

At Roscioli Donzi Yachts, full-size models of custom interiors are still the standard tool to refine details and interior arrangements with clients.

Masters of Mock-Up

Text and photographs by
Marilyn DeMartini

Above—A plywood mock-up of the after-deck and steps to the flying bridge on a Roscioli Donzi R-76 (23.16m) Sportfish takes shape in the company's Bradenton, Florida, shop.

Bob Roscioli is an old-school builder who started working on boats as an apprentice in 1962, mostly scraping and painting bottoms in a South Florida boatyard. He liked the hard, often dirty work, but when he requested a 10-cent-an-hour pay raise he was laid off. His next move in the business was something of his own. Because he knew paint, mostly brushed enamel at the time, he began there and progressed

rapidly, establishing himself as one of the premier marine coatings specialists in the country. Awlgrip and Alexseal sought out Roscioli to vet their new urethane-based products as the paints that previously had been used in aerospace applications were introduced to the marine industry.

As Roscioli diversified into all aspects of yacht service, repair, and refits, the 14-acre (5.67-hectare) Fort

Lauderdale facility on State Rd. 84 has built a reputation as a superlative traditional full-service yard. Today it comprises covered storage for yachts up to 150' (45.7m), haul/launch capacity for boats up to 360 tons, and more than 100 employees—carpenters, electricians, welders, fabricators, captains, painters, mechanics, sandblasters, interior designers, furniture makers, propulsion specialists, and project managers.

While much of his career has been focused on his service yard, Roscioli also builds new boats that bear his name. That change came about in the mid-1980s as the service yard prospered and the opportunity to be a dealer for the Donzi 65 (19.8m) arose. "I never saw a boat like it," he says of the 65' sportfisherman. "It was 25 years ahead of its time." Seven months later, he bought the "yacht" division of Donzi Marine, adding his name to the iconic brand, and has since built more than 74 boats ranging from 54' to 82' (16.5m to 25m), mostly from the Roscioli boat factory in Bradenton, Florida. (Note that Donzi Marine continues to thrive building their iconic smaller high-performance boats in Washington, North Carolina.)

Just as linear polyurethane (LPU) paint has replaced enamel in Roscioli's coatings work, fiberglass, vinyl ester resins, and foam-core construction have replaced wood in most aspects of boatbuilding, but at 73, Roscioli still uses wood in one specific aspect of Roscioli Donzi Yacht construction—building custom interiors. I visited the Roscioli Yacht Center and the Bradenton shop in 2019 to see how persisting in that material and this practice enables the development of interior arrangements to better fit customers' individual needs.



The carpentry shop at the Roscioli Yacht Center in Fort Lauderdale houses detailed mock-ups of interior accommodations as well as cabinetry for the finished boats.

In the Yard

As I walk through the Yacht Center, multiple vessels in capacious covered work bays are being painted and refit; metal shops turn out custom-fabricated components; there's a buzz in the air; and an image of Rosie the Riveter, emblazoned on the top of the 351-ton mobile lift, appears to survey the yard. In the carpentry shops, life-sized models of yacht interiors rise from floor to ceiling, providing an inside look at the still malleable spaces of Roscioli Donzi's newest models: an R-76 (23.16m) Convertible Sportfish and an R-76 Med.

Both these new yachts are being built for existing Roscioli Donzi clients. One has an 80' (24.38m) Sportfish and

wanted a day cruiser or adventure boat to add to his fleet, hence his new Med model. Not a traditional fishing boat, it has no cockpit but rather a walkaround with a flybridge that doubles as an entertainment, dining, and lounge platform surrounding the helm station.

The other client, Bud Koch, a consummate fisherman, is upsizing from his 58' (17.68) express, *Classic Coke*, to the 76 Sportfish so he, his wife, and his frequent fishing buddies have the option of adding a professional captain on their trips. While a manager oversees details of the Med project, Koch is a hands-on guy who enjoys the process of a build as much as the finished product. During my visit he talked about his boating experience and reasons for his second Roscioli Donzi as we walked the shop looking at his new boat with Roscioli himself.



Repeat client Bud Koch is a hands-on participant in planning the custom interior of his R-76, *Classic Coke*.



Crews build the foam-cored infused FRP hulls of the R-76 in Bradenton.

Koch first worked with Roscioli several years ago when he owned a 45' (13.7m) Spencer sportfisherman but was looking for something a little faster. He met Roscioli at a boat show where the company was showcasing its 73' (22.25m) Sportfish. Asked if he could build Koch an Express, Roscioli said he could and took the 6'5" Koch and his 6'7" son fishing. They liked the boat's speed and were impressed by its performance, even in the rough weather and sea conditions they encountered.

As a result, the two men struck a deal for a new 58' Sport Cruise. During that first project, Roscioli found Koch to be a discerning client who wanted to be involved in the build. With mutual respect intact, the two created the boat that is now for sale as Koch awaits delivery of his new 76—yet another *Classic Coke*. "I guess we're not very creative," says Koch. He's had nearly a dozen boats with the same name.

Customized by Customers

Bob Roscioli starts each day by reciting his mantra, "Today's the day!" and then walks the entire shipyard, providing general advice, specific direction, close supervision, or maybe just an encouraging "Atta boy!" He's a sort of Vince Lombardi of boatbuilders, coaching, enabling, and giving everyone from ex-cons to green apprentices chances to prove themselves and work successfully outside their previous comfort zones. The payoff for that management style is clear when we meet Shawn Schmolli,

who started years ago as a 19-year-old "yard dog" doing manual labor, just as Roscioli did. He worked his way up to plant manager, a complex and demanding job that keeps him on the road between the Bradenton factory and the Fort Lauderdale yard.

As the customer liaison, Schmolli regularly walks through the plywood mock-ups with the carpenters and clients as they plan the custom interiors of their new boats. He emphasizes that there are no "options" in layouts at Roscioli: each boat is totally custom-built to the buyer's specifications, with every detail negotiated between the builder and client. Schmolli says he finds that customers like being a part of the build, and they gain perspective as they see the flow of the space—its potential and limitations.

As an example, he points out the rod storage holder incorporated into the dash of Koch's 58-footer. Being tall, Koch wanted a dash on the inside helm high enough for comfort, but he also wanted a clean appearance with a minimum of technological clutter. While examining the plywood mock-up Koch, Schmolli, and Roscioli noted some extra space on the starboard side of the dash. Together, they came up with a unique solution: By extending



Bob Roscioli has been in the yacht business since the early 1960s; he still actively oversees all aspects of the company and has the last word on the details of every build.

Roscioli Standard Equipment

A few equipment specs stood out as I inspected the builds and viewed plans for the R-76 (23.15m) Convertible Sportfish and the R-76 Med—details that help set the boats apart from the rest of the sportfishing fleet.

Procurve Glass, installed by Advance Marine Glass, makes large wrap-around windshields and windows chemically treated to provide more tensile and flexible strength for wave force and impact resistance. The glass also has better visibility, and light and UV protection to reduce interior fading and deterioration. (For more on modern glass, see “See-Through Structure,” PBB No. 174.)

The Von’Widmann Underwater Exhaust System uses technology that Roscioli found minimizes back-pressure and engine power drain, while maximizing fuel loads and range. Located in the bilge in otherwise unusable space, the exhaust system makes room for other equipment like a Seakeeper.

The Seatorque Bolt On Shaft System (BOSS) eliminates shaft-line noise and vibration. The full-length, nonrotating shaft casing and thrust-bearing assembly minimizes mechanical losses, enhancing propulsion power. The rubber-mounted connection is rigged with low underbody drag.

—Marilyn DeMartini

the dash a bit and opening it up with a hinged hatch, they could create a sturdy concealed storage space, ideal for 20-lb–50-lb fully rigged rods. That practical feature will be replicated in the new 76. The team also found additional space under the stairs to the fly-bridge for more stand-up rod storage.

“Plans are important,” says Roscioli, “but you can’t *feel* the space on paper.” He compares the experience to building his home. “I didn’t build anything until I walked the entire foundation and laid everything out—making sure that it was going to be where I wanted it.” The same thing happens on each

custom-built boat. “We can see how many drawers will be in each cabinet, where the fixtures will be. I want customers to give me ideas, and we’ll do it—unless it’s crazy and will mess up the boat.” He’ll collaborate, but Roscioli always maintains control over anything that bears his name.



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Above—This mock-up of the complex shape of a tiny head compartment includes a bucket for the toilet and marked clearance of a door that will swing open into the limited space. **Right**—Roscioli, carpentry foreman Hernan Jimenez, and Koch discuss the consistent shape and height of the interior doors for the finished boat.



As we walked through Koch's new mock-up, I saw that even the toilets were laid out in detailed shape and proportions, with cutouts of a seat attached to a 5-gallon bucket to show

the height and placement of each commode.

As the master carpentry foreman reviewed a pocket door with Koch, Roscioli got interested; a debate ensued.

Koch wanted the pocket door between the head and the master suite, but Roscioli was against it. "Pocket doors are a pain—they rattle. They have to be locked to stop the rattling and then

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unlocked. Think about it,” Roscioli advised. After the carpenter showed Koch how a conventional door could be adjusted and explained how it could swing open into the head and still accommodate the heated towel bar his wife wanted, Koch agreed to the change. And then they went into an involved discussion of door shapes. Koch liked the rounded doorway shown in the entry to the master stateroom. As a group they decided *all* the doorways should be rounded, and although that design requires more craftsmanship and time, it enhances the boat and pleases the owner.

Similarly, radiused transitions, rather than sharp corners, are incorporated into the interior bulkheads and cabinetry. Koch likes windows and rounded corners to soften the passages to the staterooms, and while the softer edges look good, they also require extra lamination to stand up to

the high boat speeds and vertical accelerations. “We have boats out there for 30 years or more and they are still going strong,” Roscioli says. “We build in durability.”

Engines and Engine room

Roscioli Donzi yachts are built on what Roscioli calls an “efficient and quick planing” hullform to handle the high horsepower and bottom loading the boats are subjected to. The infused cored fiberglass structure helps absorb variable loading at speed, while the wide chines and keel add stability for a seaworthy ride at all speeds. The twin Detroit Diesel MTU 16V2000, 2,600-hp engines in the 76 deliver a projected cruising speed of 38 knots and top out at 42+ knots. Running gear includes Aquamet 22 H.S. propeller shafts sized for a 5:1 safety factor. Each main strut is a single airfoil leg design, custom cast from 316 stainless steel and fitted with

a Cutless bearing. Four-blade custom propellers are tuned to each vessel for maximum performance. The high-aspect-design spade rudders’ lower bearing is housed in a custom bronze stuffing box, and the upper bearing is mounted on an aluminum stringer.

The engine rooms are simple by modern standards—open and spacious with keen attention to detail and easy access to equipment, pumps, and through-hulls. White urethane paint coats all surfaces, the engines, two 32-kW Kohler generators, and a customized space accommodating an expansive rack for the battery banks. Tanks of 2,500 gal (9,453.5 l) for fuel and 250 gal (946.4 l) for water will support Koch’s long-distance cruising.

Another practical focus for Koch and the Roscioli crew is sound reduction. Boats equipped with large diesels and driven at high speeds in rough seas can be loud. Each Roscioli Donzi is



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Interior components going into an R-76 in Bradenton include the spacious white-painted engine room to the right, and the crew quarters fitted below the saloon sole on the left.

absorbing material; and foam-filled-void areas.

Onboard electrical systems are designed to American Boat & Yacht Council (ABYC) standards. The custom main panel has an engraved Lexan face; all panel functions are wired to terminal strips; and posts are mounted in a full aluminum enclosure fitted with an independent fire-suppression system. Smoothly radiating wires are neatly bundled and secured.

Bridge and Cockpit Layout

Koch recalled how the plywood mock-up also helped determine the dimensions of the mezzanine on the new Sportfish, because the 76 has a lot of extra cockpit space. "I had guys sit on the mezzanine so I could see the height. They know I want to stand up, so there are two tiers to the mezzanine. They inserted 4' [1.2m] steps that are steep enough for someone to sit on

subjected to a 14-point build checklist created in consultation with noise-control experts Soundown. Included are linear exhaust sound barriers; vibration mounts securing all engines and

generators, pumps, and blowers; sound blankets and vibration isolators in saloons; floors with a sound mat topped with sound-absorbing structural core; air-inlet boxes made with sound-

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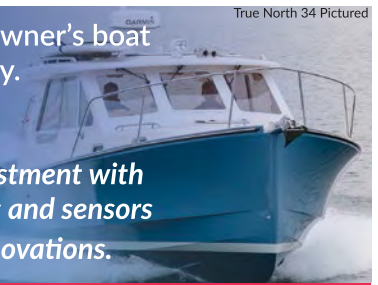
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and still give me headroom,” he said.

On Koch’s 58’ Sport Cruise, a custom starboard helm station had been added to increase visibility and flexibility for the captain. An ample overhang protects against weather and sun, and recessed LED lighting above adds night ambiance. At Koch’s direction, these features will be replicated on his 76, and the flying bridge and aft helms will be fitted with joystick controls. On the flying bridge, the helm station will also have CZone control and monitoring that integrates all onboard electrical systems. Seating up there is ample, and amenities include a refrigerator, a freezer, and an icemaker.

Customized to accommodate Koch’s fishing hobby, two refrigerated, insulated fish boxes and livewells are located on the afterdeck. They flank a fighting chair from Release Marine mounted to the reinforced deck structure that Roscioli engineered for safety

and stability. Koch had specified pressurized livewells on his 58 to help preserve live bait. On the 76 he requested an additional pressurized 60-gal (227-l) livewell on the center transom, as well as a 500-lb/226.8-kg/day Eskimo icemaker.

After numerous walk-throughs and negotiations over detailed changes to the plywood mock-up, each interior and cockpit is custom-built by Roscioli’s carpenters. Koch: “Bob [Roscioli] is influenced by the many megayachts in his yard, so he uses higher-quality finishes, hinges, and hatches you won’t find on a competitor’s sportfish. He does it right, so we avoid reworks.” He also noted that because Roscioli likes to cook, “his galleys are great.” Koch’s 76 will include a dumbwaiter to the flying bridge, suggested by his wife and embraced as a challenge by the Roscioli team. “It is another example of working with the builder to

brainstorm ideas to make things a little more unique and better,” said Koch.

Accommodations

The final galley design also includes a curved bar counter with swivel stools, “not something you find in most sportfish. It’s not conventional and has more style,” Koch said.

Forward, the galley opens to saloon lounges and a portside C-lounge and dining table. It’s hard to see in the mock-up, but the entire level benefits from curved windows providing a 360° view and natural light. Koch’s custom cabinetry will be match-grain teak. A large-screen TV retracts into the cabinetry to starboard, and to fully open the aft deck, its door and window can retract into the engineroom below. There’ll be a day head to port.

Steps to starboard lead belowdecks, where the full-beam ’midship master and forward VIP staterooms include en

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suite heads and tall glass showers with flat floors. Koch laughed that he preferred a step-up shower but compromised with his wife on that one. A chilled-water air-conditioning system is channeled through high overhead soffits. A third guest cabin is located between the master and VIP staterooms. If additional guests are invited instead of a captain, the crew quarters below the saloon offer comfortable full-size bunk beds to port and starboard, with a mini-galley and head. Roscioli designed a retractable counter to cover the toilet for extra space and included room for a washer/dryer.



Koch will use his new *Classic Coke* much as he did the old one—summer on Lake Erie with jaunts to Mackinaw, Harbor Springs, New England, and Canada. Come winter, he'll bring the boat to South Florida—Ocean Reef,

Key West, and the Bahamas, where his boats always get attention on the docks. Another attraction is the convenience of having the Roscioli yard just miles from his Fort Lauderdale home for storage, service, and hurricane protection when needed. "Even after the sale, Bob's service is second to none," he says. "He's good to work with." Roscioli basks in such comments, adding, "I like to build relationships, not just boats." **PBB**

About the Author: Marilyn DeMartini has represented World Championship offshore racing teams such as *Drambuie On Ice*, *Lucas Oil*, *Outerlimits*, and *Statement* powerboats. She managed PR for *Latham Marine* and the *Cigarette Racing Team* for more than a decade. She has written for *Yachts International*, *Power Motor Yacht*, *Soundings*, *Boat International*, *Passage Maker*, and *Guy Harvey Magazine* as well as *Professional BoatBuilder*.

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