



— Boat Report —

CRANCHI ATLANTIQUE 38

Cranchi's first flybridge boat is built with attention to detail, both above and below the waterline. How did it take to a grey day in the Solent?

Italian builders Cranchi, synonymous with chic sculptured sportscruisers up to 40ft (12.20m), have expanded their line-up in a new direction by entering the flybridge market.

We took advantage of an invitation to their demonstration base, at the Merlin Quay dry-berthing facility in Southampton, to give the new 38ft Atlantique the once-over.

Design

The 38's hull shape is medium-vee at the transom, with a deadrise of 16°, edging deeper over the midships sections, where it approaches 21°. There is a wide, slightly angled chine, and two pairs of sprayrails.

To help get the engines lower in the boat and achieve a more efficient shaft angle, the four-bladed props are set in tunnels, cone-shaped in section. The rudders, positioned just inside these tunnels,

appear markedly offset, possibly so they can attain a cleaner flow of water.

Ahead of the tunnels, the hull flattens. Initially we thought this was to recapture some of the lift lost to the modifying of the vee-sections aft, and this may indeed be a by-product, but the prime aim is to allow an even lower engine line, to further reduce the shaft angle and maximise stability.

The overall line of the boat has been kept as low as possible to improve its seakindliness, while the structure around the flybridge area is lower in weight than straightforward GRP construction thanks to the use of materials with a high strength-to-weight ratio, including Kevlar and carbon-fibre.

Aesthetically, the boat is distinctive but understated. The lines are a subtle combination of flowing curves which never drop to a hard edge, and the flybridge is drawn well back over the cockpit, with its low sweep of radar arch returning in line with the transom. Here, the bathing platform is neatly set



Above: in the saloon, the wide L-shaped settee to starboard faces a smaller one to port which divides into two separate chairs that can be pulled across closer to the coffee table. Below: the helm console is attractively moulded and incorporates a handy perspex-covered chart table. Below right: almost an integral part of the saloon, the galley includes a fridge/freezer, a gas/electric hob, a microwave and grill.

with a run of integral fendering, giving useful protection to what is a vulnerable area but nevertheless keeping a low profile in more ways than one.

Exterior

Boarding the boat from a pontoon is quite easy, either via the side deck or by stepping around the bathing platform return, even though there is no particular foothold built in. If you are berthed bows-to and stepping across the anchor platform extension, however, you are helped by a break in the rail incorporating a small step.

The bathing platform is moulded to accept the optional passerelle, and the other appointments include a long swim-ladder, a hidden shower, a shoreside power connector and a liferaft stowage point, the transom coaming being fitted with a pair of those very Italian telescopic davits. A wide door leads through to the cockpit.

Here, a shallow L-shaped bench borders the transom, incorporating an open cave locker (useful for the warps) and a conventional seat locker. Extra seating, and provision for al-fresco dining, comes in

the form of a pair of folding chairs and a table which stow within the moulding for the flybridge staircase, to starboard. Above this moulding, the latter has just a few wide, open treads, allowing plenty of light to enter the saloon, but it is nevertheless easy to ascend, with the aid of a number of handrails.

Beneath the cockpit is a large lazaret which runs into the engine compartment. Its hatch is held open by gas struts, and there is a step to help you down inside and treadplates to keep your feet out of the bilge.

The forward engine area has been left largely clear of auxiliaries, the outer reaches of the lazaret readily swallowing everything from the calorifier to the batteries. The necessities are within easy servicing reach, however, and ably secured, kept clear of the bilge by a sturdy galvanised shelf. A similarly robust fabrication has been engineered to take the optional, encapsulated 3.8kW generator, as well as the exhaust water lock and battery.

Abaft of the genset, but still accessible, are the rudder stocks and associated linkages, complete with an emergency block-and-tackle steering system. We would like to have seen this area boxed off in some manner, to prevent the possibility of

poorly stowed loose gear jamming things up, and some means of protecting gear and feet from the short run of spinning shafts would not go amiss either, although the sternlands themselves are readily accessible.

Overall, Cranchi have done a very tidy job. Here, as through the rest of the less exposed areas of the Atlantique, there is not a sharp barb of fibreglass to be found and everywhere is thoroughly painted-out; painted carefully, mark you, not just smacked on. Similarly their attention to detail with regard to fixings, wiring, pipework and engineering is excellent.

Additional stowage in the cockpit comes by way of a handy, if shallow, wet locker, together with the gas bottle compartment in the starboard coaming.

A couple of wide steps lead up to the 8in (20cm) side decks. A chest-high inboard handrail is immediately available, but a couple of feet more guardrail would make things safer still. All the deck areas are moulded with an adequate non-slip finish, and the coachroof can additionally be fitted with a large sunpad cushion.

The foredeck is neat and tidy, with the anchor tucked out of harm's way and the electric Lofrans windlass housed beneath a hatch which also gives access to the chain locker and a partitioned stowage area just ahead of it. Line handling is well catered for, with 12in (30cm) cleats forward, 10in ones amidships and in fact two pairs to take the stern lines: one on the cockpit coaming and another on the bathing platform quarters.

The flybridge offers a pair of rather upright bench seats-cum-sunloungers on the overhang portion, complete with a removable drinks and nibbles holder. At the forward console there is seating for three: the helmsman himself has a rather small but supportive bucket seat to starboard, and there is a locker settee for two, the back of which swings over to allow you to face aft.

A classic sportscar-type wooden wheel complements a veneered dash housing the compass, tachometers and engine warning lights, with another veneered panel for the ready-use switches. The rest of the fascia has a simple gelcoat finish, with room for a couple of repeater heads to the left of the helm, while the throttles and trim-tab rockers fall comfortably to the skipper's left hand.

A couple of 'bits' trays are scalloped out of the console moulding, for the helmsman and his companions. A reasonably braced perspex screen gives a measure of shelter, running into a sturdy rail which tops off the low coaming.

Accommodation

On first acquaintance we found the Atlantique's saloon rather unprepossessing on what is a fair-sized boat, except for the striking colour of the soft furnishings. But as the day wore on we became more and more comfortable with its ambience.

The main seating to starboard is a wide and comfortable Alcantara L-shaped settee, which can be pulled out slightly to make a 2ft 3in (0.68m) wide occasional berth. Complementing the rest of the quality joinery, the ash table can be raised or lowered, depending upon whether it is cappuccino or dinner time, and can be extended using a central infill which will otherwise double as a tray. What looks like a smaller settee opposite actually comprises two individual chairs (with a cavelocker behind them) which can be pulled across to the



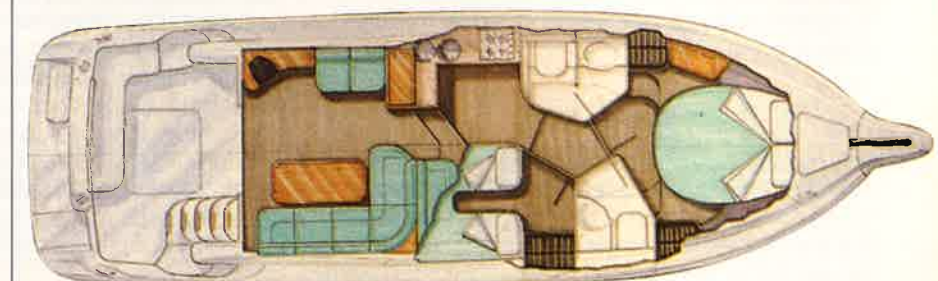
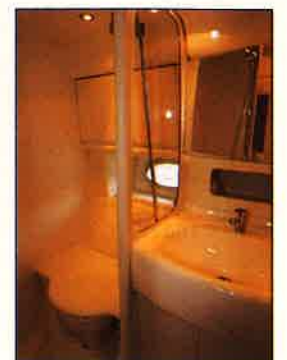
Above: the master cabin is forward, with an en-suite toilet compartment and a useful array of storage. Below: both toilets are covered, while one of the compartments has a separate shower cubicle. Below left: treadplates help you down into the lazaret beneath the cockpit, where the encapsulated generator and battery box are easy to get at.

table. The split window line ensures that everyone gets a good view out from the seating area. Storage beneath both settees is by way of drawers rather than lockers, properly fitted on runners rather than left as loose-fitting boxes. Opposite the main dinette is a small sideboard incorporating an entertainments centre and bar.

Headroom in the saloon, and through most of the boat, is maintained around 6ft 3in (1.91m).

There is plenty of room around the helm, which has a fixed double seat; again the wood liner of the locker underneath is finished with the same care as the more prominent joinery. The view is good, through a two-part screen equipped with a pair of self-parking washer/wipers which give a useful sweep.

The attractively moulded console is well designed



to break up the instruments into a logical pattern, with the heads and switches set into veneered panels. Throttles and tab controls fall easily to the helmsman's right hand, and the console runs inboard to house the standard electronics package of a Cetrek GPS plotter and autopilot plus a Shipmate VHF. A veneered overhead panel takes the log/sounder, and will help to accommodate any alternative instrument layout, should a radar be required.

Atop the inboard area of console lies a flat, perspex-covered chart area (a small fiddled shelf above the skipper's head will take folded charts and other relevant publications), and protected by smoked-perspex doors beneath is the main electrics panel, incorporating the usual remote battery switches and good-sized LED voltmeters and ammeters.

Down a couple of easy treads, the galley is all but part of the saloon. The eye-height cupboards here, all of a useful size with shelves and appropriate cut-outs for crockery and so on, are in ash, whilst, setting the tone for the sleeping cabins, the run of cupboards and drawers and the dual-voltage fridge/freezer are finished in a pale matt lacquer.

Inset in the marble-effect work surface is a one-and-a-half-bowl sink, a bulk storage bin and a gas/electric hob. The larger portion of the cover for the hob has an allotted place in an adjacent cupboard, while the smaller section flips over to double as a chopping board. Also in the inventory is a microwave-cum-grill. We were at first bewildered by a long, narrow perspex hatch above the hob — could it be a special compartment for stowing spaghetti? — but it turned out to be a rather neat extractor unit.

Beneath the carpeted sole of the galley and the adjacent lobby leading to the cabins are large hatches. The former gives access to a commodious storage bin, the latter to the bilge, shower-trap and seaocks.

The master cabin forward has a good-sized central double berth, with drawers inset, a mirrored dressing table and a useful array of hanging and shelf storage. A toilet/shower compartment is en-suite.

In the guest cabin there is a reasonable amount of space immediately inside the door, but sitting headroom over the two single berths is tight. A bedside table separates them, and the mattresses lift to reveal a moderate sized storage bin and the bilge, plus good access to the freshwater tank. Storage is adequate for a long weekend, consisting of a hanging locker with shelves forward, a wide shelf outboard under the two opening ports, and a couple of small cave lockers.

The master cabin's toilet compartment benefits from a screened-off shower cubicle as well as plenty of storage in and around the sink moulding. The guest/day WC is without a separate shower, although again there is plenty of dry stowage. Both toilets are electric and covered, but neither compartment has the benefit of an extractor, just opening ports.

Engines

Only one engine installation is available, a pair of Volvo Penta TAMD 63Ps rated to 370hp apiece.

The compact design of the engines, and the fact that they are fed by a single fuel tank situated forward rather than by a pair of wing tanks outboard,

means there is room enough to get right around them without having to lift up too much of the saloon sole. There is access from the lazaret for most running checks, and the saloon hatch allows standing room at the head of the compartment for servicing belts and impellers, together with access to the fuel tank inspection plate.

At the lazaret end of the compartment are the fuel/water separators, complete with drain cups, and the main cooling-water filters, tucked away a little awkwardly well outboard. An automatic submersible pump and manual back-up operated from the cockpit service the combined bilge compartments; a further electric unit is sited right forward.

Not only are the saloon hatch and deckhead well covered in 'loaded' noise insulation, but a similarly constructed, sound-absorbing underlay is to be found beneath the carpet. It is rare indeed that boatbuilders go to this trouble, but very welcome when they do.

Handling and performance

Whether Cranchi's efforts to drop the engines as low as possible in the hull and reduce the weight of the top hamper have resulted in any real improvement in efficiency or seakindness, we would hesitate to say. Certainly, the hull travelled cleanly through and around anything the Solent could throw at us on the day.

The 38 bowled along for the most part at 2500rpm, confirmed by our radar gun as a touch under 27 knots, as we endeavoured to catch up with any odd shaft of sunlight that might occasionally break through the persistent cloud cover. For more sedate cruising, backing off to 2200rpm gave an easy 22.5 knots, at an estimated 1.2mpg; coming down further to 2000rpm, we sat happily on the plane at around 18 knots.

A blustery Force 3-4 meant some tinkering with the tabs to set the boat on level flight, but she tracked straight and true, requiring barely a finger on the wheel, and proved responsive to the helm on all but the very hardest turns. Accomplishing a 180° turn at speed really required backing off on the inside throttle.

Flat out, we all but verified Cranchi's published performance data, clocking just over 31 knots at 2900rpm while reasonably heavily laden to the tune of full tanks and four adults.

The manufacturers' attention to insulation proved itself worthwhile, with noise levels in the saloon only easing past the 80dB(A) threshold once the engines were pushed beyond 2500rpm.

Conclusions

If we had to summarise Cranchi's entry into the flybridge market in a single word, it would be 'understated'. The Atlantique's styling is in many ways restrained (if you ignore the bold saloon furnishings), but nevertheless subtly pleasing, from its fine exterior contours to the uncluttered yet practical detailing of its interior layout. Both in and out of sight, there is nothing to disappoint; this boat was put together with care.

In terms of performance and handling, we cannot say we could identify any remarkable results from the efforts made in hull design; the boat simply goes well, and appears to be well matched to the 63-series Volvos. □

Cranchi Atlantique 38

Loa 40ft 7in (12.39m).

Hull length 38ft 9in (11.83m).

Beam 12ft 7in (3.87m).

Draught 3ft 5in (1.08m).

Air draught 13ft 3in (4.05m).

Displacement 9.0 tons.

Fuel 232gal (1050lt).

Water 77gal (350lt).

Engines twin 370hp Volvo

Penta TAMD 63P diesels.

Price £166,127 ex VAT as

standard; £177,777 as

tested with bow thruster,

generator and other options.

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