



BOAT REPORT **SEALINE** **450**

Sealine International's new flagship breaks the mould in many ways, but does its performance match the image?



IT IS a natural progression for a boat manufacturer to build ever larger models, but a jump from 36ft to 45ft (11m to 14m) is a bold step, perhaps even more so than it might look on paper. Sealine have gained a well-deserved reputation over the past decade and more for their range of fast sports cruisers which now spans sizes from 19ft to 36ft (6m to 11m), yet their new 450, launched at this year's London Boat Show, is a major leap forward.

Its predecessors were noted for their practical family accommodation, married to stylish good looks and a sparkling performance which, together with a high standard of construction and interior finish, have ensured a steady demand both new and secondhand. The latest boat not only builds on these standards, it adds a remarkable interior layout that manages to combine the attributes of an aft-cabin boat with those of an aft-cockpit/flybridge design.

When it appeared at Earls Court it started not only the customers talking, but rival manufacturers too. We went down to the Solent to see whether our first impressions were borne out by a more detailed examination.

Design and construction

Previous Sealines were designed by the company's chairman, Tom Murrant, and always used outdrive power. Favoured for their simplicity of installation and maintenance, outdrives also make best use of the available interior space on a small boat.

For the 450 however, they had to move up to inboard power, and to bridge the gap in technology and size they went to John Bennett for the design. With over 20 years in the field of motorboat design behind him, Bennett has had a recent resurgence, with his products increasingly in demand, especially in the 40ft-60ft (12m-18m) range.

The 450 is medium-to-deep vee in form, with a deadrise amidships of 23°, reducing to 17° at the transom, with the sections aft displaying a distinct convex curvature. The two sprayrails run out by the mid-point, in contrast to the wide full-length chine flat.

But it is above the waterline that this boat breaks new ground. From a distance it looks like a conventional flybridge boat, with just a cockpit

The two-cabin interior, with spacious double suites forward (right) and aft (far right). An enlightening feature of the latter is the large transom hatch, reminiscent of a cruise liner's cabin porthole. A large dinette takes the place of the optional third cabin, while the saloon features plenty of entertaining area, illuminated by windows on two levels, and a well-equipped helm position.



aft. However, when you step aboard, you find the cockpit is more of a well, surrounded by all-round seating, while beneath it is a spacious double aft-cabin that no other flybridge boat can boast.

At the same time this has done away with the major criticism of aft-cabin boats, that the aft deck is often an inhospitable windswept area. In a further break from the conventional, access to the flybridge is via a gently-rising flight of stairs rather than the usual vertical ladder, and this links the two areas splendidly. Down below, you still have a saloon, a forward cabin, and either a dinette or a third cabin forward.

Overall styling was once again taken care of by Robert Tucker, who has been responsible for all the recent Sealines and has given them their modern profiles and a distinctive family aura.

One minor problem with the design of the 450 is the confusion it causes when you come to define the length of the boat. Overall it is 45ft 9in (13.95m), but this includes the integral bathing platform and stemhead platform, both of which overhang the main hull. Take them both away, and you have a length of 41ft (12.50m). We may appear to be focusing too much attention on a

detail, but most buyers tend to make initial comparisons between boats on the basis of their overall length.

Accommodation

The 450 provides three double berths, plus a possible occasional single on the saloon settee. The layout of the standard boat provides a master double cabin aft complete with en-suite toilet and shower compartment, a further double forward with shared shower/toilet, and a lower dinette that converts to a third double. As an option, the lower dinette area can be enclosed to form a third private cabin.

The obvious first question is just how have Sealine fitted the aft cabin in? The answer becomes obvious as you walk down the steps from the port aft corner of the saloon. The double berth is in the middle of the cabin, running fore-and-aft, directly under the cockpit well. This results in a reduced headroom of around 4ft 6in (1.37m) over the berth, but since you are only sleeping here that is not a problem. Walking around all three sides you have full standing headroom, with your head and shoulders in effect



up in the cockpit seat bases above. The principle has been used for many years on sailing boats, which of course always have a deep cockpit aft, and partially on some motorboats, but never so effectively as this.

The other secret of the layout is that instead of trying to fit in a single bathroom, which would have encroached excessively upon the limited area of full headroom, the two required functions are divided. There is a WC and sink in their own compartment in the port aft corner, and a shower compartment opposite to starboard.

A special touch is the transparent escape hatch, set into the aft bulkhead and giving access onto the bathing platform. This makes a virtue out of necessity, by not just providing an emergency exit but also giving you a private patio, perfectly sited for the early morning dip. Just remember to close it at night if you don't want a visit from the ducks. Further light is given by ports set in the cockpit sides, and outboard.

Storage is well provided in the aft cabin, with ample wardrobes to port, a dressing table to starboard, and drawers set into the aft bulkhead. However, if you lift the berth base expecting to find a locker, you will receive a surprise, as it provides the location for the standard 6kVA generator. Fitting this into the engineroom was going to be difficult, so Sealine decided to put it, with GRP soundshield, under the berth.

We started the unit up, to check how acceptable this is in practice, and have to admit that, whilst you could certainly hear it, you could not have told whether it was under the berth or the other side of the bulkhead. We did not take the point any further, to find what 1500rpm does to your night-time good vibrations, but our brief sitting test proved satisfactory.

The saloon layout provides a settee and table to starboard, with comfortable room for six, and lockers beneath. Opposite is a sideboard, with

space for a second fridge, cocktail cabinet and entertainments centre. We liked the neat doors here, especially the one which flaps down and out of sight in front of the television and video. At the forward end, to port, is an optional armchair, with a pull-out chart table over it.

Finish is either maple or oak, with the wood used mainly for trims round shelves. The locker fronts are in fact a wood-grain Formica and the table and shelf tops more of the same but in a black/grey effect that is hard to describe, yet most pleasing to the eye. Add grey vinyl for the bulkheads, turquoise carpet and pink upholstery, and you have an interior that might sound confusing, but is both effective and attractive. The spacious feeling is enhanced by ample windows, particularly those set at a lower level, which open out the view for anyone sitting down.

Two steps up lead to the helm position to starboard. This has a generous two-person bench seat, with subtle curved wings to help keep you in your place.

Ahead of the driver, the console looks as if it was designed before it was built, rather than being added on as the boat progressed. A neat,



Sealine's latest and largest displays plenty of good design thinking, the foredeck area being a case in point. Here you find recesses for the anchor winch above and anchor below the stemhead platform, while fender stowages in the chain locker avoid the need for rail-mounted racks which would hinder visibility forward. Back aft, the locker theme has been extended to the bathing platform wings, with large stowages on both sides taking a passerelle, boarding ladder and more besides.

moulded crescent-shaped panel takes the engine instruments, though the warning lights are hidden behind the otherwise well-placed compass. To the left is space for radar and chart-plotter, while down by your left shin is an excellent DC electrical distribution panel. Overhead is an enormous panel which carries the engine start switches, all ready-use switches, indicators for AC and DC supply, battery condition, water and waste tank contents, and a mimic display. Again overhead, but in a panel to the left, is space for Decca or GPS.

Engine controls are twin-lever, somewhat unusual for a UK boat of this size but giving smooth and precise operation both down here and up on the flybridge. We liked the padded elbow rest on the helmsman's right, to give comfortable positioning for his hand on the throttles. The view ahead and to the sides is good, with large two-speed wipers plus washers.

Steps lead down to the galley to port. This is a good size, and well-equipped, with a double halogen hob, microwave oven, fridge and two deep sinks. The latter have domestic-size waste plugs, not the miniature holes we so often see. Ample storage is provided by five small lockers overhead, plus four below. A small serving pier connects this area to the saloon.

Opposite to starboard is a spacious C-shaped dinette and table, which will seat six to eight people. The table is finished in the same grey/black Formica, but its sloping edges will not help keep items in place. The dinette converts to a large double berth, with stowage lockers underneath and overhead. Throughout the boat, all such lockers are neatly and attractively lined, useful when you are storing snaggle items such as clothes and making for easy cleaning.

Ahead of the galley to port is a toilet compartment that serves both the saloon and the forward cabin. The doors here and through the rest of the boat have large and easy-to-use handles, important on any boat, though where this one and the forward cabin open together they clash. The compartment makes good use of GRP mouldings, though some of the silicone rubber sealing the gaps was less than neatly applied. A sensibly-sized sink, two lockers and a concealing lid over the toilet, plus a solar-powered overhead extractor fan, were some of the good features.

The forward cabin itself is well-proportioned, with a clear 6ft 4in (1.93m) headroom. The central double berth is flanked by small dressing tables port and starboard, with additional stowage space in a wardrobe, plus two drawers under the berth and a deep locker down to the keel. Natural light comes from portlights on both sides and an escape hatch overhead.

Nice features inside the boat include the oval-section stainless steel handrails, which not only aid security but link different areas together, giving the interior a co-ordinated feel.

Engines

Power comes from a pair of 357hp Volvo TAMD 71As. The company had considered offering the smaller 61s as an option, but after sea trials now believe the 71s provide the perfect match for the boat. They give a top speed of 30-plus knots, but more importantly plenty of reserve power in the 20-25-knot cruising range.

The units are mounted under the saloon sole, with access via two large central hatches and a smaller one forward. For practical purposes, you would need to lift one of the larger hatches most of the time, and we were surprised to find that these had no hinges or stays to keep them open, despite their weight. Space is tight, and whilst you can reach the top of the engines easily, getting round the outside is more difficult. Similarly, getting to the fuel filter/separators on the forward bulkhead, and the bilge pump, means a tight squeeze between the motors, and to reach the sea-inlet strainers on the aft bulkhead would risk stepping on the exposed shafts.

The standard of engineering itself is good, with massive galvanised bearers for the engines, stainless steel fuel tanks and plenty of foil-faced sound insulation on all surfaces. A comprehensive fuel-management system has its change-over valves located under the steps leading down to the galley, though labels on these would help. Bilge-pumping consists of three Rule 2000 automatic units — in the forward space, the engineroom and aft — plus a manual back-up with change-over valve. Four automatic Halon fire-extinguishers are located over the engines, portable units in the accommodation.

On deck

The aft cockpit is a comfortable space, approximately 5ft (1.5m) square, with all-round seating for six to eight people, and an attractive curved form. Neat lockers in the back of the seats will take one or two mooring ropes. Access is via a walk-through door from the bathing platform with easy-rising stairs rather than a ladder.

The platform itself is worthy of note, with large lockers in the wings port and starboard, one of which takes the boarding ladder while the other could also take a hinged passerelle. A capacious seat/locker on the platform would take scuba gear, perhaps, while a liferaft can be mounted on the transom. The topsides are high, and the absence of any toe-holds mean that many people will board via the transom, though the ears of the platform are rather narrow for this.

Up on the flybridge you find an L-shaped seat to starboard, a double helm seat and a sun-pad aft, large enough for two. The driver faces a comprehensive instrument panel, with well-sited engine controls. Two lockers are provided in the forward coaming, a larger one under the seat.

Rather than a goalpost mast, the 450 has its radar, lights and aerials on a single pedestal mast aft. This is a neat arrangement, but the downside is that the radar scanner is only 5ft (1.5m) above the floor, with the beam questionably close to the helmsman's head. The steaming light is even lower, and would rapidly become annoying on a night passage.

Back down below, the sidedecks are a good width, with a raised gunwale lip, and good moulded non-slip that continues over the coachroof forward. Well-placed handrails help you out of the cockpit, and you find similar rails on the wheelhouse side as you move forward. It is surprising how much the curved corner of the superstructure aids mobility, too, the extra width at shoulder height being a definite benefit.

The foredeck is spacious, helped by the area

created by the sternhead platform. The anchor stows in a neat recess in the platform, and there is a similar recessed area for the standard electric windlass. A deep locker contains a pair of double fender racks, with the anchor chain stowing below. There is no stowage for mooring ropes, but there is room for this to be added. Mooring is taken care of by substantial stainless steel bollards forward, midships and aft.

Handling and performance

It is with good reason that Sealine are pleased with the performance of the 450. We clocked 31.0 knots with 85% fuel, no water, and three crew, which is more than adequate for a cruising boat. Just as important is the power in reserve at lower speeds. The 0-20 knot acceleration time was 12.1 sec, which is good in itself, but a more significant figure to have measured would have been the 15-25 knot time.

The big Volvos have a perceptible lag as they wait for the turbos to cut in. Up to 1750rpm you feel you are hanging there, then the power comes in with a rush. The significance of this is that if you want to keep up good average speeds in moderate-to-rough conditions, you must have power in reserve to keep the boat on the plane, or to allow you to back off for the larger waves. With this match of engines and hull, there is no question about that power being there.

Fuel consumption is also excellent, fractionally short of 1.0mpg at 31 knots, giving a maximum range of 294 miles, and improving still more at lower speeds; steadying at around 1.2mpg and 360 miles from 25 knots down to 16.

Noise levels are less impressive. In the saloon at full throttle we recorded 82dB(A), whilst the aft cabin figure was even higher, at an uncomfortable 89dB(A). Obviously, with propellers and exhausts so close here, you are going to pick up noise, and it is unlikely anyone would want to sleep down here at 30 knots. However, we were still recording 84dB(A) up on the flybridge, where you normally expect levels to drop. In the main this was due to exhaust noise, with the side exhausts droning as the water flow alternately covered and uncovered them. Altering the outlet configuration or fitting silencers might improve matters here.

We could find no serious waves to tax the 450, but it thumped its way through the ferry wakes with a reassuringly solid feel. The turning circle at speed was wide, for no apparent reason, and we had difficulty levelling up the trim in a stiff breeze, but this might have been due to sticky trim tabs.

In the marina, the twin-lever controls gave excellent handling. These are big engines, with a lot of thrust even at tickover, and it is often all too easy to find yourself moving very fast towards the pontoon. But leaving the throttles alone, and playing the gears quickly, we found the 450 docile and precise.

Conclusions

When we saw the 450 at Earls Court, we predicted a high demand for its innovative layout and stylish good looks; three months later, we were on example No11, which bears out our prophecy. Add to these qualities an excellent performance, and you have a boat that will be setting the standard for the 1990s. □

Sealine 450

Engines: twin Volvo TAMD 71A diesels, 357hp at 2500rpm, 6cyl, 6730cc.

Conditions: wind E Force 3, sea slight. **Load:** fuel 85%, water 0%, crew 3.

rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	trim	sound levels dB(A)			
							saloon	aftcab	fwdcab	flybdg
1000	8.1	3.7	17	2.18	654	0.0	70	71	73	70
1250	10.0	6.4	29	1.56	469	1.0	73	77	78	74
1500	11.9	9.8	45	1.21	364	3.0	76	83	84	79
1750	15.6	13.1	60	1.19	357	4.0	77	83	84	78
2000	20.7	17.7	81	1.17	351	4.5	78	84	83	77
2250	25.8	21.5	98	1.20	360	5.0	80	86	85	79
2500	29.6	28.5	130	1.04	311	4.5	81	88	86	82
2650	31.0	31.7	144	0.98	294	4.5	82	89	87	84

Acceleration: 0-20 knots, 12.1 sec.

Loa	45ft 9in (13.95m)	Displacement	12 tonnes
Hull length	43ft 2in (13.15m)	Fuel capacity	2 × 150gal (1320lt)
Waterline length	35ft 0in (10.67m)	Water capacity	100gal (450lt)
Beam	13ft 11in (4.25m)	Price ex VAT	
Draught	2ft 3in (0.69m)	with Volvo TAMD 71As	£169,565

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