

# Valley Angler Coming Attractions by Bill Thompson

It's that time of year again when tackle dealers begin to roll out their new products for the New Year. For an industry that is supposed to be in decline it never ceases to amaze me how much effort goes into product development and the amount of new items that are introduced each new year.

This past Sunday and Monday Janet and I closed the North Country Angler to journey over to Manchester, Vermont to take a look at the new offerings from the Orvis Company. As per usual we were not disappointed. The big news this year from Orvis is the new improved Zero Gravity rod. You may remember two years ago I wrote about the "Launch" of the original Zero gravity rods. At that time I was pretty excited about them, but with out a doubt the new ZG Helios is even better. Should you doubt my opinion then just ask Janet; she already has placed her order.

The new Helios rods are 20 to 25 per cent lighter than the original models and at present Orvis claims to have the lightest rod on the market. Like the predecessors, the new rods make use of thermoplastic resin construction that allows for lighter weight and stronger rods. I have to admit I was skeptical, but after casting these rods I too am considering abandoning my old Sage RPL III. I was able to cast a nine foot four weight, the nine foot five weight in both a mid-flex and a tip-flex and an eight weight nine footer tip flex. If you are in the market for a new rod I would defiantly urge you to give one of these rods a try. Be forewarned these rods do not come cheap. However, compared to a top of the line Winston, Sage or Scott they certainly are not out of the ball park and compare favorably. It is hard to justify that kind of outlay, but if you count yourself among the trout bum fraternity than you will have no problem what so ever. By the way don't jump the gun too quickly, only a few of these rods are available at present. By the end of January they should be in full production.

Orvis has always been associated with eastern fishing and has coveted the reputation as catering to the elite angler. There is a lot of truth to this and Orvis has spent a lot of marketing dollars polishing this image and you can bet your bottom dollar that they are not going to walk away from this customer. On the other hand Orvis has never been able to capture the imagination of the younger fisherman. With the introduction of these new rods Orvis is taking aim squarely at the under thirty angler. These are the guys that wear their baseball caps backwards, sport tattoos of game fish and spend most of their time fishing someplace. They don't stay at fancy lodges, but they do travel to exotic fishing locations. They don't mind sleeping under the stars on some beach waiting for the early tide or in the back of their pick up truck close to some trout stream. They are mostly associated with western fishing, but we have our fair share of these guys right in our own back yard. A few years ago I might even have counted myself among their numbers, however owning a home, being married with children kind of disqualifies you from the club. The one thing these guys do is spend money on gear and seven hundred dollars for a new rod is simply the cost of living. These are definitely my kind of guys and girls.

If these anglers can get past the Orvis stereotype and cast one of these rods I am betting that you are going to find a lot of Sage and Winston rods on E-bay.

See you on the river.