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Fairline Phantom 38

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A leaflet provided by Squadron Boat Sales for the Fairline Phantom 38 says: "A boat engineered to give every owner the confidence to explore the experience of longer range cruising and to discover the considerable style in which it can now be enjoyed."

This just about sums up the boat in a single sentence. The Phantom is purely designed and built for exhilarating cruising in the most luxurious of surroundings. There is a lot of boat and a host of comforts included in the not inconsiderable price.

Being imported from England it is affected by our fluctuating dollar, but that doesn't compromise the quality and workmanship that you get with any boat in the Fairline range.

Construction and engineering quality are aspects not easily assessed at first glance, but the Fairline brand is held in high esteem internationally. Certainly the 38-footer reflects a caring concern by the factory tradesmen for the attention to detail.

It has the same quality of design integration that we saw in the \$1million Fairline Targa 48, so in no way is the smaller boat a poorer cousin.

The interiors are fully lined with quality fabrics, carpets, cushions, curtains, suede upholstery and trims, all of which are complimented by a rich, deeply polished American Cherry timber used for the joinery and panelling.

The internal layout is quite traditional for a 38ft flybridge sedan. The main stateroom in the bow incorporates a double island berth, with more than adequate storage lockers, shelves and drawers to each side of the centre companionway entry.

The second cabin, located to starboard, has twin berth accommodation that tucks back in under the lower helm station. There is a good deal of space in this cabin, with ample headroom to move around, dress and to make up the beds.

Dual access is provided for the bathroom - direct off the main stateroom, as well as off the companion way. It has the usual facilities, all beautifully appointed, and sufficient space for showering and towelling off.

The saloon will satisfy Australian demands: there's a lower helm station for wet or cold weather; a settee that converts to a double bed (taking the maximum sleeping accommodation to six); removable seats; and the usual step-down galley.

With the upper flybridge deck extending aft almost to the line of the transom, the aft cockpit is well sheltered. The lounge along the face of the transom, makes a nice little place to sit and relax late in the day. Add a couple of folding deck chairs and a small table, and one could have a breakfast straight out of a cereal commercial.

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The flybridge is roomy and well equipped. For the harsh Australian sun, and given the white moulded and upholstery finishes, a bimini top is essential... and is about the only thing missing from the inventory.

A low radar arch built off the back of the flybridge deck gives the Fairline a distinctive profile. Australian flybridge cruisers tend to keep the radar arch well forward and raised high, as the foundation from which a bimini top can be mounted. But the Phantom 38, like many other European craft, keep it low for bridge clearance.

Base price for this high-class vessel is \$619,000, rising to more than \$706,000 as tested, making it one of the more expensive 38-foot flybridge sedans on the market.

There are quite a few extras included in the as-tested price. In addition to personalised items, there is a 28,000 BTU air conditioning system and an 8kVA Onan generator, while unusual for a boat of this size is a 4hp bow thruster.

The thruster is not essential as the boat manoeuvres quite easily with the twin diesels, but it certainly makes life very much easier if there is a strong cross wind or a brisk current when getting into a tight berth.

Engine Room

The twin 370hp Volvo diesels are the maximum power supplied for the Phantom 38, and these engines produce a performance that is just about ideal.

While the top speed is in excess of 30 knots, it's the cruising performance of 16 to 21 knots in the 1800 to 2100 rpm band that is good.

I found that we spent much of our time cruising Sydney Harbour and out through the Heads at, or just under, 2000 rpm. The boat felt most comfortable at this, the noise levels were way down, and everyone on board seemed to be happy getting along at a little under the 20-knot mark.

Given that a few years ago a lot of 10-metre (or larger) cruisers didn't have a top speed much better than 20 knots, this cruising performance is excellent and ideal for that quick easy trip up or down the coast to a favourite anchorage.

Story by David Toyer; Photos by Michael Pugh

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