



A UNIQUE THROWBACK

Wheeler Yacht Company's 55-foot motoryacht is a modern classic from yachting's golden era.

BY SAM WHITE

TODAY'S YACHTS continue to evolve in what's become an arms race to create the fastest, the sleekest, the most spacious—insert your superlative of the day here. ¶ But then a design comes along that strikes a chord within the soul of a true boating enthusiast. That note chimed clearly when the Wheeler Yacht Company recently unveiled the Wheeler 55. ¶ For those unfamiliar with the

brand's history, Wheeler Shipyard Corporation created the iconic 1931 Playmate model, including the 38-foot *Pilar*—the boat Ernest Hemingway famously used to hunt U-boats during World War II. Years later, he penned *The Old Man and the Sea* based in part on the time he spent chasing blue marlin in the Caribbean from *Pilar's* broad cockpit. ¶ Some seven decades later, the brand has a new leader in Wes Wheeler—a great-grandson

Blending vintage lines with modern construction and propulsion, the Wheeler 55 is the best of boating's yesterday and today.

“This is a very special boat. She was built entirely by hand, even most of the stainless pieces. I’m sure when you see the 55 in person, it will be the most unique boat at any marina on the East Coast.”

— WES WHEELER, WHEELER YACHT COMPANY



01.

CUSTOM GALLEY

Galley surfaces are all stainless steel, similar to the boats of the era. The galley fixtures were selected to reflect the period.

02.

WOOD WORKS

Interior joinery is 100 percent African sipo wood, which is similar in appearance and strength to Honduran mahogany.

03.

WHAT LIES BELOW

The engine room belowdecks spans the full length of the salon. It is accessed via fore and aft stairs, as well as from deck hatches.



of the company's founding boatbuilder, Howard E. Wheeler Sr.—as well as a new outlook. Wheeler Yacht Company is paying homage to a bygone era of yachting, with retro lines harkening back to those glory days of elegant commuters. Outwardly appearing as a fully restored cruiser from a storied past, the Wheeler 55 proves that appearances can be deceiving. The custom cold-molded, handcrafted wooden vessel was built in

the Brooklin Boat Yard in Brooklin, Maine, and features some incredible woodwork and craftsmanship throughout its design, as well as a luxurious interior. It's powered by twin 1,000 hp MAN diesel engines—pushing it to a reported top hop of 30 knots—while also possessing the modern amenities boaters have come to expect, including dynamic trim control and gyro-stabilization. A wolf in sheep's clothing? Perhaps. ¶ “This

A HISTORIC BOATBUILDER: WHEELER SHIPYARD CORPORATION

Howard E. Wheeler Sr. founded the Wheeler Shipyard Corporation in 1910 in Brooklyn, New York, to build yachts up to 85 feet in length.

As the popularity of Wheeler's line grew, the company leased a 21-acre tract of land in Whitestone, Long Island, in 1941 to produce vessels for the US Navy and Coast Guard to help defend America's shores during World War II. At one point, it employed some 6,000 workers. By the time Wheeler closed its doors in 1965, the Wheeler Shipyard Corporation had built more than 3,500 hulls.



is a boat which was built to be ultramodern, but to look like the classics of the 1930s,” Wes Wheeler says. “The structural elements are built out of Canadian Douglas fir, which is usually what Brooklin Boat Yard likes to use for the backbone of the boat. The hull is made from sapele plywood over Douglas fir ribbands, and the entire superstructure of the boat is African sipo wood. This is a very special boat and crafted for a niche market. She

was built entirely by hand, even most of the stainless pieces.” ¶ Wheeler says the 55 is also efficient; at 1,800 rpm, it makes around 20 knots in a slight chop and burns about 50 gallons per hour. At that speed, it will provide 15 to 17 hours of running time and a range of 340 miles. ¶ “She will hit 30 knots at max throttle,” he says. “I’m sure when you see the 55 in person, it will be the most unique boat at any marina on the East Coast.” ¶

Alfred’s Interiors customized the vessel’s upholstery, while Martha Coolidge handled the interior design.