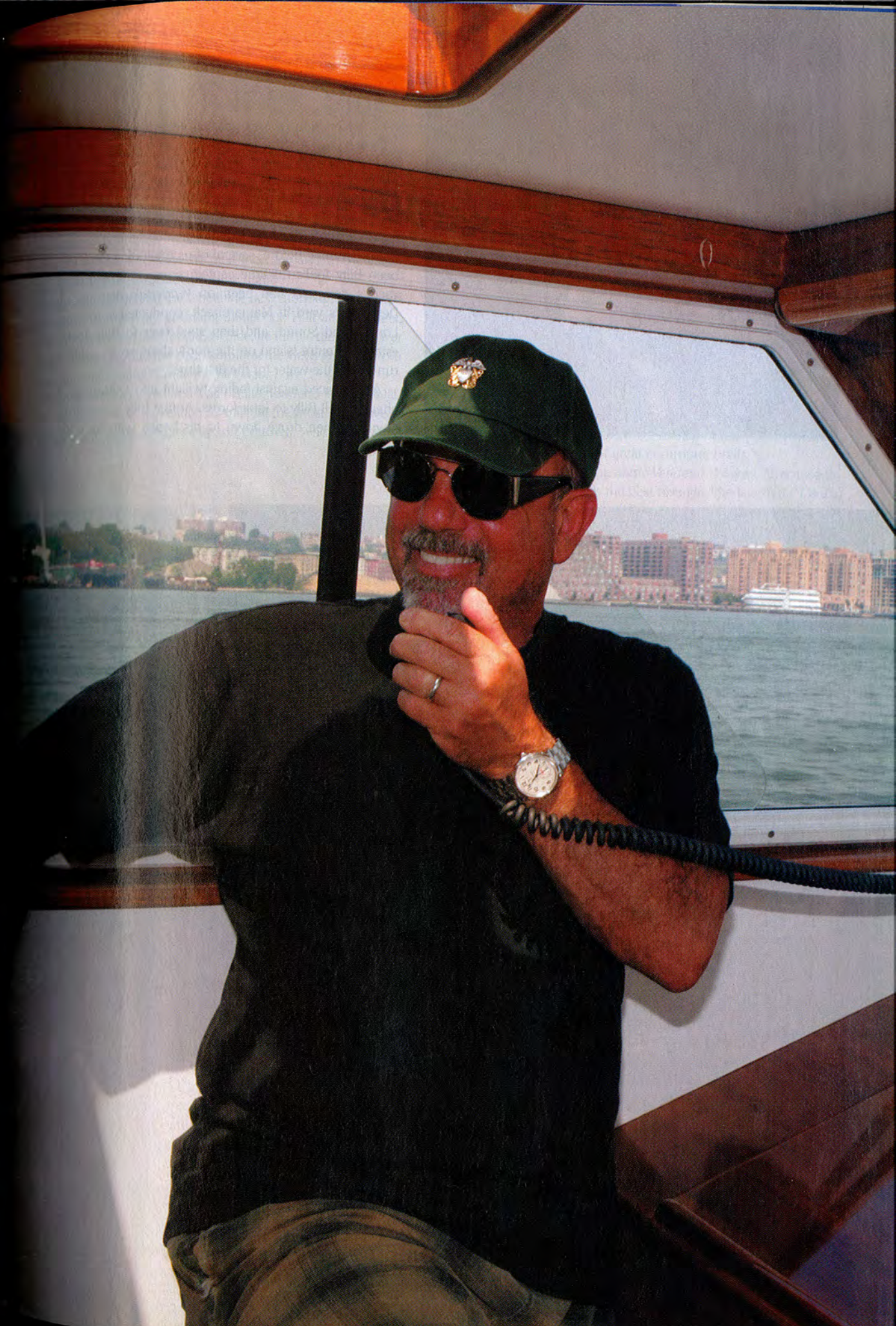


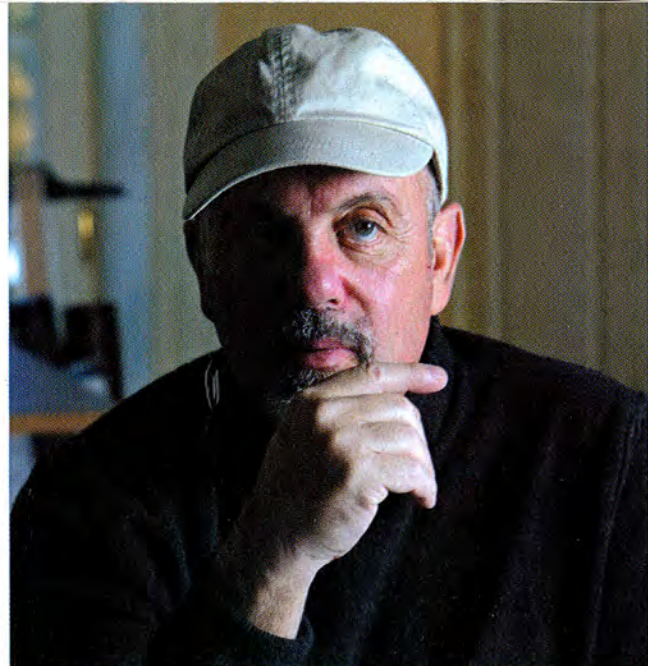


rush hour

Billy Joel builds a gorgeous new 57-foot commuter to bring back
the golden age of yachting **By Peter A. Janssen**

Photography by Billy Black





Billy Joel is definitely a New York kind of guy

After all, he was born in the Bronx. He sings about New York. He comes alive in New York. He clearly loved New York—and his new boat—as he sped down the East River this particular summer morning on his drop-dead gorgeous 57-foot commuter *Vendetta*.

The evening before, several of us (including Gene Pelland, who's been Billy Joel's full-time captain since 1998, and Doug Zurn, the yacht's designer) had been on *Vendetta's* first sea trial. We left Derecktor's yard in Mamaroneck, conducted some speed tests on Long Island Sound, and then sped over to Billy Joel's waterfront estate in Centre Island on the north shore so he could see his boat running in the water for the first time.

As we raced against fading twilight into Oyster Bay, Gene called ahead to tell Billy to look for us. At first Billy waved from his upper lawn but then drove down to his beach with his wife, Kate, and

waved some more as Gene turned *Vendetta* around in her own length. On his cell, Gene asked if Billy wanted a ride. It turned out that Kate needed to go to New York the next morning. After all, *Vendetta* was built to be a commuter, a modern-day, high-tech reincarnation of the long, low, sleek yachts that carried the Vanderbilts, the Whitneys and the Pulitzers from their Long Island homes to their Wall Street offices in the '20s and early '30s, the golden age of yachting. We agreed to pick up Billy and Kate the next morning and, in the growing dusk, sped back to Derecktor's for the night.

When Billy first got behind the wheel the next morning, he seemed fairly serious, feeling his way, checking things out. Half an hour later, however, as he drove past the Upper East Side, he turned the wheel over to Gene and walked around the boat, admiring the view, grinning from ear to ear and softly singing "I'm in the Mood for Love."

Actually, Billy Joel has loved boats all his life. *Vendetta* is just the latest, most beautiful and, at more than \$2 million, the most expensive in his impressive fleet so far. He grew up in Levittown, where he started

taking piano lessons when he was four. He now lives in his brick Georgian Revival mansion on Centre Island; his boating office (or "chart room," as he calls it) is in the second floor of a smaller building next to the main house; it offers sweeping views of Oyster Bay. But this is merely proof of how a modern rock star can live. Billy Joel recorded his first gold album, "Piano Man," back in 1974. All told, his 16 albums have sold more than 100 million copies to date. His musical, "Movin' Out," opened on Broadway in 2002 and is still playing to full houses.

In the early '90s, he worried about boating jobs on Long Island. "First there was the luxury tax and then the recession. I wanted to keep talented people working. I wanted to get involved. I didn't want the boatbuilders to lay off people." He teamed up with Doug Zurn and Peter Needham at Coecles Harbor Marine and, in 1996, introduced the 38-foot Shelter Island Runabout. So far, 39 have been sold (base price: \$356,800).

Then he wanted something bigger for himself. "There are two subplots here," he said. "Trying to revive a local builder, plus reviving a tradition of great commuter boats."

Why the name *Vendetta*? I asked. "Because living well is the best revenge," he laughed. "I live in a Gatsby-type house, now I have a Gatsby-type boat. I enjoy that lifestyle."

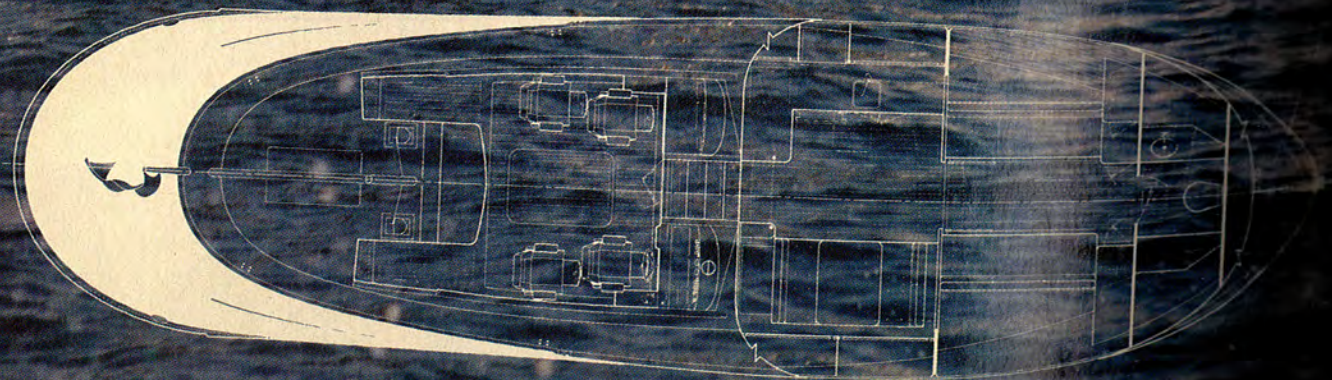
Vendetta was started at North End Composites in Maine, the hull built with SCRIMP technology, vinylester resin infused with a DuPont Kevlar



OPENING SPREAD: VENDETTA IN OYSTER BAY; BILLY JOEL ON HIS FIRST COMMUTE. THIS SPREAD: VENDETTA IN NEW YORK. BILLY JOEL IN HIS "CHART ROOM," TOP LEFT, AND AT THE HELM, LOWER RIGHT. OPPOSITE RIGHT: KATE AND BILLY JOEL, DESIGNER DOUG ZURN, CAPTAIN GENE PELLAND.



"On a boat, I never leave anything alone. I'm like a wife, always chipping away, trying to make things better"



hybrid cloth to keep the weight down. She has a slender (15-foot beam) modified-V hull with straight aft sections designed to smooth out the Long Island Sound chop. "I like to go about 45 mph," Billy says. "I don't care about the wind blowing in my hair. Hell, I don't have any hair left anyway," he laughs and takes off his tan captain's hat to show that he's speaking the truth.

Last fall *Vendetta*, with the hull and deck laid up, was moved down to Coecles for finishing, but Coecles suddenly had more orders for the Shelter Island Runabout. This spring Gene moved it to Derecktor's. Billy saw the boat there for the first time at the launch ceremony on a hot Sunday afternoon in July. The boat was on stands in the yard. "I love it," he said. Then he stepped back 20 yards or so, putting his fingers over his eyes to measure the view. He was bothered by the curves at the aft end of the eyebrow and the superstructure. "My eye doesn't know where to go," he said. "The curves don't match; they fight for your attention." He started to look for Doug Zurn, then broke out laughing. "On a boat, I never leave anything alone. I'm like a wife, always chipping away, always trying to make things better."

A few minutes later I ducked under the boat with Zurn. She has twin Power-Vent surface drives tucked under a torpedo stern. "These give you the effect of power ventilated surface drives, like Arnesons," he said. "But you don't have the machinery hanging off the end of the boat. And you end up with 6 percent more efficiency."

In truth, *Vendetta* is a beautiful yacht; the tumblehome alone is enough to set her apart from anything else on the water. The sweeping sheer; black Sterling paint; white cabin sides; teak accents on the cabin, toe rail, dorade boxes, mast and boom, plus the thin gold stripe along the top of the hull side, are simply elegant.

LOA: 57'3"
 Beam: 15'
 Draft: 3'11"
 Disp.: 40,200 lb.
 Fuel: 660 gal.
 Water: 120 gal.
 Engines: 2x MAN 1,300 hp
 Props: 5 blade, 27x44 Hale
 Propellers: Power-Vent surface piercing drives
 Transmission: ZF 1.5:1
 Gear ratio
 Controls: ZF Mather
 Electronics: Raymarine E-Series
 Top Speed: 43 knots
 Designer: Zurn Yacht Design

On the bridge deck, four STIDD chairs, two by two, offer plenty of commuting comfort; and there's another STIDD settee back by the mast. A Raymarine customized package includes the E-Series multi-function network displays. Below, the cabin is open; the only door is for the head, all the way forward in the bow. There's a beautiful teak dining table (with gold striping) to starboard, a small galley to port, and two settees forward. "Less is more," Gene commented. "People ask, 'How many beds are there?' Well, it's a commuter. How many beds are there on the Long Island Rail Road?"

On the first sea trials, with full fuel and water, the twin MAN 1,300 hp engines pushed *Vendetta* to an even 43 knots at 2370 rpm. "That's pretty good," said Zurn. "We'll tweak the props and get a little more." The seas were flat that evening, but at high-speed turns the boat was solid as could be; the ride was soft, comforting.

As we left Oyster Bay on that warm summer night, a green light was blinking on a can in the harbor. Remembering Billy Joel's comment about living like Gatsby, I flashed back to F. Scott Fitzgerald, to East Egg and West Egg, to Jay and Daisy. *Vendetta* picked up speed and I looked at Gene. We both broke out into big grins. □

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BILLY JOEL AND KATE, GOING TO TOWN, BELOW. VENDETTA'S OPEN INTERIOR, BOTTOM, AS SEEN LOOKING AFT FROM THE BOW. OPPOSITE: VENDETTA SPEEDING UP TO 43 KNOTS ON LONG ISLAND SOUND.

RPM	KNOTS	dB(a) HELM
588/IDLE	7.2	79
1000	10.0	79
1500	13.5	88
2000	20.3	98
2370	43.0	98

Speeds were measured in Long Island Sound by Raymarine E-Series GPS. Calm seas, 5 knot wind, 51 feet water depth, with six people on board, and full fuel and water.

