

## Aquarium Toys

### New aquarium products.

*By Richard Harker*

The annual Marine Aquarium Conference of North America (MACNA) has traditionally offered an opportunity for hobbyists to view the latest hardware designed for the marine hobby. This year's MACNA in Ft. Lauderdale was no exception. MACNA XII featured nearly 40 exhibitors displaying hundreds of products designed for the marine and reef hobbyist. This month's product review will touch on several of the more interesting and useful products displayed.

Lighting is one area that attracts a great deal of interest. PFO Lighting strengthened its image as a leader in reef lighting by unveiling several lighting systems featuring double ended metal halide bulbs (Figure 1). Double ended metal halide bulbs have been popular in Europe for many years, but American hobbyists have had few (and very expensive) options until now. PFO Lighting has changed that with new retro-fit kits with double ended fixtures instead of the traditional mogul base single ended fixtures common in the States. PFO Lighting also displayed several other products including electronic ballasts, an expanded line of complete lighting systems, and new fittings that conform to the stringent requirements of Underwriter's Laboratory. The company is one of the few hobbyist oriented companies that seeks UL approval for all its products.

Champion Lighting and Supply displayed its line of Blueline ballasts in 175, 250 and 400 watt ballasts. In addition, the company displayed a line of Blueline metal halide bulbs to complement the line of ballasts. The bulbs will be the subject of a future product review.

Aquarium Lighting and Supply (ALS) also displayed a wide range of metal halide fixtures and bulbs. ALS offers several well designed double ended metal halide fixtures along with both single ended and double ended Ushio metal halide bulbs. Ushio manufactures one of the most popular 10,000 degree Kelvin metal halide bulbs available.

While the "big ticket" items tend to generate the greatest attention, sometimes it is the little products that deserve the greatest acknowledgment. Reefers, A Marine Aquarium Store, featured a wide range of products, but prominently displayed one of its least expensive products, a line of algae cleaning magnets. The Magnavore line of magnets just may be one of the most useful products displayed at the conference (Figure 2). These powerful magnets are a complete glass and acrylic cleaning system, with such well designed features as replaceable pads and different abrasion levels for glass and acrylic. Five different sizes accommodate everything from ¼-inch acrylic to 1½-inch glass. No one enjoys cleaning a reef tank's glass, and the Magnavore line of magnets makes this task a little easier.

Fritz displayed its well known line of additives, but also prominently displayed was a new line of chillers, some of which are small enough to lift with one hand (Figure 3). These chillers, most little larger than a small microwave oven, are designed to chill anything from a 30 gallon tank to an 800 gallon tank.

Knop Meeresaquaristik displayed its growing line of compact efficient protein skimmers along with a line of additives and supplements long available to German hobbyists. Knop was not alone in the additive department. In recent years the list of companies offering reef oriented supplements has grown to include companies like Kent, Marc Weiss, Seachem and ESV. ESV, best known for its two part calcium replacement, B-Ionic, unveiled a new bacteria test to assess reef tank water quality. While it is too early to tell for sure, the ESV Bacteria Reaction Test may potentially revolutionize the way we determine the health of a reef tank.

ESV also featured its well known spray-dried marine phytoplankton, but the company was not alone in this category. DT's Plankton Farm was also on hand promoting its brand of concentrated live phytoplankton. DT's Plankton has attracted a great deal of attention lately, providing the hobby a convenient source of live phytoplankton. If this year's list of exhibitors is any indication, DT's will have growing competition in the future — several newer companies displayed various live phytoplankton and algae products. In a related category, Two Little Fishes promoted its Marine Snow, a product that generated a great deal of attention both on the exhibit floor as well as in the presentations.

Hobbyists also had the opportunity to examine several new reef oriented books. Volume 3 of The Modern Coral Reef Aquarium by Fossa and Nilsen was available from several companies. The most excitement, however, was reserved for the news that Corals of the World by J.E.N. Veron would soon be released (Figure 4). This three volume successor to Dr. Veron's popular Corals of Australia and the Indo-Pacific should be available in the United States in December or January



of next year.

This has only touched on a handful of the many products exhibited at the conference. Unfortunately, space does not permit me to mention them all. Next year's MACNA in Baltimore, hosted by the Chesapeake Marine Aquaria Society, will be doing their best to match the quality of exhibitors offered in Ft. Lauderdale.