

BOAT REPORT

SETTING THE STANDARD



SUNSEEKER 29



Introduced at the last Southampton Boat Show, Sunseeker call their new Mohawk 29 an all-purpose sports cruiser with blistering performance. Can this be true? Poole Bay in November gave us the answer.

TO SAY that Northern Europe's climate is idiosyncratic would be to mildly understate the case. After a summer season of raging gales, torrential downpours of tropical intensity and a range of ambient temperatures that would make a freezer manufacturer blue with envy, the autumn months have once more produced the best boating conditions of the year.

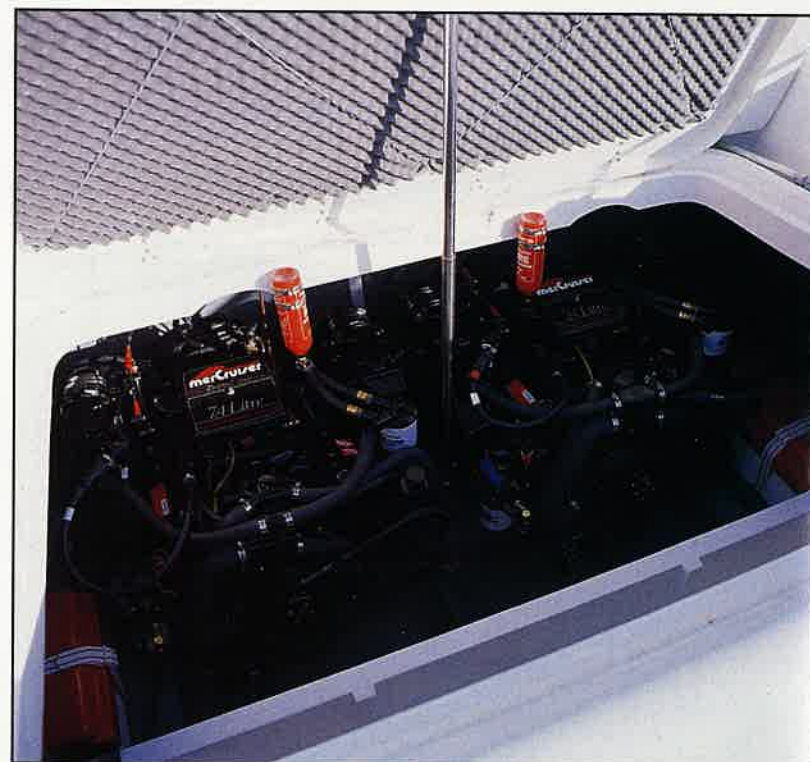
Thus, it was, that we found ourselves in Poole Bay on a day of such crisp clarity of light and sparkling water that it would have been OK on its own. We had the added benefit of Sunseeker's new Mohawk 29 to play with, and the abiding memory of the boat on that day remains; the Poole boat builders have got it right again.

Design

After many years setting the benchmark with a range of sports cruisers that capitalised upon Don Shead's racing reputation; coupled with increasingly ingenious accommodation plans to cope with the family afloat, Sunseeker took the conscious decision three years ago to develop a more overt range of high performance craft that appealed to a slightly different, but equally demanding audience. That rich vein has been tapped in successive years with the Cobra 39, the Tomahawk 37 and the latest offering in this performance-plus category — the Mohawk 29.

Shead has drawn a medium deadrise hull form, varying from 21° on the transom to around 23° amidships. This configuration, allied to a pair of outboard spray rails running right aft and an inboard pair that phase out forward of midships,

BOAT REPORT



The neat helm position (top) and compact galley (above left) both ably illustrate Sunseeker's attention to detail. Above right: twin Mercruiser 330hp Bravos nestling under the electrically-powered hatch.

SUNSEEKER 29



gives the boat a soft entry and a predictable ride that inspires confidence, allowing maximum manoeuvrability throughout the impressive speed range.

The overall styling makes considerable use of soft, rolled curves on the quarters and through the deck line. This is carried through to the elegant yet substantial cockpit screen surround. The radiussed quarters sweep aft to give protection to the bathing platform. With a subtly integrated chine, the Mohawk represents an efficient and stylish package.

Exterior

The foredeck, which occupies a little under half the boat's length, has a raised centre section to assist headroom below. This, in common with the wide side decks, benefits from a non-slip finish across its full width. A stainless steel bow roller is standard, as is the Bomar hatch, a de-mountable running light and a pair of cleats forward of the self-draining

anchor locker. Spring cleats are located at midships and deck rails extend forward, making the task of going forward a safe and easy one.

The cockpit is self-draining, with the helm to starboard. A raised binnacle carries the tank gauge, water temperature, oil pressure and battery state indicators, with prominence given to the tachometers, an echo-sounder and log while a switch/breaker panel is found to port of the wheel. A Ritchie compass completes the essentials. Outdrive trim controls are outboard of the helm, with Morse race-type, notched throttle levers and separate gear selectors.

The two person helm seat rolls back to face aft for dining, and the single seat to port lifts to reveal a draining cold box. Between the seats is a deep and capacious locker that is big enough to handle the inflatable and its outboard. It revealed Sunseeker's attention to detail with painted bilges and a fully gelled underside to the lifting hatch — nice touches and practical too. The locker also gives

access to the skin fittings.

With deep cave lockers either side and stowage boxes beneath the lifting aft settee, the cockpit is both spacious and well planned. Talking of lifting, the one piece engine hatch/sun deck hinges off the transom, and is elevated by way of an electric ram which is both neat and effective.

Accommodation

A sliding door access from cockpit to cabin is almost de rigeur on today's boats of this class and the Mohawk is no exception. The hatch slides neatly out of view beneath the fascia panel, and is lockable in both open or closed positions. The entrance gives onto a galley with fridge and cooker, a small toilet compartment to starboard and the mandatory five seater settee forward with its infill table to convert into a double berth.

Our test boat sported a colour scheme of pink, grey and white, a fashionable mix used with discretion, and there was adequate sitting headroom throughout. We particularly

SUNSEEKER 29

liked the builder's use of fully-trimmed berth-bases, and the detail of imitation snakeskin on the fiddles. An inspection hatch behind the fascia gave access to the instrumentation, and the wiring was both well planned and neatly executed. A hanging locker to starboard completed the below decks accommodation.

Engines

The Mohawk is specified with a variety of twin engine options including Volvo petrol motors on 290 outdrives with Duoprops optional, and diesels which utilise Duoprops as standard. However, our test boat which, incidentally, was the second boat off the line, sported two Mercruiser 330 hp Bravos. They fitted snugly in an engine bay that benefited from full acoustic insulation and which was notable for the neatness of its piping and cable runs, and hidden wiring. Indeed, the attention to detail is superb. A full-width storage box runs athwartships on the forward bulkhead, in which the cockpit table stows, while the master switches for the electrics are housed conveniently within the aft cockpit locker to starboard. Twin battery banks service engine starting and ship's systems respectively.

Automatic fire extinguishers are positioned over the two motors and the whole boat drains aft in the bilge to be pumped overside by a single automatic unit; a manual bilge pump

may be specified as an extra. The 80 gallon, aluminium fuel tank is located forward of the engine bay, under the cockpit sole, accessed via a lifting hatch, with individual fuel lines to each motor in reinforced rubber hose, together with separate filters.

Handling and Performance

Any Shead hull is likely to be a pedigree performer and as we eased the Mohawk out through the Haven and into Poole Bay, it quickly became apparent that here was a boat that could be helmed with verve and precision. Pick up was instantaneous; response was immediate. The hull ran cleanly through any chop that we could find. Running head to wind, over a slight swell, the boat could be set up with the drives trimmed out and virtually left to its own devices; it handled quartering or following seas with equal certainty.

Our radar gun recorded a maximum speed of 50 knots with half fuel load and two crew. As the test boat had virtually new engines, the builder's claims of more to come would not seem unreasonable. Most importantly, the beauty of the boat was as much in its total predictability as in its out and out performance — we found it impossible to break the hull away, or cavitate the outboard propeller on even the tightest turns.

We chose to helm standing up, but the sight line over the bow is such that the boat could equally safely be driven seated. Having said that, for a performance craft we might have expected to find wrap-around racing seats rather than the two-person bench. The ease of attaining planing attitude, together with a level running angle gave unrestricted visibility and with a length overall of 29ft (8.70m), on a beam of 10ft (3.00m), the Mohawk has clearly been designed with both newcomers to performance boating, as well as the more experienced in mind; in this, it succeeds very well.

Conclusion

The Mohawk benefits from a performance heritage and the builder's production engineering techniques, together with some truly thoughtful and in some cases, delightful touches. With better than 50 knots from petrol power and a reputed 44 knots with diesel motors, this latest Sunseeker is clearly a sparkling performer and looks built to last. The lessons of a wide Mediterranean-based clientele have been learnt well and whilst ex VAT starting prices ranging between £39,950 and £54,500 are not cheap, its value becomes particularly self-evident the more the boat is studied. Sunseeker's 29 will win the company yet more friends. ■



Length Overall	29ft 0in (8.70m)
LWL	25ft 06in (7.77m)
Beam	10ft 0in (3.00m)
Draft	2ft 08in (0.80m)
Weight	7840 lbs (3550 kilos)
Fuel Capacity	80 gal (364 litres)
Water Capacity	10 imp gal (45 litres)
Designer:	Don Shead
Price as tested	£49,400 ex VAT
Builders:	
Sunseeker International Powerboats Limited, 27-31 West Quay Road, Poole BH15 1HX, Dorset. Tel: 0202 675071	