

BOAT REPORT
FAIRLINE 38
TARGA

We tested the newest of this British builder's open-cockpit range with two different diesel engine options, from Volvo and Yamaha.





LAUNCHED at this year's London Boat Show, the latest in Fairline's open-cockpit Targa range joined a line which already includes 31ft, 33ft, 35ft and 41ft models.

The Targa philosophy is to offer an unashamed sun-lover's boat, ideal for Mediterranean day-boating, but one which still has full standing headroom in the accommodation below and the appointments and comforts necessary for occasional serious cruising. The 38 offers six berths, in two private cabins plus the saloon, plus a cockpit for entertaining as many as a dozen guests.

Power comes from a pair of sterndrive engines, either petrol or diesel. For most, the preferred option is likely to be diesels, which will still give up to 35 knots with excellent fuel economy, so the Targa provides a battleground for the main protagonists in this competitive section of the engine market: Mercruiser, Volvo and Yamaha.

The latest offerings from all three can be specified in this boat. We had the opportunity to try it with the 230hp Volvo KAD42 and with the 247hp Yamaha ME420 STI, the former with a Duoprop leg and the latter with a single prop.

Left: the Targa's WC is attractively presented with a green Avonite top and the toilet concealed under a seat. Above: light ash timber lends a bright feel to the saloon, whose six-person settee converts into a double berth to complement the adjacent forward double. Right: plenty of worktop is provided in the galley to starboard, and the steel handrail is a good idea.

Design

Like all Fairlines today, the 38 was designed by Bernard Olesinski. The hull he has produced bears all his hallmarks, featuring a variable-deadrise form with deep-vee sections forward, flattening to medium-vee aft (24° amidships, 20° at the transom).

He stresses that his brief was to produce a boat with the largest possible amount of accommodation and space, but still able to be powered by diesel outdrives (taking account of the maximum horsepowers currently available in this form). This has been achieved by concentrating on balancing the underwater lines, particularly in the planing area, and on keeping the overall weight down.

All redundant components of the structure were eliminated, and structural components made to the minimum weight commensurate with the strength and durability required.

Exterior

In a boat designed for the sun, the logical place to start an inspection is the cockpit. This is laid out on two levels.

The lower, aft level has L-shaped seating to port which will take six or seven people. These seats hinge up to reveal slim storage lockers, with further room to slide loose items underneath these, plus storage for the cockpit table. To starboard is a wet bar, with a narrow sink moulded into its top but no lid. Underneath is a fridge and a locker, behind moulded GRP doors.

A good feature is the stainless steel handrail

along the front of the bar, with further recessed rails forward and ahead of the port seat. On a fast boat, it is important to have well-placed grabrails to make moving about safe.

Similarly important are the glass-holders strategically located around the cockpit, including a neat white perspex corner piece aft, to port, with three cut-outs for glasses or cans, plus four more ahead of the wet-bar and three alongside the helm. It is surprising how many boatbuilders overlook such vital accessories, leading to spilled drinks and rolling cans.

A substantial transom door to starboard leads out to the bathing platform, which has a teak sole laid into a recess in the GRP. The boarding ladder is concealed under a hinged lid, and six fender baskets are mounted against the transom. The rest of the cockpit is available with teak sole as an option.

A single oval teak step leads up to the forward cockpit. Facing the helmsman is an L-shaped seat to port, but the aft backrest of this seat does not go down to the top of the cushion, which means anything laid on the seat slides out as soon as the boat lifts onto the plane. The semi-bucket helm seat has good side supports, and a locker underneath.

The helm console is well laid out. There are rows of rocker switches on both sides ahead of the wheel, sensibly grouped to ease identification in a hurry or in the dark. Ahead of these is a 24in x 30in (600mm x 750mm) chart area, with a hinged perspex lid, and ahead again the dashboard, finished in walnut veneer to match the wood-rimmed steering wheel.

The panel contains all the necessary engine



instrumentation, plus a 'neutral' indicator in the case of the Yamaha-powered boat. Engine controls are well-placed by the helmsman's right hand, on a GRP plinth, while the VHF is set in a recess, by his right elbow.

The windscreen is finished with a substantial stainless steel frame, as is the sliding door to the saloon. The latter has a simple but effective catch to hold it open.

Moulded steps lead out of the cockpit to the side decks, which are 6in-8in (150mm-200mm) wide with a moulded gunwale lip.

Solid guardrails with lower wires run from the bow back to the cockpit, and substantial 10in (250mm) stainless steel cleats are mounted forward, midships and aft. The side decks' moulded non-slip continues over the coachroof, which has a recessed sunpad, with low rails either side, and recesses for glasses.

An electric anchor windlass is partially recessed into the foredeck, with the chain and anchor stock set into a slot. A deep foredeck locker will take ropes, fender and chain, but has no partition for the chain. It also has just a half-width hinged lid.

Interior

Four steps lead from the cockpit down to the accommodation, which gives an excellent first impression, the light ash timber giving a bright and open feel to what is a good-sized saloon. Table tops are in a darker bird's-eye maple, with further contrast provided by vertical inlaid mahogany strips in the bulkheads, one of several features borrowed from the Squadron range.

The saloon has generous headroom for a boat in this class, 6ft 4in (1.93m) over most of its area. To port is a large curved settee which has room for six people, facing a height-adjustable hinged table, and converts into a double berth if required. Storage is provided by small lockers underneath, which are not lined and go straight down to the hull.

There are also four good-sized lockers overhead, and a surprisingly large locker under the floor. The hatch to this is heavy, and has sharp edges to its stainless steel frame, but there is a lot of room inside. The space is open down to the keel, which means that anything stowed here would be vulnerable to water in the bilge, but it would be a simple job to put a floor across between two of the longitudinal stringers.

A second hatch in the sole forward gives access to the shower sump and bilge pump. The latter is tiny, with a nominal capacity of only 500gph (less in practice), and is of little use in a boat of this size. The wiring is also too thin, with a simple connector block just 3in (75mm) above the keel, and vulnerable to water.

The galley, to starboard, is large and practical, with generous worktops in marble-effect Avonite with green 'marble' trim. A double gas hob and two deep stainless steel sinks are concealed under lift and drop lids when not in use. The stainless steel handrail along the front is a good idea, but the gap behind it is too narrow and could trap your fingers. Stowage is provided by three lockers overhead and four useful-sized ones underneath, plus outboard shelves. A pull-out bottle store and a fridge are concealed behind excellent lacquered wood doors.

Light in the saloon is provided by a transparent

Fairline 38 Targa

Engines: twin Volvo KAMD42 diesels, 230hp at 3800rpm, 6cyl, 3590cc.

Conditions: wind SW Force 5, sea moderate to rough. **Load:** fuel 50%, water nil, crew 3.

rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	trim	sound levels dB(A)		
							saloon	helm	ckpt
2500	14.2	8.6	40	1.65	245	4.0	—	—	—
2900	20.0	10.7	49	1.86	280	5.0	—	—	—
3200	24.4	12.8	58	1.90	285	5.0	—	—	—
3500	28.3	14.3	65	1.97	295	5.0	—	—	—
3700	31.0	15.4	70	2.01	300	4.5	—	—	—
3900	34.0	23.1	105	1.47	220	3.5	—	—	—

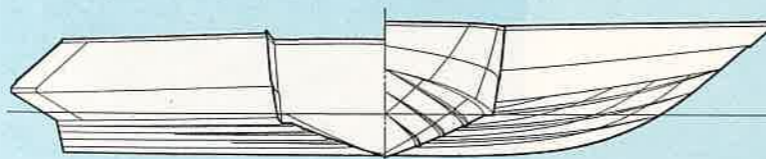
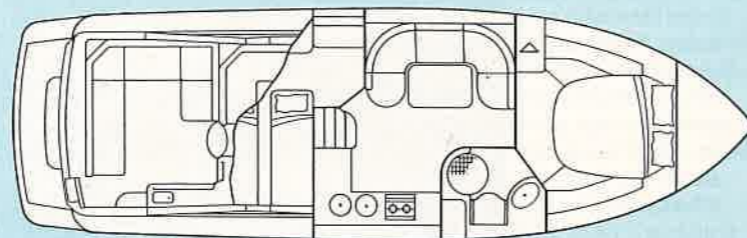
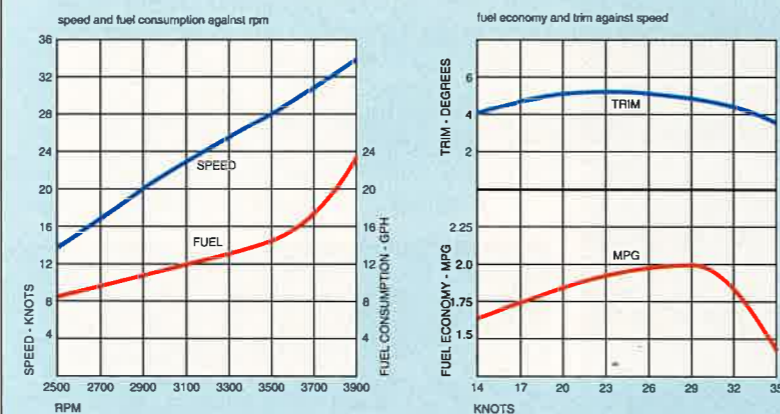
Acceleration: 0-20 knots, 10.5sec.

Loa	39ft 9in (12.10m)	Displacement	6.8 tonnes
Hull length	38ft 1in (11.62m)	Fuel capacity	150gal (680lt)
Beam	12ft 0in (3.66m)	Water capacity	75gal (340lt)
Draught	3ft 3in (1.00m)		

Price: from £106,195 ex VAT.

Builders: Fairline Boats plc, Oundle, Peterborough PE8 5PA. Tel: 0832 273661.

Suppliers: B A Peters plc, Chichester Marina, Chichester, West Sussex PO20 7EN. Tel: 0243 511381.



overhead hatch which has clever combined gas struts and catches, plus a mosquito screen and a blind.

An angled door at the aft end of the saloon, to port, leads to the after cabin. The door is narrow, at 15in (375mm), and most people will have to go through sideways.

Usually on boats of this type, the aft cabin under the cockpit is a tiny cramped area suitable for sleeping and little else. But the Targa's has some useful space, and could be used by a couple for short cruises, or by the children. To this end, it can be supplied either with a double or with two single berths.

There is full headroom over the area next to the door, where a neat vanity unit includes a small basin under a lid, and two small settees have 5ft (1.5m) headroom over them. Good storage space is provided by a full-height hanging locker plus a stack of shelves. Light comes from opening portlights on each side, plus a sliding window to the cockpit.

At the forward end of the saloon, to starboard, is a very attractive toilet compartment. Again the door is narrow, but once inside there is good room. A deep moulded sink is set in a green Avonite top, and the toilet is concealed under a lid which doubles as a seat. The shower stall is cylindrical. There is a locker under the sink, plus a smaller one above. A second door leads to the forward cabin.

The cabin itself is large, with a central, shaped, queen-size berth. This has two large drawers under its foot, and there are also a full-height hanging locker, small dressing-tables port and starboard, and three overhead lockers on each side. We liked the practical but attractive brass door furniture here and throughout the boat, which not only looks good but is a sensible size for grabbing hold of.

Engines

The engines are mounted under the aft cockpit, accessed through a full-size lid which rises complete with the cockpit seats. The clever hydraulic arrangement uses a similar ram to the Bennett trim tabs, and takes its power from the same pump as the tabs, using a splitter-valve to divert the thrust.

The two Yamahas look lost in the space. There is enough room to walk between and around them and, most importantly, to get to the back of them to service the steering system.

The Volvos, on the other hand, with their extra supercharger and seemingly larger intercoolers, take up the full width of the space.

The compartment is clean and clear of obstructions, with all equipment well laid-out and easy to reach. Separ fuel filter/separators are mounted on the forward bulkhead, drawing fuel from a single aluminium tank mounted on the other side of the forward engineroom bulkhead. The location of the filters is good from the point of view of servicing, but makes them vulnerable to being stepped on as someone climbs down. A fixed step above them would prevent this.

Three 125Ah batteries are securely mounted in a box with a lid. One serves one engine, while the other two look after the second engine and the domestics. Four 1.36kg automatic fire-extinguishers are fitted to the hatch.

Noise insulation consists of simple eggbox

foam rubber, on the hatch only. The engineroom bilge pump is the same tiny model as the one fitted in the accommodation.

Handling and performance

We had enough waves to test the handling of the 38, and it came through with full marks. Even with a Channel chop, we were able to run at full speed if we wanted to, at any angle to the waves.

Realistically you would probably back off a few knots when running straight into the seas, just to avoid the bigger ones, but that would be out of prudence rather than necessity. Across the waves, even quartering, the hull runs straight and true, though there is still plenty of control in the steering to change course if required.

The Volvo-powered boat with its Duoprops performed excellently. Acceleration from 0 to 20 knots took 10.5sec, which translates into easy planing even with a full complement of passengers. Top speed with half fuel and three crew was 34 knots, with the engines overrevving slightly, indicating power in hand.

At this speed the engines were burning 23.1gph between them, giving 1.47mpg and a maximum range from the 150gal tanks of 220 miles. Backing off to 30 knots improved these figures considerably, to 15.4gph, 2.0mpg and 300 miles respectively.

Our sound meter was out of commission so we were unable to record figures, but subjectively the levels were quite acceptable. The only time the engines were noticeable was when the compressor was spinning, with a characteristic whine. Under normal conditions this only occurred as we accelerated onto the plane, but it could become wearing if you had to run for long periods close to planing speed, in really bad conditions for instance, or if you had to get home on one engine.

The Yamahas' figures were nearly as good. The single-prop leg was slightly slower off the mark, one second slower for 0-20 knots, but the boat was no slouch onto the plane. Top speed was also down, at 32.5 knots, a difference which would appear to be accounted for by the advantage the Duoprops give to the Volvos.

We were unable to measure fuel consumption, but previous tests indicate they would be broadly in line with the Volvo figures. Noise levels were excellent at all speeds.

Where the Yamahas really scored was in their gearshifts. The Volvos went in with their characteristic clunk, which we have come to expect but which can be disconcerting to passengers. The Yamahas shifted so smoothly that it was occasionally difficult to know which gear you were in (so that's why the 'neutral' light has to be fitted!). Manoeuvring around the marina became a pleasure, encouraging us to apply gentle ahead or astern at will.

Conclusions

The 38 is another successful addition to the Targa family. All the usual qualities are there, plus some interior styling additions which we are sure will be carried through into other models.

And if you are tired of plain white gelcoat, the new boat can be supplied with its hull moulded in bold colours — red, blue or turquoise — to add that extra zest to an already sporting boat. □