



New Boats: Hunter 41

The 41's high-aspect rig ensures it still keeps moving in light winds.



Dream Hunter

Caroline Strainig checks out the latest offering from Hunter Marine.

Ask Olympic sailor Matt Hayes why he's taken on the chief Australian distributorship for the US-built Hunter production boats and the response springs instantly to his lips. "Because I like their yachts," he says. "They are more suited and adapted to the climate and our way of life than any other imported boat. They are the most Australian imported yacht available in this country."

Okay, so Matt, long-time owner of the Darling Harbour-based Sydney By Sail charter, sail-training and corporate team-building company, prides himself on his marketing prowess, and there's undoubtedly a bit of salesmanship in his statement. But even so there's a ring of sincerity about it, and it's backed up by his actions.

Matt has signed a long-term distributorship agreement with Hunter. Not only that but he has sold 10 yachts since making his mark on the contract eight months ago – two on the morning I rendezvoused with him to see the 41.

The decision to take on the Hunters has its roots two years ago. At the time, the Australian Taxation Office controversial draft ruling looked like it had every chance of being adopted, which would have meant that private investors would have left the industry in droves and charter companies would have been forced to become largely owner-operators. Matt didn't want to have to buy his yachts through a middleman if that happened, and started looking around for a yacht that he liked, was good value for money and could replace the eight privately owned Beneteaus in his fleet if the worst-case scenario did come to pass.

"I found the Hunters were really a brand that had been under-promoted here, even though I discovered Hunter was the largest builder in the US and UK, so they must be doing something right," he said.

"I got in contact, went to the factory and liked what I saw. I thought they were ahead of other imports in terms of a design suitable for Australia that was value for money.

"They were between Australian distributors at the time and were impressed by our operation. The ATO ruling was amended so the pressure wasn't there to source our boats direct, but they suggest-



ed we give the distributorship a try and we decided to take it on.

“We have now signed a long-term agreement. We are selling the larger boats and a number of other companies are selling the smaller ones.”

Matt believes the launch of the yacht sales arm – operating under the company name US Yachts – has turned his already award-winning operation into the first one-stop sailing shop in Australia.

“We can take you on a sailing trip, do corporate team-building for your company, sell you a yacht, service the yacht, and even operate it in our fleet in a partnership for you. We have the whole lot.”

Hunter 41

The Hunter 41 is the first boat Matt’s US Yachts distributorship arm has landed in Sydney, although a 33 and a 44 should also be here in time for the Sydney International Boat Show at the end of July/early August.

Its predecessor, the 410, did the rounds of Australian boat shows a few years ago, but the 41 incorporates quite a few changes, so don’t expect it to be all but identical.

On deck

The twin pushpit “love seats” are an immediate eye-magnet upon boarding – these were only singles on the previous model and the twins are a great improvement. As the love-seat tag indicates, they

are great for couples, but they are also a wonderful spot for non-sailors to sit back and watch the action out of harm’s way.

The trademark big gleaming-white Hunter cockpit is there, complete with binnacle with compass and log and a large fold-down table. The seats are comfortable and there’s plenty of room to lie down and snooze.

Sail controls come back to jammers on the cabin top and two Lewmar two-speed self-tailing 44 winches, as does the in-line reefing. The headsail is self-furling (Furlex) and the furler line is on the side deck next to the lifelines.

FAR LEFT: The double “love seats” aft should be a selling point.

ABOVE: The aft cabin has a double bed with innerspring mattress, plus a vanity and hanging locker.

The headsail winches (also Lewmar 44s) are well aft on the coaming and easily controlled by the skipper or someone sitting on a loveseat, while the mainsheet traveller (Harken) is on a metal arch above the skipper.

The backstayless B&R rig has been around for a while now and needs little introduction. Suffice to say for those not familiar with it that the fractionally



The forward cabin has a tapered double berth (as in narrower at the foot end) and a vanity and handbasin opposite.



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ABOVE: The starboard side of the saloon looking forward.

LEFT: The drop-leave table can be extended with another leaf or lowered at night to make a huge double bed.

rigged, double-spreader Selden mast is braced by a triangulated forestay and shrouds.

In the transom there are two lockers, one for gas bottles and the other for general stowage, and two in the cockpit, one of which is big enough to double as a brig for that unruly crew member.

Forward is a deep anchor locker with rope/chain gypsy, electric windlass and Delta anchor. The latter was 20kg and – as per most that come standard on a production boat – looked only just adequate. A bit of extra chain would also not go amiss.

Features I particularly liked apart from the love seats were the several grab rails, swimming platform with hot and

cold shower and telescopic ladder, numerous drink holders and the neat little cabin-top pockets for halyard ends.

Down below

This is as spacious as one would expect of a yacht from the Hunter stable. The saloon has full 6'6" headroom and there are umpteen windows and hatches. Décor is an attractive mix of timber and composite materials, with a cream headliner contrasting nicely with the timberwork.

Starting from the stern, there is a large cabin with a double bed with inner-spring mattress athwartships, vanity table, hanging locker and stowage. There is only one opening

window/port so a fan might be a good idea here to keep occupants comfortable in warm weather. This cabin opens into an ensuite with sit-down/stand-up shower, which is also accessed from the saloon. Twin double cabins aft are an option.

At the bottom of the companionway to port is an L-shaped galley with Corian countertops, two-burner gas gimbaled stove and oven, microwave and upright electric fridge-freezer. There is reasonable stowage and room for an optional top-opening ice-box next to the sink. Opposite is a smallish chart table and seat.

Midships is a large U-shaped settee to port with stowage under and adjacent. The table can be extended with another leaf or dropped at night to turn into a large double bed. Opposite is another settee.

Forward is another cabin, with double berth to port and opposite a hanging locker and vanity/handbasin. Forward of this again in the forepeak is a head and sit-down/stand-up shower. As per the other head, this has a holding tank and Y-valve with macerator.

Features I particularly liked were the deep bilge, the tiny "courtesy" floor lights so you can see where you're going in the dark, and the excellent access to the engine, which is located under the companionway stairs.

How she sailed

Not yet another harbour jaunt in light winds? I hear you saying. Yup. Sorry, folks. We were lucky to get five knots and all I can say is that she kept moving in the light winds, the Whitlock cable steering felt positive and direct and the sail controls worked without hassle. We did do about double the speed of the only other boat we encountered, but that was a Hartley 16 trailable, so it wasn't exactly a match race. Visibility was excellent and raising and dousing the big, high-aspect main easy via the lazyjack system.

Designer Glenn Henderson has a sports background and Matt said the underwater hull shape was sportier than its predecessor, although the boat was still aimed at the cruising market.

"With its high-aspect rig and deep

WHAT A 410 OWNER THINKS

Libby Ozinga owns a Hunter 410, which she purchased four years ago. She came along when *CH* inspected the new 41. She liked the yacht – especially the new double "love seats" – but there were a couple of things she said she'd miss if she did a swap.

"I think the two windows in the hull each side in the saloon were a great feature and I'm really sorry they're gone. They let you look out when you're sitting down below and we really love them," she said.

"The floor is also a timber composite instead of real timber and the aft cabin seems smaller and with less ventilation."

Libby said there had been a few more cost-saving measures, including as standard two instead of three burners on the stove, two instead of three water tanks, a smaller fuel tank and smaller engine.

"That said, the price is cheaper than it was four years ago, so it has to be very good value," she said.

keel this boat sails really well. We test-sailed it against a Beneteau 40 and it beat it on all points," Matt said.

Hunter 41 owners I asked for their views via the Hunter owners' website (hunterowners.com) also expressed satisfaction with performance.

"I did the 150-mile delivery from Miami to Key West with three other adult male friends," US owner Bob La Salle told me. "She sailed like a dream in all kinds of wind and weather conditions. We easily did 50-mile days with 6.5-7.5 knots boat speed as the norm."

A magazine reviewer in the UK wasn't quite so kind. While very positive about the boat's easy handling and spacious living areas, he said performance-wise it was cruising-orientated and sailed best flat, showing some weather helm when pressed in stronger conditions. However, he did not make it clear whether he was sailing the shallow-draft fin-keel version or deeper-keel version. The latter should help considerably with pointing and weather helm.

Under motor during my Sydney Harbour outing she easily achieved seven knots at 2500 rpm.

Construction

The hulls are moulded using isophthalic resins on woven rovings and CSM and there is Kevlar reinforcing in the bows and along the centreline.

The gelcoat includes UV and osmosis



ABOVE: A dodger is an optional extra.

RIGHT: The aft head is accessible from the aft cabin and saloon.

inhibitors, Joinery is fully bonded to the hull, decks are balsa-cored and the hull and deck bolted and bonded together. Keels are lead/antimony and the GRP rudder has a composite stock.

A plus for future buyers is that Hunter is now Bureau Veritas accredited – a worldwide-recognised standard – so it is easier to put them into charter.

Optional extras

There are dozens of optional extras to choose from to suit what you want to do with the boat.

Extras Matt opted for on the test boat included a 56hp Yanmar (40 is standard), bimini, slightly larger wheel, deep keel and flat-screen TV and DVD. These would set you back an extra \$15,000 or so.

Conclusion

The Hunter does have a nice, light airy feeling about it that makes it well-suited to Australian conditions. This, coupled with the strong Aussie dollar and Matt Hayes' higher-profile marketing and convenient location, should ensure we see many more Hunters sailing in Australian waters in the next few years.

Oh, and before I go, if you're wondering where and when Matt competed in the Olympics, it was in Atlanta in 1996. He finished 10th in the Soling class and had what he described as "the experience of my life".



SPECIFICATIONS



LOA	.....	11.83
LWL	.....	10.85
Beam	.....	4.05m
Draft	.....	standard 1.52m
	.....	deep (optional) 2.01m
Displacement	.....	8800kg
Ballast	.....	standard 2999kg
	.....	deep 2951kg
Sail area	.....	standard 86.1 sqm
	.....	in-mast furling 78.32 sqm
Berths	.....	6/8
Engine	.....	Yanmar 40hp diesel
		with conventional stern gear, fixed two-blade prop
Batteries	.....	1 x 110ah service, 1 x 75ah engine battery
Fuel	.....	136 litres
Water	.....	530 litres
Limit of vanishing stability	.....	125°
Designer	.....	Glenn Henderson
Builder	.....	Hunter Marine Corporation, Alachua, Florida
Price	.....	\$335,000
Distributor:	US Yachts,	
	ph (02) 9281 4422, fax (02) 9280 1119,	
	email hunter@usyachts.com.au,	
	website www.usyachts.com.au	

BOAT SHOW PACKAGE

US Yachts is offering a special Sydney International Boat Show package for those who sign up for a 41 at the show. For the standard retail price of \$335,000 you also get a set of davits, Liberty dinghy, 2.5hp outboard, Raymarine 4000 autopilot, bimini, flat-screen TV and DVD.