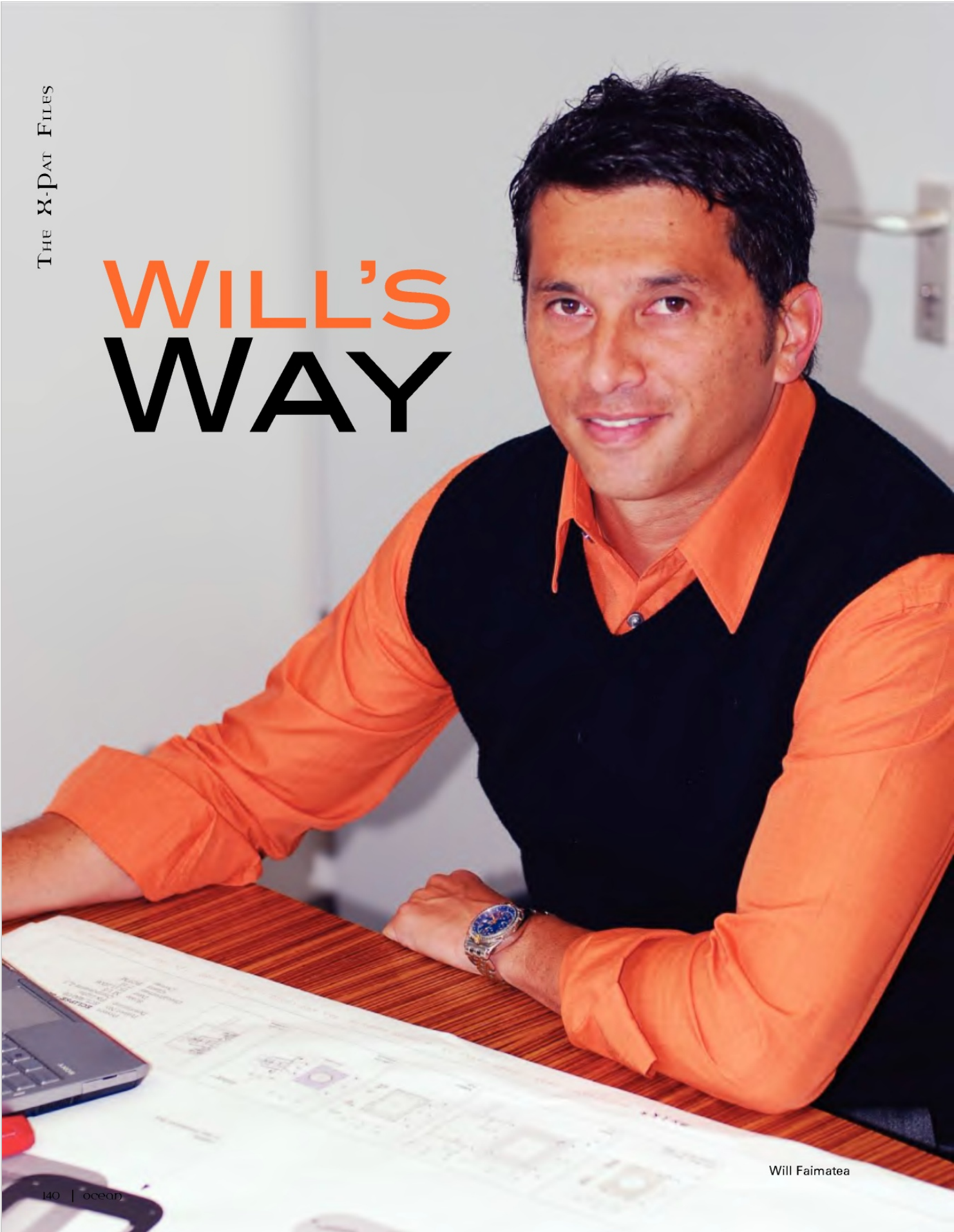


THE X-_{PAT} FILES

WILL'S WAY



Will Faimatea

140 | ocean



The Aviva visiting Sydney for the 2000 Olympic Games

In a new series, *OCEAN Magazine* profiles Australians enjoying global success in the international superyacht industry. Australia's most famous superyacht 'export' was undoubtedly Jon Bannenberg, the superyacht designer whose influence helped shape the industry into what it is today.

By *Richard Morris*

Australians have been actively involved in the superyacht industry for many years, not only in seagoing capacities, but in the design, construction, management and brokerage sector supporting the seagoing side of the business.

One such Australian is Will Faimatea. A land-based electronics engineer by profession, Will first went to sea on large superyachts as an electronics officer in the early 1990s, before specialising in the electronics fit-out of large superyacht constructions. His career change from sea-based electronics professional to fit-out and design expert was a shrewd one, as it coincided with superyacht owners increasingly needing to conduct business '24/7' from the comfort of their superyachts - regardless of where they were in the world. Will's company, Bond Technical Management, is now the industry leader in the specification, consulting and project management of high-end electronic and audio visual systems that are being installed

on the ultimate superyachts built today.

Originally from the western Sydney suburb of Revesby, Will, 41, started his electronics career immediately after high school by accepting a traineeship with an electronics instrumentation company before working at VDO Instruments, where he studied to be an electronics engineer, and later at Honeywell where he worked as an electronics engineer. It was while teaching as a GMDSS course instructor at Honeywell that Will first met seafarers, one of whom worked on superyachts and introduced him to a different lifestyle and way of thinking. Through this contact Will was invited in 1993 to apply for the electronics officer position aboard the 72 metre superyacht, *Coral Island*, being built in Germany.

"I got a phone call from the captain and I'll never forget when he rang me, he said "Cuckson here, Captain Richard Cuckson". I stood up at attention while I was on the telephone! He had such an aura about him even before I met him. He offered me the job and I was beside myself. I remember how excited I felt. It was the most significant day of my life up until that point. I felt like this was going to change who I am and who I'm going to be."

Will joined the yacht at the shipyard in Bremen, Germany in January 1994 as part of the owner's representative build team that included the Captain, First Officer, Purser, Chief Engineer and 2nd Engineer.

"*Coral Island* was a 72m motor yacht designed by Jon Bannenberg and owned by a

Saudi Arabian. It was a beautiful yacht with state-of-the-art electronics. When I came into yachting, my skills at alarm and monitoring systems, PLCs (programmable logic controllers), computers, communications systems, satellite and radio systems and bridge control systems was very high and my focus at the time was on these systems, not the entertainment systems.

"The yacht was launched in July 1995 and I sailed on it for 14 months. We sailed to Ibiza, St Tropez, the Greek Islands and Turkey then went down through the Red Sea and to Sri Lanka then the Seychelles. It was great experience on board and gave me great insight into what order of priority the systems I was responsible for were. I learned that audio visual systems are first!

"Then we went back to Germany and transferred off *Coral Island* and started a refit for the same owner aboard another one of his superyachts: the 43 metre *Tugatsu*. That's where I met Captain Maxx Ainsworth, another fellow Aussie. He convinced me to stay on board even though I thought that the size vessel didn't typically need an electronics officer but the owner did. The level of electronics systems was starting to get very high-tech with touch screens, audio on demand and Internet. It wasn't common for crew to have email back then; we had fax but no email.

"I stayed on *Tugatsu* for two years visiting Jeddah in Saudi Arabia where the boss had a palace. The owners then offered me a job as technical manager for all the electronics systems, audio visual, IT, telephone systems etc at the Jeddah and Riyadh palace. I felt that it was a great opportunity and a lifestyle change. I stayed there for 18 months before returning for a break in Sydney.

"While in Sydney I got a phone call asking if I was interested in a job on the 62 metre *Aviva* currently under construction at Feadship. *Aviva* had very advanced electronics systems being put on board that were at that time very, very high-tech. I learnt a lot technically, on implementation and application and how not to do things. The vessel is beautiful but the electronics systems were perhaps a little too ahead of their time and I had to spend a lot of time nursing them. It took quite a lot of time and patience to keep them running but it helped me a lot with where I am today.

"There were many high points whilst I was



Coral Island and Aviva

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aboard *Aviva*; living in the Bahamas was one, but the highest point was coming back to Sydney on the superyacht for the 2000 Olympic Games. I'll never forget my parents at Rozelle Bay Superyacht Marina with a big sheet saying "Welcome Home Son"; it was a very emotional day. I hadn't been home in three years, so the anticipation of coming back was unbearable. I'll never forget coming in through Sydney heads with Khe San from Cold Chisel playing. I finished aboard *Aviva* after that.

"I then took the job of the Electronics Project Engineer as part of the owner's team for the 86 metre motor yacht *Ecstasea* being built at Feadship in Holland. This yacht was the biggest ever built by Feadship at the time and it was remarkable in that it had a gas turbine that propelled it to a top speed in excess of 30 knots. The aspect that interested me with that job was the fact that most of the

electronic systems were to be owner-supplied. This meant that the shipyard was no longer going to be responsible for design and implementation of the audio visual, IT, navigation, security and communications systems. This was going to be specified by myself and this was of significant interest to me because I had always felt that there was room for something like this but I was never in a position to take advantage of it.

"Towards the end of the project, other opportunities presented themselves. I was asked to be if I would like to be involved with the new vessels and whether I wanted to be part of the management company of the fleet. I was more than happy to do this, and after speaking with the captain of *Ecstasea* and finding a suitable replacement, I started working as Electronic Systems Fleet Manager, that had two roles; fleet operations and new builds.

"This gave me a lot of experience because on one side I was specifying equipment and systems and on the other I was seeing the actual application. I was seeing the application and functionality of these systems on a daily basis and involving myself in improving them and getting the best for the owner.

"I have started my own company, Bond Technical Management, to offer the next level of consultancy and project management services for the electronics systems on superyacht, new builds and refits. I have a team of very bright engineers and we are dedicated to bringing the highest level of service to new builds or refits.

"We are involved in several new builds and refits but the most prestigious of these is a 150m project where Bond TM is responsible for the concept, design, implementation and commissioning of the audio visual, IT, bridge systems, communication systems, security systems and alarm and monitoring. We are now starting to test and compare products ourselves and really verify product manufacture's claims. We have, of course, had some interesting results.

"When an owner or project team for a big superyacht about to be built comes to me,



Setting up a 5 metre satellite dishes in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

the services I provide can range from consulting to more involved project management. It mainly revolves around owner supply of audio visual, IT systems, communications systems, the bridge and navigation systems and alarm and monitoring systems. Satellite links - which are slowly becoming more and more used in the industry - where we get bespoke satellite links for yachts. Bond TM will identify the owner and captain's requirements and their budget and either specify or coordinate the whole process. I know the industry very well; the suppliers, the integrators and I have good relationships with all these. We put these together and this is proposed to the captain or the owner as it's not always part of the shipyard supply. I am also very conscious of future developments and am fortunate to have a very good line of communication with the OEM's future development plans.

"Once the client has agreed to what is going to be fitted on the yacht, we will then help facilitate and coordinate how the equipment is installed within the schedule of the yacht build. An electrical cabling company provided by the shipyard will run the cables but we do the cabling specification before an integrator is chosen and this takes huge pressure off the shipyard and the owners, where this structure is given to the electrical contractors.

"Bond Technical Management is looking

into setting up an office in Monaco that will not only handle consultancy and project management but it will facilitate job placement for Electronics Technical Officers. I feel that this is also close to my heart, getting the right ETO for the right job and also keeping them current with manufacturers' equipment. I have some very good agreements in place with the OEMs where I can send electronics engineers on training courses, so I hope to improve the overall level of competency of ETOs in our industry as this only makes it better for the captain, owner and of course the ETO.

"The industry is becoming very reliant on very high-tech electronics that keep the owners in touch with their world, even when the yacht is cruising the most remote places on the globe. Electronics Technical Officers and engineers as part of the superyacht crew are now becoming standard as these systems do require operational and maintenance at sea to ensure their service delivery. There is therefore a very high demand for well suited and well qualified electronics engineers in the superyacht industry.

"Young people considering becoming one should first confirm that they are able to live and work aboard a boat and meet the challenges a seagoing life entails. They should have appropriate electronic or electrical engineering qualifications and experience. An electronics engineer for a

yacht I feel comes in two types; one with an IT background but with some aptitude with electronics or an electrical engineer who has a good understanding of audio visual control systems and IT systems. It is crucial that a yacht decides at an early stage if it will have an electronics officer on board as a system should be designed with this fact in mind. I know many instances where the installation on board has been given a bad name only because competent personnel were not on board.

"In addition to being responsible for the electronics aboard the yacht, the electronics officer may be expected to assist in other areas on the deck or in the engine room. On *Coral Island* I was also the 3rd engineer where I maintained engine room watches in addition to my electronics duties. Depending on which yacht you get on, the larger vessels can take dedicated electrical engineers where they don't have to do engine room watches.

"I get asked almost once a week if I know of an electronics engineer to go and work on a new yacht. There is a lot of opportunity out there for young people who want to improve their skills and want to see the world. I wouldn't have done it any differently; the superyacht industry is a marvellous stage to open new horizons to electronics and IT guys who want to try their hand at something else. On some of the big 100m plus vessels there are more than one electronics officer and I try now to implement on these vessels an electronics engineer with good hand and test equipment skills as well as an IT guy who is very solid with implementing and administrating networks.

"The superyacht can be brought to a standstill if the network fails completely and this is quite a concern to an owner and even more so to the captain. Every yacht is different and all of the permutations should be taken into account when designing a system for a yacht and this is why I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to gain a lot of experience from working on some very special superyachts.

"I am more than happy to help anyone get into the superyacht industry as an Electronics Technical Officer or advise them of courses to help them position themselves for the opportunity of a lifetime. I'm very happy I did." ○