

blue water boats



Hunter makes a blue-water statement

The new center-cockpit Hunter 45cc is designed for comfort and easy sailing—and it will carry you safely offshore

by George Day

The northern Florida afternoon offered a pleasant easterly breeze as we jibed toward the St. Augustine inlet. We rolled up the fractional headsail and hoisted the cruising chute, which caught the breeze nicely and shunted us onward with real purpose. The new Hunter 45cc, broad reaching in 12 knots of breeze, was making a steady 6.5 knots through the water and nearly hit seven in the puffs.

We were bucking a foul tide as we passed through the inlet, a current that swirled in small whirlpools and ripped around the channel buoys. While progress was slow, the boat handled the current well and steered surely and easily. The balanced spade rudder and Lewmar steering system provided the helmsman with excellent control.

We had been out for several hours putting the boat through its paces and getting a feel for how it might behave in a range of conditions. Hunter's emphasis with the new boat—with all of their boats, in fact—was to make the 45cc easy for a couple or a singlehander to sail.

Hunter's cruising boats are designed by a team led by Hunter founder and veteran offshore sailor Warren Luhrs. Luhrs has campaigned two of his custom creations, *Thursday's Child* and *Hunter's Child*, in transoceanic singlehanded events and knows a lot about what makes sail handling simple and efficient. This hands-on experience has been used to make the Hunter cruising boats, particularly in the larger sizes, better and safer boats.

The signature design element of the boat is the B&R rig, with swept-back spreaders, small fore triangle, large mainsail and no backstay. The rig combines simplicity and efficiency in a low maintenance package. The mainsheet leads to the main traveler, which is mounted on a stern arch at the aft end of the center cockpit where the mainsheet traveler control lines are convenient to the helmsman.

The small slightly overlapping headsail on a Furlex roller-furling unit provides lift and augments the drive of the big mainsail. As we tacked eastward from St. Augustine the 45cc sailed within 45 degrees of the true wind while making six knots. We did not have enough breeze to really push the boat, but its stability was apparent as she stood up nicely to the puffs. Cracked off to 60 degrees, the boat felt lively and its speed increased to 6.5 knots.

Designed to be sailed shorthanded, the 45cc is easy to handle and can be tacked efficiently by a lone watchkeeper, particularly with the autopilot handling the helm. In the 12 knots of breeze we encountered, the small jib could be trimmed in almost all the way by hand and then only required a few cranks on the self-tailing winches. The mainsail's traveler could then be readjusted to the new angle to power up the mainsail as need be.

Off the wind, the mainsail is the workhorse. Because of the swept-back spreaders of the B&R rig, we chose to tack downwind instead of running wing and wing. We found the 45cc sailed best at about 150 degrees off the wind, which allowed the jib to draw.

On the last jibe as we headed into the inlet, we hoisted the cruising chute and felt the boat accelerate. She behaved well under the chute and an experienced sailor using the autopilot to steer could have raised and lowered the sail, in its ATN spinnaker sock, solo.



Hunter 45cc

LOA	43'3" (13.49 m.)
LWL	39'2" (11.94 m.)
Beam	14'6" (4.42 m.)
Draft (shoal)	5'0" (1.52 m.)
Draft (deep)	6'6" (1.98 m.)
Ballast (shoal)	7,389 lbs. (3,352 kg.)
Ballast (deep)	7,237 lbs. (3,283 kg.)
Displacement	22,936 lbs. (10,404 kg.)
Sail area	962 sq. ft. (89 sq. m.)
Air draft	57'4" (17.48 m.)
Water	149 gals. (564 l.)
Fuel	75 gals. (288 l.)
Waste water	48 gals. (182 l.)

Hunter Marine
Route 441
Alachua, FL 32615
Ph: 800-771-5556

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The new 45cc's sailing performance is what most couples and families will be looking for. The boat is easy to sail, requiring very little effort, and stands up to a breeze well.

Floating home

Hunter has been building center-cockpit cruising boats for a long time and has a lot of experience fitting a great aft cabin—the owner's cabin—into the confines of the stern sections. The new 45cc takes that theme and melds it with the company's new efforts to make the larger cruising designs sleeker and more streamlined.

Hunter's Director of Engineering Glenn Henderson and his team spent a lot of time building mock-ups of the interior as they worked out how best to keep the raised deck saloon as low as possible while providing six-foot, 11-inch headroom in the saloon. Part of this effort was arranging the deck design to allow the interior to be built on one floor level all the way fore and aft. By eliminating steps between interior spaces, they have made the boat safer at sea and easier to live aboard at the marina.

The resulting design, with its wraparound "windshield" and low-profile center cockpit is a marked departure from Hunters in this size range from the past. As Henderson notes, "If you look at the 45cc from the side, it is hard to tell it's a center cockpit."

The interior has been given a traditional center-

cockpit layout with a guest cabin and head in the forepeak, a saloon with a L-shaped dinette to port and a bench settee to starboard, the chart table and galley at the foot of the companionway steps and the huge master cabin aft.

For those who intend to live aboard, the after cabin will be the highlight of the interior. It is huge and very comfortable. At sea, this can be a great sleeping cabin (with lee cloths installed). At anchor or in a marina, the aft cabin has plenty of space for all the clothing and personal items we tend to collect while living aboard.

The head, which has Corian counters and ample locker space, has a separate stall shower. The head itself is positioned at an angle to the centerline instead of athwartship, which will make it easier to use on both tacks because you won't be launched off the throne when the boat rolls on a beam sea.

The chart table has been set up to be command central for the skipper and navigator. The table itself is large enough for a standard chart folded to size or a Chartbook. A seamanlike touch is the low teak fiddle that will keep pencils and plotting tools on the table when the boat heels. Plenty of cabinet space has been provided to mount sailing instruments, radios and a chartplotter/radar. The boat comes standard with Raymarine speed, log and depth instruments; a full Raymarine navigation package and autopilot can be added as options.

Galley high points: Ample counter space and a fiddle that doubles as a handhold





Straight saloon settees will make good sea berths

The 45cc's U-shaped galley will be appreciated by gourmets and seacooks alike. The Corian counter is surrounded by a low fiddle that will double as a handhold in bouncy weather. The twin stainless steel sinks are large enough to wash up after a party. The boat comes standard with a microwave/coffee maker combination, a two-burner propane stove/oven, a front loading, stainless steel fridge with a separate side-by-side freezer, and an innovative dish rack that both drains and dries freshly washed dishes. The galley's U-shape will make it snug at sea but the expanse of counter will also mean any cook will have room to create.

The dinette and settee bench will seat five or six friends comfortably and both will be good sea berths—port for adults and starboard for children. Under the fixed table, a small seat/locker can be slid out to provide seating. Because the furniture has been pushed outboard the lockers above and behind the bench seats are not large, but plenty of storage can be found beneath them.

The forward cabin will be comfortable for guests for a weekend or longer. Self contained, the forward cabin has its own large head and separate shower, a large cedar-lined hanging locker and ample storage for clothes and personal items.

The overall feel of the new 45cc's interior is warm, bright and airy. The varnished teak bulkheads and trim are well accented by off-white liners. The large

windscreen lets in plenty of light and deck hatches and ports provide ample ventilation.

Moving around the interior while underway, we found plenty of handholds and never sensed that we might fall across the saloon in bad weather. This is an interior space that manages to combine a very pleasant, homey atmosphere while being set up to be functional when crossing the Gulf Stream.

How it is put together

The Hunter 45cc is a production cruising boat that was conceived to be built in series on an efficient assembly line. But Hunter Yachts should not be judged only on their "value;" the company's ability to sell hundreds of each of their new models means they can tool up a production run and then turn boats out at costs well below those of semi-custom builders. The economies of scale end up providing value to Hunter buyers.

Yet it is the quality of the new boats, as demonstrated in the new 45cc, that turns a fair deal into a truly good investment.

The hulls are hand-laminated fiberglass with balsa coring above the waterline for stiffness and insulation. Kevlar is laminated into the hull at strategic points to increase hull strength and provide collision protection. The decks are cored with marine plywood and Coremat and provided with backing plates wherever deck gear will be bolted down.

The hull is lined with a fiberglass structural grid or



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A secure seat and ample work space grace the nav station

pan that is bonded to the hull with a patented epoxy paste called Plexus that chemically joins the two pieces. Bulkheads and modular units of furniture, which can be built outside the boat, are dropped in with the grid and tabbed in place.

The deck, which has a fiberglass liner on its underside, is then dropped onto the hull and bonded to the toe rail and all internal structural parts. Once the hull and deck have been joined, the whole boat becomes a single structural grid that is both relatively light and very strong.

In the new 45cc, quality name-brand equipment has been installed throughout the boat, starting with the 75-horsepower Yanmar diesel engine and including Seldén spars and Furlex roller furling, Harken deck fittings, Lewmar steering systems and hatches and much more. Interesting details belowdecks are the Oceanair hatch screens and shades, the built-in stainless steel range hood over the galley stove and the inner spring mattresses on the double berths.

Poking around inside cabinets, we found the electrical panel to be well installed and logical to service. The bilge was well fitted out with pumps and bronze seacocks for all underwater thru-hulls. The chainplates were attached to the hull securely with massive bolts and backing plates. And the engine installation gives the skipper or a mechanic ample access to vital engine parts.

BWS thoughts

Hunter Marine is the largest builder of sailboats in the U.S. and has built thousands of center-cockpit cruising boats. While most of these boats have been used for coastal cruising and marina living, plenty have ventured to far off cruising grounds and have crossed oceans in the process.

The most publicized voyage aboard a Hunter was undertaken by Mike Harker who put 24,000 miles on his Hunter 466, including two transatlantic passages and a cruise to French Polynesia (see Harker's story in the September issue of *BWS*.) Harker was so pleased with his boat and with the company behind it that he is now in the process of building a new, larger Hunter that he will use to sail around the world. While that is only one testimonial, it underscores the simple fact that the boats, when well fitted out, are up to the task of blue-water sailing.

Off the shelf, the new Hunter 45cc offers her owners a lot of cruising comfort and amenities. The rig is set up for safe and easy sailing while the engineering systems have been thought through carefully and installed properly.

Because the boats are built on a production line, new owners will not be able to make major modifications to the basic layout of the 45cc. But the options list provided by the builder will allow new owners to tailor their boats specifically to their cruising style and the regions in which they will be sailing.

For those looking to cross oceans, the new 45cc is a solid platform on which to build the full cruising inventory (see *BWS*'s November 2005 issue for our special report on fitting out for cruising.) The boat has enough storage for living aboard long term while the hull, rig and systems are up to long and heavy use. For Hunter, the 45cc is a "break-through" boat that is leading the company into a new era of building offshore quality boats at affordable prices.



