



Most of us had, at some point of time in our lives, secretly dreamed of travelling around the world. Going solo though, is something else altogether. Nautique cruises in for a chat with Aron Meder, the daring enthusiast who is on his first solo quest around the world, during his brief stop-over at the Raffles Marina last December.

# Sailing Solo

By Alythea Ho

Fascinating as his voyage sounds, Meder reckons that travelling solo on a small boat comes with its unique challenges. Getting sleep for instance, has to be done in short intervals ranging anywhere from ninety minutes to just five minutes.

"When you're alone and tired, you begin to hallucinate too," says Meder. His longest port-to-port journey took more than 50 days. And for a man who's more than 6-ft in stature, living continuously aboard a tiny boat can result in much physical discomfort.

Even food can be an issue. "Normally I will catch fish, but sometimes there can be no fish for three weeks, so I have to rely on tinned food," he quips. Fortunately, his family, fans and sponsors have been supportive of his endeavour. Sometimes he gets food; at other times he receives free equipment and berthing. In Panama, for example, a sponsor sent him some sails to replace the original ones that were two decades old.

"I think this type of lifestyle is very healthy," he says happily, upon a bit of reflection. "Sometimes I like to jump in the water because it's so clean in the oceans. But mostly, you feel so close to the ocean when you're sailing on this kind of boat. It's a feeling that comes from inside."

His next plan is to continue onwards to Thailand and Sri Lanka, before returning to Europe in late 2009. "All subject to change, of course," he smiles. But with the continued support from his growing legion of admirers (and a little luck from a Polynesian protection tattoo on his ankle!) it looks like the young bold sailor is right on course towards completing his dream. *44*



Mr. Aron Meder & Mr Robert Bird, CEO Raffles Marina.

His tanned weathered features says it all. 29-year-old Aron Meder has been making waves in the international sailing community ever since he undertook one of the most challenging quests in sailing — going around the world solo in a boat that's only 19-ft-long.

"Everyone said to me, 'You're crazy, you're going to die!' They didn't believe in the Carina," recalls Meder, with a short laugh. He found the old fiberglass boat in 2004, lying unused in someone's garden. "I looked beyond its surface and could tell it had a nice shape. I liked it," says Meder, who paid US\$1,800 for it.

After some reconstructive work, the Carina was ready to sail, and in 2006 the Hungarian sailor began what would eventually be a solitary three-year-long voyage around the world. To date, he has already traversed the great Pacific and Atlantic oceans, weathered multiple storms that threatened to sink his little boat; pausing only to do brief stop-overs unless the unforeseeable happens. He adds that he prefers small quiet islands.