



BY MICHAEL PETERS

SIGHTLINES

The World Is Not Enough

SOMETIMES EVEN OLIGARCHS AND BILLIONAIRES TAKE THEIR CUES FROM FICTION.



Bond influenced John Staluppi's 200-foot Benetti *Diamonds Are Forever*. Comments for Michael? Give him a shout at inbox@pnymag.com.

I must admit, I have been a James Bond junkie since I was a kid. So, on opening weekend, I dragged my wife out to see *Skyfall*, the newest Bond film, promoted as the best installment of the 50-year-old spy franchise. My favorite Bond of all time is of course Sean Connery, but I have to admit Daniel Craig is rising fast on my list. I really could never stand Roger Moore or that pretty boy Pierce Brosnan. Anyway, I came away from *Skyfall* a bit let down. It was good, but not great. Sure, it had the requisite beautiful girls and impossible chase scenes, but something was definitely missing. Maybe I could forgive the absence of fast cars and futuristic gadgets, but where the hell were the boats? Sorry, but a sailboat doesn't count.

From its inception, we have come to expect a certain level of titillation from the Bond movie, not least of all due to a proliferation of very cool boats. Starting with *From Russia With Love* back in 1963 the standard was set with Bond's first high-speed boat chase when he and his lover, Tatiana Romanova, escape the Soviets in a Fairey Swordsmen at what looks like a menacing 20 knots. But *Thunderball* didn't disappoint us with the *Disco Volante*, the 110-foot half yacht/half hydrofoil that was central to Emilio Largo's plot to threaten the United States with two H-bombs in an attempt to extort \$300 million. Reruns make it look pretty lame today, but it was actually a real boat that joined a 55-foot stern cocoon to a 64-foot Rodriguez hydrofoil that could run 40 knots. It was certainly the coolest thing I had ever

seen as a kid way back in 1965, and I was absolutely hooked on Bond.

Ensuing films including *Live And Let Die*, *The World Is Not Enough*, *Die Another Day*, *Casino Royale*, and *Quantum of Solace* tease us with an onslaught of fast, sexy, and futuristic Glastrons, Sunseekers, M Ships, and Q-Boats. But the prototype Bond yacht was the *Flying Saucer* in the 1983 remake of *Thunderball*, and in Sean Connery's final turn as James Bond, *Never Say Never Again*. Serving as his world headquarters, Maximillian Largo points out to Bond that his yacht is equipped to "run a large government from here." The movie provided the world with its first introduction to a real super-yacht. In a case of life imitates art, or vice versa, the yacht in the movie is none other than the Jon Bannenberg-designed 281-foot

Benetti, *Nabila*, owned at the time by Saudi arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi, and rumored to be replete with bulletproof glass, secret passageways, and an onboard missile-detection system. After selling the yacht, the story gets even stranger as megalomaniac Donald Trump purchases it, only to lose it when he self-destructs and plunges into bankruptcy. Trump, no longer relevant, surfaces years later in another episode as birther-revolutionist, Harry Galore, as vile a Bond rival as ever there was.

From behind the Iron Curtain, I am sure the KGB secretly loved watching these movies, with themselves thinly disguised as S.P.E.C.T.R.E. Did they privately cheer for Bond or did they aspire to the role of villain? Former Soviets like Roman Abramovich and Andrey Melnichenko certainly drew inspiration from the series, building a succession of yachts like the 390-foot *A* and the 536-foot *Eclipse*, both of which are certainly capable of sustaining the government of a small country. The most unabashed American fan has got to be John Staluppi, who over a period of almost 20 years has built a series of record-breaking, fast yachts with names like *Octopussy*, *Moonraker*, *The World Is Not Enough*, and *Diamonds Are Forever*. It is impossible to imagine that Larry Ellison and Paul Allen were not influenced by Bond in the creation of their yachts *Rising Sun* and *Octopus*. Thanks to Bond, megayachts do seem the natural playground for any self-respecting billionaire with a white cat and his heart set on world dominance.

So thank you James Bond, for all the inspiration and all the crazy, sexy boats that came from men wanting to be like you. The die was cast many years ago when the world could be threatened for a mere \$300 million. Times have changed, but you are still the coolest dude around, even if it now takes more like \$16 trillion to extort us. □