

YACHTING

SPRING/SUMMER 2007

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MAN AT THE TOP
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Featuring
'The Yacht
Owner'
Supplement



THE MOONEN SHIPYARD

- A HISTORY

BY JACK A. SOMER

The famed Moonen brand was born in February 1981, in the medieval Dutch town of 's-Hertogenbosch, where Rien Moonen ran a profitable commercial painting company and dabbled in real estate.

Moonen had built three family motor cruisers at a small shipyard in Hardinxveld, run by three de Ruiter brothers. To help them expand, Moonen rented them a prime waterfront property in 's-Hertogenbosch; they moved in, geared up, and promptly went bankrupt with a few unfinished boats on the line. Moonen had no choice but to wrest the facility away from his tenants to recoup his investment.

Though an avid yachtsman, Moonen had no wish to build boats, and was even ready to retire from painting. Instead he wrote his name in large letters on a new shipyard destined to build a highly regarded line of 'pocket-size superyachts,' today recognised the world over for their superb design, construction, finish, and reliability.



FAR LEFT:
MY ISSUE
— LAUNCHED
MAY 2006

LEFT:
CHARADE — ONE OF
THE FIRST MOONEN
YACHTS

When he took over, Rien Moonen understood that he couldn't succeed with just the team of skilled workers he inherited and the infrastructure he had built, so he hired an experienced yard manager to reverse his fortunes. Moonen's plan was to create a series of identifiable, semi-custom models he could sell from a catalogue. He began exhibiting at European boat shows, principally Boot Düsseldorf, garnering clients mostly from northern Europe. In 1983 — for a German client — Moonen launched the first yacht built under his name: the 69-foot Lady M.

In 1984 — also for a German client — he splashed his fourth yacht, the 61-foot White Heaven. The significance of these yachts cannot be overestimated, as both owners would build two more yachts of the same name, starting a precedent of repeat clients that today remains a mainstay of Moonen's continuing success.



ABOVE:
THE NEW 94 ALU

84s have since been launched, the eighth is on its way to 2008 delivery.

The captivating four-cabin Moonen 84 is just one element in the shipyard's complete turnaround. In late 2003, a client ordered a displacement Moonen 96, *Clementine*, to a René van der Velden custom design, which the yard built in just 16 months and launched in early 2005. Two clients, admirers of *Clementine*, then ordered slightly modified versions as Moonen 97s. Meanwhile, Bilterijst and van der Velden had earlier developed a handsome, powerful design to initiate a new 'Explorer Series' to meet market demand. When the first client opted out, the idea came to the attention of the owner of the 25-knot *My Issue*. He was ready to slow down in order to cruise globally in greater comfort. The result: the Ice-Classed Explorer 114 *My Issue*, launched in May 2006 for another Moonen repeat client, and the birth of another important Moonen series.

There were, as well, clients looking to speed up on a platform of superb Moonen quality. For them, van der Velden and Bilterijst conceived a new 'Fast Yacht Series' of semi-displacement cruisers to be built wholly in light, corrosion-resistant Sealium alloy and identified with 'Alu' appended to their length. Moonen currently has the first two of the '94 Alu' series under construction,

and a '99 Alu,' for 2007 and 2009 delivery respectively. As Moonen celebrated its 25th Jubilee in 2006, more record-breaking orders unfolded. A new client has contracted to build a 124-foot cruiser, which evolved out of the top-of-the-line Moonen 114 van der Velden had shaped for the 'Displacement Series,' and which was subsequently stretched to 120 feet. And Bilterijst is negotiating to purchase a large property adjoining Moonen's 's-Hertogenbosch facility to erect a larger construction hall to contain a 147-foot cruiser, which when launched would mean that 'pocket-size' may no longer apply to every Moonen little ship.

Moonen now stands tall and proud, recognised and admired for the quality of its yachts and the loyalty of its clients. Because it builds no more than two or three yachts each year – and as of today has launched fewer than 70 – buying a Moonen is equivalent to joining an exclusive club, whose members enjoy the finest yachts Dutch workmanship and dedication can offer.

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