "But so far the feedback has been very positive."

Interestingly, the three models have sold in equal numbers, but this may be more to do with model availability. "Moving forward I expect the slightly smaller Mobilvetta 80 – the one with the attractive rear lounge – to outsell the 79 and 85 (twin single or double bed layouts)," predicts Mike.

For the coming season, Marquis has blocked monthly production slots at the factory from September to June inclusive (July is dedicated to next season's prototype development and the factory closes in August).

"By doing it this way, Marquis receives a regular monthly mix of models that meets the sales demand," says Mike. "So we get regular fresh stock into the branches – every month... Not every supplier is able to work with Marquis on this basis."

But then the appeal of Marquis to a manufacturer which is not in the UK can't be underestimated. "Marquis has an exceptional distribution network. It does volume," says Mike. "We are an attractive partner for numerous manufacturers... we are able to drive, promote, tailor and grow a brand. Take a look at Benimar, we have taken it from zero to the number one imported product in just three years. The objective is for Mobilvetta to be the number one A-class brand in the UK. We're already very close to that."

The figures, as they say, speak for

themselves. "At the outset we had an annual expectation of 33 sales," reveals Mike. "In 2017 Marquis has actually sold 88 Mobilvetta motorhomes. That was our full allocation... For 2018, Marquis has already ordered 210 units."

NEW ARRIVALS

Now a year on, Mobilvetta is working with Marquis to develop the brand further in the UK.

This means improvements to the current three-model line-up after Christmas – including 'flipping' the layout so the habitation door is on our nearside. These will be at the February 2018 NEC motorhome show.

Then, in early summer 2018, is the launch of a new range-topping line called the Tekno Design (the current line-up is the Tekno Line).

So the three layouts in the current line-up will remain (although they will be flipped and enhanced next year). These models will also attain NCC approval in early 2018.

Then we will see the launch of the all-new flagship range. "This new Tekno Design will sit above the Tekno Line and will have all-new modern interiors, probably an Al-Ko chassis with enhanced specification, so larger engines, that sort of thing, as standard," explains Mike. "Production is planned to start in April/May 2018."

It is expected that initially there will be two models in this new flagship range – the twin single bed and the rear island bed layouts – but this will be expanded probably to three models later in the year.

"They will have some revolutionary interiors... these are going to be really



exceptionally modern inside."

The intention, says Mike, is to give current Mobilvetta customers a choice when they come to upgrade in 18 months' time. "So the customer will go from a Tekno Line to a Tekno Design. There will be a premium for these products and, if you think Mobilvetta currently is already a 'wow' vehicle, these will be a major step up from that. They will not be for everyone and they are not mass market."

AND THE COST?

It is too early to set the pricing for this new line but Marquis' pricing policy for its current Mobilvetta range is simple: "With its all-inclusive, on-the-road price of £67,995, Mobilvetta competes exceptionally well with a lot of coachbuilt products and the perception is, if you can afford to buy an A-class over a coachbuilt, which

are you going to buy?" It's a question many buyers have already asked themselves and the expectation is hundreds will again next year and come to the same answer.

This one-spec, all-inclusive price is not only good for customers, it's also good for the manufacturer and the dealers because it removes complexity and so the possibility of errors. "It's a very simple and streamlined buying process and it is an off-the-peg opportunity to get an A-class," says Mike. "We've made it simple for the manufacturer, for ourselves and for the customer."

And this simple pricing policy will remain with the new range. "We will continue to offer one specification at what we consider to be one very competitive pricing policy," explains Mike. "But, there will be an increase [in prices]. Most suppliers and component costs haven't really risen and labour costs haven't risen, the difficulty is the exchange rate there has been a 17% swing."

The exchange rate fluctuations will not only affect Mobilvetta; all new motorhome prices are likely to either increase or see lower specifications offered for the same price.

Being part of the huge Trigano Group may help in terms of greater economies when buying components and the ability to buy and hedge currency at a better rate, but there's no escaping that sterling has devalued and that will be reflected in 2018 prices across the board. www.mobilvetta.com

MOBILVETTA AND MARQUIS

This Italian manufacturer, Mobilvetta, currently makes three A-class models for the UK. This will be expanded to a second flagship range, initially of two models, in mid-2018.

Mobilvetta has worked closely with Marquis to develop right-hand drive models suited to the British market. This means you can only buy right-hand drive Mobilvettas from Marquis or its partners, as Marquis has exclusive rights to sell and distribute all the right-hand drive models the manufacturer produces.

Marquis is committed to building the brand here, as Mike Crouch says: "There is absolutely no question that Marquis will not be retaining Mobilvetta for many years to come. Mobilvetta is refreshingly different. It is not quite mass-market but you could think of it as a mass-market A-class with high specification, simple value-for-money pricing structure with off-the-shelf availability."

Marquis has partnered with a Scottish dealer – The Motorhome Company Scotland – to sell Mobilvetta north of the border. It has also appointed a dealer in the Irish Republic called Anchor Point Motorhomes in County Tipperary.