



The iconic Zens boat, driven by J Craft masterbuilder Zoltan Antunovic, captured off the coast of Gotland.

## Craft Services

Words by LINNÉA PESONEN Photographs by LUCIO GELSI

SCANDINAVIAN SUMMERS and boating go hand in hand and Swedish boatmaker J Craft provides some of the most covetable rides around. Just ask Chanel or Jimmy Choo, who both featured a vessel from the company in their recent campaigns, or King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden, who owns one. “The essence of this boat is *la dolce vita* – enjoy your life and be at one with your environment,” says J Craft CEO and owner Radenko Milakovic. Offering one style of boat that can be tailored to the extent of one’s imagination, J Craft provides an ultimate, luxurious boating experience suitable for the roughest conditions on the temperamental Baltic seas.

It all started in 1999 on the Swedish island of Gotland, where building strong and manoeuvrable vessels can be traced back to the Viking longships. Local entrepreneur Björn Jansson had been dreaming of creating his own boat with a fibreglass hull and a mahogany veneer, taking cues from the design of the sleek, wooden sport boats of the ‘50s and ‘60s.

Jansson’s idea came to fruition when he teamed up with boat builder Johan Hallén. It just so happened that the duo’s first cus-

tomer was the King of Sweden himself. “That boat is called Polaris – it still exists to this day, and we manage it for the King,” Milakovic says. “He rides it every day when he’s in France during the summer.”

While J Craft gained international recognition through its distinguished customers, the company faced a tragic loss when Jansson fell seriously ill around the turn of the millennium and was unable to continue making the crafts. A couple of years later, Milakovic, an entrepreneur and hedge fund manager, came across one of Jansson’s boats and fell fiercely in love with it. Although he was initially meant to buy one boat, Milakovic acquired the whole company.

In 2009, the 13-metre Torpedo, J Craft’s current and sole style, was born. It boasts the same retro design as the company’s previous boats, enhanced with features that make it suitable for a beginner. Hallén and his Gotland-based team still handcraft each vessel the company produces, around three to four a year, with each boat taking 8,000 to 9,000 hours to build. An intricate labour of love, only five people work on each vessel. “It actually feels like you’re losing somebody

when the [finished] boat stands on the trailer and goes away,” says masterbuilder Zoltan Antunovic, who has worked on the vessels since the first Torpedo was introduced.

Building a J Craft boat goes in stages: first, two separate teams work simultaneously on the fibreglass hull and the deck – this is, according to Antunovic, the phase that takes the longest. Once done, the hull and the deck are attached, and the boat is ready for finishing touches. “We don’t do new types of models because it’s made to look like a boat from the 1960s – it’s supposed to look like that even in 20 years,” says Antunovic. “But we keep up with technical developments, and always try to adapt the boat while keeping the boat as classic as possible.”

Upon purchasing a Torpedo, one can tailor-make it to one’s own specifications. Previous customer requests included interior fabrics sourced from Louis Vuitton, 2,000-plus watt music systems, diamonds integrated into the dashboard, and even a built-in teppanyaki grill. “None of our boats ever look the same,” says Milakovic. “They have the same shape, but otherwise they are all very different – only the sky’s the limit.” ❄