



Sessa 42

This is the biggest sportscruiser yet from an Italian yard with expanding pretensions. There's pace and sunpads aplenty, but are the practicalities up to rivals' standards? **REPORT BY CARL RICHARDSON**

Which eight letter word has had the most use in MBM over the past couple of years? An each-way bet on 'flagship' would be well worth a flutter. The industry is full of them at the moment: new top-of-the-range models pushing builders' production lines to new heights, and lengths.

The latest to jump on the bandwagon are Italian builders Sessa Marine. A new 50ft sportscruiser is on the drawing board, but while we wait for that an interim new flagship, the 42, has already wetted its hull.

Sessa have a reputation for designing fine-looking craft at sensible prices, but at

this level the competition is fearsome, so what does it offer that they don't? A 100-mile dash in testing conditions in the boat's Calabrian home waters was sure to find out.

DESIGN & BUILD

Like most south-European boatyards, Sessa have opted for a pure white gelcoat rather than the contrasting dark blue hulls favoured by British and Scandinavian offerings. This minimalist approach can look beautifully clean and fresh, but it can also be quite stark. Sessa have countered this by weaving plenty of interesting detail into the 42's well proportioned lines, especially at the stern.

Crowned by the sweep of the radar arch, the boat's rounded transom seems to look at you through bright, spotlight eyes. A tender garage is the central feature, with matching teak steps on both sides of it. The port set leads up to a sunpad and the side deck while the starboard one opens onto the companionway through to the cockpit.

The 42's side profile is less original but still manages to look well balanced. The way the gentle curve of the aft quarters marries up with the flare of the wake is a particularly pleasing effect.

On board, the cockpit has a logical, flowing layout. The walkway to starboard passes

the sunpad and the main seating area before cutting across to port, where wide steps lead up onto the foredeck.

Below decks, a standard sportscruiser layout offers three separate well proportioned living areas: a forward master suite, a saloon with a galley, and a midships suite.

The variable deep-vee hull has a 30° deadrise amidships, falling to a still-sharp 16° across the planing area aft. Besides avoiding slam, this should provide enough bite for the slippery sterndrive engine installation.

The design works on both an aesthetic and practical level. Purists might raise an eyebrow at the narrow 6in side decks but Sessa's target audience should be quite happy.

✓✓✓✓✓
Clean and serene looks, if a little formulaic in layout.

ACCOMMODATION

When it comes to the interior layout of modern sportscruisers, midships is rapidly becoming the new forward. Once the land that design forgot, the mid-cabin is suddenly reinventing itself as an equal to the master cabin.

Although likely to be beaten in terms of overall size, its shape has more potential, allowing inventive designers to create a more interesting space than the triangular forward sleeping area.

In this case, set across a multi-level sole, the appointments include a full double berth, offset to allow access from both sides, a smartly upholstered bench seat set between chunks of light oak cabinetry, and a proper en-suite toilet/shower compartment.

Yes, the headroom is typically low, and jagged in places as it follows the cockpit

bulkheads above, and the en-suite's entrance is tight (although the builders inform us that this is to be improved on future boats). But an array of recessed spotlights and two portholes avert any risk of this being a dark or dingy cabin, and we like the direction this sometimes underutilised space is taking.

By comparison, the forward cabin's constant height and less complex dimensions seem rather ordinary, although the designers have attempted to make up for this with a surfeit of pleats on every inch of available fabric.

Where it does score is with its en-suite, which is far larger, allowing room for a separate roll-shut shower cubicle complete with fold-down seat, without cramping the toilet (electric flush as standard) and washbasin.

This will also act as the boat's day loo, as it has a door from the saloon too.

Quite square in design, the saloon gets its only real shape from the curved bulkhead that encloses the forward shower. And its rather plain character is not lifted by an understated fit-out. At least the ambience is warm and inviting; panelled linings finish the bulkheads, and natural woodwork and toned veneers make a welcome change from the usual high gloss finish.

Taking up the whole of the port side is a U-shaped settee with an extending table, which will seat five adults or convert down to an additional berth. The seating is finished in the same luxurious tan leatherette which also adorns lockers and cubby holes.

Opposite, the L-shaped galley's territory is marked by a teak sole. The finish here is a mite flimsy in places, but there is plenty of well thought-out storage space, a full complement of appliances and sufficient space in which to work your culinary magic.

Set behind a frosted screen by the stairwell is the main circuit and breaker board. Its illuminated panel clearly shows you whether any systems have been left on when you step out of the accommodation

and, of course, is perfectly positioned for easy powering up when you arrive back on board.

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The midships cabin is the star of an understated interior.

EXTERIOR

The refined and well-finished cockpit is as simple as it is effective. The standard inventory includes a full set of canopies, but this space is all about alfresco sociability.

The huge aft sunpad can be added to by converting the circular seating and table arrangement that it runs onto, adding up to a long line of loafing potential. There's even more when you factor in the foredeck pad.

Servicing your needs is a large wet-bar with a standard-fit fridge, and the raked arch has inset spotlights to illuminate your soirées.

As the only place to park the crew's posteriors, the crescent of seating to port is



above The crescent-shaped cockpit settee is positioned well forward, and there's no navigator's seat.

an important area, and it's positioned well forward, allowing its occupants to stay in touch with the skipper at the helm. This is just as well, as there is no provision for a navigator's seat.

Apart from the teak front of the wet-bar, there is precious little to break up the stark whiteness of the cockpit. If you hanker after some more colour, there's the £4,000-plus option of teak decking or, for about a tenth of that price, blue upholstery.

The deep teak-clad bathing platform offers plenty of watersports space, as well as storage, even with the tender garage raised. The garage itself has enough room for a 2.2m (7ft) dinghy and also, the builders say, a liferaft — although responsible owners should make sure this is mounted where it is more

rapidly accessible in an emergency.

The side decks are poor for a boat of this length. You can get up onto the foredeck easily enough, by virtue of a huge walkthrough door in the windscreen and large steps up to it, and the port deck can then be accessed comfortably from the sunpad. But the starboard deck is harder to reach than a US immigration official's sense of humour.

You either have to jump across from the sunpad, or climb up from the cockpit. But if you prefer the latter route, there's no step up to help you, and no guardrail reaching this far aft. We would advocate fitting a fold-out step in the recess for the transom gate.

✓✓✓✓✓
A simple but refined cockpit, although deck access is hard work.



above The garage can hold a 7ft tender and more.

ENGINE OPTIONS & ACCESS

Only two diesel engine options are available, both from Volvo Penta, but for a sterndrive application they are hard to argue against.

The twin KAD300s (as fitted in our test boat) offer up 570hp, which on a boat of this size is no more than acceptable; twin D6s bring an extra 50hp, and cutting-edge technology, albeit for a £10,000 price hike.

To combat the hassle of having to remove the tender from the garage for access to the enginebay, an auxiliary hatchway is set into the companionway. But from here it is a very tight squeeze to get at all the service points, with the raw-water strainers tucked to the rear of the compartment, for example.

So it's back to the garage and an even bigger palaver. Four locking bolts secure the tray in place, and with no gas strut or bracing arm to hold it up, the entire tray has to come out. The simple act of checking your strainers is therefore a two-man job!

This problem is hardly unique in the world of the tender garage, but simply by repositioning the main service points a skipper's life could be made much easier. The good news is that,

once opened up, the boat's engineering is neat and the compartment's finish first-rate.

✓✓✓✓✓
Ease of performing routine checks needs to be improved.

PERFORMANCE & HANDLING

Pressures of time mean that it is rare for us to cover any great distance during a test run, but this was an exception as we managed to complete a decent sea passage of almost 100 miles.

Even better, the conditions threw up a combination of a rolling, breaking 6ft-8ft chop and longer, deeper swells that allowed us to fully test the boat's performance range.

Racing into this kind of head-sea for hours

on end is not really our idea of fun, but the Sessa didn't seem overly bothered. Running at a steady 22-knot cruising speed, its ride remained composed and dry. We felt the odd jarring wave as a larger than average trough opened up, but nothing worse than the conditions warranted.

Pushing on past 25 knots, which in more tranquil sea states would still be a relaxed cruising speed for this boat, the ride did become a touch flighty, but in a solid, controlled, smile-inducing way.

Only approaching 30 knots did the ride become more animated; and, in these conditions, that kind of speed verges on the irresponsible.

The weight of the steering made it a joy to turn across the waves, and the hull showed no ill-effects in a quartering or beam sea, other than the odd slap from the chine. In a following sea, the ride immediately softened, allowing us to push up to the 34-knot top speed without having to consider lifting off for the odd rogue wave.

Longer swells obliged us to tuck in on the outdrive leg's trim to maintain grip, as we would expect. The standard-fit trim tabs are quick to help out, and the indicators are well located at the helm.

Back in more sheltered waters, we put the

below The spacious platform includes a shower.



below Engineering is sound but access is poor.



variable-vee hull through a series of full-chat turns, and its measured response proved vice-free with no dipping of the bow or loss of grip. It was not even mildly interested in stepping out when pressed.

Visibility and comfort at the helm is spot-on. The tall screen that surrounds the cockpit does its job whether you are standing or seated, and the console has a clean, up-to-date design. We were surprised that the wheel isn't adjustable, and that the single helm seat doesn't provide more support, but the layout is good.

Below decks, the noise levels we recorded

were an impressively hushed 73-75dB(A) at fast cruising speeds. This is on a par with the smooth-running Princess V46, and certainly quiet enough for a cat-nap on longer passages.

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Composed ride, with sometimes exhilarating performance.

SPECIFICATION & VALUE

As you move above 40ft in length, you expect boats to carry a pretty inclusive standard inventory, and this one certainly ticks plenty

below The saloon has a warm ambience, the galley good storage. The midships cabin also offers a seat.



below Pleated fabrics enliven the forward cabin, and its en-suite boasts a roll-shut shower cubicle.



boxes. Canopies, cushions, shorepower capability, holding tank, two electric-flush toilets, two fridges, an electric windlass — all there.

Aside from a bow-thruster, teak decking and VHF radio, you might not want to add much to the keen base price of £207,778 inc VAT. Navigational equipment is another extra, but that is par for the course.

A sideways glance across the market shows that the price needs to be keen. The class-leading Sealine S42's tag might be a touch higher, at £221,227, but it packs in a mighty standard specification that includes a bow-thruster and teak decking, which would add over £8000 as options on the Sessa.

In a market full of proven performers, this newcomer needs to match or better still undercut the competition. It does, but not by much.

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Inclusive inventory and a realistic price adds up to a strong package.

Verdict

According to the British Marine Federation, one third of all marine mortgages applied for at this year's London Boat Show were on craft over 40ft. So the market that Sessa is aiming to gatecrash is busy.

Thankfully, the 42's credentials are impressive. The styling is modern, the layout is well executed and the hull's behaviour beyond reproach.

In fact our only serious criticism of the boat, and one we make no apologies for, is the poor engine room access. To some, it might sound like a small war in a distant land, but fast and safe access is only appreciated when you need it most.

Which leaves just the question of whether the builders have done enough to make an impact in such a hard-fought corner of the market.

The Sessa 42 is a good boat at a fair price, but when you are trying to woo customers away from the likes of Sealine, Fairline and Princess, either the boat or the price needs to be exceptional. We are not fully convinced that this is the case.

MBM RATING

7/10



Sessa 42 technical data



specifications

BUILD	glass reinforced plastic
RCD	design category B
LENGTH OVERALL	43ft 0in (13.12m)
BEAM	12ft 6in (3.85m)
DRAUGHT	2ft 3in (0.70m)
AIR DRAUGHT	12ft 8in (3.92m)
DISPLACEMENT	8.5 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	151gal (690lt)
WATER CAPACITY	55gal (250lt)

key dimensions

WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	0ft 6in
HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 3in
HEADROOM IN MASTER CABIN	6ft 2in
HEADROOM IN MIDSHIPS CABIN	6ft 2in
MASTER CABIN BERTH	6ft 2in x 5ft 6in
MIDSHIPS CABIN BERTH	6ft 2in x 5ft 6in

performance

engines twin Volvo Penta KAD300/DP diesels.
configuration 6cyl, 3.6lt, 285hp at 3800rpm.
conditions wind westerly Force 5, sea moderate.
load fuel 25%, water 25%, crew 4.

rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	noise
2000	10.2	8	36	1.28	154	66
2500	16.5	13	59	1.27	153	72
3000	24.2	16	73	1.51	182	74
3200	28.0	17	77	1.65	199	75
3500	30.7	20	91	1.54	186	76
3800	34.7	24	109	1.45	175	78

Range figures above are in miles, with 20% margin.
Noise figures are in dB(A), recorded in the saloon.

prices

STANDARD BOAT	inc VAT
with twin 285hp Volvo Penta diesels	£207,778
with twin 310hp Volvo Penta diesels	£218,122
LAUNCH & COMMISSIONING	standard
DELIVERY	POA
BOW-THRUSTER	£3,987
TEAK COCKPIT DECKING	£4,196
COCKPIT TONNEAU COVER	£1,049
BOAT AS TESTED	£217,010

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