

DEBAUCHERY, DANGER AND THE DIRTY SECRETS ABOARD THE SUPER-RICH'S SUPERYACHTS

BY DANA KENNEDY

JUST A FEW YEARS AGO, A young steward working on one of the glossiest superyachts anchored at Cannes for the film festival threatened to call the police on a well-known movie producer who was badly beating two prostitutes during sex in the master stateroom.

"He couldn't believe I'd actually do it," said the man, who no longer works on yachts but signed a confidentiality agreement that precludes him from being identified. "But it was the only way to stop him. He was violent and out of control. The girls were screaming, and he didn't care. He did care about the cops being called."

That incident, says a former chief stewardess, is not atypical of the behavior aboard some of the world's multimillion-dollar mega yachts, a global armada that recently has exploded with bigger, even more opulent vessels being launched on the seas — or into Cannes — every year.

"I could tell you stories that would make your head spin and make you reach for the Dramamine on dry land," says Elizabeth Moore, who was based in Nice and worked on mega yachts in the Mediterranean and Caribbean for 11 years before quitting the lucrative but stressful business and moving to Australia last year.

The average have-not gazing out at the sumptuous floating party palaces from the Croisette only can imagine the luxury aboard these vessels, the most expensive of which cost up to \$400 million. Amenities include movie theaters, wine cellars, gyms, detachable "beach clubs," helipads, storage for Jet Skis and submarines, anti-paparazzi shields and jellyfish aquariums.

"Jealous? Don't be," says power publicist Peggy Siegal, a Cannes veteran. "Here's the dirty little secret about the parties on the yachts. People don't want to get stuck on them. Then there's the shoe problem. They make you take your shoes off. Nobody looks good without their shoes. Then you've got the weather. The tenders [which transport guests to the yachts] are a real pain in the ass because you get wet. You've got to bring shawls and sweaters and wind-breakers and you're still freezing. Black tie in early May on a boat is not a good combination."

Even Paul Allen's annual party aboard his yacht Octopus, once the festival's hottest ticket, has lost its allure. "Nothing but hookers on that boat now," says one longtime attendee. Then again, the ambiance aboard a yacht at Cannes can be so magical that



Above: Eva Cavalli (left) hosted Sharon Stone on her and husband Roberto's yacht, RC, during the 2014 Cannes fest. At a 2012 charity event, Alec Baldwin was flanked by wife Hilary (left) and Denise Rich.



- 1 Ester III's owner's suite has nearly 8-foot ceilings, is the full width of the boat and features Avodire wood, gold leaf and bronze detailing and silk carpets. Designer Pascale Reymond also conceived the interiors for Stolichnaya billionaire Yuri Shefler's superyacht Serene.
- 2 The 66-meter (216-foot) boat was designed by Norwegian specialist Espen Oeino (he also designed Paul Allen's Octopus and former Microsoft executive Charles Simonyi's Skat) and built by top German outfit Lurssen. A state-of-the-art yacht generally costs \$1.1 million per meter, according to Peter Wilson, founding partner of Marine Construction Management in Newport, R.I., and would charter for about \$900,000 a week, adds Nice-based Fraser Yachts Charter broker Valeria Alekhina. Ester III is cruising the Mediterranean in advance of a public debut at the Monaco Yacht Show in September and will anchor off Cannes during the festival — using an electronic anchoring system that prevents damage to the seabed.
- 3 Oeino incorporated a 23-foot-long swimming pool — with a jet stream that allows guests to swim against a current.
- 4 A full spa on the lower deck features Persian-influenced decor, including a Botticino classic cream marble floor with semiprecious-stone inlays.
- 5 This backlit honey onyx sink is one of several onyx fixtures in the spa.

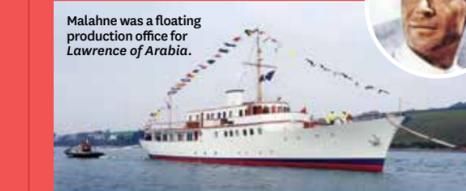


OH, BILLIONAIRE: MAY I INTEREST YOU IN A \$73M BOAT?

A state-of-the-art yacht from a top builder costs a cool 1 million euros (\$1.1 million) per meter. Ester III comes with pool, helipad, outdoor theater, discotheque and spa (with sauna) as its renowned Norwegian designer gives *THR* an exclusive tour **BY NICK JEFFERY**



→ SURE, VINTAGE CARS. SO WHY NOT VINTAGE YACHTS?



Malahne was a floating production office for *Lawrence of Arabia*.



One way to make a glamorous entrance at Cannes is aboard a restored classic yacht — like a vintage Rolex, it's just as impressive (and pricey) as a newly built model but makes a less flashy statement. Efforts to preserve these historic vessels have increased in recent decades, a trend set in part by publishing heiress Elizabeth E. Meyer, who in 1984 bought and restored Endeavour, a boat built for the 1934 America's Cup, and in 1993 founded the International Yacht Restoration School in Newport, R.I.

The most recently relaunched classic, after a 2½-year restoration, is the 165-foot Malahne, which comes with a Hollywood pedigree: Built in 1937 and commandeered by the British Admiralty in World War II, it later served as legendary producer Sam Spiegel's floating production

office in Jordan's Gulf of Aqaba during the filming of 1962's *Lawrence of Arabia*.

The experts behind the Malahne project are G.L. Watson & Co., based in Liverpool, England, who also led the restoration of Blue Bird, a 1938 boat once owned by "the fastest man on earth," Sir Malcolm Campbell (who set the world land speed record in a car also called Blue Bird). Its current owner is Tara Getty, whose family also has a 1929 yacht named for his mother, Talitha. Last refitted in 2008, it's available for charter — to carefully screened clients — at about \$350,000 a week.

Now, a boat that G.L. Watson & Co. managing director William Collier calls "a unique and last opportunity to undertake the restoration of a yacht that combines both pedigree and elegance" is waiting for its champion on

the grass just off of California Highway 101, about 750 miles north of Hollywood. Ripe for restoration is the 157-foot Caritas, built in 1925 for New York sugar magnate J.P. Bartram, which also was drafted into WWII service (for the U.S. Navy). After being decommissioned in 1945, the boat eventually made its way to Smith River, Calif., where it once housed a museum and gift shop for the Ship Ashore Resort, a motel and RV park.

A history-minded yacht buff with about \$50 million to spare, the patience for a two- to three-year restoration (the boat's structure largely is original, with timber decks; engines, pipework and wiring have been removed) and the wisdom to see beyond Caritas' trailer-park phase could sail her into Cannes for the 2018 festival. A riches-to-rags-to-riches story made for Hollywood. — N.J.