

Company Poised for Next Phase

Inova may have 'parent companies,' but it is growing up quickly.

By Rhonda Duey, Senior Editor, E&P

Inova has come a long way in the past 18 months. Born of a joint venture between BGP and ION, the company's goal has been to balance BGP's efficiency with ION's innovation. At this year's SEG, the fruits of that labor are obvious.

The company introduced five products geared toward its customers' demands. Several of these products seem to be aimed at least partially at the North American shale plays – the UNIVIB Vibroseis buggy is designed to have a smaller environmental footprint, and the Hawk autonomous node system is geared for rough terrain and urban areas where cabled systems are hard to deploy. It has also introduced the FireFly DR31, a radio-based cableless system that offers redesigned ground station electronics and a more robust aluminum enclosure.

"We've been working for the past 18 months to reestablish Inova as a customer-focused equipment provider," said Steve Bate, president and CEO of Inova. "We have had product offerings from our parent companies, but this is the start of us rolling out 'Inova-generated' products."

He added that the company strives to provide usable products while maintaining a focus on innovation. "These systems strike a balance between high-tech and usability," he said. "It's not just new cool stuff – it's the stuff our contractors like to use."

The Hawk system, for instance, is meant to fill a need within the contractor industry for a single-function, high channel-count product that can be used independently or in conjunction with the FireFly DR31. "Our market research suggests that 85% of the market for this type of system is in the US," said Doug Allinson, Inova senior vice president of Business Development. Not only does the system



From left: Doug Allinson, senior vice president of Business Development, and Steve Bate, president and CEO, are working to reestablish Inova as a customer-focused equipment provider. (Photo by Barchfeld Photography)

provide more flexibility than a cabled system, but it also has a smaller environmental footprint, a key factor in areas like the Marcellus shale where public sentiment is deeply divided and many landowners are not familiar with seismic surveys.

The nodes also are capable of recording multicomponent data, which Allinson said is critical for shale plays.

The nodes store data for later downloading but are Blue Tooth and Wi-Fi enabled for quality control purposes. They also contain a simple LED readout that allows crew members to do a quick visual check to ensure that the nodes are in working order.

"It's a simple thing, but our customers say it's the right thing to have," said Bate.

The UNIVIB was specifically designed for deployment in urban areas and environmentally sensitive areas. It has immediate uses in Canada and the US as well as areas in Europe. Unlike other small-footprint buggies, it can operate at up to 26,000 lb of peak force. Allinson said that there is a strong market demand for this type of buggy, and already Inova has an industry partner, a large North America-based seismic contractor, who is helping to "test drive" the technology.

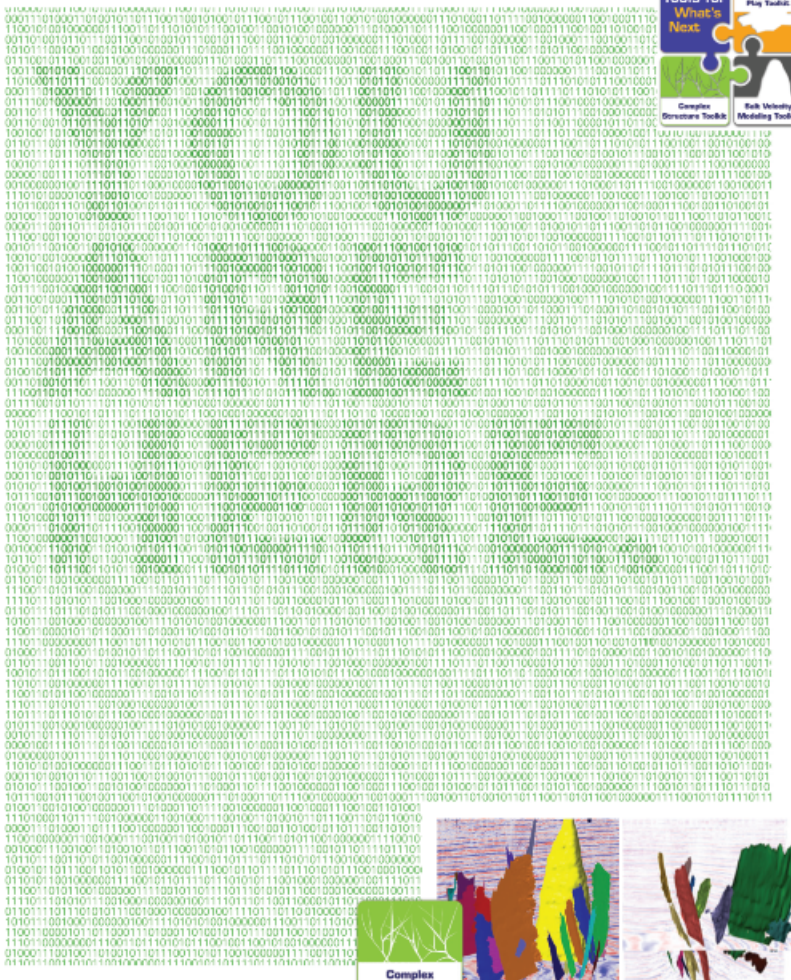
Overall, the goal of the company is to take the next step in its development as an independent equipment manufacturer. "Every project is a learning experience," said Allinson. "But we've probably shot 3,500 sq km (1,340 sq miles) of data with FireFly and done 20 3-D surveys around the world. That has enabled us to move into the next phase of development." ■



Inova has introduced several new products, including the UNIVIB Vibroseis buggy, designed to have a smaller environmental footprint. (Photo by Rhonda Duey)

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ION attributes Orca's rapid success to the system's advanced capabilities for high-end 3-D and complex survey operations. The introduction of Orca advanced seismic data acquisition capabilities has made previously impossible operations achievable. Whether the objective is to achieve high quality repeatability for a 4-D survey, execute the most challenging survey geometries for wide-azimuth surveys, or simply manage the data of upwards of 20 streamers and multiple vessels, Orca's new survey-wide architecture and capabilities make it possible.

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Orca is used by the world's leading seismic contractors, many of whom have long-term, multiyear agreements, including Polarcus, PGS, CGGVeritas, Fugro, COSL, Dolphin Geophysical, JOGMEC, DMNG, Reflect Geophysical, and most recently BGP. ION cooperates with customers to prioritize product enhancements so that new features with the most value are delivered to the field first. In addition, flexible modules, such as 4-D and wide-azimuth towed streamer, are available to customers who require advanced functionality.

To learn more about Orca, visit ION at booth 2028. ■