



PHOTOS: JOHN FORD VIDEO: HUGUES DE ROBILLARD

# Hoppy Hunting GROUND

The telltales point to a Hunter, but the 39's extended hull, cabin and deck are a break with tradition. **ALLAN WHITING** spends a day on Sydney Harbour to bring his report

**T**he Hunter 39 is a replacement for the superseded 38, but it's battling in a higher league. We didn't like the 38's double-deck swimplatform, cockpit seats that were too low and lacked support, and pulpit seats designed only for kids. Styling was typical of last-century Hunter, with deck lines broken by different shaped and sized windows and a forward-raked traveller arch. For cruising

the Hunter 38 was fine, but it was 'clunky' looking and didn't lend itself to the cruising/racing function.

The new Hunter 39 is a better styled and more functional beast altogether.

The 39's deck lines frame an elliptical deckhouse window shaping that's broken up into four separate, integrated panes and the hull incorporates fixed cabin ports.

The clean deck lines are complemented by

recessed handrails, flush-fitting hatches and sail-control lines that are led under the main deck. Another nice touch is a small solar panel that's flush-mounted on the deck, to keep the engine starting battery topped up.

Oddly, though, two self-draining, cabin-top dorade vents are have cheap, plastic, swivelling air scoops that we know from experience lose shape quickly and deteriorate in UV light. Polished stainless



steel would look much nicer.

The 39's cockpit is a quantum leap over the 38's, with twin wheels behind small pods, anti-slip helm seats, supportive cockpit seating and a sturdy, centrally mounted, drop-side cockpit table complete with compass mount, an icebin and drinkholders. A swivelling mount for Raymarine's new widescreen chartplotter display is fitted below the compass.

The new swimplatform uses some of the

need to step into the cockpit to walk from foredeck to stern. Also, the helmsperson can set the autopilot and walk forward, without disturbing cockpit dwellers in the process.

Hunter has resisted the temptation to coat some of the flat surfaces with cheap-looking imitation teak, but the finished boat does look a tad white and stainless steel dominated. A set of cockpit cushions would break up this antiseptic look — puce, my beloved suggested.

**“Even with the smallest sail-area package installed, the new Hunter 39 was no slouch...”**

additional hull length to provide a broad boarding area. Two huge water-toy storage bins are located under the helm seats and there's a central passage from the cockpit between the wheels. To remind us that the 39 is still a Hunter, there's a pair of 'batwing' doors in this walkway.

A redesigned, swept-back traveller arch keeps the mainsheet and traveller lines out of the cockpit and the new arch is narrower in beam than the 38's. The arch posts are inboard, providing walking space along the deck, outboard of the arch. There's no

### BUILDING BLOCKS

The Hunter 39 hull is balsa sandwich above the waterline with solid FRP below and two layers of Kevlar in the forward sections for extra impact resistance. The structural grid-shaped inner moulding is hand-laminated in a single piece and fused to the hull, with most of the interior components already assembled in place. The plywood-cored deck laminate is stuck to the hull using an outward flange joint, sealed with 3M 5200 and mechanically fastened.

Hunter yachts employ unique standing

**Above: Twin fridges are a feature of the galley that, along with the big dinette which can seat 10, can easily be reached in a seaway. Headroom is another highpoint, making the Hunter 39's saloon a great belowdecks living space.**

rigging, with what many observers might call 'old fashioned' external chainplates. The chainplate area of the hull is reinforced with additional laminations and a belt of reinforcement runs around the hull, from chainplate to chainplate.

The deck gelcoat is Maxguard that is said to be more flexible than most finishes and also highly UV-resistant. The interior gelcoat is MicroBan, incorporating an anti-bacterial agent and the outer hull skin is Ashland AME-5000 modified epoxy, for maximum osmosis resistance.

Hunter uses winged-bulb keel shapes, to concentrate weight as low as possible, without the compromise of draft that's excessive for a cruising boat. The 39 can be ordered with shoal-draft 1.52m keel, or a



**Left: The lines are concealed on the coachhouse and the decks are easy to negotiate; although there's really no reason to leave the roomy cockpit (below) when sailing.**

1.98m deep-draft keel. Both keels are high-antimony lead bulbs, cast around stainless steel frames, with integral threaded rods.

Hunter standardised on the Selden B&R rig back in 1993. Lars Bergstrom and Sven Ridder developed this rig design in the 1960s, for use on shorthanded, around-the-world yachts. The shrouds and the forestay are disposed at 120-degree intervals, triangulating the mast support and doing away with the need for fixed or running backstays.

On the Hunter 39 conventional diagonals

### HIGHS

- High-quality finish
- Spacious accommodation
- Cockpit and traveller design
- Ease of sail handling
- Value for money
- Euro-like styling

### LOWS

- Cheap dorade vents on cabin roof
- Angled sheet winches



The B&R rig preferred by Hunter has been tried and tested over many years and numerous circumnavigations.

run between the spreaders, but the lowers anchor at inboard chainplates, separate from the shroud chainplates. In addition, four reverse diagonals run upwards from the mast to the spreader tips.

Hunter claims that the B&R rig is reliable, stable and easier to handle than conventional rigs, and its long-term performance is unmatched by any other spar manufacturer.

### BELOW DECKS

The 38's two-cabin, single-head layout was very good in our judgment and the 39 retains its proportions.

Wide, comfortably angled companionway steps lead to a large saloon, with a house-sized L-shaped galley to starboard and a navigation station to port. Two front-opening fridges — one can be run as a freezer — flank a two-burner stove with oven. The deep double sink has a mixer tap.

A U-shaped dinette featuring a highly polished, twin-pedestal table with drop-side leaf and opposite settee could comfortably seat the boat's rated capacity of 10 people.

The flatscreen digital Sole TV/DVD produces brilliant sound from the optional Bose speakers, while a separate Sony sound system provides the vibes on deck, via a pair of speakers nestled under the traveller arch.

Forward of the saloon is a cabin with a double vee-berth and ample hanging and shelf space, plus under-bed storage.

A vast bunk nestles below the cockpit floor and also in the aft cabin are a large seat, dual wardrobes, ample drawer and shelf space, plus a door into the head. There's an opening hull port and a hatch cleverly sited under a cockpit seat, so that the hatch can be left open without the risk of rain coming in.

Quality improvements over the 38 include

stainless steel galley handrails, Corian bench tops and splash back in the galley, Corian shower floor, bevelled laminate floors, a chartplotter-oriented nav station and a folding shower compartment door.

The new deck hatches and hull ports let in more light, so the impression of the 39's saloon is more airy than its predecessor.

Engine access is class-leading, because the

return under the companionway steps lifts when the step section is raised, exposing the starboard side of the engine as well as the front end. A nice touch is an engine room blower that runs when the engine does, pumping warm air out of the boat via a small grille on the transom.

The floors lift easily for access to the boat's plumbing and wiring and we were very

impressed with the quality of fit and finish in these out of the way places.

### EAGER TO PLEASE

The Hunter 39 has its engine switches and instruments beside the port helm station, but instead of the usual low-mounted lever, it's now located high up on the wheel pod. This arrangement is much more convenient



**"The 38's two-cabin, single-head layout was very good in our judgment and the 39 retains its proportions"**



Left: Room for all the crew to watch a movie and hunker down. Below: When it's time to weigh anchor, the Hunter 39 sails swiftly off the breeze.





when berthing, because the helmsperson can control speed and direction without stooping and losing vision temporarily. This 'proud' location is possible because the Hunter 39's mainsheet and traveller blocks are on the targa bar, so there are no lines to catch on the prominent lever.

Hunter's new 39 comes standard with in-mast roller furling, as well as a roller-furling headsail, so making sail couldn't be easier. Mainsail control is a breeze, thanks to traveller clutches on both sides of the targa bars, in conjunction with a mainsheet

work, to cambered for reaching and running. The main can be trimmed from the port helm, using the sheet winch, or from the cockpit, using a cabin-top winch, enabling singlehanded sailing from the wheel, or trimming from the cockpit while the autopilot is doing its job.

The test boat was fitted with an unbattened main that had a slightly hollow leech and an adjustable leech line. A main with some roach and short vertical battens is an option, as is a mainsail with a high degree of roach that is slab-reefed and stowed in a boom bag.

### IN THE RIGGING

The swept-back spreaders and cap shrouds of the signature B&R rig obviously restrict boom-out geometry, which has spawned the idea that Hunters don't run square very well. This issue could have been worse in the case of the new 39 that has a shorter traveller than its predecessor, but that's not what we found. Conversely, the 39 ran dead-square, wing-a-wing, with eased main foot-tension and no need to pole out the jib. Hunter's theory is that the wind flows around the mast from the angled mainsail and fills the jib.

**"Hunter uses winged-bulb keel shapes to concentrate weight as low as possible, without the compromise of draft that's excessive for a cruising boat"**

clutch at the port helm station and another mainsheet fall that leads through a clutch to the portside cabin-top winch. Clear panels in the bimini above each helm station provide a good view of the mainsail.

The 110 per cent headsail unrolled and sheeted with very little effort. The sheet winches are within easy reach of the helmsperson and the winch location allows sheet handling from the cockpit seats, but the winches are angled outboard, so grinding them is difficult. Powered winches or the optional winches that come with the spinnaker-pack would be our choice if racing was on the menu.

The main appeared out of the Selden mast roller with easy winching effort and there was plenty of boom length to adjust foot-tension from almost flat for upwind

A headsail with more overlap and a spinnaker are also available. Pads for spinnaker sheet and brace winches are installed and there's a radial-cut rebate in the coaming for the turning blocks.

Even with the smallest sail-area package installed, the new Hunter 39 was no slouch, provided it wasn't pinched excessively to windward. However, the boat pointed in the high 30-degree apparent zone and went upwind at around half wind-speed in 8kts to 12kts of Sydney nor'easterly breeze. Off the wind the 39 picked up speed, bolting away from the photo chase-boat. Once the sails were adjusted, balance was excellent on and off the wind, with only light helm pressure and small wheel movements needed, so demands on the autopilot should be small.

On our test sail the main never overpowered the jib, which drew consistently, despite the inevitable wind swirls downstream of Bradley's Head. We didn't score an accidental jibe, when sailing a few degrees by the lee, but a boom preventer could easily be rigged for extended downwind legs.

Rolling up the sails wasn't quite as easy as unfurling them, because the jib needed considerable winch effort, even with the sail luffed.

Our test sail in the new Hunter 39 was a rewarding experience. The boat is well designed and made, is easy to handle and suits its cruising role admirably. We also reckon it can be turned into a useful club cruiser/racer with the addition of some performance sails and more winching power.



**Opposite and below: Thanks to the twin-wheel arrangement, vision is great from the high and low sides. Above and right: Big coachhouse windows direct plenty of light indoors and help create a whole new external look for Hunter. Below right: The forepeak stateroom caters for the big American frame.**



## Hunter 39

### PRICE AS TESTED

\$327,326 (introductory offer that includes discount)

### OPTIONS FITTED

Deep keel, engine upgrade, cockpit table, ST 70 instrument package, ST60 wind instruments, autopilot, 50amp charger, 80amp alternator, 200amp/h house battery, inverter, electric windlass, quiet-flush head, VHF radio, in-mast furling, mainsheet traveller on arch, solid boom vang, freezer, flatscreen TV w/ Bose DVD system, Hunter crockery, bedspreads and pillows, shade and hatch package, cockpit stereo with speakers and light, and bimini

### PRICED FROM

\$320,000

### GENERAL

Material: ..... FRP  
monolithic and balsa sandwich hull and plywood sandwich deck  
Type: ..... Monohull  
Length overall: ..... 12.01m  
Hull length: ..... 11.81m  
Waterline length: ..... 10.57m  
Beam: ..... 3.94m  
Draft: ..... 1.52m (1.98m optional)  
Weight: ..... 8391kg

### CAPACITIES

Berths: ..... Two doubles (tri-cabin layout optional)  
Fuel: ..... 136lt  
Water: ..... 284lt  
Holding tank: ..... 94lt  
Water heater: ..... 19lt

### SAILS

Sail area: ..... 92.07m<sup>2</sup> (standard); 78.5m<sup>2</sup> (mast-furling main); 83.98m<sup>2</sup> (mast-furling main w/ vertical battens)  
Asymmetric spinnaker: Optional

### ENGINE

Make/model: ..... Yanmar diesel  
Type: ..... Shaft drive  
Rated HP: ..... 29 (40 optional)  
Prop: ..... Fixed two-blade (folding optional)

### SUPPLIED BY

US Yachts Pty Ltd,  
Sydney By Sail Festival Pontoon,  
Darling Harbour, NSW  
Mail: P.O. Box Q1195, QVB,  
Sydney 1230  
Web: www.usyachts.com.au