



I am the hunter

WORDS + PHOTOS BARRY TRANTER

Looking for an easy to sail cruising yacht?

Naval architects must down a few beers in celebration when they are asked to design a no-compromise yacht.

Most production boats these days are cruiser/racers and while they may be fine boats they must cause the designers small headaches as they weigh the requirements of the cruiser against what the racer needs and what the buyers think they want.

In the case of the Hunter 45CC, I can imagine it was truly satisfying to design a boat which has only one goal, to sail long distances while keeping the crew comfortable. This latter quality, crew comfort, is the most important quality of all, but perhaps I'm getting soft in advanced middle age.

UNASHAMED CRUISER

The Hunter 45CC is an unashamed cruiser. The company's designers chose a centre cockpit (guess what CC stands for?), which makes a lot of sense at this size and, among other things, gives space in the stern for a stateroom bigger than the one Nelson had at Trafalgar.

There is nothing unusual about the boat's configuration, but the Hunter rig is always a good topic for discussion. Years ago the company adopted the B&R Rig System (B&R stands for Bergstrom & Ridder, the originators) after Hunter boss Warren Luhrs used it on his short-handed racing yachts.

The mast is stepped on deck, supported by heavily-raked spreaders and by solid

struts that connect the chainplates to the gooseneck, the point where the boom meets the mast and which is subjected to a lot of loading.

There is no backstay, so the mainsail can have a large roach (the curve of its trailing edge), which boosts sail area and in turn permits a slightly shorter mast, of lighter section. The headsails can also be smaller and easier to handle.

The mainsail is controlled by lazyjacks when hoisting and lowering and lives in a boom bag when furling, but you can option in-mast furling on a taller mast. Hunter importer Matt Hayes says that philosophically he prefers simple boats, but that having sailed the Hunters up and down the coast he would choose the



HUNTER'S CREDENTIALS

Hunter Marine was founded in 1973 and is the dominant sailboat builder in North America. Its market share in 2003 was measured at 24 per cent, three per cent higher than any other single brand. Hunter is one of America's most popular cruising sailboats.

Hunter is one of four boat manufacturing companies owned by the Luhrs family and its employees. The other three companies, Luhrs, Mainship and Silverton, build powerboats. All four companies work together to order massive quantities of raw materials and equipment that can be used on all boats, resulting in major cost savings that are passed directly to the buyer.

These boats can boast value for money, consistent quality and dependability — they're ideal for years of trouble-free sailing.

in-mast furling, especially when sailing short-handed.

"If you get caught in a bit of a storm, you just roll away the main and you don't have to go to the mast to complete the stow and zip up the boom bag."

BELOW DECKS

The 45CC is roomy below decks, no surprise in a centre-cockpit boat. Ed Penn, who works with Matt Hayes, says the dinette in the saloon can be lowered to form a double berth, but the boat was intended to carry two couples long distances in comfort. Surely the centre-cockpit arrangement is the most civilised for long-term sailing, because it confers privacy on all.

You can hide in your cabin and sulk, if that's what you want, and you are well removed from the other people on board. On a yacht (or anywhere else, for that matter) privacy is the greatest luxury of all.

Each cabin has its own bathroom. The galley is U-shaped, and the cook should get support from the companionway structure when the boat is heeled on starboard tack.

The navigation area is alongside the companionway and in the portside walkway, which connects the owner's cabin and the saloon. From the walkway you have access to the engine room, which is big enough to climb into if you must. The engine oil can be changed with the electric pump set behind the engine. In here too is an automatic fire extinguisher system, which operates an engine cut-out when bottle pressure is low. There is an override switch.

Ahead of the engine bay, beneath the companionway, there is space for the optional generator. There's a deep sump, which traps stray water and can be used for storage.

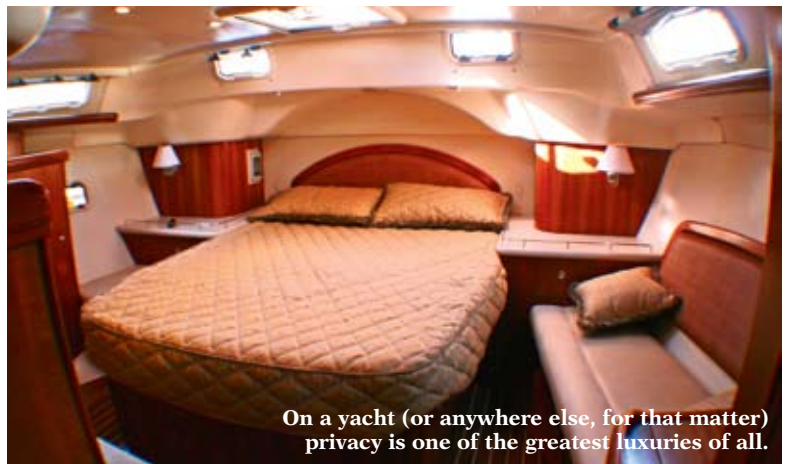
The standard toilets are manual Jabsco's, but this boat was fitted with the optional electric units. You can use the holding tanks or pump overboard when offshore after the macerator has done its job. Oops, sorry for that.

The through-hull fittings are bronze, grouped together below the companionway. There are many other details, which demonstrate that this Hunter has been well engineered for cruising — safety has been given a lot of attention, as has ease of maintenance.

The 75hp Yanmar four-cylinder diesel, fitted with a three-blade fixed prop, pushes us out at 6.5 knots and 2600 revs, a peaceful speed for both hull and engine. You get a bit over 7 knots at 2900-3200 revs, which is still a happy noise level. Either these Yanmars are inherently quiet or sound-deadening materials have progressed a long way in recent years. Or both. Certainly the turbo cuts a lot of the clatter inherent in unblown diesels.

SAILING

Ed hoists the mainsail by hand three-quarters of the way



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up, and then uses the electric Lewmar winch for the last bit. The small headsail is easy to unfurl manually.

We see 6.7 knots going upwind into 13 knots of breeze. As a yardstick it takes a quick yacht to top 7 knots on the wind in this breeze.

The steering is weighted and geared well. The mainsheet traveller is carried on the tubular bar above the cockpit, which also acts as the anchor for the bimini. This boat is simple and easy to sail.

Ed tells me that one customer thought the cockpit was too small. It can seat six, but you can now order a storage bin which doubles as a seat and mounts immediately aft of the cockpit. There are two seats in the pushpit too. To my mind, if there are more than six people on board there are too many, but I'm a bit of a recluse and should not be taken seriously.

The 45CC takes easy sailing to new heights. The Seppos like their comfort and as a race are not happy to compromise on that. The accommodation arrangement gives the room below decks of an aft-cockpit 50-footer, but in a better configuration.

The longitudinal distribution of living space creates the sense of a floating apartment rather than a mere yacht. You could live happily on this boat for a long time because compromise has been minimised. You could say that the designers achieved what they set out to do. ⚓

SPECS	HUNTER 45CC
LOA:	13.72m
Hull length:	12.83m
Waterline length:	11.94m
Beam:	4.42m
Draft:(Shoal)	1.52m
(Deep)	1.98m
Displacement:	10,404kg
Ballast:	3352kg
Sail area:	. Standard 89.37sq m
Furling:	82.03sq m
Furling:	(vert. Battens)88sq m
Fuel:	288lt
Freshwater:	564lt
Holding Tank:	182lt
Water heater:	42lt
Engine:	75hp Yanmar
Price: (Base boat) \$490,000
Contact: (02) 9281 4422
Web:www.usyachts.com.au

+	Overall layout Easy to sail
-	Nothing to report

The lonely hunter. There's plenty of room for quiet contemplation on the 45CC.

