

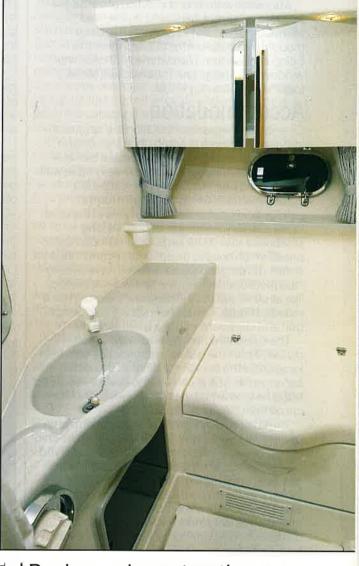


FAIRLINE's new 38 Phantom marks a watershed for one of Britain's largest motorboat builders. Outwardly it is a conventional

aft-cockpit/flybridge craft, providing six berths in two cabins and the saloon; it fills a gap between the 36 and the 41, and will appeal to the owner wanting that bit extra space in a vessel that can still be handled by two or three people. Behind this, though, the boat is the first to fully embody the styling and production ideas of the company's in-house design team, and thus introduces the philosophy that will carry the range into the 1990s.

Over the last few years, the boom in the motorboat market has led to a race to get new models out as fast as possible, to attract the undecided or first-time buyer, with less attention being paid to the detail planning of each boat. Now, in a more measured climate, new designs are likely to have to last longer in the range. Buyers are going to be more selective in their purchasing, but perhaps more significantly the production costs of each model are going to have to be kept as low as possible. Success for a company will no longer be measured in how many boats they sell, but in the margin they make on each sale, and the use they make of their resources, buildings, labour and capital.

The way in which this has been applied to the 38 has meant new materials, construction methods, production ideas and styling.



Design and construction

For the design of the 38, as with the whole of their range in recent years, Fairline have remained with Bernard Olesinski. His combination of powerful hulls, making maximum use of today's high-performance diesels, and unmistakable above-water styling, have had much to do with Fairline's success during the 1980s.

For the Phantom he has stayed with his well-trained formula of a medium-to-deep-vee hull, with a deadrise amidships of 24° giving good head-sea performance, reducing to 19° at the transom to produce easy-planing lift. Three spray rails give a dry ride, improve grip in the turns, and reduce the wetted-surface area at speed. These are assisted by a wide chine flat which also provides extra planing lift.

Tunnels are retained, allowing the engines to be sited further aft, reducing both shaft angle and draught. But a quick look under the boat at the factory showed that these are shallower than in previous designs, and parallel fore-and-aft to give an easier flow of water into the propellers and rudders.

Another neat feature is that the trim tabs, normally bolted to the transom, are now set forward in recesses, so that when not in use they do not protrude either downwards or aft. This not only gives them some protection from floating debris, but avoids the risk of damage should the

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boat be reversed into a pontoon or dock.
Above the waterline, the styling of the 3

Above the waterline, the styling of the 38 follows the current fashion for curves and rounded corners, and again this has been thought through from the outset, rather than being added later. The symmetry of deck line, windows, flybridge and radar arch all blend together as a flowing whole.

Accommodation

On entering the accommodation it is apparent that improvements are more than skin-deep.

To starboard is an L-shaped settee that will seat four or five people, facing a heavy table with opening leaves. The base of the settee is a sprung mattress which pulls out to form a comfortable double berth, with none of the usual loose cushion problems. To port is a long sideboard, with three large lockers underneath, one of which houses an optional second fridge for drinks. Three good-sized drawers have clips to stop them opening inadvertently, while the top, like all other surfaces throughout the boat, has a rounded fiddle. Two lockers set in the aft wings port and starboard will take small items.

The sideboard has a pier forward which divides it from the galley, and provides both the location for the cocktail cabinet and a useful serving area. The galley itself is down three steps, but at no time would even the shortest chef feel cut off from the rest of the saloon.

The layout here is good. A large worktop area is finished in an attractive but practical marble-chip effect. Two large stainless steel sinks are served by a mixer tap, while alongside is a four-burner gas hob. Underneath are an oven, fridge, large lockers, and a pull-out rubbish bin, while further extensive lockers are sited above. We liked the recessed stowage for quick access to plates and dishes set in the worktop; if it had drains it would be even better.

A hatch in the galley sole gives some access to the inside of the hull, but the rest of the carpet is stuck down. Lifting the hatch reveals toilet skin-fittings, plus the shower and sink water collection sump. This consists of a box with a small automatic bilge pump in it, but no lid, which is ultimately going to give rise to smells throughout the boat. The forward bilge pump here is too small for a boat of this size.

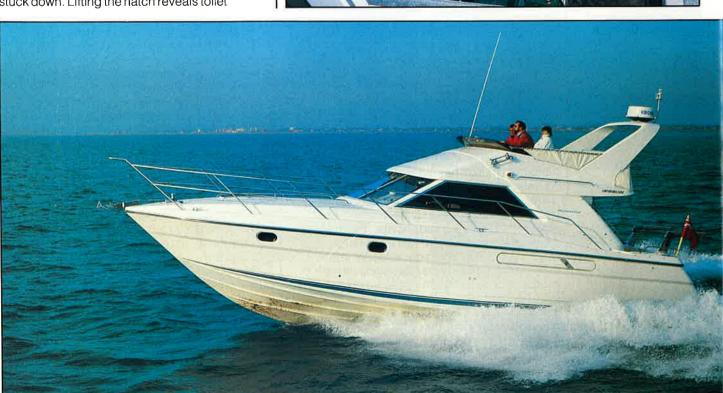
On the other side of the saloon, forward, is the lower helm position. Again, this shows the benefit of forward thinking from the design department, with one of the neatest but best laid-out dashboards we have seen.

Full width across the face of the console, it houses chart plotter, radar, echo-sounder and log, plus ready-use switches. The latter we particularly liked, as they were laid out in four sets of four switches, grouped together by function. So you have three bilge pumps and the engineroom extractor together, three wipers and the optional washers together, four light switches together, and so on.

Similarly, having the radar and chart plotter ahead of the navigator to the left, yet still viewable by the helmsman, is good. Not so good are the echo-sounder and log, obscured by the wheel, and the VHF down to the driver's right.

One of the best features seen at the 1990 Southampton Show, the whole of the port motor and inboard side of the starboard one is revealed by lifting the one-piece hatch. Ease of access is not only a necessary convenience, it encourages regular checks of the engines and, as a result, takes on a greater significance.





Fairline Phantom 38

Engines: twin Volvo TAMD 61A diesels, 306hp at 2800rpm, 6cyl, 5480cc.

Conditions: wind NW Force 3, sea slight. Load: fuel 50%, water 50%, crew 3

							Sound levels dB(A)			
rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	trim	saloon	fwd cab	ckpt	flybdq
1500	9.8	7.9	35.8	1.24	297	2.0	73	70	82	75
1750	12.4	10.8	49.2	1.14	276	3.5	74	72	83	75
2000	16.4	13.5	61.4	1.21	291	4.0	76	74	83	75
2250	20.3	15.9	72.4	1.27	304	4.0	77	75	84	76
2500	23.1	20.0	90.7	1.16	277	3.5	78	76	84	77
2800	28.2	27.5	125.0	1.03	246	3.5	80	78	84	78
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Acceleration: 0-20 knots, 11.8sec.

Loa	42ft 3in (12.88m)	Fuel c
Hull length	38ft 4in (11.68m)	Water
Beam	13ft 6in (4.11m)	Design
Draught	3ft 4in (1.02m)	Prices
Displacement	10 tonnes	

Fuel capacity	2 x 120gal (1090lt)
Water capacity	116gal (530lt)
Designer	Bernard Olesinski, 1990
Prices ex VAT	standard boat £133,950 as tested £144,104

Builder

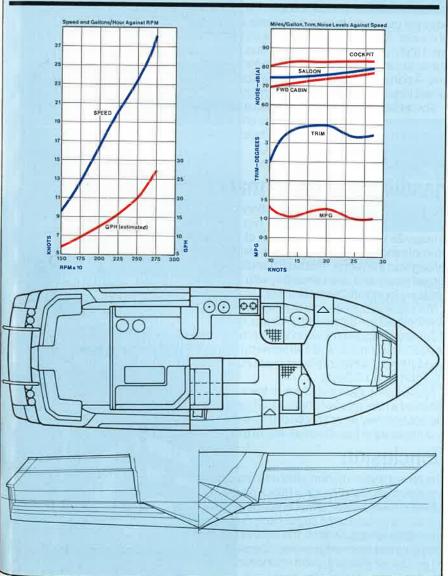
Fairline Boats, Oundle, Peterborough PE8 5PA.

Tel: 0832 273661

Supplier:

B A Peters, Chichester Marina, Chichester, Sussex P020 7EN.

Tel: 0243 511381.



Siting the major navigation instruments here avoids the neck-ache inducing overhead consoles that are so prevalent, though you will still have to find a location for the Decca, Loran or Satnav. Further ahead are the engine instruments, while ahead again is a large compass which we found too high for easy continuous operation. In between is a useful tray for binoculars and other odds and ends. To the left of the console is a perspex-covered chart area, but there is nowhere to stow the charts.

The helm seat is big enough for two people, or three at a pinch, with plenty of kneeroom for the tallest of drivers, and a good stainless steel handrail to the left and across the end of the dash. A sliding window allows the helmsman to talk to the crew on deck, but forward vision is reduced by small windscreen wipers set too high, something that will be modified on future boats. It is a pity also that washers are seen as an extra rather than as the essential equipment they are.

A comprehensive electrical distribution panel, with press-button breakers, is set in a neat moulded recess in the front of the console, near the navigator's knee.

Opposite the galley is the twin-bedded guest cabin. This is a good size, with 6ft 1 in (1.85m) headroom over 80% of its area. A full-height wardrobe and two small lockers provide stowage, as do a cabinet between the head of the berths and further lockers under them. Two of these have PVC liners; the others go straight to the gelled-out hull side. An overhead hatch at the aft end gives access to the back of the helm console, and a hatch in the sole to the inside of the hull here. A door forward leads to the day toilet

The toilet itself allows room to move around, and the finish is particularly pleasing, with extensive use made of GRP mouldings. These include a curved lid over the WC which not only conceals the plumbing but gives you somewhere to sit while changing. Plenty of stowage space is provided — important when different people will be using this compartment — including lockers overhead outboard, lockers under the sink and a shelf. Our only criticism was the light switch, set right away from the door, and the lack of an extractor. The only ventilation comes from an opening portlight.

Forward again is the master cabin. This again is a reasonable size, with a central double berth and en-suite bathroom. Stowage in the cabin is provided by a three-quarter-height wardrobe, two large drawers and a locker under the bed, three small lockers in the overhead port and starboard, plus two shelves. A small vanity unit is found to starboard, and the woodwork around this is particularly noticeable, typical of the high standard to be found throughout the boat.

The doorway into the ensuite bathroom is surprisingly narrow. Once inside you have a separate stall for the shower and WC and, again, extensive use made of GRP mouldings. These even include a GRP liner for the locker under the sink, an example of how time spent at the development stage can save time later in production (in fact, the total number of separate mouldings that go into the boat is 92). An excellent number of lockers and shelves are matched by the moulded lid over the WC, and a neat clear perspex door for the shower stall.

Exterior

The cockpit is a roomy area, partially covered by the flybridge overhang. Cushioned seats are fitted to the sides and across the stern, with a space through for the transom door, and good moulded lockers are found under them. The port one provides stowage for two gas bottles.

A gas-strut supported hatch in the cockpit sole gives access to the lazarette. We were surprised to find that the bottom of this was a continuous floor running across the tops of the stringers and frames. Strategically placed traps in this give access to P-bracket bolts, but in the event of major damage to the hull in this region, it would not be possible to reach it quickly. A similar false transom hides the steering system, again with access traps. On the forward bulkhead are the battery switches, and the fuel supply changeover system, which uses rotary valves, needing five turns to shut them off, instead of the neat swing-valves used for the returns.

Also in the lazarette are the hot-water calorifier, optional battery charger, and optional Eberspacher heater. We were also pleased to see Elastomuffle silencers in the exhaust lines, which helped reduce noise levels in the cockpit. You would still have room for a deflated dinghy, its outboard, and a couple of waterskis alongside

this equipment.

Out in the cockpit, dinghy davits are fitted as standard, plus three fender stowages port and starboard on the transom. A boarding ladder stows under a lid on the bathing platform when not in use. Lockers in the wheelhouse wings will take shore supply lines and similar items. Also located out here is a manual bilge pump, with change-over valves for the forward area of the boat, the engineroom, or the aft end.

A ladder leads up from the cockpit to the flybridge. This has a two person helm-seat, plus an L-shaped lounger whose forward section can also double as a single passenger seat. Good rails and dodgers surround the space, and the swept-back radar mast is well out of the way. The only stowage space is under the forward seats.

Back down below, stepping out of the cockpit is made safer by strategically-placed Treadmaster pads for extra grip, and the 10in-11in (250mm-175mm) side-decks forward have a moulded gunwale lip and well-placed handrails on the cabin top. These are just below shoulder height, but on the turn of the roof so they do not protrude. The same location is used for the nav lights, keeping them out of the way.

Solid guardrails extend round the gunwale from just forward of the cockpit, with lower wires. The deck slopes upwards as you move forward, but this is gradual enough, while the moulded non-slip extends over the coachroof.

Mooring is well catered for, with 12in (300mm) cleats forward, midships and aft. The anchor is handled by an electric windlass fitted as standard, with the chain stowed in a good-sized forward locker. Access to this is via a large deck hatch, and the space can be used for stowing fenders and warps, but there is no bulkhead or partition to stop the two getting tangled.

Engines

Only one power option is offered, namely twin 306hp Volvo TAMD 61As. Mounted under the saloon, these drive through down-angle MPM gearboxes, which help to reduce headroom.

The main access is via a single hatch in the saloon sole. This covers nearly the whole of the visible part of the floor, and would normally be a massive piece of plywood or GRP. However, as part of their policy of looking at new materials, Fairline use a composite sandwich board to considerably reduce its weight. A gas strut would make life even easier, as would reducing the width of the saloon table feet by 1in, so that you do not have to move it each time you open the hatch.

With the hatch open, access to the port engine and the inboard side of the starboard unit is excellent. To get at the rest of the starboard engine you have to lift the settee and a second hatch. The best way into the compartment is to step down between the engines, where there is an excellent aluminium treadplate floor. Forward, you can easily reach the two sea-inlet strainers mounted on the bulkhead, plus a medium-sized automatic bilge pump down in the keel. Here, we were impressed by the two 6in Airmax extractor fans drawing air away from over the engines. Also on the forward bulkhead were changeover valves for the fuel return systems, though the main valves for the supplies are in the lazarette.

At the aft end of the space are two large Racor fuel filter/separators, plus excellent access to the stern glands. We were concerned to see the exposed shaft couplings, but few manufacturers have yet got round to shielding these as a matter of course. Also back here is the battery box, with two 135Ah units for domestic use and the starboard engine, plus one 170Ah for the port one. A parallel switch allows the two circuits to be joined together for starting a flat engine.

Sound insulation consists of foam rubber on the hatch and bulkheads, but none on the two aluminium fuel tanks mounted outboard. There are two small 1.36kg automatic BCF fire-extinguishers over the engines.

Handling and performance

Out at sea the 38 proved a straightforward performer with no vices or quirks. Top speed was an easy 28 knots, with acceleration of 11.8 sec to 20 knots showing that the power is well spread throughout the range. The boat handled well, turned easily and dealt smoothly with the short chop we found off Chichester Bar.

We recorded 28.2 knots at 2800 rpm, with fuel consumption an estimated 27.5gph, giving 1.03mpg. Dropping down to 2500rpm gives an easy 23-knot cruise, and fuel figures of 20gph and 1.16mpg, while 2250rpm gives 20.3 knots, 15.9aph, and 1.27mpg.

Noise levels were excellent. In the saloon they reached a maximum of 80dB(A), while even out in the cockpit they were only 84dB(A) at full speed a measure of the effectiveness of the silencers.

Conclusion

The 38 is a stylish modern offshore cruiser, with good accommodation for up to six people. Down below it is well built and well equipped, though we would like to have seen larger bilge pumps and fire extinguishers. Overall, it is easy to see the Phantom has been engineered to ensure it can be produced efficiently and economically well into the 1990s, a bonus for any buyer.