



Boat Report

MARIAH Z275 DAVANTI

Big and comfortable for a sportsboat, this American import puts the emphasis on speed. Is it overpowered? We took it to 48 knots to find out.

integral bathing platform, the topside moulding becomes sculpted with 'finger-wings', which are reminiscent of the exaggerated fins seen on American cars of the 1950s.

Exterior

The bathing platform incorporates all the necessary watersport accoutrements: a ski-hook, a shower and a chunky swim ladder. There are plenty of grabrails, and a seat-locker doubles as a step up to the full-width sunpad.

Ahead of this in the cockpit proper are a U-shaped settee and two bucket seats up at the helm. All these, as well as the coaming sides, are upholstered for cosseted performance boating, and well served by appropriately sited handholds. The bench seat-bases hinge up to give access to lockers beneath. A two-part table, which also acts as an infill to make the settee into another sunlounger, stows within the engine bay, as does the cockpit canopy assembly.

Moulded into the coaming just forward of the settee are a sink unit to starboard, and a single alcohol burner under a small area of work surface to port. An alternative to the former is a coolbox, possibly more useful given that there is a sink in the galley below-decks anyway (in turn, the large American-sized fridge there could then be done away with, and the space utilised instead for more galley stowage).

The helm console has a sportscar feel, with a very smoothly sculpted drift of panels and controls, from the main fascia's inset engine instrumentation down to the stereo unit beside the driver's right leg. Ready-use switches lie either side of the adjustable padded wheel, and an easily viewed compass is located just ahead.

Both the helmsman's and passenger's seats are electrically operated, with squabs dropping down if you want to stand, or moving back if you want more clearance when doing so. The square-section, stainless steel framework of the seat plinths appears conspicuously workaday compared with the smooth-operator feel of the rest of the cockpit.

On the passenger's side are a couple of useful-sized gloveboxes, together with a measure of stowage under the footrest. Between the two seats, a set of steps can be swung out to give you a leg-up through the well-braced split screen, which is serviced by a self-parking wiper and a demister.

The coachroof-cum-foredeck, which curves slightly on its run forward, is moulded with a reasonable all-over non-slip surface. It is also bordered by a pair of rails which are good and robust but would serve better as handholds for those climbing through the screen if they were brought inboard by a foot or so.

Up at the sharp end there is an anchor locker, but no bow-roller is fitted as standard. Deck hardware comprises 8in (20cm) cleats here, amidships and on each quarter.

Accommodation

From the outside, there looks to be room below for little more than a simple cuddy. But whilst there is indeed only a single cabin area, with a convertible dinette/berth forward, the proportions are generous, with space for a useful galley area and a separate toilet compartment, giving the Z275 genuine weekending capability.

There is stooped-standing headroom, with light

At a shade over 27ft, which makes it the largest in the range from American boatbuilders Mariah, the Davanti is a craft for those who take their sportsboating seriously.

It is adequately appointed for comfortable overnighting, but what really gives the game away is the engine options. A single 330hp V8 is fitted as standard, and our test boat boasted a 502 Magnum EFi petrol installation from Mercruiser, delivering its 445hp through a Bravo III leg.

Design

The hull's mid-sections are a full deep-vee, the transom deadrise mellowing slightly to a still well-cushioned 22°.

Above the waterline, the bow sections fill with plenty of flair, running up past the gunwale rubbing strip, whose coloured style-band helps to streamline the bulk of foredeck and coaming above. A finely raked, curved screen blends into the bullet profile.

Towards the stern, to add some interest to the



Above: the Davanti is a floating entertainments complex, as witnessed by the television and video fitted as standard in the convertible forward dinette. Below: in addition to a stereo unit at the helm, a secondary hi-fi is installed in the galley area below, alongside the microwave. But would most owners rather have more stowage space?



and ventilation provided by an opening deckhead hatch and sideports.

The dinette converts into a 6ft 6in x 5ft 4in (1.98m x 1.63m) double berth. Beneath the seat bases are lined lockers, whilst overhead is a range of moulded lockers which incorporate a television and video as standard.

We would favour specifying the moulded galley with more stowage for dry food in lieu of the large fridge and secondary stereo installed on our test boat. However, most owners would appreciate the standard microwave tucked neatly away in an eye-level enclosure (the Davanti has a mains ring and a Heart combined charger/1000W inverter, although still in its 110V form unfortunately). Below, there is an adequate amount of counter space adjacent to the sink.

Opposite is an almost fully moulded, and thus easily cleaned, toilet compartment of usable if crouched proportions. Currently you get a chemical toilet as standard, but we understand a sea-toilet fitment is under consideration. A locker is set in the sink moulding for stowage, and overhead there is a short length of hanging rail. Ventilation is by way of an opening port and an extractor fan.

There is no shower within the compartment (just the one on the transom), and we were surprised to find no calorifier to supply hot water, although there is room in the engine bay should it be required.

Engines

Our test boat was the most potent, and by far the most expensive, version of the Z275 available, with electronic petrol injection helping to deliver 445hp through Mercruiser's twin-prop Bravo III leg. The standard model has a 330hp V8 on a Bravo I (with the twin-prop leg available at reasonable extra cost), and there are other options from Mercruiser and Volvo, starting at the latter's 5.8FL/SX 250hp unit.

Helm-activated rams make it a painless affair to raise the rear sunpad for access to the engine bay and adjacent stowage areas. At first sight the installation appears pretty tight, but day-to-day checks are possible without further ado.

To get at the belts and filters, you simply hinge the seat-base forward; access to the leg end at the transom is slightly more of a fiddle, as it involves going through side lockers, some of which house the batteries. The battery switches are readily accessible within the engine compartment.

As is common with American-built craft of this type, there is no factory-fitted fuelcock, although we are pleased to say that the UK distributors Southwater Marine take pains to add them to all the boats they import. The fuel tank itself is accessible through a screwed-down section of the cockpit sole,



Above: the settee, helm seats and coaming sides are all well upholstered, and there are handrails aplenty, in a cockpit which is designed to allow comfort at speed. Below: tucking away inside the coaming to port is a single alcohol burner, with an area of worksurface available above it.

the senders and pipework through a more easily removed inset hatch.

A rather small submersible pump services the bilge, and an automatic fire-extinguisher is fitted. Dedicated noise insulation consists simply of wipe-down foil attached to the surfaces of the hatches, with the hefty upholstery being relied on to complete the job.

Performance and handling

With 445hp on tap through just one engine, twin-lever throttles are fitted, making incremental changes to the setting that much easier and ensuring that a steady rein can be kept on what is a highly responsive package. These levers are located readily to hand on an inclined coaming to the helmsman's right, but less convenient, at least until you get used to it, is the power-trim control, sited vertically on a lower run of console.

Even so, for a 27ft sportsboat the Davanti is easy to drive, especially with the twin-prop leg. Just trim it out to zero and forget everything, even through high-speed turns.

The hull cut well through the lumpy Solent chop to a maximum of 48 knots at 4800rpm, flying cleanly, landing smoothly and proving extremely difficult to wrong-foot. For meandering about, 3000rpm gives 25 knots, while cruising at 4000rpm equates to 38 knots. The standard 330hp engine gives a claimed top speed of around 43 knots.

Sound levels are reasonable. In the 3500-4000rpm fast cruising bracket our meter registered 84dB(A), and after dropping to 3000rpm we positively purred along at a comfortable 79dB(A). Flat-out, the noise is just within reasonable bounds; to let everyone know you are there, flick the switch to bypass the exhaust muffler and you will leave an unsociable 100dB(A) behind.

As for fuel consumption with the 502 Magnum, it is down to the old adage: if you need to ask, you cannot afford it. If you are a speed merchant, budget for your tank to be emptied at around 32gph (145lph); a 3500gph setting should give a somewhat more conservative 16gal (73lph) or so. The standard 7.4lt V8 engine option should be rather more frugal, consuming near enough 23gph (104lph) at full revs but a relatively paltry 14gph (65lph) at 3500rpm.

Conclusions

In its standard all-American specification, the Davanti is like a 48-knot branch of Curry's, with no less than three 'entertainment centres' within its 27ft length. But those destined for the European market can, if required, have the onus placed more on a practical galley and extra stowage.

Mariah build usable solidness into their craft, so the design and construction can comfortably handle the power and speed offered, in an exciting but predictable manner. This is not some skittish, overengined, stretched sportsboat, but an enjoyable weekender for those who require the performance edge.



Mariah Z275 Davanti

Loa 27ft 2in (8.28m).
Hull length 25ft 8in (7.83m).
Beam 10ft 2in (2.59m).
Draught 2ft 7in (0.79m) with drive down.
Weight 2.8 tons.
Fuel capacity 92gal (416lt).
Water capacity 5gal (23lt).
Engine Mercruiser 502 Magnum EFI/B3.
Price £35,417 ex VAT with standard Mercruiser 330hp 7.4L on Bravo 1 leg; £45,417 as tested.
Builders Mariah Boats, RR1, Box 502A, PO Box 1300, Benton, Illinois 62812-5300, USA. Tel: (1) 618 435 5300.
Suppliers Southwater Marine, Hamble Point Marina, School Lane, Hamble, Southampton, Hampshire SO31 5NB. Tel: 01703 452255.