

BOAT REPORT

# Swordsman 37

*Does this reincarnation of a classic Fairey successfully marry the marque's renowned style and seakeeping with modern expectations and materials?*

*We tested the first boat off the line.*



## BOAT REPORT

Having come to prominence 40 years ago, the Fairey range of sportscruisers was in production for two decades.

They took full advantage of a new breed of high-performance turbo-diesel engines, and offered a go-anywhere ride for those who didn't mind standing up to the elements. As such, they were amongst the most sought-after motorboats of their time.

Original examples still command a remarkable following today, though they require a lot of work to keep them in mint condition. It is perhaps inevitable, then, that modern versions based on the original lines keep recurring.

The latest is the centre-cockpit

Swordsman 37, and this seems more likely to succeed than any other — not least because it has been developed by Fairey Marine's original designer, Alan Burnard, in co-operation with Willie Bewes and a group of highly experienced Fairey owners under the Swordsman Marine banner, before being completed by Nelson specialists, the Bridgend Boat Co.

### Design & layout

Fairey Marine built a Swordsman, a 33ft twin-cabin boat. But the new Swordsman is based upon a different classic Fairey hull, that of the Dagger, the last design produced for them by Burnard. This affords an extra 4ft of overall length in

which to fit what is essentially the same layout: forward and aft cabins, plus a convertible dinette and galley forward of the centre cockpit.

The Dagger was conceived primarily as a fast patrol craft, with a sizeable payload capability which required an unburstable structure to support it. This Lloyd's-approved combination of stringers, longitudinals and engine-bearers has been retained in the new boat, with the deep-vee configuration now incorporating E-glass and isophthalic resins with

20mm Divinycell foam core in the topsides.

Three sprayrails on each side and a pronounced forward flair give a 3° bow-up angle of attack and ensure a dry ride, while the topsides are higher and the boat sits deeper in the water than older Faireys, giving great stability.

A bustle has been incorporated on the transom, to assist in aerating the twin

rudders and to extend waterline length for added lift aft, and the result is a well-balanced running trim.

Bridgend Boat Co's previous work in custom-building Nelson hulls has translated wonderfully well to this project, and its traditional-style interior of teak and holly is just what the Swordsman needs.

In Fairey Marine's heyday, top

speeds of up to 25 knots were the accepted norm from this kind of boat. But the world has moved on, and today's buyers will expect 30 knots. Accordingly, the engine options are Cummins B-series diesels, which boast a particularly strong power-to-weight ratio.

The standard package is twin

270hp units, but upgrades to 330hp or 370hp are available. Our test boat sported the most potent option, driving three-bladed contra-rotating 23x25 propellers, via 1.5:1-reduction ZF gearboxes, on shafts supported by flush-mounted bronze P-brackets.

### Performance & handling

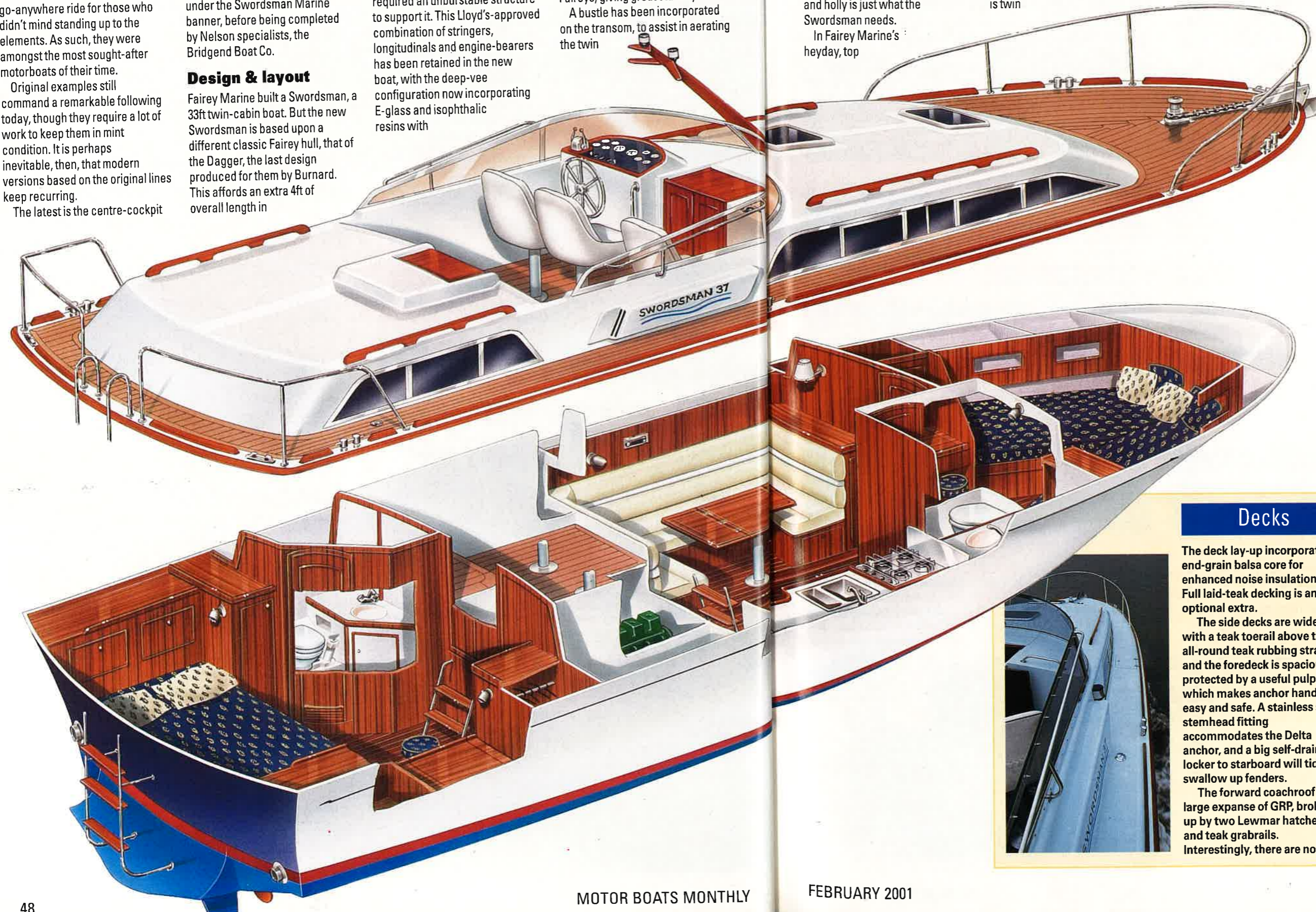
The Swordsman accelerates rapidly from rest, getting to 20 knots in 16sec and going on to attain more than 32 knots at 3100rpm, with a real kick in the back when the turbochargers cut in at around 2000rpm. However, our experience suggests that this performance could benefit from more pitch, bringing the boost in fractionally earlier.

Response to the throttles was good, and the boat rose easily onto the plane, generally riding level but showing a tendency to lean into the prevailing wind. Whether this indicates too much lift aft from the bustle, or the need for trim tabs, or both, is open to debate.

Once set up for the sea conditions, the boat picked its way unhesitatingly and predictably through the water, giving a generally dry ride and, even more pleasingly, a soft one. This should make for relaxed passagemaking; with a range of more than 350 miles, and the ability to outrun the weather, this boat is going to be used for more than short coastal hops.

In our test, the twin rudders were giving only 24° of helm off the centreline, which inhibited our ability to throw the boat about. This has since been rectified by adjusting the stops and eliminating the toe-out, and two spins of the wheel gives lock-to-lock turning.

Ahead or astern, low-speed



### Decks

The deck lay-up incorporates end-grain balsa core for enhanced noise insulation. Full laid-teak decking is an optional extra.

The side decks are wide, with a teak toerail above the all-round teak rubbing strake, and the foredeck is spacious, protected by a useful pulpit which makes anchor handling easy and safe. A stainless steel stemhead fitting accommodates the Delta anchor, and a big self-draining locker to starboard will tidily swallow up fenders.

The forward coachroof is a large expanse of GRP, broken up by two Lewmar hatches and teak grabrails. Interestingly, there are no

forward-facing windows.

Aft, a stainless steel pushpit gives on to a boarding ladder and teak-trimmed bathing platform.

Three pairs of substantial stainless steel bollards and four fairleads make for easy deckwork. A gas bottle stowage is recessed to starboard, and the boat also comes with a teak mast and stainless steel ensign-holder.



manoeuvrability was exemplary, aided by the widely spaced engines. The predictability that this configuration offers means that owners will quickly be able to maximise their control after a short time at the helm in confined waters.

Our test day gave us a southwesterly of up to Force 6-7 in the western Solent, as good a test of short, sharp water as we could wish to find. Predictably, the boat took everything in its stride, without hesitation, and nothing that we could do would get it out of shape.

Noise levels let the boat down slightly, but then on a craft of this configuration you are never far from what amounts to more than 700hp.

## Conclusions

The Swordsman 37 is a worthy successor to its illustrious predecessor which carried the Fairey name. It offers a blend of performance, range, quality and usability that has always been much sought-after.

The design is practical and the finish extremely good and well executed, with a hint of luxury and the ability to be customised to suit a buyer's preferences. Better still, out on the water the hull feels unbreakable.

The builders' ambition was to produce a boat that could hold its own in any waterborne company, and in this they have succeeded admirably. They might even have developed a modern classic. □

## Aft suite

Accessed via a companionway ladder from the cockpit, the aft accommodation comprises a very spacious double berth with a toilet and shower



compartment en-suite to port. With full standing headroom, it offers much more by way of user-friendly living space than any original Fairey.

There are hanging lockers and a dressing table to starboard, and other lockers all



around, so this carefully planned cabin can cope with extended stays afloat.

It is fully trimmed in teak, with vinyl overheads. There are currently no aft windows, something which might be changed by the builders, but the side ports offer plenty of natural light.

## Saloon & galley

The saloon features a U-shaped settee and hand-made teak table to port, all of which can be converted into a double berth if required.

Opposite, to starboard, is a simple but comprehensively

equipped galley comprising a hob, an oven, a fridge and a stainless steel sink, with fiddled stowage for crockery and cutlery.

The boat's water system is hot-and-cold pressurised, with an 8gal calorifier and immersion heater.

The main 12V and 240V

electrical switch and breaker panel is located aft to starboard, as is the obligatory radio/cassette player. A small bar unit is forward to port.

The sole is teak and holly, and the whole area is light, bright and appealing, with plenty of evidence of quality in materials and fit-out.



## Cockpit & helm

The central cockpit, which is offered with either a GRP or laid teak sole, is deeply recessed



and spacious, if plain.

Two fixed aft seats, with sensible steps incorporated in them to ease access up to the side decks, have copious stowage within their bases.



Forward, upholstered helmsman and co-pilot chairs to port and starboard can be swivelled to face aft.

However, the builders should perhaps consider adding some



form of table, and perhaps an additional seat or two, for a more sociable arrangement.

Teak companionway doors fore and aft, with perspex sliding hatches, give easy

access to the two separate sections of the accommodation.

The helm station to port is pure functionality. Dual-lever Morse controls are mounted outboard, and a Whitlock hydraulic steering system is supplemented by highly visible tachometers and by engine oil and temperature, gearbox oil pressure and battery state gauges. There is plenty of room for fitting additional navigation equipment of your choice.

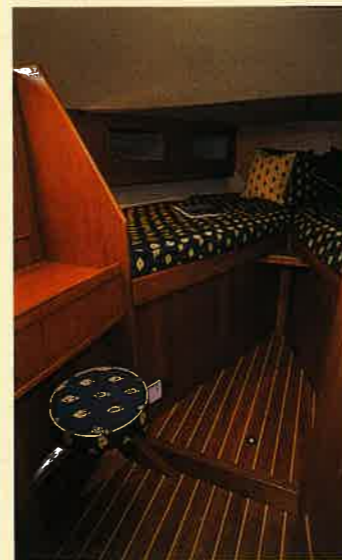
The cockpit is surrounded by a substantial screen in a polished aluminium frame. Most owners will opt for a sprayhood for added protection from the elements, though this was absent on our test boat.

## Forward cabin & toilet

Teak and alcantara linings support two big single berths in the vee forward. These are supplemented by a hanging locker and plenty of other stowage space, and by a vanity unit to port.

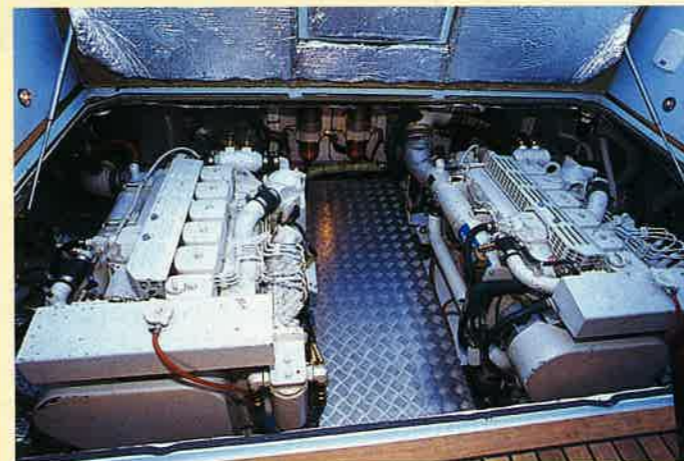
The vanity unit, and the floor space in front of it, are extra elements which did not feature in the original Swordsman; this is one part of the layout where the Dagger hull's extra length has been turned into a clear benefit.

Aft to starboard, adjacent to the cabin but not en-suite, is a good sized toilet and shower compartment, trimmed in white laminate.



## Engineroom

The entire cockpit sole lifts on hydraulic rams to give walkaround service access to the engines. But there is a



smaller hatch for daily inspection and maintenance.

We were pleased to see that the engines have handed dipsticks and oil drains. Racor fuel filters are in line between the two stainless steel bunker

tanks, one of which is located in the enginespace itself and the other beneath the aft berth. Large seawater strainers are located above the waterline to facilitate easy inspection and cleaning.

This part of the bilge is serviced by one of three automatic bilge pumps and a back-up manual pump, and automatic fire-extinguishers come as standard. So too does a 25A battery charger, to supply the three 120Ah deep-cycle domestic and one 120Ah engine-starting battery banks, and shorepower.

The builders have taken great pains to insulate the engineroom, with acoustic material on all the vertical surfaces and the hull surfaces below.

## Swordsman 37

PERFORMANCE & FUEL CONSUMPTION										sound levels dB(A)		
rpm	knots#	gph†	lph†	mpg‡	range*	trim	saln	aftcab	ckpt	fwdcab		
1200	9.1	—	—	—	—	3.0	71	82	79	72		
1400	10.4	4.2	19	2.48	516	4.0	72	84	79	73		
1600	13.3	5.8	26	2.29	477	5.0	74	87	81	74		
1800	16.2	7.8	36	2.07	432	5.5	77	90	81	76		
2000	20.0	10.2	46	1.96	407	6.0	78	90	82	78		
2200	22.6	13.2	60	1.71	356	6.0	79	91	82	79		
2400	25.4	15.8	72	1.61	334	5.0	80	92	83	80		
2600	27.7	20.2	92	1.37	285	5.0	81	92	83	81		
2800	29.3	25.3	115	1.16	240	4.5	82	93	84	82		
3000	31.2	31.9	145	0.98	203	4.5	83	93	85	83		

# Measured by GPS. † Calculated from engine manufacturers' figures. \* Allows 20% margin.

CONDITIONS wind southerly Force 5, sea slight

LOAD fuel 80%, water 100%, crew 4



## BUILD

glass-reinforced plastic

## RCD

build category B

## DIMENSIONS

### LOA

37ft 0in (11.27m)

### BEAM

11ft 6in (3.51m)

### DRAUGHT

3ft 2in (0.97m)

### AIR DRAUGHT

11ft 7in (3.53m)

### DISPLACEMENT

7 tonnes

### FUEL CAPACITY

260gal (1180lt)

### WATER CAPACITY

64gal (290lt)

## ENGINES

twin Cummins 370Bs  
6cyl 5.9lt diesels  
370hp at 3000rpm

## PRICE

from £186,825 inc VAT  
£201,004 as tested

## SUPPLIERS

Swordsman Marine Ltd,  
Hamble Point Marina, School  
Lane, Hamble, Hampshire  
SO31 4NB.  
Tel: 023 8045 7704.

## BUILDERS

Bridgend Boat Co,  
Western Hangar, Mount Batten,  
Plymouth, Devon PL9 9SJ.  
Tel: 01752 404082.

