



# BOAT REPORT **SILVERTON 312 LS**

One year on from its introduction to the UK, the American Silverton range made an impact at Southampton with this all-new flybridge cruiser.



THE Silverton range of 30ft-plus cruisers from the USA was introduced to the UK for the first time at last year's Southampton Boat Show. A pair of their flybridge 34s were shown, both closer to 40ft loa: one incorporated an aft master suite, the other was an aft-cockpit version.

However, neither enthused us sufficiently to pursue a test. The design and layouts of these established models seemed to offer little by way of anything new in the hotly-contested 35ft-40ft market.

The 32ft model which appeared at this year's show is a little different, and it represents a new line for Silverton. A flybridge design, but with the cockpit and exterior helm position linked by a short run of easily climbed steps, the 312 has already made an impact in its home country; a similarly-styled larger model of around 36ft is due to enter production next year.

The 312 has two interior layout options. The LS we tested has an interior helm and a galley which is fully integrated into the saloon. The alternative is to have only one steering position, on the flybridge, which allows a larger galley to be incorporated, further forward, leaving more space in the saloon.

## Design

The superstructure moulding is fashioned with the stairs to the flybridge, and with a low, raked arch. The engine installation, using outdrives, has enabled the cockpit and saloon sole, and therefore the flybridge, to be kept as low as possible, giving a useful air draught of 10ft 8in (3.25m).

Underwater sections are a shallow to medium vee with a deadrise of 14° at the transom and 16° at the midships section.

Topside and superstructure lines are pleasantly clean but far from bland, the careful attention to the 'in-one' styling of windscreen and side windows making an eye-catching difference.

The anchor platform adds about 2ft (0.6m) to what we would consider the useful hull length of 30ft 0in (9.14m), which includes the integral bathing platform.

## Exterior

It was the practical, easily-climbed steps to the flybridge that first caught our eye on the 312. The treads have a good sandblast-effect non-slip, as do all other deck areas including the flat of the coachroof, but unfortunately the coamings above the moulded cockpit steps (much the easiest place to board) are devoid of this treatment, with nothing but a shiny gelcoat finish. Both here and back at the run up to the flybridge, however, there are plenty of handholds.

The helmsman and his co-driver are comfortably catered for by swivelling pedestal chairs, while the rest of the flybridge is bordered by an L-settee arrangement with some open-sided storage beneath.

The console offers a clear configuration of engine instrumentation and ready-use switches, with room for further additions. A compass is already incorporated.

Topping the coaming is a perspex screen of reasonably protective proportions supported on a stainless frame that doubles as a handrail. The arch carries what appears to be the very



minimum of steaming lights; antennae and other navigation-related gear might well require additional installation hardware.

A drop-away bench seat in the cockpit runs across the transom, with a walk-through to the generous bathing platform which incorporates a moulded stowage for fenders, a hidden boarding ladder and a shower fitting.

The cleats fitted on the sloping quarters, amidships and forward are just about adequate at 8in (20cm). A slight ridge to the outboard side

**Clockwise from above: the flybridge has swivel chairs for two at the helm. Cabins are curtained-off from the rest of the accommodation. The lower helm is more complete than on many American boats of this style. Hinged down, the helm seat increases galley workspace.**



of the 6.5in (17cm) sidedecks serves as a toerail, and the guardrails, pleasingly, come right back to the cockpit. A handrail running along the superstructure provides further security, although the guardrails here could do with being angled out slightly to give a little extra width.

The coachroof has been kept flat, and is completely covered in moulded non-slip. Rather less practical is the ground tackle arrangement: the anchor rode from the stemhead fitting to the Simpson Lawrence windlass (an extra) passes

directly over the foredeck locker, so the latter can be opened only a couple of inches. Hopefully, a modification is in the pipeline.

## Interior

An attractive curved sliding-door arrangement leads down a couple of steps to a mainly open-plan interior; the midships and forward cabins are simply curtained off when required.

On our test LS model, the galley and helm are



to starboard, with a good-sized convertible dinette arrangement opposite.

The helm station, geared for the European market, is more complete than on many American boats of this style, where any interior steering position is very much a secondary one. There is a pukka bench seat, which hinges forward to add extra work surface to the galley.

A clear layout of engine instrumentation and ready-use switches on the console leaves a modest amount of room for smaller navigation displays, but anything bulkier will require rather more thought. Each part of the three section screen is serviced by a self-parking wiper, and visibility is adequate.

Adjacent to the main access, the galley is equipped with a two-burner alcohol/electric 240V hob (gas is an option), a large fridge and a microwave tucked away in one of the below-counter cupboards. There is plentiful stowage for larger items here, and also a cutlery drawer, but no handy storage bins outboard or at counter level.

The smallest of the cupboards nearest the door houses the main electrics panels (12V and 240V shorepower), and beneath the step are the main battery-isolators.

A reasonable amount of lined locker space is provided by the seat-bases of the dinette, whilst a couple of hatches in the sole give access to further stowage and to the midships bilge (serviced, like the forward and engineroom compartments, by an electric submersible pump). There is also limited access to the fuel tanks, whose main stopcocks can be operated remotely by pull levers next to the flybridge steps.

Headroom in the main saloon is generous, up to 6ft 5in (1.95m) over the most part. This diminishes only slightly at the lower level, which houses the two sleeping areas plus a reasonable-sized and smart moulded WC to starboard, all three of which have opening ports for ventilation and a useful amount of storage.

During the day the midships sleeping compartment, which opens more fully onto the saloon than does the forecabin, can be used as extra seating, the backrest of the settee hinging up to form a second 6ft 2in x 2ft 0in (1.9m x 0.6m) bunk. The forward berth is angled, with a width of 3ft 10in (1.2m) and various shapes measuring from 6ft 0in (1.8m) to 6ft 6in (2m) long. Although both areas are only curtained-off, there is room enough to dress in privacy.

## Engines

Twin-petrol options start at 230hp V8s, while no fewer than four twin-diesel outdrive choices are listed, the one single-engine installation being a 230hp Volvo KAD42. Our test boat had the smallest twin-diesel installation, a total of 360hp courtesy of two Mercruiser D219s.

A large central hatch in the cockpit, supported on gas struts, gives access to all the main service points, even if at first glance the compartment seems on the tight side. Hatches outboard of the main one allow access to the further side of the engines and, if you are a contortionist, to the battery boxes as well.

The mechanics of the installation appear sound, but we were somewhat alarmed to find no evidence of any fuel/water separators. And whilst the forward bulkhead carried a fuel manifold

allowing either engine to draw and return to either tank, the taps and changeovers were unmarked. Poor pipework layout and untidy wiring looms were further disappointments.

Noise insulation is limited, but the thick bead of rubber cushioning around the hatches must give a good tight seal as sound levels were good.

A Firebuoy extinguishing system is installed, with status panels and control switches at the helm stations. A cockpit-mounted manual bilge pump supplements the auto/electric unit.

## Performance and handling

Thames-based Boat Showrooms of London, the UK distributors, leave their exhibits in the Solent for a week or two after the Southampton Boat Show, for demonstrations to potential clients. We took this opportunity to run our trials on the 312.

Ironically, after the gale-struck show, the weather proved too listless to kick up anything more than a ripple. Instead, the comings and goings of everything from Whitbread Round The World yachts to the *QE2* and her attendant tugs made for some interesting artificial sea-states.

Head-on, doing 25 knots at 3400rpm (a couple of hundred revs down on flat-out), these fast-moving ship wakes proved pretty hard, the hull sections being shallow. At any other angle the ride was much eased. Indeed, according to the delivery skipper, the Silverton came around the coast on its own bottom with little bother in a Force 5 with a following sea.

Through hard turns it banked with plenty of heel, which took some getting used to, with the hull responding smartly to the light, easy steering. Once straightened up, it settled to a steady course with barely finger-pressure on the helm.

Trimming out the legs brought the D219s up to their full 3800rpm, with a speed just shy of 30 knots, while a touch of tab kept the bow at a more cleaving angle and readily straightened up any tendency to lean into the wind.

Dropping back to 3000rpm gave a pleasant 20 knots, with very acceptable noise levels of 76dB(A) on the flybridge and 79dB(A) in the saloon; even in the cockpit they were reasonable, at 84dB(A). Full throttle brought very little increase, with 80dB(A) measured on the flybridge and 81dB(A) in the saloon.

With slower work in mind, it is worth noting that the 312 happily jogged along at a sedate 8½ knots at 2200rpm, and there was plenty of scope for easing down further for commendably quiet and smoke-free trolling.

At 3800rpm, expect consumption for both engines to be in the order of 20gph (91lph), at 3400rpm 16gph (73lph), and at 3000rpm around 11gph (50lph).

## Conclusions

Apart from one or two aspects of the engine installation which need further attention, and could be easily rectified, the 312LS acquits itself adequately in terms of layout and fit-out. The price with petrol power is very keen, although predictably, there is a significant increase to take the European preference for diesels.

The stepped access between the flybridge and cockpit will be welcomed by all; the curtained partitioning of the interior may make it too cosy for some. □

## Silverton 312 LS

**Loa** 31ft 10in (9.70m).

**Hull length** 29ft 10in (9.11m).

**Beam** 11ft 6in (3.50m).

**Draught** 2ft 4in (0.71m).

**Air draught** 10ft 8in (3.25m) with the arch up.

**Displacement** 4.8 tons.

**Fuel capacity** 125gal (570lt).

**Water capacity** 66gal (300lt).

**Engines** twin 170hp

Mercruiser D3.6L diesels.

**Price** from £54,855 ex VAT

with twin petrol engines and

£70,526 with a single diesel;

£75,793 for the standard boat

with 360hp Mercruiser D219s;

£80,581 as tested.

**Builders** Silverton Marine

Corporation, 301 Riverside

Drive, Millville, New Jersey

08332-6798, USA.

Tel: (1) 609 825 4117.

**UK distributors** Boat

Showrooms of London,

Shepperton Marina, Felix Lane,

Shepperton, Middlesex

TW17 8NJ. Tel: 0932 243722.