

Albuquerque, New Mexico SSA's February 2008 Convention

Looking around the exhibit halls, one could not be faulted for proclaiming 2008 the "Year of the Winch." From the many self-proclaimed "Winch Heads" walking around the convention (identified by their prominent "Winch Head" badges pasted to pockets, hats, backpacks, and in at least one case a Forehead), to the 3 different commercial winch vendors in attendance, it's clear that there is a considerable interest in winch launching across the USA

The story of Roman Wrosz and his company, Roman's Designs, typifies this burgeoning renaissance in winch technology. Roman is an outgoing, energetic Polish import now living in

California With a master's degree in mechanical engineering, Roman has been designing factory automation equipment for more than 20 years. He is also a talented and eclectic inventor, as evidenced by his invention of the "Invisalign" invisible orthodontic braces.

A glider pilot for almost 20 years, he recently decided to dedicate his resources to soaring-related projects.

Roman has applied the lessons learned through his years of experience designing industrial equipment to produce what can only be described as the "Battleship" of sailplane winches.

As I entered the exhibit hall and saw this yellow monster parked off in a corner, my first thought was that someone had used a bulldozer to construct the exhibit and then mistakenly left it parked on the convention floor.

Equipped with a 7.3 liter turbo-diesel engine, Roman's winch is about as powerful as a bulldozer, too. With multiple cable drums (Roman will make them with 1,2,3, or 4 drums to meet your specific requirements a

large comfortable cab with seats for multiple operators, huge hydraulic disc brakes, and a computer control system to manage winch speeds and cable tension, this was one impressive piece of equipment. It was so industrially ugly that it was beautiful.



As Roman was giving me a tour of the 2drum model on display, I couldn't help but notice that the thing looked like it was armored, with heavy steel doors and covers. It even uses a blank rifle cartridge to fire a guillotine to quickly cut the cable in an emergency (an innovation of which Roman is justifiably proud).

Roman told me that you could even order one with air-conditioning (But I didn't notice any cup holders in the cab). If you are in need of a winch for your club or commercial operation, and can afford an "industrial strength" version, you will definitely want to talk to Roman. Send him a note at ronaow@san.rr.com for more information.

(Extracted from Soaring Magazine, April 2008)