



# BACK ON THE HUNT

A POST-QUARANTINE SEA TRIAL OF THE HUNT 63 REMINDS THE AUTHOR THAT THE ONLY WAY TO CREATE SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL IS BY EMBRACING COLLABORATION. BY DANIEL HARDING JR.



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The Hinckley yard in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, is the antithesis of my previous few months. Alive and buzzing with activity, workers hustle from boat to boat. A refit Huckins is being lowered into the drink and a striking Talaria is getting engine work done. Cars zip in and out of parking spots and boats pull in and out of slips. It's a bluebird morning, warm but not too humid.

I stand for a minute and soak up the energy radiating from hundreds of people scurrying about and working towards a common goal. It's a taste of the analog world, a world, I realize, I have desperately missed.

I walk the dock beside the travelift and come face-to-face with the newcomer in the Hunt Ocean series—the 63. I walk up to the enormous swim platform and the oversized (if there is such a thing) American flag flapping playfully in the wind. The color of the hull catches my eye. A combination of teal and sky blue, it is, for a lack of better word, beautiful. Just a couple weeks before, I was going back and forth with Hinckley's VP of Sales and Marketing, Scott Bryant, about the possibility of doing a virtual walk-through of the boat. Safer in these confusing times? Yes. The same thing as seeing the boat shine under a summer sun with your own eyes and feeling the bare teak beneath your feet? Not by a long shot.

We were practicing social distancing, so I opt to give myself a solo tour of the interior. This was a smart move in retrospect. As a journalist, you're not supposed to ogle a new model in front of the builder, even if they can't see your dropped jaw behind a mask.

The interior has a lot to like. Hinckley-level woodwork (Hinckley acquired Hunt in 2010) is everywhere you look. The boat at first glance looks like the perfect combination of modern motoryacht and classic commuter yacht. There's plenty of elbow room for customization in this series, but hull number one has the galley down. There's a lot to be said for the ever-popular galley up, but for me, being able to cook in private has its advantages (read: fewer witnesses). Directly across from the galley down is my favorite spot aboard. At first blush, it's a second salon that again makes you think of classic commuter yachts. It's a spot where you can escape the prying eyes dockside and read a book, watch a movie or steal a few minutes of shuteye.



ONNE VAN DER WAL





RPM	KNOTS	GPH	RANGE	dB(A)
600	5.7	2.5	2,280	56
1000	9.6	11	872	56
1500	13.3	34	391	64
2000	22.3	65	343	73
2450	31.5	100	315	75

Seas: Calm | Fuel: Full | Water: ¾ Full

LOA: 69'6"  
Beam: 18'0"  
Draft: 4'6"  
Displ.: 78,000 lbs.  
Fuel: 1,000 gal.  
Water: 300 gal.  
Power: 2/1,000-hp Volvo  
Penta IPS 1350  
Base price: \$4,395,000

ONNE VAN DER WAL







Enormous ports fill the amidships master with light. Left: Pocket doors turn a second, commuter-style salon across from the galley into a private stateroom. Below: The engine room offers exceptional access.

If a couple extra guests decide to join your cruise—after a couple bottles from the built-in salon wine storage are polished off perhaps—this space converts to a stateroom in mere seconds. Pocket doors close the space off, and the settee converts into a berth plenty big enough for two, complete with access to the head.

This space would then be the third full stateroom aboard; there is a captain's (or kid) cabin aft. If owners opt for the galley up, you have the option to add a fourth stateroom in its place below. And as someone who has spent plenty of nights on salon sofas, that space could easily be made to accommodate two more: 11 guests able to sleep aboard a 63-footer comfortably is no small feat.

The area aboard I'm most interested in inspecting is the engine room. Three years and a lifetime ago, I tested the Hunt 76 and was shocked in the best way possible by that space. I breathe a short sigh of relief when I realize the mechanical space in the 63 does not disappoint. Access to service points is, quite frankly, as good as it gets. Well-ventilated and ship-like, the engine room has walk-around access to the IPS 1350s, and access to the pods themselves—often hidden from sight and inspection—is excellent. I snap a few shots on my cell phone. Bill Pike would definitely approve, I think to myself.

With my walkthrough out of the way, it's time for the business at hand. Our captain for the day, Service Manager Yosh Sokolowski, maneuvers the boat out of a crowded—and expensive—marina and into Narragansett Bay.

Getting back on the water reminds me a bit of the scene from *The*

*Wizard of Oz* where Dorothy lands in Oz and everything snaps into color. We are suddenly back in a vibrant world where everything feels vaguely familiar, yet at the same time completely foreign, like returning home from a semester away at school.

Our sea trial of the 63 was both perfect and terrible. Perfect in that it was a stunning summer day with a light breeze coming down the bay. Boat traffic came via a single RIB dancing far behind our wake. It was a great day for a boat ride, but terrible in the fact that this hull, a highly touted design from Ray Hunt Design, would not get to prove its prowess.

We conduct our two-way speed runs, officially recording what my eyes and ears are telling me, and then I close my notebook. I don't think I've tested a boat in New England and not made the joke, "Okay, now how about some mudslides and lobster rolls on Block Island?" It's overtold for sure but it makes me smile so I continue using it. After all, it's the rule of numbers. Eventually someone will take me up on the offer. That's when Yosh tells me he was on Block Island just the night before. He recounts how nice of a day and evening it was.

I'm not sure what we talked about next; I was too busy daydreaming. The control of the IPS and wing station, paired with excellent visibility, makes me think I can handle this boat as an owner operator. Just maybe the Hinckley team will indulge me in an extended test? Maybe next time.

What impresses me most about the Ocean series is how much collaboration goes into each build. The hull is designed, as it always has

been, by Ray Hunt Design in Massachusetts. The boat itself is built in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. The interior is created by Martha Coolidge in Maine, and it's serviced and given the white-glove treatment by the growing East Coast powerhouse that is Hinckley. Oftentimes, having this many chefs in the kitchen is a recipe for disaster, but in the case of the Hunt 63, it comes together just right.

Before our sea trial, I had the chance to catch up with President of Ray Hunt Design, Winn Willard, on the flybridge. Conversation turned to his company's famous founder and the company's recent and subtle name change from C. Raymond Hunt & Associates Inc. to Ray Hunt Design. He pointed to the new nomenclature on his shirt, right below the Hunt logo. The logo caught my eye: an arrow piercing two crescents. I asked Willard what the meaning behind the logo was. He explained that it was Ray Hunt's personal burgee symbol, a symbol that back in the day was a precursor to AIS that helped identify a boat's owner and helped you decide if you wanted to visit them or not.

"It might be an arrow shooting into two moons or two bananas," he shrugged.

"I really hope it's not two bananas," I replied.

It's funny what can stick in your mind. Later that night, I thought about that logo again. A web search revealed no further meaning, so I convinced myself it was two moons and forced it to the back of my brain. Trying not to think about something is about as effective as walking on water.



If those symbols are in fact two moons, they might just symbolize the passing of time. And the arrow, of course, represents "hunt." Channeling my inner psychologist, I think it means through time, apt for the man who created the most timeless hull to date and who founded a company with such drive that they still speak his name with reverence. It's also an apt logo for a boat builder that seems to keep getting better with age. Then again, it could just be an arrow stuck between two bananas. □