

Boat Report

FAIRLINE SQUADRON 43

The latest and smallest of the super-luxury Squadron range gets a first test, exclusive to Motor Boats Monthly.





Fairline launched their Squadron fleet of top-of-the-range cruisers two years ago, with the 62. Distinguished by its interior styling and by the materials used for the finish and fit-out, its aim was to give the company new impetus in the international market, challenging Italian chic and winning orders throughout Europe and the world.

Interior styling by Ken Freivokh blended exotic maple veneers with clever use of eye-catching fittings and furnishings, in layouts never before seen in British production cruisers. Combined with traditional Fairline qualities, namely spacious and practical layouts on strong and seaworthy Bernard Olesinski hulls, this created an eminently usable craft which appealed to customers and the press alike.

The 62 was an immediate success, and was followed by 56 and 47 models in the same range, using the same interior styling and finish. Finally, a 43 was launched at this year's London Boat Show.

Fairline believe this is the smallest size at which the Squadron formula can work. The curvaceous layouts and expanses of expensive wood which seem appropriate for a larger craft begin to look out of place once you get below a certain size. And also, of course, the cachet of owning a Squadron would lose its effect if too many people had one.

Design

As we have said, the 43 is another product of the highly successful Olesinski design process, with a

The Squadron concept in as small a frame as it will go. The saloon (above left) features a circular table and semicircular fixed five-seater settee, with a matching two-seater which can be pushed across to join it. The master cabin (above right) in the bow has a queen-size bed and an en-suite WC (left) with toilet, bidet, basin, shower and plenty of storage. Down a step from the saloon, the galley (right) is partially hidden from the saloon but part of the social centre nevertheless.

variable deadrise hull, 25° amidships, 17° at the transom. Three sprayrails run between 50% and 75% of the underwater length, and propeller tunnels help reduce shaft angle and draught.

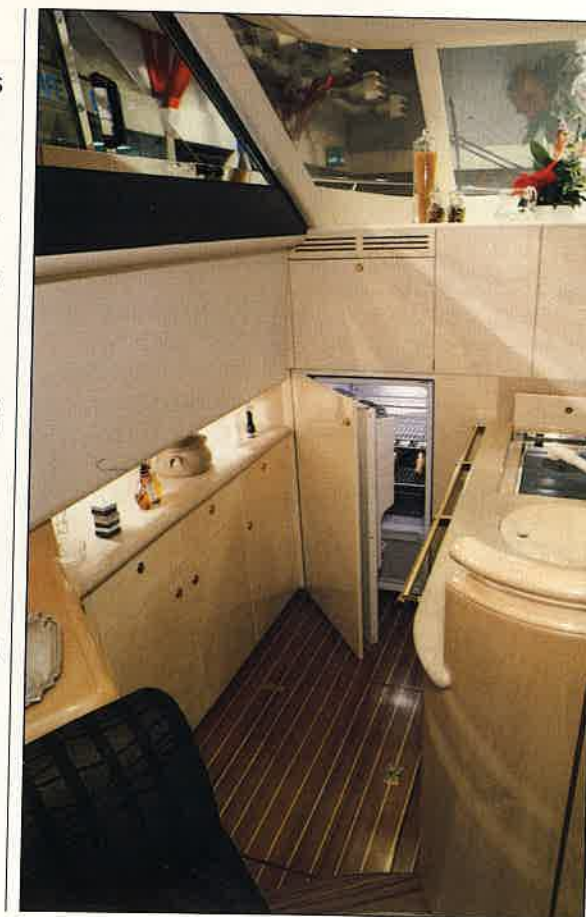
Accommodation

In its standard form, the 43 provides berths for four people in two double cabins, each with en-suite facilities. A three-cabin version is also available, with two of them sharing a WC.

The saloon is the social centre of the boat, featuring a semicircular settee to starboard that will seat up to five people around a hinged circular table. A smaller matching double seat to port can be rolled across to extend the seating capacity here. A sideboard to port contains two small pull-out cocktail drawers; further stowage under the main settee is just open down to the carpet.

The galley is forward to port, down one step and divided from the saloon by a fore-and-aft serving pier, but still part of the space in every sense. The pier has a clever moulded handrail along its back, on top of a splashback, which stops items falling off and doubles as a grabrail for people moving forward, while preventing them from knocking anything on the countertop.

There is ample work surface on two sides, in moulded Avonite. Cooking is taken care of by a double halogen hob and a microwave oven, the latter concealed behind a door in the forward bulkhead. Alongside this is a similarly discreet large



Fairline Squadron 43

Engines: twin Volvo TAMD 72 diesels, 430hp at 2600rpm, 6cyl, 6.73lt.

Conditions: wind SE Force 5, sea slight. **Load:** fuel 100%, water 100%, crew 4.

rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range*	trim	sound levels dB(A)			
							saloon	helm	fwdcab	ckpt
1200	9.5	—	—	—	—	2.5	76	72	68	80
1500	11.1	11.2	51	0.99	206	5.5	78	74	70	81
1800	17.0	15.4	70	1.10	229	6.0	79	76	88	83
2000	22.4	19.7	90	1.14	237	6.0	80	78	74	85
2300	25.5	26.4	120	0.96	201	5.0	81	79	76	86
2500	28.9	33.0	150	0.88	182	5.0	84	83	79	89
2600	31.0	41.4	188	0.75	156	5.0	85	84	81	90

Acceleration: 0-20 knots, 13.0sec.

(* allows 20% margin)

Loa 42ft 9in (13.03m)

Beam 13ft 7in (4.14m)

Draught 2ft 7in (0.79m)

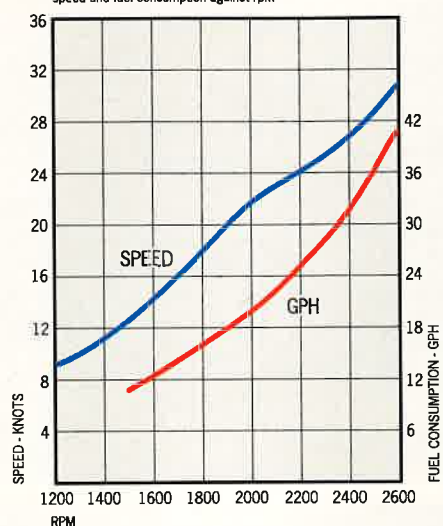
Displacement 14 tonnes

Fuel capacity 260gal (1182lt)

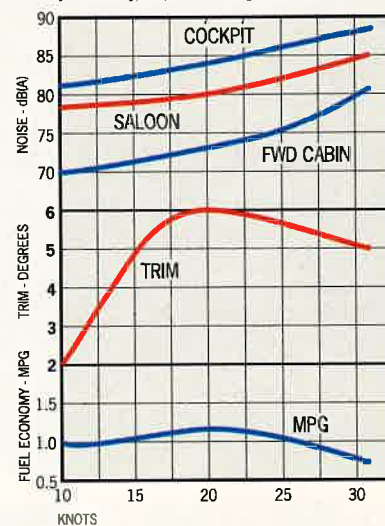
Water capacity 136gal (618lt)

Price £220,950 ex VAT

speed and fuel consumption against rpm



fuel economy, trim, noise levels against speed



fridge. There are double sinks under lift-out lids.

Galley stowage comprises shallow lockers and drawers outboard, plus good-sized lockers in the inboard pier, tailor-made for the Squadron bone china and cutlery. A further locker is located under the floor, accessed via a hinged hatch in the attractive teak-and-holly sole.

The helm station is up one step to starboard, with a double helm seat facing a large and attractive console finished in inlaid walnut veneer, matching



the wood-rimmed steering wheel. A curved array of engine instruments is mounted ahead of this, although the two rev-counters are somewhat obscured by the wheel itself.

The radar and autopilot are mounted semi-flush to the left, but there is not much room for further navigation instruments. Two rows of ready-use switches are well placed in the front of the console, either side of the wheel, cleverly matching the curved corner of the dash.

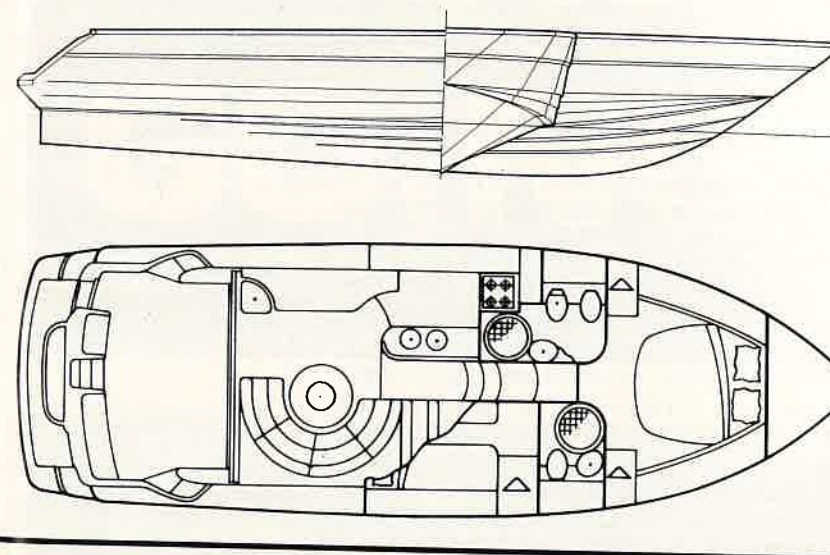
A one-third-size chart area is located to the left of the console, while the Morse Twin controls are handily sited by the helmsman's right elbow. Not so convenient is the positioning of the windscreen pillar, dead in his line of sight and likely to be awkward on anything of a passage.

Also confusing is the fact that the two centre screens are made from clear glass while the curved corner screens are tinted, giving the world ahead a split personality. The problem is compounded by the fact that the wipers do not clear a low enough area of the screens, creating a blind spot in bad weather just beyond the bow, the point where you want visibility to be best.

The main electrical panel is mounted on the inboard end of the helm seat. Beneath it is a big front-opening locker.

Interior finish is a hallmark of the Squadron range, and the 43 lives up to the reputation forged by its

Left: no old crocks here! All boats in the Squadron range come complete with their own set of bone china and cutlery. Right: the 43 handled perfectly in a nasty Solent chop, but icy windscreens forced our test team from the lower helm up to the freezing flybridge.



predecessors. The main area of the saloon is finished in light maple, straight-grain for the vertical panels and bird's-eye for the top surfaces. Overheads are in white vinyl, while the seats and cushions are in contrasting green fabrics, matched by green imitation baby ostrich trim. However, the galley cleverly uses cream lacquered wood and beige Avonite, to break up the expanses of veneer and delineate the area, the same principle being behind the walnut of the helm console.

Four steps lead down forward from the saloon to the sleeping quarters. Our test boat had the twin-cabin layout, with the guest to starboard and the master in the bow.

The guest cabin has twin berths, a full-height hanging locker and full headroom over the forward 40% of its area. It also has its own door forward to a toilet compartment which is compact but contains all the essentials, including a separate cylindrical shower.

The master cabin contains a central tapered queen-sized bed, with drawers under the foot. Further storage is provided by dressing tables port and starboard, a full-height hanging locker to port and a matching cupboard with shelves to starboard. Headroom is 6ft 4in (1.93m) at the aft end, tapering forward.

A door aft to port leads to the large en-suite WC, which has both toilet and bidet, plus a separate cylindrical shower and three good-size lockers.

Exterior

At the stern, the 43 features an integral bathing platform, with teak planking laid in a recess in the GRP moulding. A central locker-seat provides stowage for watersports gear and somewhere to sit when putting it on, but it does restrict space. A boarding ladder is concealed under a hinged hatch.

Excellent cleat/handholds are mounted on the sloping wings, handy for stern-to mooring, for dinghy mooring or just as climbing aids when getting out of



the water. Two more curved, oval-section stainless steel cleats are mounted on the rear of the side deck above.

A walk-through transom door to port leads from the bathing platform into the cockpit, while moulded steps lead over the transom from the passerelle mounting-point amidships.

In the cockpit, useful hinge-out lockers are found on your right, set in the face of the transom and flanking the passerelle steps. The double-width one to starboard has stowage for six fenders, while a single-width one takes ropes. Smaller lockers in the cockpit sides and the wheelhouse wings house the shore-supply socket and the manual bilge-pump.

A large gas strut-assisted hatch in the sole gives access to the lazaret. Much of the room down here is taken up by the standard 6kW HFL generator, the GRP water tanks each side, the calorifier and the GRP exhaust silencers. The remaining space would take covers, cushions and a deflated tender. The amount of fixed equipment makes it a complicated crawl to get to the steering gear aft, and certainly not something you could do in an emergency.

Also on the forward bulkhead of the lazaret are the battery switches, the engine fuel shut-off valves, and the transfer valves to enable each engine to draw from either tank. These are hidden under the overhang and it is not clear how they operate.

A large sliding patio door to port leads from the cockpit into the saloon, while the fixed panel to starboard provides a storage point for the cockpit table.

Two teak-treaded steps port and starboard lead up to the side decks. The decks are 10in (250mm) wide, with gunwale lips, and solid guardrails with lower wires. These run well aft past the cockpit, making stepping up and moving forward safe and secure, further aided by inboard rails on the cabin sides. As you reach the foredeck, the slope of the coachroof can catch your feet unawares, but otherwise this is a good boat to work on.

The anchor is handled by a partly-recessed electric windlass. The chain is stored in a locker with a half-opening lid, and a dividing bulkhead to allow you to stow the mooring line too. A recessed sunpad area on the coachroof has stainless steel siderails and moulded drinks holders.

The flybridge is reached via a ladder from the cockpit, through a sliding hatch overhead. On the test boat this hatch did not open far enough, but this is being rectified.

The flybridge is a good size, with a single central helm seat, an L-shaped seat/lounger to starboard and a cushioned area aft. A cooled drinks locker is set in the back of the helm seat, and the rear seat provides a location for the liferaft.

The console area bristles with good ideas, and the curved instrument panel is attractive and well laid-out. Hinged perspex lids protect ignition keys and the VHF, while GRP lids cover gloveboxes port and starboard. The top of the starboard one has a matching hinged transparent perspex lid, to secure a quarter-folded chart for ready inspection. The 'mouse-ear' perspex glass-holders alongside the wheel close up like folding scissors, making an attractive job of a necessary feature.

Engines

Power options are 430hp Volvo TAMD 72s or 441hp Caterpillar 3208s, driving conventional shafts. Our test boat had the Volvos.

The engines are mounted under the saloon. Quick access is gained by lifting a centreline hatch in the saloon sole, but the rest of the floorboards under the carpet lift for more extensive work and there is a smaller trap over the starboard engine header tank. Once you are down between the engines, aluminium treadplate floors help you keep your feet.

Access to the large inlet water strainers and valves forward is good, but the fuel filters on the aft bulkhead are much less convenient. You would have to climb over the battery boxes and past the exhaust elbows, so the port unit is almost impossible to reach and the starboard one is not much better, even with all the floors up.

Soundproofing consists of simple 'eggbox' foam on the overheads, with rubber strip between the panels and the bearers to reduce vibration.

Handling and performance

Conditions for our test day were wintry, and the first problem they highlighted was the lack of heater outlets or demisters under the saloon windscreens. Even if the weather had simply been cold and damp we would have been misted-up; as it was, peering through a film of ice added a twist to the driving, and forced us up to brave the freezing blasts of wind on the flybridge.

The Solent threw up its usual nasty chop, which the 43 handled perfectly, but nothing in the way of larger waves.

Steering was excellent, the 43 tracking a straight course when required and turning in a satisfactory curve when needed. It is a well-behaved boat, up to today's usual good standards.

The top speed we recorded with 100% fuel and four crew was 31 knots, which compares favourably with Fairline's estimated 30 knots. At this speed the engines were if anything slightly overrevving from their maximum 2600rpm, indicating that there is power in reserve to compensate for the load of normal cruising gear and for a dirty bottom. Dropping to 2300rpm gave a comfortable 25 knots cruising, with 2000rpm still turning in 20 knots.

At these speeds the fuel consumption figures were 41.4gph, 26.4gph and 19.7gph (188lph, 120lph and 90lph) respectively, giving 0.75mpg, 0.96mpg and 1.14mpg. The boat's range (with a 20% margin) would be 156, 201 and 237 miles respectively, just allowing you to hop over from the Solent to France and back on cheap UK diesel, though most people would want to top-up for the return.

Sound levels were comparatively high, 85dB(A) in the saloon at maximum speed, though when we were running our tests some of the furniture was out, which may have affected matters.

Acceleration of 0-20 knots in 13.0sec shows the engine and hull are well matched.

Conclusions

The 43 is another excellent addition to the Squadron family. It has the same pedigree as its larger sisters, with the same stylish interior and attractive finishes on a powerful seagoing hull, but the formula has adapted well to a smaller craft, and at a price that puts it within reach of a significantly larger number of potential buyers.

We think Fairline are right not to take the concept any further down in size, but at 43ft it is a superb package. □

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