



# Glastron GS279

**A stylish 27ft sportscruiser with a punchy diesel engine and a full specification for under £50,000.**

**Is this the bargain we've all been waiting for, or a price cut too far?**

REPORT BY CARL RICARDSON

**O**ur visit to the Glastron stand at the London Boat Show unearthed a real surprise: a credible sportscruiser whose price list showed a diesel variant as the cheapest option. And not by a small amount—it was a whopping £2500 less expensive than the smallest petrol alternative.

After picking ourselves up from the floor, we were even more amazed to discover that the engine in question was not something from the Royal Mail's van fleet but Volvo Penta's supercharged and turbocharged 170hp KAD32.

It seems the UK importers and distributors,

RYB Marines Sales, have simply absorbed the normal 20% diesel engine premium in order to give their customers the boat they want at a price they will like.

Having recently pitted its peers against each other in a group test (see MBM Jan 04 p50), we were keen to see how the Glastron GS279 stacked up. Would its budget price be reflected in build quality and finish, or is this a bona-fide bargain?

## DESIGN & BUILD

American boatbuilders tend to base their model designations on hull length, rather

than counting tacked-on pulpits and oversize bathing platforms, so you get a good idea how far your money is going. Sure enough, the 279 measures 27ft 5in overall, including only a short stub of pulpit and a sensible bathing platform.

To maximise interior space, the deck moulding rises fully 19in above the level of the hull join, and carries this all the way aft. This does give it a slightly sober look, but subtle indentations and knuckles in the topsides, plus the standard-fit radar arch, help to balance its proportions.

On board, the extra freeboard is very

noticeable. The cockpit coaming starts waist-high, and rises further still as it moves forward to meet the windscreen, creating a very protective environment.

Below decks, the four-berth interior is deep and spacious, with around 6ft 3in of headroom in the entranceway, although comfort and finish could do with a pep-up.

There may not be many frills on board but there are signs that plenty of care and attention has gone into production. Digging around in the few voids you can actually get at reveals no evidence of rough or unfinished GRP work, and plenty of stainless steel has been used to brighten up the various navigation lights, outlets and breathers.

Beneath the waterline, a 20° deadrise at the stern means this is a deep-vee hull in its truest form (Fairey used to go for 19°), suggesting a capable performer even in awkward seas.

✓✓✓✓  
**Low on frills, but offers good space with solid build quality.**

## ACCOMMODATION

Given this deep-vee design, it is no surprise to find that the footwell which leads down from the cockpit through a sliding door, has more of a drop than most. The upshot is lots of headroom immediately inside the cabin.

Finished in clean, cream vinyl, detailed with deeper khaki inserts, the GS279 has a textbook sportscruiser layout. There are forward vee-berths and a midships cabin, with a galley and toilet compartment occupying the space in between.

The entrance to the mid-cabin is open and easy to get through. Inside, the finish is simple, with a one-piece mattress laid over the sole and a deep cubbyhole set into the padded backrest. A window provides a useful amount of natural light.

As a berth, the forward vee arrangement works well enough, but in its dinette mode it lacks a little comfort. Many boats in this class have integrated backrests, which pull out to form the infills for the berth; it is probably a blessing that these backrests don't have that

function, as they seem to have all the requirements of cushions except foam!

The small plastic table supplied as standard is not really up to the job either. It would be better to pay more for the optional teak table, and keep the plastic one for use in the cockpit.

For stowage, there are carpeted bins under the seat-bases plus a useful hanging locker to starboard, which incorporates some shelf space. As with the galley lockers, this unit is fitted with a heavily lacquered door and finished with oddly non-nautical handles.

The galley itself, higher and wider than most, is well equipped, with a fridge, a single-burner hob, a microwave oven and a moulded basin. The toilet and shower compartment is sensibly sized, but does fall

foul of the deep-vee hull form; the rising chine pushes the floor up, adversely affecting headroom.

✓✓✓✓  
**Space and headroom, but only limited creature comforts.**

## EXTERIOR

You can board the boat easily via the integral bathing platform, and a large transom gate leads you through to the safe haven of the cockpit. The striking feature of this area is its protectively deep surround; with 33in of coaming, the cockpit walls are waist-high for adults and chest-high for children.

The layout is unremarkable, compared to the innovative style and finish of the more expensive Crownline 250CR, for example. However, the basics are all in place.

A back-to-back helm bench drops down to create a sunpad. A lay-back bench to port and a removable seat along the transom create a socialising space for five or six people. A curvaceous wet-bar includes a segmented icebox. Snap-in carpets cover the GRP floor, and it is all capped off by a radar arch.

The wet-bar moulding also includes a step to help you climb up to the sliver of side deck, or over the coaming onto a pontoon. The normal route to the foredeck, however, will be via the stepped cabin door and the walk-through screen. Appreciating that this is not always the most comfortable journey, the designers have kept the foredeck free of obstacles with only a gentle slope forward.

Another piece of good sense is the provision of an electric windlass as standard, reducing the need for forays forward. If the spring cleats were mounted a little further back, so they could be reached from the cockpit, it would be better still.

At the helm, the seat is either a large single or a small double. The layered console spreads instruments and controls over four tiers, with the main dash set at the top, leaving plenty of space to fit additional navigation displays. Sadly, no 'bits' tray is provided.

✓✓✓✓  
**The deep cockpit offers good security and socialising room.**



**above** The helm console has four tiers of instruments, the cockpit benefits from deep coamings, and the single Volvo Penta diesel is a real performer.

**ENGINE OPTIONS & ACCESS**

The engine options list might run to 13 variations, but for most UK buyers there will be only one sensible choice. Sitting amongst an army of single petrol V8s that range from 230hp to 320hp is the 170hp Volvo Penta KAD32 diesel, and fuel prices mean the derv road is the only route to take.

If choosing your engine is straightforward, getting at it is easier still. A large one-piece hatch lifts easily on two gas struts, opening to a height that allows quick and easy access to the block and all its service points.

For more involved maintenance or cleaning duties, you can unclip the struts and hinge the hatch back fully, resting it safely against the aft bench backrest.

All the ancillary equipment and the twin

battery banks are arranged across the beam in a neat, if slightly tight, line. This leaves freedom of space at the front of the bay to work from, or indeed for fitting additional kit.

The painted-out finish is clean and simple, although some of the detailing is a little untidy, especially around the boxed-in fuel tank.



**PERFORMANCE & HANDLING**

If this boat had been available for our sportscruiser group test, it might well have won the performance section.

On paper, the heavier and lower-powered GS279 looks outgunned by the Monterey 245 and its 240hp Yanmar diesel, but when have

boats been creatures of logic? Defying a 400kg and 70hp handicap, it accelerated from idle to 25 knots some 6sec faster than the Monterey. We put this down to the Volvo Penta's belt-driven supercharger and more efficient DuoProp drive allowing the engine to get up to speed far more rapidly than the turbo-lag-affected Yanmar. Not surprisingly, the Glastron's top speed was lower than the Monterey's: 29.5 knots compared to 33.

There is still a small lag before the supercharger and then then turbo kick in, but from 2500rpm on it's an exhilarating ride. The engine pulls like the proverbial wild horse all the way up to its maximum speed, with the final 500rpm delivering an extra 6 knots for little reduction in mpg.

Indeed, the poise of the boat changes at 3500rpm, from a comfortable sedate cruise to something much more agile. This might encourage you to spend more time at the upper end of the Volvo's performance curve, but this well-proven and economic engine should be able to take it.

The set-up of the boat is balanced and extremely user-friendly. Engine, outdrive and hull all feel well matched and help to make the helmsman's job easier and more enjoyable.

The grip of the DuoProp drive is impressive in the turn, with only 1-2 knots of pace lost under fairly serious levels of helm. The trim of the leg (something of an issue for all three boats in our group test) is also faultless, enabling the planing area to be correctly pushed aft without any sign of cavitation or porpoising.

Cutting across wash and waves proved no problem for a hull that simply refuses to slam. Regardless of our angle of approach, the ride remained assured, with very little spray finding its way inboard.

As we found with the smooth running Yanmar in the Monterey, having a diesel does not mean that you have to forego refinement. Although perhaps not quite as silky as its

Japanese rival, the KAD32 still purred along, recording noise readings comparable to those of a V8 petrol.



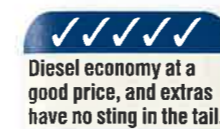
**SPECIFICATION & VALUE**

Since the London Boat Show, RYB Marine Sales have changed their pricing policy, but not to the detriment of diesel buyers. Now, it is the turn of the petrol engine options to be reduced, to a starting price of around £46,000 inc VAT, so it's good news all round.

In truth, though, these price cuts were necessary. The petrol options did not compare well with, say, the Monterey 245 or Larson 260 Cabrio. Even with these reductions, the diesel package remains the one to choose.

Whichever fuel pump you moor alongside, the Glastron's standard inventory is pretty much complete for most inshore cruising needs, with canopies, shorepower, battery charger and trim tabs, plus the radar arch (a £3,895 option on the Larson) and the electric windlass (a £1500-plus extra on each of the boats in our group test).

That leaves only your preferred marine electronics and a cockpit cover as the major costs to factor in to your budget.



**Verdict**

Depending on what you expect from a 27ft sportscruiser, this Glastron varies from being merely impressive to almost irresistible.

The combination of a capable hull, a plucky diesel engine, a spacious layout and an inclusive standard specification makes the GS 279 hard to ignore at any price. But at a fiver under £50,000 it is little short of sensational

For those who hanker after the more luxurious end of the market, its level of fit and finish might not pass muster. But there is no knocking its practicality, performance or value for money.

The winner of our group test of sportscruisers, the diesel-powered Monterey 245, offers more style and refinement, but the Glastron's superior pick-up and specification, and £4,500 price advantage, make it a very tempting alternative.



**Glastron GS279 technical data**



**specifications**

|                |                                       |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| BUILD          | glass-reinforced plastic              |
| RCD            | design category C                     |
| LENGTH OVERALL | 27ft 5in (8.36m)                      |
| BEAM           | 8ft 5in (2.59m)                       |
| DRAUGHT        | with leg down, 3ft 3in (1.02m)        |
| AIR DRAUGHT    | excluding radar arch, 7ft 4in (2.26m) |
| DISPLACEMENT   | 2.4 tonnes                            |
| FUEL CAPACITY  | 60gal (273lt)                         |
| WATER CAPACITY | 55gal (250lt)                         |

**key dimensions**

|                           |                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS       | 0ft 3in           |
| HEADROOM IN SALOON        | 6ft 3in           |
| HEADROOM IN FORWARD CABIN | 6ft 3in           |
| FORWARD CABIN BERTH       | 6ft 1in x 6ft 2in |
| MIDSHIPS CABIN BERTH      | 7ft 0in x 4ft 1in |

**performance**

engines single Volvo Penta KAD32P/DP, configuration 4cyl, 2.4lt, 170hp at 3900rpm. conditions wind westerly Force 5, sea moderate. load fuel 25%, water 25%, crew 4.

| rpm  | knots | gph | lph  | mpg | range | noise |
|------|-------|-----|------|-----|-------|-------|
| 2500 | 11.0  | 3.4 | 15.5 | 3.2 | 154   | 74    |
| 3000 | 17.2  | 4.5 | 20.5 | 3.8 | 182   | 76    |
| 3200 | 20.4  | 5.2 | 23.6 | 3.9 | 187   | 75    |
| 3500 | 23.2  | 6.2 | 28.2 | 3.7 | 178   | 76    |
| 3700 | 26.6  | 7.1 | 32.3 | 3.7 | 178   | 76    |
| 3900 | 29.1  | 7.5 | 34.1 | 3.9 | 187   | 79    |

Range figures above are in miles, with 20% margin. acceleration 0-15 knots in 9.5sec; noise figures are in dB(A), 0-20 knots in 12.5sec; recorded in the saloon, 0-28 knots in 19.0sec

**prices**

|                                      |          |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| STANDARD BOAT                        | inc VAT  |
| with single 170hp Volvo Penta diesel | £49,995  |
| with single 280hp Volvo Penta petrol | £45,886  |
| LAUNCH & COMMISSIONING               | standard |
| DELIVERY                             | POA      |
| ANTIFOULING                          | £468     |
| ROPES & FENDERS                      | £193     |
| COCKPIT TONNEAU COVER                | £480     |
| BOAT AS TESTED                       | £50,188  |

**ENQUIRIES**

RYB Marine Sales Ltd, Racecourse Yacht Basin, Maidenhead Road, Windsor, Berkshire SL4 5HT. Tel: 01753 851717. www.ryb.co.uk

**the rivals**



**LARSON 260 CABRIO**  
from £59,650 inc VAT (diesel)  
A sure-footed sportscruiser with plenty of space and an interesting offset cabin, but little design detail.  
Tel: 01903 713553.  
www.yachtworld.com/littlehamptonmarina



**BAYLINER 265**  
from £57,995 inc VAT (diesel)  
Besides upping the ante in the style stakes, this boat packs in plenty of accommodation.  
Tel: 01539 442121.  
www.bayliner.com



**MONTEREY 245 CRUISER**  
from £54,578 inc VAT (diesel)  
The winner of our recent group test (see MBM Jan 04 p50) offers style, refinement and ability.  
Tel: 023 8045 2255.  
www.southwater.com



**below** The WC is a bit cramped but the mid-cabin is easily accessible and the galley well equipped.

