



BOATING

MADE BY VIKINGS...

...sailed by kings. How Gotland brought the Baltic to the Med. By *Rory FH Smith*

Catching a glimpse of a sleek, mahogany-veneered vintage cruiser skimming through the waves is an unusual sight in the Baltic Sea. Typically made and manufactured in Italy, such a water-born representation of the *Dolce Vita* is usually found floating off the French Riviera, not between mainland Sweden and the Viking stronghold of Gotland. But the J Craft Torpedo isn't your typical retro-styled day cruiser.

"My wife and I chartered a J Craft one summer and fell in love with it," says the boatmaker's German owner Radenko Milakovic. That model, the Cabrio Cruiser, had been the brainchild of Swedish entrepreneur Björn Jansson and Gotland boat builder Johan Hallén, the very first one of which was delivered to the King of Sweden, His Majesty Carl XVI Gustaf, in 2000.

"Having tried it, we wanted to buy one for ourselves," says Milakovic, a former hedge-fund manager who has done so well he's retired at 52, "but with changes – put simply, I wanted something that looked and performed like a 1957 Corvette but had the home comforts of an Airstream trailer." In 2008, when J Craft came up for sale

Milakovic bought it and, working with Hallén and the J Craft team, had his dream boat ready for the water by the following year.

Like the Cabrio Cruiser, the Torpedo borrows the style of the wooden sports craft of the '50s and '60s, but with a modern fiberglass hull and mahogany veneer. If the shape looks familiar, it should – it references the iconic '60s Riva Aquarama, but is actually far more exclusive: fewer than 22 Torpedos have been made to date. Sporting an entirely new propulsion system in the form of two Swedish Volvo Penta IPS engines incorporated into a new, redesigned hull, Milakovic and Hallén's Torpedo took Jansson's vision of a classically styled cruiser and dialed it up – with more performance, modern comforts and materials. With a choice of IPS 400, 500, 600 or 650 engines, the most powerful J Craft can touch 47 knots and still pull off astonishingly tight turns given its size and stately ride.

With a curious mixture of *Dolce Vita* flair and the kind of robustness that can only be found in the rough and rugged Scandinavian environment, the Torpedo is an impressive all-rounder out on the open

water. Step aboard and the sheen of the hand-finished mahogany details on the deck draws you back to a golden age of transport when style and substance

"IT'S A 1957 CORVETTE MEETS AIRSTREAM TRAILER"

took priority over speed and efficiency. At the helm, a beautiful Italian-made wood and steel Nardi steering wheel invites you to take control, while powering up the two Volvo engines triggers a growl from below deck as the torque gradually pushes you back against the soft leather seat.

Navigating the Baltic Sea, albeit on a calm day, is a breeze behind the wheel; Milakovic assures me that many J Craft have taken on much more arduous journeys, such as Saint-Tropez to Corsica, Ibiza to Sardinia, Miami to The Bahamas and Hong Kong to Hainan. With a 280-nautical-mile range, room for four adults to sleep at a squeeze and a generously proportioned forward cabin complete with separate bathroom and stand-up shower, the Torpedo is a capable cruiser. Like the upper deck, the cabin is beautifully constructed from hand-finished mahogany, polished steel and leather. Given

Above: the Torpedo Zens on the J Craft factory floor.
Below: the interior of *Amarcor*



Top: J Craft team member Zoltan Antunovic at the helm of *Zens* and (below) working on *Natalia*

PHOTOGRAPH: LUCIO GELSI

STYLE

The sweater of Inisherin

The Tweed Project's knitwear is a celebration of Irish craft... and Colin Farrell. By Sara Semic



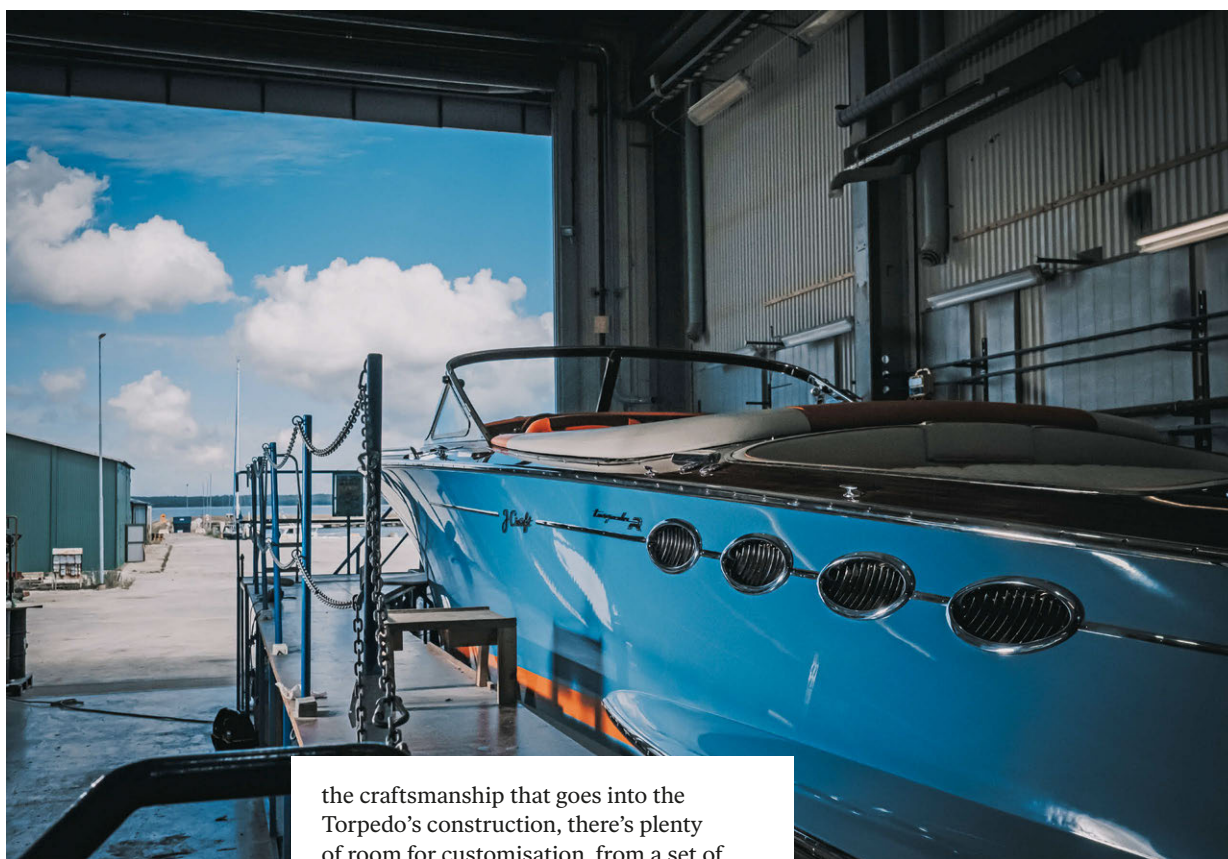
THE TWEED PROJECT THE COLIN, €790

The costumes in *The Banshees of Inisherin* – a dark comedy about a platonic breakup between two friends living on a remote island off the coast of Ireland – shouldn't have been such a talking point. And yet it was the knitwear that emerged as the breakout star – in particular the chunky rust-red jumper worn by Pádraic, played by Colin Farrell (pictured below), midway through. “It just took on a whole life of its own,” says costume designer Eimer Ní Mhaoldomhnaigh, who sourced all the film's knitwear. “I love the knitwear myself, but I definitely wasn't expecting that [reaction].”

Inspired by the traditional Aran jumpers worn by fishermen in the early 20th century, the knit in question featured stockinette panels with moss diamond and purl stitches – though it was the large, pointy collar in particular that offered a unique spin on the Aran style. “I was obviously blown away by the film, but I was really blown away by the jumper,” says Aoibheann MacNamara, co-founder of Galway-based slow-fashion brand The Tweed Project, which is now collaborating with Ní Mhaoldomhnaigh on a collection based on the cult sweater. “Knowing the ethos of The Tweed Project and how they support local craft, it just seemed like a really good match,” says Ní Mhaoldomhnaigh.

Launching this month, the jumper (known as The Colin) will be available in four colours: tomato red, turquoise, Jacob's grey and the cream-coloured báinín (€790), made using wool from Donegal and Kerry. In keeping with the tradition of hand-knitting in Ireland, each made-to-order piece is made by two knitters in the west of Ireland, taking about 50 hours to produce. “It's a very slow process,” says MacNamara. “But it's a celebration of the old techniques that need to be protected, because if you can't buy an Aran jumper in Galway or the Aran islands then it's a sad situation.”

The trio hope it might inspire a new generation of knitters. “In Ireland, knitting was always seen as the woman's work,” says Ní Mhaoldomhnaigh, “so I love that it's Triona, Aoibheann and I supporting these women who are knitting at home, and just really trying to keep the craft alive.” ■HTSI



the craftsmanship that goes into the Torpedo's construction, there's plenty of room for customisation, from a set of bespoke matching luggage to a 2,000-watt music system and a teppanyaki grill behind the front seats.

“WE'RE BLENDING AGE-OLD techniques with modern-day materials – the good old-fashioned skills that are acquired over many, many years of civilisation on this island,” says Milakovic, walking through J Craft's wood shop, stacked with beautifully shaped, highly polished mahogany pieces waiting to be added to the three hulls under construction on the factory floor. Buried in the hull of one of them is another key member of the J Craft team and Gotland native, Zoltan Antunovic. With an athletic build, neatly trimmed short back and sides, and Viking-like beard, he is the embodiment of the boats they craft here. Despite busily working on a wiring loom in one of the hulls, he spares a second to recount his experience, first his military service and then with Swedish boat builder Nimbus, before joining J Craft full-time around the time Milakovic acquired it.

With a history of boatbuilding dating back more than 1,000 years, Gotland and its Unesco World Heritage Site town of Visby have a nautical knowledge base like no other – something that remains in rude health thanks to its population, who were raised on a rich diet of sailing experiences and seafaring tales dating back thousands of years. “I've worked with boats my whole life in some way,” says Hallén, J Craft's longest

serving employee. “I renovated my own boat at the age of 16 with the help of my father, and before that I was always down at the harbour watching and helping the fishermen after school – the people of Gotland have always made their living by the sea.”

With each boat taking more than 8,000 man-hours to make, the J Craft Torpedo is priced accordingly. Starting from €1.36mn and rising depending on options, this day cruiser is not for the casual buyer looking for a cheap and cheerful day boat to get them around the bay and back. “We have clients that take it on long trips across seas. You have other guys who treat it like a piece of art but for me, it's my peaceful place,” says Milakovic, referencing his very own Torpedo, which he named *Natalia*, after his daughter.

“WE'RE NOT INTERESTED IN MASS PRODUCTION”

“I learned the hard way – you can't really rush it,” he says. “It's literally made by Swedes in Sweden.” Celebrating

the delivery of three boats this year, Milakovic and the J Craft crew plan on keeping production limited. “We're not interested in mass production,” he admits. “My only role to play is to act as a custodian and enable it to be on a trajectory so that Jansson's vision lives on.” Milakovic and his team are busy tweaking and refining the design, ensuring the next generation of J Craft has less impact on the environment. From new, on-board technology and a removable hardtop next year, to switching to a fully recyclable material for the hull and deck, and even the new forms of propulsion on the horizon, the plot of the J Craft saga has twists and turns to come. ■HTSI



Top: *Natalia*, named after Milakovic's daughter, in the J Craft workshop. Above: the hull of Torpedo number 20 under construction



Left: Johan Hallén works on *Natalia*