

4. BOW THRUSTERS

You're watching a beautiful boat come into the dock. The captain knows what he's doing, quietly giving orders to his crew; then all of a sudden he's yelling, and from inside the boat comes the sound of rocks being chewed up in a grinder - he's turned on the bow thruster.

Bow thrusters are irritatingly noisy because they use a tiny prop spinning at high speed deep inside a pipe: a perfect situation for producing huge amounts of cavitation. Besides being noisy, they're also inefficient.

The cure for this is to use one of the new jet systems, such as one from Willdo (willdo.eu). There's a high-volume pump in the engine room with an intake. Water is directed to jets at the bow (and stern if desired). It's virtually silent, uses less power than a prop, puts a much smaller hole (1.75 inches compared with 4.5 inches) in the hull, won't foul with trash in the water and easier to install. Expect to start seeing these fitted on cruisers next year, as they're an economical alternative to bow thrusters.

