



CL-BUS: the range of control panels is expanded with PL3



Paolo Moiola and Dorian Sosi

The new range of products with the LIN BUS connection system developed and produced by CBE, has been expanded with a new control panel dedicated to campervans that will be officially launched at the Caravan Salon in Düsseldorf

Words Paolo Galvani

Dialogue and integration: with electronics, information technology and connectivity increasingly at the center of every aspect of our lives, even the components of recreational vehicles must adapt to this new trend that simplifies the use of products, transforms them into complete and greatly versatile solutions and changes the way you interact with them.

CBE, the manufacturer of 12- and 230V electrical systems and devices, such as 12V modules, control panels, battery chargers, tank probes and lighting management nodes, which has supplied many of the leading European RV manufacturers for over 40 years, has been researching this

technology for some time before launching CL-BUS (CBE LIN BUS), a system that relies on the LIN-BUS standard but is open to integration with other communication technologies, including, of course, CI-BUS. In 2020, the PL50 control panel was introduced featuring a colour display that is perfect for integration into high-end motorhomes. To meet the needs of manufacturers of entry-level or mid-range vehicles, the PL10 panel was then joined by the PL3 version, which offers the same functions, but without a colour display. It can be programmed through a specific APP that is supplied to the manufacturers of motorhomes and caravans as a b2b application which can also be used by the assistance network.



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About CBE

CBE, based in Trento (Italy), is a quality leader in Europe in the field of electric and electronic equipment applied to caravanning. A staff of about 100 people working in three different factories design, develop and manufacture complete systems adapted to suit the specific needs of every recreational vehicles manufacturer. Its indisputable expertise and know-how, developed over 40 years of experience, united with the trust granted by an increasingly higher number of European and non-European manufacturers, enable the company to supply control panels, distribution boxes, battery chargers and wiring harnesses specifically designed to be used on recreational vehicles. A wide assortment of aftermarket accessories (switches, sockets, frames, test panels, inverters, photovoltaic modules etc.) completes the product range. In 2018 DexKo Global Inc. (through its subsidiary AL-KO Vehicle Technology Group) signed an agreement which has led to the acquisition of CBE.

"If it is true that the large OEMs are all growing, compared to 2019, the small manufacturers, who are also supplied through our distributors, are recording unexpected peaks," adds Sosi. *"The distributor who previously bought 200 products a year, now perhaps asks for 50 a month: many try to stock up because they are afraid of not having a product. In any case, we have structured ourselves to supply even the smaller manufacturers in the best possible way without penalizing the big buyers".* Despite the contingent challenges, CBE has never stopped creating innovation and even now it is already looking at new technologies. In the not too distant future, there will be therefore more important news. The joint answer of Paolo Moiola and Dorian Sosi leaves no room for doubt: *"Stay tuned!"*.

Scheme of the connections among batteries, the 12 Volt distribution box and the PL3 control panel

The missing piece: PL3

Now the range of new-generation control panels is enriched with a new model: PL3. *"The high number of campervans built in Europe,"* explains Paolo Moiola, co-CEO of CBE, *"pushed us to create a new control panel of smaller dimensions which allows easy placement even in small spaces, such as a cabin of a campervan. Smaller dimensions, however, do not mean less technology. In fact, the managed functions are virtually the same as those of the PL50 and PL10 panels. Only the interface has been simplified. We decided to invest in a new design that still recalls that of the PL series, abandoning the mechanical buttons and proposing a fully touch sensitive panel"*.

The range of products with the LIN BUS connection system is already on board as standard components on some premium motorhome ranges of the Laika (Ecovip series) and Niesmann + Bischoff (iSmove series) brands, and this year Rapido also added it to some of its most prestigious series.

The challenges in the time of Covid-19

The challenges for CBE are not just of a technological nature. In the last 18 months, the market has had to adapt to a pandemic situation that has completely overturned the way the entire sector operates: forced closures, production slowdowns, lack of components and an extreme and sudden increase in demand have redesigned the landscape within which suppliers of components to the OEMs have had to operate. This situation also put pressure on CBE, however it was able to react promptly.

"What we have learned in the last year and

a half," says Moiola, *"is that we need to know how to go beyond the simple relationship of information exchange between customer and supplier. And this aspect is important that it remains even when things will return to normal. I refer to the flow of information - much more in-depth, continuous, and confidential - that has been activated between our company and the motorhome manufacturers and which is the only way to be able to produce and deliver according to the real needs of our customers. It is useless to provide material in abundance, but at the wrong time. Our commitment is to be able to deliver what you need, at the right time, and to allow you to complete a production. Today, we need to seek optimization in every corner, rethink all processes, because when the components are not ready on the shelf or arrive with a discontinuous flow, it is necessary to be more reactive"*.

In the case of CBE, which has been part of DexKo Global Inc. since 2018 through its subsidiary AL-KO, an important synergy has been created with Nordelettronica, also recently acquired by the group.

"We have three factories and they have two more," says Dorian Sosi, co-CEO of CBE.

"By working together, at least on some product lines, we are also able to respond effectively to any peaks in demand, also because all our production sites are perfectly aligned in terms of quality".

Meanwhile, requests are increasing not only from large manufacturers, but also from those who make recreational vehicles in a more artisan way.

