

Fancy going for a cruise?



CREDITS ON OPENING SPREAD

If you're looking for a coastal cruiser, something to take you and your partner to the Whitsunday's in comfort, then you'd be well served to look at the Hunter 45 DS. Editor, Barry Henson, took a test sail on Sydney Harbour recently and here's what he found.

"The Hunter 45 DS is designed as a live aboard coastal and blue water cruiser."



WHEN IT COMES to boat building, Hunter is a name that has a fair bit of history behind it – 36 years in fact. Many of the features that we take for granted, such as walk-through transoms and bulb keels, were first introduced to modern production boat building by Hunter. Having originally come from the U.S., I had always thought of Hunters as well-priced, mass-produced, production boats - a sort of a 'boat for the masses'. In the last ten years, however, Hunter has improved its quality standards and introduced designs that are offshore-oriented. Given this background it was with some anticipation that I went for a

test sail on the Hunter 45 DS (deck saloon) and here's what I found.

The design brief

If you've been following any of my boat tests you'll know that I believe in assessing a boat against what the designer has been asked to create. In this case Hunter's Australian distributor advised me that the 45 DS is designed as 'a live aboard coastal and blue water cruising for couples and 'empty nesters'. In other words, this boat is designed for grey hairs, like me, who want to cruise, like their creature comforts and don't mind the odd powered winch.



First impressions

Looking at the 45 DS on the dock outside the Maritime Museum in Sydney, it's a very impressive looking boat. The styling is quite attractive. The look is similar to that of an Oyster with the low wrap-around window. It's a look that more and more boats are adopting and I like it. The cockpit is divided into two sections, again reminiscent of the larger Oysters, with dual helm stations aft coming off substantial pedestals replete with instrument repeaters, a center pivoting chart plotter (optional) and a forward cockpit for entertaining and crew.

I boarded the boat via the sugar-scoop stern, which provides a nice wide step, and the walk-through transom. One of the immediate things that caught my attention was the traveler-arch, it's a feature that Hunters are known for. It's a solid and well engineered, stainless steel arch that elevates the traveler above head height for both safety and convenience. The traveler-arch is an intriguing feature. Many boat designers try to keep the traveler clear of the cockpit. Hunter has solved this challenge by elevating the traveler and it's not until you're on board this boat that you realise what

a big impact the traveler-arch has. There is, quite simply, a lot more usable space, and it's safer. You'd have to be a player in the NBL or the Opals before your head would be anywhere near the boom. In the boat we tested the arch also serves as an anchor point for a substantial bimini (optional) that covers quite nearly the entire cockpit. With the amount of direct sunlight we get in Australia, this is a wonderful idea, no more hiding from the mid-day sun, or stepping off the boat looking like Tassie craysfish. A similar bimini is now high on my Christmas wishlist.

ABOVE: As a cruiser the 45DS has a surprisingly good turn of speed.

OPPOSITE PAGE: The traveler arch is a Hunter innovation that raises the traveler above the cockpit freeing up space and providing an 'accidental gybe' safe environment.



What's it like on deck?

Working from the stern forward, the sugar scoop stern and deck have inlaid Plasti-teak flooring, this is a man-made flooring that looks like teak, but doesn't have the maintenance or wear issues teak has. The stern has a hot and cold water shower and fittings for both shore power and shore water. The plumbing and electrical connections for air conditioning have been fitted, but the actual A/C unit is an option. There are two aft lazarettes: one stores two large LPG bottles and the other is a storage unit with built-in shelving, a nice touch as keeping lockers well organised is an on-going battle. There are aft seats built into either side of the push pit.

There are two helming stations, both of which are quite substantial, both have compasses and instrument repeaters (only one set of repeaters is standard, the other is optional). The engine and optional bow thruster controls are at the helm. The primary winches are Lewmar 48s that are within easy reach of both the helmsman and any crew in the cockpit. The boat we tested had been optioned up to include one electric-powered winch, the port primary, which made light work of raising the main.

There was a Raymarine E120 chart plotter in a swiveling, waterproof case just aft of the cockpit table. It's shown as an option on the specifications, but hardly a cruising boat is sold these days without a chart plotter. The only choice is which brand and model.

The cockpit is quite spacious with a table down the centerline. It's amazing how much space there is in a cockpit when you elevate the traveler.

The main and genoa halyards, topping lift, vang, main in & out, main sheet and outhaul all run aft through Spinlock XTS jammers to Lewmar 40 winches on either side of the cabin top. Another nice feature of the 45 DS is the self-draining line storage boxes built into the cockpit coamings; no more messy lines strewn around the cockpit or bulging line storage bags.

The Selden mast comes standard with a fully battened main with lazy jacks or you can spring for the Selden in-mast furler. The Selden rod kicker is standard.

Forward you'll find a 110% headsail on a Hood roller furler. The anchoring package is a 22 kilogram Danforth with 10 metres of chain (which you can upgrade to 50 metres as an option), a rope rode, a motorised windless with foot



HUNTER MARINE



pedal control and substantial anchor rollers. Perhaps I'm being a bit picky here, but here you have a nice cruising boat with all the nice kit and they give you a 10 metre anchor chain! Could any of you imagine going cruising with 10 metres of chain? I'd much prefer the nice Hunter people price in the 50 metres of chain right from the git-go because that's invariably what you're going to need.

The rig and kit on this boat are quite nice and in Hunter's defense, they no doubt want to bring in the base boat at an affordable price allowing the boat to be upgraded later as funds allow, but the anchoring package is no place to skimp.

And below?

The interior of this boat is pretty smick. The interior is light and airy and is well complimented by the cherry woodwork and panelling. Down the companionway steps there is a very attractive galley to port and a forward-looking nav station to starboard.

The galley is nicer than the kitchens you'd find most homes. There is a three burner stove with oven, a standup refrigerator (with space for an optional freezer), a microwave, a coffee maker and enough Corian countertop to keep Martha Stewart happy. I can only see two problems with this galley: I'm not keen on side-opening refrigerators. They're inefficient from a cooling perspective. Each time you open them you have a cooling loss that can only be replaced through increased energy use, and the motion of the boat ensures that each time you open them something will drop out on to the galley sole.

The other problem is even more dire. If I had this boat I'd have to find

"The galley is nicer than many at-home kitchens...with enough corian to make Martha Stewart happy."



OPPOSITE PAGE TOP: The divided cockpit works well with the helming stations aft and the entertaining and crew space forward.

OPPOSITE PAGE BOTTOM: The helming stations are well equipped and everything is within arms' reach.

ABOVE: The galley is nicer than the kitchens you'd find in many homes.

LEFT: The forward facing nav station is well equipped and the electrical system is very cleverly designed.



HUNTER MARINE

ABOVE: The dining table can be lowered to create a double berth and the opposite settee makes an excellent sea berth.

RIGHT: Hunter haven't played the 'how many can it fit game', instead they've opted for generous accommodations.



someone who could *really* cook to do the galley justice. Using this galley to turn out anything short of a restaurant quality meal would be a waste.

The nav station is nicely set-up. Hunter has installed a well thought out electrical system. All of the things that are frequently switched off and on, such as nav lights, are within easy reach. Those switches that are used less frequently, such as the water pump, are located in a separate panel behind one of the settees. This keeps the electrical panel at the nav station to a small number of regularly used switches. For \$25,000 Hunter offer an electronics package that includes a Raymarine 7000 autopilot, an E120 chart plotter, instrument repeaters, a flat screen TV (we'll get to this later) and a wireless remote. Hunter will also wire the boat for networking and wifi, a big plus for long-term cruisers who want to stay in touch.

Another nice electrical feature is that there is a single isolation switch at the nav station for the entire boat. So when you leave the boat you turn one switch. That same K.I.S.S. philosophy is applied to their thru-hulls. You pull up one small floor panel in there are four thru hulls, the only thru hulls in

the boat, all side by side and all within easy reach.

The salon is very well done. There is a large settee to port with a dining table that lowers to form a double berth. To starboard there's a long straight settee, perfect for a sea berth. There is a wealth of storage for food, spares and sundry. The only things I'd add are fiddles for the dining table, cross-bars on the shelves and more handholds. Any boat that is headed offshore should have plenty of handholds.

Oh, and don't worry about missing *The Bill*.

The boat we test sailed had a large flat screen TV mounted on the cabin wall. I have no doubt that it's a popular option, nor do I doubt that fighting this trend is like putting one's finger in the dike. On a recent flight a friend of mine sat next to the sales director for a large motor yacht manufacturer. They starting chatting about boats and what buyers were looking for and the sales director asked "Do you know what the most common question I get from prospective buyers is?" My friend shook his head. "It's how many flat screen TVs does it have". Sounds incredible, doesn't it, but it's true. It's inevitable, like old age and taxes, that someday soon every new boat is going to come standard with a flat screen TV.

How many does it sleep?

Forward is an attractive stateroom with a double berth to port and a built-in vanity and sink to starboard, and where you would normally find a v-berth on most boats, Hunter have placed the forward head. It's the perfect arrangement if you've got two couples on board.

The owner's stateroom is located aft and a stateroom it is. There is a queen-size centre-line bed, a seat and a vanity table with mood lighting. If you're partner doesn't fall in love with this, then you're doing something wrong. A spacious aft head with stand-up shower is located just outside the aft cabin, directly behind the nav station. This head serves the main cabin and as it's located at the base of the companionway steps, this would be the perfect place to dry out your wet weather gear.

One thing I must compliment Hunter on is that they've resisted the

"If your partner doesn't fall in love with this, then you're doing something wrong."



“This boat has an easily driven hull with a large sail area - it’s no wonder she moves well.”



ABOVE: The Hunter 45 DS is a potent combination of comfortable cruiser with good sailing performance.

urge to jam as many berths into this boat. With 13.6 metres LOA they could have easily reconfigured it to fit a v-berth forward, but instead they opted for larger cabins and more generous accommodations. Well done. They do offer an optional tri-cabin layout, with two smaller cabins aft, but the two cabin layout we tested is much more in-line with the market this boat is targeting.

A few words about the engine.

The Hunter 45 DS comes standard with a 75 horse power Yanmar, an automatic fire suppression system, a carbon monoxide monitor and alarm, and a ‘X-change R’ oil changing system. If you’re not familiar with the X Change R, it’s a device that’s permanently attached to your engine that allows you to drain and refill your engine oil at the push of a button. This definitely falls into the category of ‘why didn’t I think of that’.

So how does the Hunter sail?

We went for a sail on Sydney Harbour in a 15 to 18 knot nor-easterly. One

of the things I like about the Hunter is that it’s a fairly stiff boat with a smooth motion. We moved quite smoothly through all points of sail and she performed well. When you see the numbers on this boat you’ll understand why.

This boat’s displacement to length ratio is 170. This ratio is an indicator of how easily driven the hull is. An ultralight would be around 100, a moderate boat around 200 and a heavy cruising boat around 300, so the Hunter’s 170 indicates an easily driven hull. The sail area to displacement ratio is 18.3. This ratio, like horsepower, gives you an idea of how much drive the sail area generates. 18.3 is reasonably high for a cruising boat, so in short, this boat has an easily driven hull with a fairly large sail area – it’s no wonder she moves well.

The vertically battened main keeps a very nice shape as you’ll see from the photos and the reduced leech area of the in-furling main sail is nicely compensated for by the taller mast that Selden provides with their in-mast furling system.

The only issue I have this boat’s performance relates to the steering. The Hunter 45 DS has a rack and pinion steering system with dual helming stations and the design of the system eliminates feedback through the wheel. The

result is no weather helm so the helmsman can’t ‘feel’ how the boat is reacting to conditions.

How well does she stack up against her design brief?

The Hunter 45 DS demonstrates how much Hunter has changed over the years. What was a company that produced plastic boats for the masses has become a company that’s produced a boat I would gladly take cruising. The Hunter 45 DS has a lot going for it. It’s a solid, well-designed boat that’s equipped with quality fittings. The interior is well laid out for a cruising couple with guests, and the quality of the interior finish would suit the most fastidious owner. The boat is well powered, both in terms of sails and engine, and the engineering of its systems show the benefit from Hunter’s years of experience. Above all, this boat sails well. While there are a couple of things I’d like to change, the fact is this is a heck of a lot of boat for \$495,000. If you’re looking for a cruising boat, something to take you to the Whitsunday’s or across the South Pacific in comfort, then you’d do well to take a look at the Hunter 45 DS. **Y**



BARRY HEINSON

Hunter 45 DS Specifications

| | | |
|--|-------------|------------|
| Length Overall (Includes Bow Roller) | 44' 10" | |
| Hull Length | 42' 1" | 12.83 m |
| Waterline Length | 39' 2" | 11.94 m |
| Beam | 14' 6" | 4.39 m |
| Draft (Shoal) | 5' 0" | 1.52 m |
| Draft (Deep) | 6' 6" | 1.98 m |
| Displacement | 22,936 lbs. | 10,404 kg |
| Ballast (Shoal) | 7,389 lbs. | 3,355 kg |
| Ballast (Deep) | 7,237 lbs. | 3,286 kg |
| Mast Height: (Standard) | 57' 4" | 17.48 m |
| Mast Height: (Furling) | 60' 8" | 18.49 m |
| Sail Area (actual) - Standard | 962 sq ft | 89.37 sq m |
| Sail Area (actual) - Furling | 925 sq ft | |
| Sail Area (actual) - (Furl w/Vertical Battens) | 975 sq ft | |
| I | 47' 11" | 14.61 m |
| J | 14' 8" | 4.47 m |
| P - Standard | 46' 6" | 14.17 m |
| P - Furling | 50' 0" | 15.24 m |
| E - Standard | 20' 9" | 6.32 m |
| E - Furling | 20' 10" | 6.35 m |
| Headroom - Standard | 6' 6" | 1.98 m |
| Fuel Cap. | 51 gal. | 193 l |
| Water Cap. | 140 gal. | 530 l |
| Holding Cap. | 45 gal. | 170 l |
| Water Heater | 11 gal. | 42 l |
| Aux Power (Yanmar) | 54HP | |
| CE Classification | A | A |

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