

THE IRRESISTIBLE RISE OF THE super center console

FAMILY, FISHING, FREEDOM AND FAST. Boatbuilders heard these words from American boaters and in response have created a whole new breed of boats at the intersection of the yacht, performance and center console worlds. Fitted with racks of outboards, the latest in electronics, finger-sensitive handling, big sound, at least one air-conditioned cabin and a price tag in the millions, they seem to fit in the same category. But what are they?

HCB, builder of the 65ft Estrella, currently the world's largest center console, has trademarked the name Mega Center Console Yacht. Scout went for Luxury Crossover Fishing, or LXF for short. Cigarette has yet to come up with a formal description for its 59ft Tirranna flagship, but its superhero color scheme (owner's choice of black paint and red upholstery) make the term "super center console" ring true. The owner of that first Tirranna is an avid boater and yacht owner who has logged 4,000 miles with his previous 42ft Huntress.

"The 42 Huntress is a great boat and we loved it, but we've outgrown it," he says. "We need a family boat, [but] we use the motor yacht as a hotel, we park it. If we are in Atlantis and take the motor yacht to Staniel Cay, it will take the whole day, but with this boat we will be there in an hour." And he won't need crew to do that, which is another big plus.

Turnkey fun is a big market driver, says Steve Potts, founder of Scout. Like that Tirranna owner, Scout buyers can afford and often have yachts with crew.

But, he says, "they want the opportunity to run their own boat for fun, [compete in] fishing tournaments or pull up the motors in shallow waters and beach it." It's that sort of all-in-one premise that produces new converts, like Troy Herbst. An onshore racing champion and avid fisherman, Herbst bought Scout's new 530 LXF. His previous boat was a 42ft Scout, which he purchased after running a variety of offshore performance boats and he was hooked. "I saw I could include family, fishing and have it all," he says. "I thought center consoles were little fishing boats – nothing like these boats."

Aside from their size, what sets them apart from their humbler predecessors are fit and finish. A fair amount of cross-pollination has gone on with the yacht world. Cigarette's Tirranna combines American engineering with Italian design courtesy of Giorgio M Cassetta, whose credits include the exterior design of the 230ft award-winning Benetti *Spectre*. Giuseppina Arena, an architect and designer who worked with Ferretti before opening her studio in Miami, gave Italian sensibility to the interior of Midnight Express's 60ft Pied-A-Mer. And Genesis Interiors, a superyacht interior outfitter with a slew of projects to its credit, crafted the interior of Scout's new flagship.

All very good arguments to hop on board, then – which we did. Kate Lardy brings back her impressions of a thrill ride on the Scout 530 LXF, while Marilyn DeMartini tries the Midnight Express' 60ft Pied-A-Mer and Cigarette's 59ft Tirranna for size.



Cigarette Racing Team 59' Tirranna

BY MARILYN DEMARTINI

Launched on Cigarette's 50th anniversary, the Tirranna combines power, tech and luxury in one good-looking package. The 59ft boat with naval architecture by Cigarette and design by Giorgio M Cassetta can do a poker run from Miami to Key West at full speed (around 72mph), and run to the Bahamas and back on one tank of gas.

On the back end are six Mercury 400R engines. Mercury and Cigarette are like two peas in a pod. "Every one of our boats is what Mercury uses to test their engines," says Cigarette CEO Skip Braver. But why six? "Besides looking really, really good, there is no reason to have a five-engine boat with Mercury's new integration system. We can control all six engines with two levers with the new Garmin integration."

The only way to find out how well this works is to get behind the wheel. Jimmy Secord, Cigarette's test driver, exits the dock effortlessly using the boat's Imtra SidePower thrusters, then I slip behind the wheel. The Tirranna operates like a much smaller boat and I feel at ease at the helm. I let the boat dance with the Biscayne Bay chop, watching the rpms rise on the digital gauge, but not the bow. It's power without the angst.

As if designed for a pilot, the fly-by-wire, air-conditioned helm has two, 24in Garmin screens and no rocker switches. A CZone integrated system controls entertainment, lighting and navigation from the helm or from four other screens around the boat. The dash is protected by a double curved windscreen that offers great visibility.

>> SPECS

Length: 59'
Beam: 14'
Draft (full load): 32"
Fuel: 1,000 gallons
Dry weight:

31,000lb
Construction: fiberglass, carbon fiber
Power: 6 x Mercury 400R
Price: from \$2.8m





Beside the gadgets and tech, the Tirranna stands out with its sculpted looks. The owner of hull No 1 went for a black exterior paint with a standout mirror finish and hot, lipstick-red upholstery with black accents. The heat-dissipating fabric by Poltrona Frau is one of the many extra touches that Cassetta brought to the boat. "You're sitting on a cushion that combines the resistance, flexibility and reliability of the usual center console seat, but it has a dry-feel foam in three-layer density, which means it is 10 times more comfortable," he says.

Another feature borrowed from the yacht world are vertical windows, which, along with skylights, flood the spacious cabin with light. Inside is rich black-and-white hand-stitched Poltrona Frau leather upholstery (one piece alone is 43 square feet in size) complemented by dark wood flooring. The bed is king size and the glass-

enclosed shower in the en suite would be at home in a luxury hotel.

The Tirranna is also fit for socializing. Forward is a convertible dining/lounge area and behind the helm and pilot are more loungers that slide together for total relaxation en famille. The full outdoor kitchen includes all the essentials plus a black Phoenix countertop, an antimicrobial, anti-scratch material that is used on all flat surfaces around the boat. "It's super matte and oil resistant, so no fingerprints," Cassetta says.

The designer points out that it's easy to carry on a conversation at 50mph, but that's without the 5200-Watt JL Audio system (24 speakers and five, 12in subwoofers) switched on. Just like the music, the message is loud and clear. "Cigarettes are not just for guys in tank T-shirts," Braver says. "We are still sexy, but now have a different image and invite a new customer."

THE BOLD AND THE BEAUTIFUL

Not one to blend in, the first hull of the Tirranna sports a color combination as bold as it gets. There's no need to fear the hot sun on the dark fabrics

though; the upholstery by Poltrona Frau actually dissipates the heat. The helm itself is air conditioned and protected by a double curved windscreen

Scout 530 LXF

BY KATE LARDY

Before my sea trial on board the Scout 530 LXF, I am given a Mustang Survival PFD to wear and a release to sign, which, naturally, I don't read, but gives me pause: what exactly are we going to do out there on Biscayne Bay?

I know this much: with a stern full of big engines - 5 x 425hp Yamaha XTO - maneuvering this 53ft boat will be interesting. But Yamaha has made this very easy with a new joystick system that handles the shifting, throttling and steering of each outboard at all rpms. Point the joystick the way you want to go and each outboard moves independently to get you there.

Captain Josh Slayton eases out of the dock and then lets her rip. Pure instinct causes me to grab the armrest as we begin to outpace cars on the Interstate at about 63mph. There is no need to hold on for dear life though. The key to this mega center console's design is comfort. "At this size boat, it's really important that you give people a level of comfort that is unsurpassed," says Slayton, Scout's client-production liaison. "You don't want to spend \$2.5 million on a boat, invite your friends out and have them be uncomfortable while you're cruising."

The 530 LXF is the latest and largest in the line that is all things to all people - a fast cruising vessel, with high-end entertainment amenities, and a performance fishing boat. Its running surface is modeled after Scout's 420 LXF, so the whole boat absorbs wave impact. "It handles like a tank but performs like a sports car - that's our goal," Slayton says. A Seakeeper 6 gyro stabilizer comes standard and despite serious wake from boat traffic, the Scout barely registers the motion.

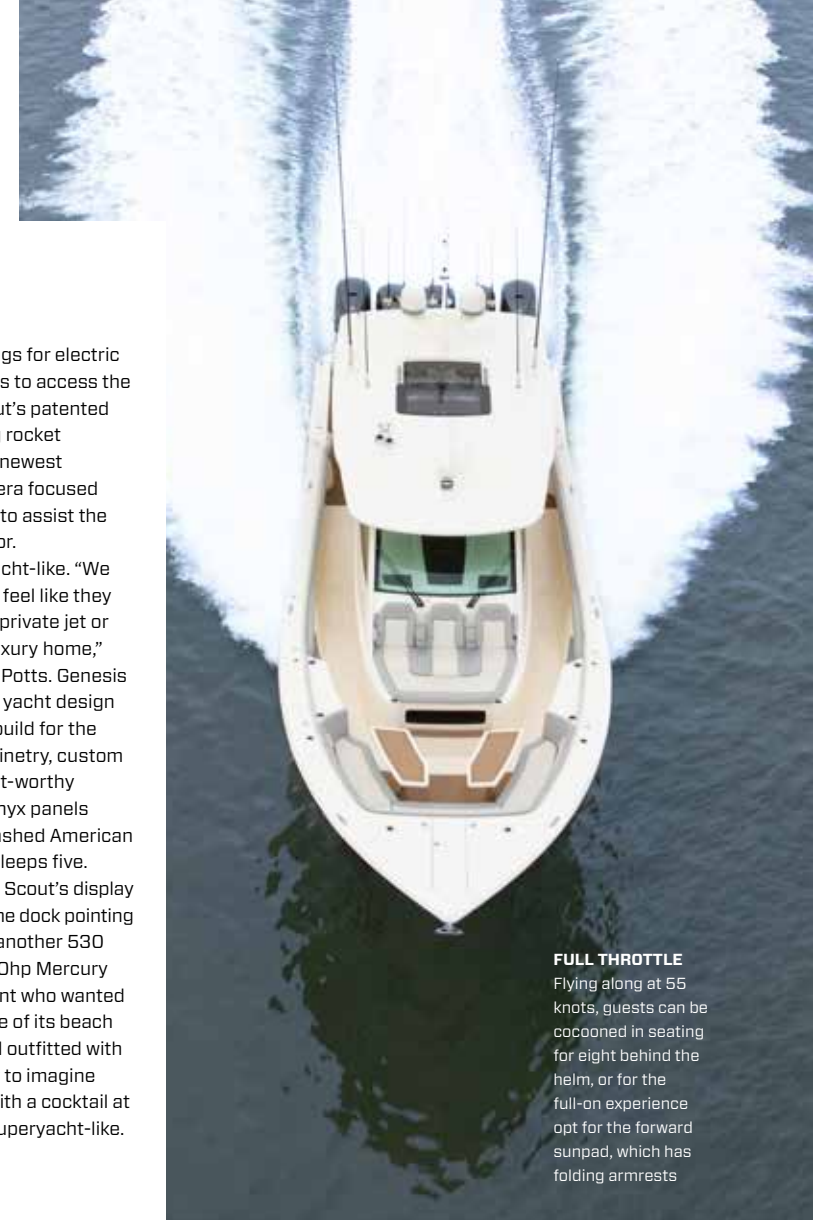
At high speeds, the best place to be is the seating area behind the helm, which itself is well sheltered within a glass enclosure. But for that true center console experience, you can slide open side windows and sunroof or feel the wind in your hair at the bow tables and forward sunpad. The cockpit is entertainment central with an island containing a cooler, sink and bar stools flanked by hydraulic beach platforms that widen the beam to more than 17ft.

The 530 LXF is fully equipped for fishing with two transom bait wells, two fish boxes, multiple rod holders, in-deck

lockable rod storage, plugs for electric reels, dual transom doors to access the flush platform, plus Scout's patented push-button articulating rocket launchers. The builder's newest innovation is a bow camera focused just above the waterline to assist the captain with lifting anchor.

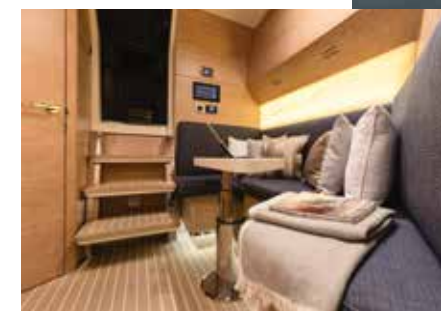
The fit and finish is yacht-like. "We wanted the customer to feel like they were stepping aboard a private jet or walking into a modern luxury home," says Scout's CEO Steve Potts. Genesis Interiors lent its custom yacht design talents to a production build for the first time, supplying cabinetry, custom furniture and superyacht-worthy appointments. Backlit onyx panels accent the light whitewashed American oak in the cabin, which sleeps five.

After my ride I head to Scout's display where I find a crowd on the dock pointing their phone cameras at another 530 LXF, this one with six 400hp Mercury outboards built for a client who wanted an extra couple mph. One of its beach platforms is lowered and outfitted with a couple chairs. It's easy to imagine myself there, lounging with a cocktail at the waterline - all very superyacht-like.



FULL THROTTLE

Flying along at 55 knots, guests can be cocooned in seating for eight behind the helm, or for the full-on experience opt for the forward sunpad, which has folding armrests



>> SPECS (as tested)

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|----------------------------|--|
| Length: 53' | Construction: fiberglass, carbon fiber |
| Beam: 14' 8" | Power: 5 x 425hp |
| Draft: 31" | Yamaha XTO |
| Dry weight: 31,500lb | Price: around \$2.5m |
| Fuel capacity: 875 gallons | |



>> SPECS

Length: 60'
Beam: 15'
Draft: 42"
Fuel: 700 gallons
Dry weight (approx.): 33,000lb

Construction: fiberglass, carbon fiber
Power: 4 x Seven Marine 627 (or 6 x Mercury 400 or inboard diesel)
Price: from \$2.5m



Midnight Express 60' Pied-A-Mer

BY MARILYN DEMARTINI

The 60ft Midnight Express Pied-A-Mer pulls up to the dock, causing a fisherman who has been gazing at the water to nearly lose his pole. The bow thrusters slide the big boat closer and I leap aboard.

I soon find I don't need to go 70mph to get a feel for the Pied-A-Mer. It's a bit intimidating to take control of what feels like a big beast, and I hold my breath as I throw down the throttles. Made from the mold of a Mystic powerboat, the big boat craves more when we plane at 20mph. I lean in a bit to feel the thrill of acceleration from the four Seven Marine outboards, but when we reach 50mph at 5,000rpm, I back down to cut the wheel and feel the hull grip the water. The 15ft beam makes it really stable; we don't even need the Seakeeper 6 gyro.

The Pied-A-Mer is designed for owners who want to enjoy the feel of the boat. "When you buy a Ferrari, you want to drive it. The same with this boat," says Eric Glaser, co-owner of Midnight Express.

Drivers will appreciate the air-conditioned helm in carbon fiber, the impressive display of four 24in Garmin screens and the black leather Isotta steering wheel embossed with the Midnight Express logo. A massive curved Corning Gorilla Glass window (like the chemically treated glass used on cell phones) provides excellent visibility, and robust handrails curving down each side of the helm ensure extra safety.

Smooth, gray, ultra-suede upholstery and large Italian SeaSmart cleats in brushed and anodized black complement the deep silver metallic hull. The aerodynamic lines scream "Midnight Express."

As smaller boats go by, their passengers snap cell phone shots. "Everybody looks," Glaser says. "Sleek and sexy - it's what we do!" He laughs, clearly enjoying the attention.

While the exterior looks are all Midnight Express, Eric and brother Harris Glaser brought in Italian architect Giuseppina Arena to revamp the typical Midnight Express teak interior and bolster decor. Arena enthusiastically rose to the task,

going with a refined European aesthetic and mostly Italian brands.

The 60ft Midnight Express is a small living unit, complete with two spacious cabins with 7ft headroom, privacy glass windows, a huge head with separate shower and a galley. Seating for well over a dozen is at the bow, and more seating and a full summer kitchen are on the aft deck. A few neat tricks make this boat fun and more functional, for instance the helm bench that pulls out and tucks back onto itself to provide access to storage below.

For entertainment, three stereo systems deliver music to 30 speakers scattered throughout, and a large television rises from behind the helm bench. Storage abounds - including compartments for custom logo-embossed square fenders that slip snugly into their respective spaces.

Although not built for fishing, the Pied-A-Mer can be fitted with rod holders and even a tower. Boxes large enough for a child to sleep in, as Glaser puts it, double as fish boxes.

The buyer of hull No 2, the owner of a Midnight Express 43 center console, plans to cruise to the Bahamas. The colors and finishes will change but the style - and \$2.5 million price tag - will remain the same.

When we return to the dock, a helpful man offers a hand as I step off the deck. "That is a lot of boat!" he exclaims. Agreed. ■



50 SHADES OF...
The Pied-A-Mer's interior is entirely customizable. For the first hull, the owners chose to employ an Italian designer, who gave the interior a

distinctly European vibe in cool gray tones. Two full staterooms with 7ft headroom, a galley and a large head with separate shower make it eminently livable



PHOTOGRAPHY: BENJAMIN EDELSTEIN