

BOAT REPORT

ITALIAN
TWINNS

A small family boat for trail cruising, or an out and out sportsboat with a double berth for the night. The well established Italian boatbuilder Acquaviva has catered for both interests with two models based on the same hull.

TALK Italian boats, and 60ft luxury motor yachts by Ferretti, Italcraft and of course Riva come readily to mind, tending to overshadow many of the much smaller, fast family runabouts with Latin origins. Acquaviva, established just eight years ago has rapidly become one of the major Italian manufacturers at this latter end of the market and its craft have recently found their way to our shores. We put two models, the sportsboat style Winner 18 and pocket cruiser Frontier 18, through some extended tests over a Get-afloat weekend, and as press boats during the recent Admiral's Cup.

Both boats are based on the same medium vee hull designed by Acquaviva boss Luigi Scagnelli, with a length including bathing platform of just under 20ft (6.0m) and trailable weights well below the 1.5 ton mark,

Above: the Winner majors on its large cockpit area, which comes complete with deeply-upholstered seats and sunbed. Right: fun for families, the Frontier shows off through the wake.

even for the heavier Frontier model. The bottom sections incorporate two pairs of spray rails, with the vee culminating in a kindly fine entry forward that stood us in good stead cutting through the persistent wind over tide Solent chop. Above the slab sides and rubber fendering of the gunwale, completely different moulds are used, the sportsboat Winner being dominated by its cockpit, while the cruiser version employs an extension to its topsides, together with a careful rake of superstructure to give standing headroom below. This gives a pleasantly proportioned boat that still avoids a top heavy look. ▶

ACQUAVIVA 18



Pictures by William Payne

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Winner 18

Although basically an open sports design, the Winner is more than a speedboat to be enjoyed by the driver alone. A high cockpit coaming topped off by stainless steel handrails that run down to the bathing platform and ladder keeps occupants safely within, while generously upholstered cushions on the sunbed and seats provide a soft landing. Cockpit sides are thoughtfully cushioned, while the sole is finished in a comfortable, hard-wearing rubber nonslip.

The bench settee seats four easily, with stowage beneath for fenders and the like, while also housing the battery box and associated isolator. Further stowage is provided in coaming cave lockers with bulkier items finding a dry home under the helm and adjacent passenger seats.

Deck hardware includes a bow roller with a useful snubbing clamp, chain locker, a low pulpit and pair of 6in cleats forward, with a second pair lying on the quarters. The stainless cockpit hoop makes for a robust handhold, and also gives support to the full canopy. The latter is an extra, although nav lights and integral courtesy lights come as standard.

The helm is to starboard, with the padded wheel, and single lever throttle mounted on the coaming side both being at a comfortable height whether sitting or standing. The usual Volvo engine instrument fascia lies behind the wheel adjacent to the optional VDO log. A waterproof, ready use switch and status panel is sited to the left of the helm with a typically no-nonsense blower switch to the right. As a safety precaution, the blowers have to be turned on before the engine is fired up. Acquaviva have also fitted an electric solenoid fuel valve adjacent to the stainless steel tank that automatically closes when the ignition is switched off. This is a good feature, especially as there is a manual override should the inevitable happen and the electric valve fail at some stage.

There is sitting headroom below in the cuddy cabin which just houses a vee-berth. There are no washing or cooking facilities, so accommodation is obviously limited, although a fridge and stern shower are listed as extras.

The engine compartment under the sunbed is fully painted out, with the outdrive installation itself tidily engineered. Retaining boards outboard of the engine provide extra



stowage for bulkier items and cleaning gear. Apart from the sensible blower and fuel shut-off system, other safety equipment includes an electric bilge pump, and a rather inadequate looking 1lb (0.5kg) fire extinguisher.

Our test boat was fitted with one of the larger options, Volvo's 210hp petrol V8 with single prop, although a full range of OMC and Mercruiser units are also available with prices starting at around £15,000. The engine was not quite pulling its full revs at the time of the test, but even so, our top speed with two-up was still over 36 knots although the manufacturer claims nearer 40 knots. Noise was a reasonable 88dB(A) but some insulation would have no doubt reduced this further. Checking the brochure, we found the tank capacity is only 24gal (110lt), giving the Winner under two hours running time flat out. Dropping to 3000rpm — which

Acquaviva have managed to pack a lot of features into the Frontier, with the port side featuring a toilet compartment and galley (top), while opposite is found a small convertible dinette, seen here in its night-time configuration (right). The forward deck area (above), is best accessed through the deck hatch or alternatively, over the windscreen.

gave us a comfortable cruising speed of 22 knots with sound levels an unobtrusive 78dB(A) — we guzzled the best part of a full tank in 3.5 hours. This is probably adequate for a day's running about but it does mean worrying about that important get-you-home margin.

If the fuel capacity on our runs down and around Christchurch Bay from Cowes during Admiral's Cup week concerned us, the Winner's capabilities as a sea-boat did not.

ACQUAVIVA 18



Motoring down to see the race, we tucked the bow down, cutting and riding the Force 4 north westerly, keeping press breakfasts safe and telephotos dry. In the ensuing slop kicked up by the countless other press, TV and support boats, her generous beam, full topsides and deep cockpit kept journalists within and green water out.

With the leg trimmed out and bow up, the steeper, shorter seas running up the Solent as the tide turned against the wind proved exciting but uneventful on our 22 knot return journey. Our only comment being that the single prop outdrive leg needed to be re-trimmed on the two or three occasions when the following waves sucked the power from the propeller, knocking her off the plane. In our experience, Duoprops tend not to be so temperamental in these conditions.

Frontier

Based on the same hull as the Winner, the Frontier offers full weekending accommodation for the younger family, although it is still small enough to trail behind larger cars. The topside extension above the gunwale allows for a safe depth of self-draining cockpit, even though the sole has been built up to house the engine and outdrive beneath. To make this cockpit area as versatile as possible, the usual fixed transom bench has been ignored in favour of a pair of comfortable, thick cushions. These can either lie along the transom, be moved outboard to face each other or completely laid flat to provide a full width sunbed or double berth. Fixed seating comprises twin bucket seats for the helmsman and navigator.

Stowage is plentiful, with a variety of cave lockers tucked into the

coaming. Acquaviva have again topped this off with a stainless steel rail, although some sort of infill to guard the gap to the bathing platform would seem a wise precaution.

The side decks are really too narrow to be used, so it is a matter of moving through the foredeck hatch out of the cabin or hopping over the windscreen. On a boat of this size the crew can just step ashore from the cockpit when berthing, the only reason for using the foredeck being when anchoring, or having done so, getting the cushions out for a well-earned siesta. Even so, lines have to be tied on to something, the foredeck is ably equipped with twin 6in bollards — a further pair lie on the coaming aft — with the anchor housed in a bow roller complete with a snubbing clamp. A pulpit running well aft along the raised coaming gives a necessary handhold.

Back at the helm, we found the

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◀ usual Volvo engine instrumentation, with a switch panel and blower arrangement similar to the Winner.

Access below is via a substantial perspex door and down two steps which are steeply aligned. There is close on 6ft (1.8m) headroom over the after portion of the cabin. Immediately to starboard is a mini U-shaped dinette that converts into what amounts to a child's berth, being barely 4ft long. Stowage is found under, although the seats are themselves limited in depth.

Opposite is a separate compartment housing a sea toilet, and just forward of this, a galley area which comprises a two burner gas hob and stainless steel sink with pressurised cold water. A cupboard below the sink takes care of victuals, although this can be replaced with a fridge as an option.

Forward is a permanent berth of good size with opening hatch over; further ventilation is via opening windows either side. Beneath this main berth lies a 22gal (100lt) stainless steel water tank. Clothes stowage is adequate for weekending, with a large three-quarter height hanging locker adjacent to the galley, and draws towards the after end of the berth. The whole interior is tastefully

but practicably upholstered and finished, the joinery being wipe-clean, wood textured formica, the linings in a soft, imitation suede.

The Volvo 205hp V6 is tucked easily beneath the cockpit sole, leaving plenty of room for further stowage outboard and access to service points. Like the Winner's larger V8, this engine was competently installed with due care and attention to cable runs and wiring. Again, the automatic fire extinguisher could do with being larger, but the fuel and blower systems still enjoyed the same safety precautions. An electric bilge pump is also fitted.

We did not enjoy the same lengthy association with this cabin cruiser model as we did with the sportsboat version, but still pushed her hard enough to ascertain a favourable impression. Her extra accommodation gives a higher centre of gravity, which seemed to make for a slightly easier motion than the open style Winner. This is obviously no bad thing for a family boat, while the whole crew, being higher up, are less likely to suffer from spray being whipped back inboard.

The Duoprop leg on the Frontier made for an easy life. Set it at zero and forget it. At full throttle, the 205DP

produced a respectable 35 knots — only a knot slower than the Winner. Pulling full revs — 4600rpm — expect fuel consumption around the 14gph (661lph) mark, while dropping to our easy cruising speed of 22 knots at 3000rpm, figures tumble to a reasonable 5gph (231lph), giving a useful seven hours or so of cruising — about a 150 mile range. The sound meter measured 86dB(A) at full throttle, and this was somewhat noisier at our cruising 3000rpm than the Winner. This, probably due to the latter's thick sunbed cushion directly over the engine hatch.

Conclusion

Both boats fulfil their respective roles adequately. The Winner as a comfortable, well-mannered sportsboat, with the practical addition of a cuddy. This gives plenty of dry stowage for all the paraphernalia involved in a long day out, with the additional facility of a bed for the night if required. Pocket cruiser is an apt description for the Frontier, having as it does all the accommodation and range for the younger family to explore estuarial and coastal waters, but with a fine turn of top speed for those who still relish sportsboat performance. ■

Winner 18

LOA	19ft 6in (5.95m)
Beam	7ft 8in (2.32m)
Weight	2425lb (1100kg)
Fuel	24gal (110lt)

Price ex VAT
with single Volvo AQ211 £16090

Frontier

LOA	19ft 8in (6.00m)
Beam	8ft 2in (2.50m)
Weight	2866lb (1300kg)
Fuel	39gal (180lt)
Water	22gal (100lt)

Price ex VAT
with single AQ205 DP £20450

Builder:

Nuova Fibreglass,
Via Provenciale Uso, 143 47030
Borghi, Italia.

UK Distributor:

Marlin International Ltd,
Chartwood House, Breamore,
Hants. Tel: 0725 22472.



The Winner's helm position, with central access to the cuddy.