

BOAT REPORT **PRESIDENT RANGER 43**

Built in Taiwan to suit the tastes of a selective clientèle, this semi-displacement cruiser offers a lot of boat for the money.





BOAT REPORT MANUFACTURERS, especially those from Taiwan catering for the American market, seem to have been preoccupied of late with offering the greatest possible volume on any given length: enclosing more and more of the boat, turning deck space into 'conservatories', with hard tops over aft decks surrounded by acres of sidescreens to maximise on accommodation, and creating full two-deckers.

This is all very useful, but if you want to go boating and actually feel you are partaking of the elements, albeit in luxury, then one Far East builder has a purposeful, eye-catching, aft-cabin alternative. That manufacturer is President, and the boat in question is the Ranger 43.

Design

At a quick glance, the 43 could be mistaken for one of those much-admired pilot boats redolent of authority, but wood rubbing strakes and blue

hull do not a Nelson make. Whilst the Ranger's hull and associated performance could best be described as semi-displacement, it lacks the tight round bilge and slender form most designers would associate with this designation.

The hull, and indeed some of the superstructure lines, come from one of President's previous flybridge designs, of which well over a hundred were commissioned. Underwater sections combine hard chines with a central run of keel, and the convex shape of the panels, especially over the forebody, naturally enhance the boat's strength and give a less punishing ride. This curvature is maintained to a lesser degree over the topsides, which are also of a foam sandwich construction, for extra stiffness without excess lay-up weight. After the midships station, the hull shape flattens considerably to provide the necessary lift, the depth of keel being exaggerated as the hull bottom warps from a deadrise of 17° at amidships to 9° at the transom.

President can offer purpose-designed accommodation to any specification, but our test boat featured one of two standard layouts. The interior is in light teak throughout, the joinery being of good quality. The windows let in a good amount of light, but the open interior of the Ranger 43 also benefits from a beam which is generous compared to traditional designs of similar form.



From a fine entry, the topsides fill considerably, with a useful amount of flare running back to the shoulder. This, and the lower full-length wooden rubbing strake, tends to prevent too much unwanted spray being carried back aboard. A second wood and rubber strake at the gunwale further augments the seamanlike appearance of this raised-aft-deck cruiser.

Exterior

Of course, seamanlike appearances can be deceptive, but the Ranger did not disappoint. The mundane exercise of boarding, for example, is helped by a simple clip-on stainless steel two-tread ladder, and by extra well-braced stanchions at the gap in the solid guardrails.

The latter stand 29in (73cm) high on a toerail. We were pleased with the 16in (40cm) wide sidedecks and non-slip, which extends onto the lower superstructure, but were less happy about

the placing of the handrail along the coachroof side, which (although well-intentioned) actually tends to push you outboard. Future vessels will have this mounted on the coachroof top instead.

Deck hardware is substantial, with the main 16in (40cm) cleats fore and aft running through well-placed fairleads of similar dimensions, and two 12in (30cm) spring cleats each side mounted atop the toerail, leaving the sidedecks clear of obstructions. A large Maxwell vertical windlass, with remote controls at both helm positions, looks well set to handle the ground tackle.

The guardrails around the raised aft cockpit are finished with teak taffrails and equipped with solid dodgers, with well-secured doors leading down to the GRP bathing platform. Teak is laid to this aftdeck area as standard.

The helm, with its attractive twin-spoke wood wheel, is set centrally. Although only one adjustable chair was supplied on our test boat, President aim to double up on this. We were



pleased to see a full set of engine instrumentation and start/stop buttons at this outer helm station, along with a large, purpose-built, well-protected chart table. Even on the most inclement of days, the skipper and his companions are particularly well protected, with a canvas canopy filling the gap between screen and the substantial stainless steel radar hoop. The consensus was that the screen would benefit from being two or three inches higher, as the top of the frame falls annoyingly at eye level.

The radar hoop can be dropped to reduce the air draught to just over 11ft (3.35m). According to the importers, Pacific Motor Yachts, the common aft-cabin layout problems of lack of seating and lack of exterior stowage are to be rectified on the Ranger 43 by the inclusion of aft-deck seat lockers.

Accommodation

President are ready to customise to any specific requirement, although two standard layouts are offered. A midships cabin to replace the lower dinette is the main option to the fore/aft cabin layout, where the main saloon settee and this secondary dinette convert to double berths.

Our test Ranger had the two-cabin layout, the forward one having twin bunks instead of the alternative double. Both have spacious en-suite facilities, the master cabin's including an offset shower area. Clothes storage in both is also excellent, with plenty of hanging space and useful spreads of drawers and cupboards, plus dressing tables complete with swing-out stools.

Additional stowage throughout the interior was not only capacious but also usefully thought out. Drawers are fitted wherever possible in lieu of harder-to-get-at lockers, while a large section of the queen-sized aft berth hinges on a gas strut to swallow bulky items or bedding from the saloon.

The main saloon features an eight-seater settee to port, with a sideboard opposite containing the entertainments centre and bar, complete with fridge.

The comfortable helm position just in front benefits from its own half-height opening door to the side deck, and has been equipped with a big enough console to accommodate the usual engine instrumentation, controls and ready-use switches, as well as adequate space for a full set of navigation electronics. Everything is convenient for hand and eye rather than perched on a neck-cricking deckhead console or across

Who needs a second helm when the upper station is as well sheltered as this? Future models will sport a second helm seat. Blue Star is powered by a pair of Caterpillar's impressive 3208 diesels rated at 320hp, one of two engine options.

the central companionway. Above the main electrical panel opposite is a hinged countertop area which the skipper should quickly earmark as his chart table.

The open-plan lower saloon is spacious, with a six-seater dinette and electric galley, including Bosch hob, oven, microwave and domestic-sized fridge/freezer. One thoughtful item for the cook we especially liked, bearing in mind the all-electric galley, was the handily-placed starter panel for the generator.

The standard of interior finish was generally good. The light teak joinery, highlighted by plenty of natural light through the low windows, was of a superior quality, lockers for the most part lined (easy-clean GRP mouldings being a nice touch in the galley) and details such as the underside of seat bases covered. One or two cupboards, though, could have done with some closer attention in the aft cabin, which backed without protection directly onto exhaust trunking and areas of the steering flat.

Engines

Two engine options are offered, our test boat being equipped with the larger installation of twin



3208 Caterpillars in their turbocharged 320hp form. The alternative is a pair of 250hp Cummins.

For major work, the saloon floor comes up piecemeal, but for day-to-day checks access to the engine compartment is via a crawl-through door behind the steps in the after cabin. Once you are ensconced here, most items of interest can be inspected easily, the raw-water strainers and fuel/water separators being conveniently sited on the forward bulkhead while the shaft logs and battery boxes are clear of obstructions.

Even so, the pair of V8 diesels, encapsulated 8.5kW Onan generator and two stainless steel 170gal fuel tanks mean the engine compartment is pretty full. The engines butt up to the wing tanks so there is insufficient room to pass even a small adjustable spanner between the outboard side of the engine and the tank, although the Cats are handed so the average owner should have little need for access to this outboard side. The Cummins units, with their in-line configuration, are several inches narrower and would alleviate the problem.

The whole compartment, including the tanks, is covered with 'eggbox' sandwich foil-faced insulation. We were pleased to see not only a good array of automatic bilge pumps throughout the boat but also a good-sized Whale manual unit in the saloon. We pointed out that both the engineroom and accommodation were devoid of fire-extinguishers, and were assured that these were soon to be fitted.

Whilst it appeared the engines could be run either from their own dedicated tank or from just one, only one set of return lines had been fitted, curtailing the boat's range should the need arise to run off a single tank. However, the installation appeared generally sound, with simple but all too often forgotten touches such as sight gauges on the tanks. The rudder bearings, steering gear and hydraulic reservoir can be inspected via hatches in the base of the after bunk.

Performance and handling

Neither of our test days could be described as taxing for a boat of this size, but its manners were impeccable on the tidal rips and washes we could find.

Amongst the Ranger's positive traits was its easy turning manner at speed, and we liked its responsiveness to the helm. Cutting back on the top hamper obviously makes slow-speed manoeuvring less prone to the whims of the wind, as does a useful run of keel; the latter also assists in straight-line tracking, which proved impressively steady.

It was a confidence-inspiring performance, and our feelings were borne out by the delivery skipper who did the round trip to Chelsea Harbour for last January's London Boat Show, a comfortable journey by all accounts. The boat's semi-displacement form meant that, once the head seas built up, its speed could be nudged back to a comfortable 16 knots without suffering a planing boat's problem of powering up to planing speed only to be knocked back to wallow in displacement mode.

Visibility from the exterior helm was good, except for the view astern which was curtailed by the dodgers set round the guardrails — unfortunate given that the builders have gone to the trouble of incorporating windows in the



◁ saloon's aft bulkhead. In fact, with the upper helm so well protected, most owners would have to be hard pressed to need to retreat below, where there is also a visibility problem due to the front of the coachroof covering a sector over the bow. Standing gets over this, but a few inches shaved off the leading edge of the coachroof would probably cure the problem without restricting headroom below.

Our test boat had an owner awaiting delivery, so we refrained from pulling the fuel system apart to plumb in our meters. However, from data we have gathered on a vessel of similar size, speed and displacement, we estimate that running the sizable tanks dry would give a creditable range of just under 400 miles, at high on 19 knots, using about 17gph (77lph) and maintaining a cruising figure of at least a mile per gallon at 2400rpm.

Opening the throttles fully brought the revs up to 2750rpm, 50 short of the 3208s' maximum, possibly due to some minor fouling since the boat had been in the water for three months.

Without any tab, we measured a top speed of 22.5 knots. Dropping the bow slightly for better visibility pulled this back a knot, the prominent coachroof being the culprit here rather than any uncomfortably high trim angle. Running up to the full rated 2800rpm would give a consumption figure in the order of 30gph (136lph), dropping the range to around 250 miles and giving 0.75mpg. We can report that the Ranger responded as well to the opening of the throttles as it did to the helm. The hull just pitches her bow up a few degrees and accelerates to 20 knots in just over 10sec — very nimble for 12.7 tons.

Noise levels were reasonable, 81dB(A) being recorded on the all-important aft deck with a similar reading in the saloon at our 19-knot cruising speed, although as with nearly all similar layouts it was the aft-cabin which suffered most.

Propellers running close to the hull bottom are the usual culprits, and vibration can also be a problem in severe instances. Fortunately, the four-bladers fitted by President did not show any signs of the latter, with readings well below the uncomfortable threshold of 90dB(A) at cruising revs, although they did rise to 92dB(A) at full revs. If that seems excessive we suggest trying the forecabin, which remained commendably quiet.

Conclusions

The price given in the accompanying specification table benefits from a full inventory of electronics, including radar, autopilot, navigator and VHF, along with central heating and entertainments centre.

After our all too brief encounter with the 43, our main niggle was the partial obscuring of the bows by the coachroof: an inconvenience rather than a major problem, and one which can be rectified relatively easily. Apart from that, we liked the boat for a great many reasons, not least its versatility. Swing down the radar mast and you can try some docile river cruising, or batten down and you can take off to explore inland waterways on the Continent instead.

If you visited Chelsea Harbour in January, the Ranger will certainly have caught your eye; it did ours, and we were pleased to get a closer inspection, coming away satisfied that her good looks run more than just skin-deep. □

President Ranger 43

Engines: twin 3208T Caterpillar diesels, 320hp at 2800rpm, V8 10.4lt.

Conditions: wind E Force 2, sea calm. **Load:** fuel 60%, water 100%, crew 2.

rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	trim	Sound levels dB(A)			
							saln	fwdcab	aftcab	aftdck
1400	9.0	4.0	18.2	2.25	765	2.0	76	70	82	75
1600	10.6	6.4	29.1	1.66	564	3.0	76	72	84	77
2000	14.3	11.9	54.1	1.20	409	4.5	79	74	84	80
2400	18.6	16.4	74.6	1.13	384	3.5	81	76	87	81
2600	20.7	22.7	103.2	0.91	310	3.0	84	78	90	82
2750	22.5	30.1	136.8	0.75	255	3.0	85	80	92	83

Acceleration: 0-20 knots, 10.5sec.

Loa	46ft 8in (14.22m)	Fuel	340gal (1550lt)
Hull length	42ft 6in (12.95m)	Water	140gal (640lt)
Beam	13ft 10in (4.22m)	Price ex VAT	
Draught	3ft 2in (0.97m)	as standard with twin	
Weight	12.7 tons	Cummins 250hp	£165,000
		as tested	£185,000

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