



GO WITH THE FLOW

Delta Powerboats won big yet again at this year's London Boat Show. The designer is an unexpectedly unassuming man living in a small house on an island near Stockholm

By **Risto Pakarinen** Photos by **Karl Nordlund & Delta Boats**



**Lars Modin, the
visionary behind Delta
Powerboats**

Making plans as you go through life is often quite difficult. Magazine articles and books abound with advice on how to plan your career, but sometimes - perhaps even most of the time - life interferes and we simply work. At some point we look back and realize that we have a career.

Lars Modin is the designer behind Delta Powerboats, a Swedish luxury brand that recently won the prestigious Boat of the Year award at the London Boat Show. Delta won the same award with another model in 2013, but Modin's path to the top has been a long and winding one. And that's exactly how he likes it.

Modin has worked in advertising, designed hand tools and faucets, raced with boats, and he's taken a pilot's certificate. He started a company at the height of the dot-com boom, and he's worked and lived in Monaco as a designer and a yacht broker. He also captained a yacht before co-founding Delta in 2003.

Despite all this there has been one constant in his life: the sea.

"I don't think I could live in a place where I couldn't see the sea," he says. "Actually, it doesn't even have to be the sea - it could be a lake. I just need to see water."

Modin currently lives on the island of Vaxholm, about an hour's drive from Stockholm and known as the gateway to the city.

"It's only 15 minutes from here with a Delta boat, if you don't stick to the speed limits," he says with a

"I think I got to use our family's boat for the first time when I was 12, then I got a boat of my own at 14"

smile. "Or 25 minutes if you do."

When Delta was founded the first boats were built at an old factory that made Flipper boats, originally a Swedish brand. A few years later the owners brought in Lennart Alpstål, who owned a factory in Estonia. Modin gave him the rights to the brand, which he owned, while staying on as designer.

The first Delta yacht built in Estonia was also the first one Modin ever designed from scratch. He had tinkered with his own small craft and racing boats, but he drew on his whole life experience, including his first boating experiences when he was barely a teenager, when designing that first yacht.

"I think I got to use our family's boat for the first time when I was 12, and then I got a boat of my own at 14," he says.

Like a car to other kids, the boat gave Modin the keys to the world, the freedom to do whatever and go wherever he wanted. A few years later, when he worked in the city, he'd park his boat at Skeppsholmen in downtown Stockholm where the big ferries stop. This was not always the greatest idea.

"The police would call me to say the boat had sunk. Again," he says with a chuckle.

When he was in advertising he would commute to Kungsholmen, another Stockholm island, then go into the office to work on boat advertising. Essentially, boats have always been a part of Modin's life, even when he wasn't making a direct living from them.

"I guess most, if not all of my friends and contacts have something to do with boats," he says.

Even today, when he has carved out a new career designing boats, he still has the passion. Working ▶



with boats has not extinguished the fire.

"I still like all kinds of boats," he says. "I have old boats and old cars, and I collect things like that. There's a boat brand called Smuggler from the 1960s. I just happened to find, on the Internet, the first Smuggler ever made, and I'm trying to fix that up now. The goal is to be finished next year, when the boat turns 50," he says.

Modin designs every single aspect of Delta's boats, which allows him use every weapon in his creative toolbox. He designs the exterior and gets to use his expertise about how the boat should behave on water, how to make it sail best, how to make it environmentally friendly and fuel-efficient, and, of course, beautiful.

"The fun thing about Delta is that I get to do everything," Modin says.

Not only does he get to do everything, he gets to wear his interior designer's hat to put that stamp of exclusivity on Delta. For an 80-foot yacht he used shower components by Tapwell, because once upon a time he did work for that company.

It was his passion for design that took him to Monaco in the 1980s, as head designer of an enterprise created by tennis legend Björn Borg. The Björn Borg Design Group crashed in 1989, but Modin decided

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Learn more

deltapowerboats.se
Follow Lars Modin's Smuggler renovation project at smuggler1.blogspot.se



Photo by Shutterstock

Lars likes

Should you be traveling by sea, here are some of Lars Modin's favorite boating destinations

- 1 Skagen, Denmark**
"To see the light."
- ▷ **Symi, Greece**
"A peaceful pearl of an island."
- ▷ **Sanary-sur-Mer, France**
"Like St Tropez before the jetsetters got there."
- ▷ **Saaremaa, Estonia**
"While you're there, pick up your new Delta."
- ▷ **Gotska Sandön, Sweden**
"Only on a calm day."

to stay in Monaco. When it came time to leave, boats were his way out – both as a broker and as captain of a friend's yacht.

All that experience, both the good and the bad, comes together when Modin picks up his electronic pen and draws the first lines in FreeHand, an out-of-date program that has forced Modin to buy several computers with operating systems that support the software.

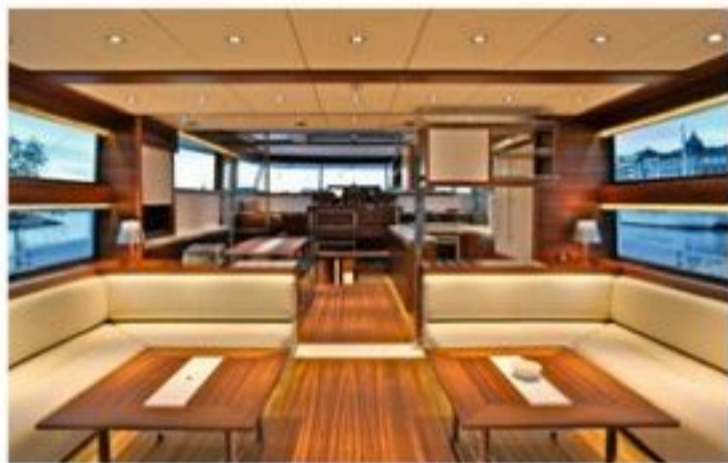
He adds new things, one by one, dipping in to the more than 60-year-old well that is his life.

"My designs are fairly classic," he says. "I use simple lines. My beds are square, not round. The windows are also like regular windows – nothing fancy there. I use stainless steel and other uncluttered materials. There are several myths in the business, like that you shouldn't use tinted glass, but I use green and it works fine, even in the dark.

You can tell the Delta boats are expensive – the 80-foot yacht costs about €6 million – but they're not made just to show off the owner's wealth.

"They are durable and are made to be used," says Modin.

Over the years, Delta has sold hundreds of boats to clients all over the world. Most of the boats are at least partly custom-made, with minor changes made according to the customer's wishes. This means there is little back inventory. Twelve years



Delta Powerboats offer an excellent balance between form and function, and are designed with sustainability in mind

is not a long time in the yacht business, but Modin says the company already has clients who have both upgraded to a bigger Delta and downgraded to a smaller one. It also has customers who have owned every model the company has made.

Currently, Delta has eight different models available, from the 26-foot open model to the 80-foot yacht, and the company says they're the fastest-growing motorboat brand in Scandinavia.

Modin is happy to be back in Vaxholm, where he has his view over the sea while sitting on his porch and taking photos of eagles flying overhead. He can ride his bike to the center of picturesque Vaxholm, where he might bump into Ingemar Stenmark, Sweden's alpine skiing hero, who also lives there.

"I lived in the same building with him in Monaco," Modin says casually.

It's just one of those things. Like finding the first Smuggler boat on the Web, or designing an award-winning yacht. Things happen. ○

BOATING TRENDS

It's slowly getting warmer so let's see what we want and need for our boats this summer

Magnus Rassy

CEO/Hallberg-Rassy – Swedish bespoke yacht manufacturer

"The biggest trend I'm seeing is a need for greater comfort and better functionality. Easier handling is important, and today we see a very strong demand for both bow-and stern thrusters, which make it possible to move the boat sideways and even push it to the dock when the wind is against you. Another example is more and more electrical aids for sail handling, such



as electric in-mast furling, electric winches, and so on. Buyers also want increased natural light in the saloon, along with more armchairs, and they want less but more comfortable berths to maximize leisure space."

Thomas Ekholt Aalrud

Sales and Marketing – Norwegian boat manufacturer Marex

"Security and safety are always issues for boat owners. You can security mark your boat and out-board engine, and GPS installation is also an option. Both make recovery much easier. Both of these measures, by the way, reduce your insurance costs. Some engines now offer a digital pin code that you need in order to start your boat. When it comes to safety, we at Marex install door alarms on the children's cabin, so if small kids wake up during the night and leave their cabin, the alarm goes



off in the cabin of the parents. Most manufacturers now also install a Sea-fire system in the engine room, a high-performance fire suppression system released if the engine room temperature goes higher than 73 degrees Celsius. When it comes to comfort people want two ready-made areas: one inside, one outside, so you can sit and relax where the weather dictates."

Hanse Thorslund

Event Manager – Stockholm International Boat Show

"There are a number of trends that we're seeing, from the way boats look to how they are built. An aluminum boat, perhaps with a carbon fiber reinforced hull, is very popular right now. This has to do with more and more families buying boats. They want longevity and durability. They also want comfort and kitchens with a high standard. The boat's appearance, both the exterior and interior, is another area growing in importance.

"The environment is increasingly important and getting a lot of



attention, with boaters much more aware of the impact their practices can have on the sea. Much less toxic paints, better motors, and better cleaning methods are all being used. This is especially important in the Baltic Sea, which is extremely fragile. Finally, we're seeing more and more people choosing to rent a boat for a season, or to just charter when they need one."