

## Exclusive Interview with Owner of Blind Date

One of my most memorable moments at this year's Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show (which closed last night) was an exclusive, sit-down interview that I garnered with the owner of *Blind Date*. The 161-foot motoryacht is about as new as they get, having left the [Trinity Yachts](#) shipyard in Mississippi less than two weeks ago. I snapped the photos below during my tour of the yacht on Saturday, right after I had the following conversation with the yacht's owner.

### How did you discover the world of yachting?

My wife and I were looking to vacation with another couple about 10 or 12 years ago. A friend of mine recommended that we work with Fiona Maureso at [Peter Insull's](#) as our charter broker, and she helped us spend a week aboard a 117-foot motoryacht called *Lady Tiffany* in the Mediterranean.

That was it. I was done. Hook, line, and sinker.

### Did you charter again right away?

For the next eight years, we chartered at least once a year. One time, we chartered three times in one year. We absolutely loved it, and the boats started to get bigger. Our biggest that we chartered was about 165 feet.

I really was into it. I'm still friendly with and e-mail with every captain of every one of the boats we ever chartered.

### How did you go from being a charter guest to being a charter yacht owner?

I really wasn't looking to buy a boat. In 2005, the smallest yacht ever built by Lurssen was going up for sale at the Fort Lauderdale boat show. A broker talked me into going to look at it before the show opened, and I had the weirdest reaction. I saw the boat from the dock, and I fell in love with it. I'm not a naval architect, but I knew she had beautiful lines.

I bought her before the boat show opened, because I knew that if I waited, somebody else would get her. I felt really excited. And nauseous.

### That was the 135-footer that I reviewed in late 2007, also called *Blind Date*. I remember her being absolutely lovely, and her chef being really fantastic.

She is a terrific boat, and [chef Eduardo Garcia](#) is still with us. We named her *Blind Date* because that's how my wife and I met. And you know what's funny about that boat: I once ran into Paul Allen, who owns the 413-foot motoryacht *Octopus*. I told him, 'We have a lot in common. You own the largest Lurssen, and I own the smallest.'

### So after you bought the first *Blind Date*, you put her right into the charter market based on your own experience?

Actually, no. My wife didn't want to offer the first *Blind Date* for charter. She didn't want anyone else sleeping in our bed.

But in our second year of ownership, she got over it, so we listed that boat for charter through [Peter Insull's](#), which will manage this new boat as well. It's been a terrific experience because we have Fiona still helping us after all these years. She is the gatekeeper, and she helps us make sure that the people who charter are going to treat our crew well.

That's very important to me. We've never had an unsatisfied charter client, but we did have one who left the crew only a 2-percent gratuity, even though he said he'd had a terrific time. That made me livid. I have always taken care of the crew when I chartered boats, and I expect our charter clients to take care of my crew just the same.

### So here you are at the 2009 Fort Lauderdale boat show, just four years after buying the 135-foot *Blind Date* on the brokerage market, and you are sitting aboard a brand-new 161-foot *Blind Date* built specifically for you. That's a pretty big leap in a pretty short amount of time.

When we were chartering, we had been aboard some bigger boats, and I had seen some of Trinity's 161-footers at boat shows. I really liked the split-level master cabin. It caught my attention.

I started to think about building a boat, and I knew that Trinity was the best American builder, hands-down. People talk about the difference in quality between American and European yards, but I've owned a [Lurssen](#), and I can tell you that the differential in quality between American and European yards is much less than it used to be, because the American builders have gotten so much better.

So I knew that I wanted to build with Trinity, and that I wanted that split-level master, and I liked that the boat was a tested platform. I also liked that it cruised at 18 or 19 knots. That's faster than a lot of bigger boats, but not so fast that you're just zipping around without enjoying the scenery.

### In looking around this new *Blind Date*, I see that Patrick Knowles has created yet another stunning motoryacht interior. The ambience on this boat is much different than what I've seen aboard other 161 Trinity builds. What else is uniquely yours?

Our master is the biggest difference from other models. I thought I could optimize it. Usually, the bed is on the top level and the sitting area is below. I wanted to switch that around, with a floating seating area on top and the bed on the bottom level.

I also didn't like the way other 161s carried their tenders on the sundeck up top. It's not optimized in terms of design. That should be a guest area, and when tenders are up there, it's all cranes and toys. On our boat, all the tenders are on the main deck aft, so the sundeck is completely open entirely for guest relaxation. The space up there feels like what you would find on a 190-footer.

The trade-off, of course, is that your 161 lacks the main deck aft dining area that the others have.



I knew, because I've chartered so many

times on boats with those dining areas, that I didn't like them. There's always fumes from the fuel because you're right above the engines, and when you're docked stern-to, people are watching you eat from the dock. I prefer to eat one deck up, which is where we have one of two outdoor dining spaces on this boat.

For the crew, our way is optimized, too, because the toys are all closer to the water. It makes it easier, quicker, and safer to launch them—and they can be launched without all the guests being interrupted and having to watch. Plus, moving them down two decks puts more weight down lower on the boat, which makes the boat more stable and comfortable.

### Did you consider building a tender garage, instead of using the aft deck space?

I did, and here's the thing: A garage does not solve the problems that we solved, because by regulation, you have to have a rescue tender that is accessible should you have a dead ship with no electrical power. Those garage doors are hydraulic and need power to be opened. So you still end up with a tender and a crane on your top deck, even if everything else is in the garage. It defeats the purpose.

### I have been very impressed of late with designer Patrick Knowles. His work aboard the Trinity motoryachts *Mine Games* and *Destination Fox Harb'r Too* really blew me away. The yachts are so different in terms of style, according to the owners' tastes, but both are absolutely stunning. How did you choose him as your designer?

Patrick had been the original designer on the 135-foot Lurssen that I bought, so I was familiar with his work from there. He really nailed what we asked him for on this boat. She's imbued with this notion that we have of 'Live, Love, Laugh, and Give.' He made this interior sexy, cozy, and soothing. It's fantastic.

### How involved were you with the build process itself?

This boat was the most owner's team-supervised and owner's team-engineered project that Trinity has ever done. We had four or five people there continuously at the yard, including a build captain, a build engineer, and a supervisor from [Patton Marine](#). I got everything I wanted, exactly the way I wanted it.

### I get the sense that charter guests will feel the same way.

We're looking for about six weeks of charter each year. And we can't wait to use her ourselves. I haven't even had a chance to sleep in my own master cabin yet.

*Blind Date* is part of the charter fleet at [Peter Insull's](#). Her lowest weekly base rate is \$235,000 for 10 to 12 guests with 10 crew. She will be in the Caribbean this winter and is expected to cruise in New England during summer 2010. Any [reputable charter broker](#) can help you book a week onboard.



161-foot Trinity motor yacht Blind Date master cabin

