Dream Mac

LOA: 39'3"
BEAM: 12'9"
DRAFT: 3'11"
DISPL.: 19,000 lb.
FUEL: 300 gal.
WATER: 55 gal.
TEST POWER: 1/670-mhp Cummins QSM11 diesel inboard
TRANSMISSION: ZF325A, 1.49:1 ratio
PROPELLERS: 25 x 26 5-blade ZF
OPTIONAL POWER: 1/610-mhp Cummins QSM11 diesel inboard; 2/300-mhp Volvo Penta IPS400s
BASE PRICE: $763,000
PRICE AS TESTED: $850,000

WHAT DOES A SAILOR GET WHEN HE OPTS FOR A CLASSIC, SWEETLY PERFORMING POWERBOAT? A VERY EFFICIENT, TRADITIONAL-LOOKING BRUCKMANN YACHTS ABACO 40!

BY CAPT. BILL PIKE PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILLY BLACK

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I look forward to testing some boats more than others—a matter of taste I guess. And quite frankly the Abaco 40, a traditionally styled, albeit racily swept-back, single-engine powerboat from sailboat maven Bruckmann Yachts, was lookin' pretty dang tasty as I browsed her photos on the Web some while back. So when my boss George Sass asked whether I'd like to actually test the 40, I replied, "Hell yes, George!"

One way or another, traditionally styled vessels have always been my thing. For years now, I've owned a Grand Banks 32 Sedan trawler. And one of the major reasons *Betty Jane* and I are still romantically involved is that she's a very boaty-looking boat, with the sort of traditional, New Englandy demeanor I can appreciate from a naval architecture standpoint, as well as from the standpoint of pure, take-a-seat-and-stare-for-a-whole-hour art.

My test boat—and her owner—happened to be in West Palm Beach, Florida. "Welcome," said Steve Scotchmer as I jumped into the cockpit. Within seconds, I was totally synced into one of the 40's basic virtues—genuine, straightforward simplicity, a quality I almost always find appealing in a boat, both for practical and aesthetic reasons. More to the point, as Scotchmer and I stood there shooting the breeze, I became increasingly distracted by the saloon, visible through the open bulkhead sliders, with its starboard-side helm station forward, Stidd pedestal chair immediately abaft (with another Stidd to port for the copilot), and an opposed set of bench-type seetees (with table). Not only did the simplicity of the place promise lovely, easy-living experiences onboard, its pure elegance was slowly but surely capturing virtually all of my attention.

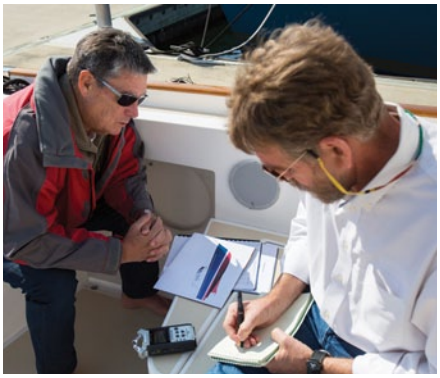
"Yes, she is beautiful isn't she?" said Scotchmer, eventually noticing. "That's Epifanes varnish on all that mahogany joinery you see in there, Bill—7 coats, I believe."

A tour belowdecks only bolstered my enthusiasm. Scotchmer's a long-time sailor and, in keeping with the ragbag ethos, his 40's not shy about showing her salty, windjammin' heritage. For example, there was an actual V-berth (Bruckmann offers an island option, by the way) in the one-and-only stateroom, complete with golden-hued ceiling planks and jewel-like Ocean Frigast reading lamps. And the layout abaft the stateroom was undeniably spartan and sailboaty, but it also plainly offered all the extra comforts (like a big, sepa-

***Except for the veneered sole,** all the wood in the saloon is precisely joined mahogany.*

"Scotchmer's a long-time sailor and, in keeping with the ragbag ethos, his 40's not shy about showing her salty, windjammin' heritage."

Note the fine fit and finish on the window trim and console. It veritably glows with varnish.



Ex-sailor Steve Scotchmer (above) is a big-time fan of a traditional Herreshoff interor.

rate shower stall and an ample U-shaped galley) that powerboat converts hanker for.

Our sea trial turned out to be extremely interesting, particularly in terms of performance, and, except for one little vexation at the end, extremely enjoyable. Weather conditions were mild—in fact, upon departing our slip at Lake Park Marina, we found the sea state was flat-out unchallenging.

And yeah, the average top hop of 27.7 knots I recorded was not exactly radical. But then again, the way the boat achieved this respectable velocity was amazing. I've elsewhere detailed the thinking behind the 40's Mark Ellis-designed running surface (See "Better Boat: Smooth Operator" on page 49) but suffice to say here that mixing an assemblage of fairly flat after sections with a modified-deep-V hullform forward, and then adding a sizable skeg and rudder to both protect a single propeller and enhance tracking, puts some serious pizzazz into a boat's performance.

And I do mean pizzazz! Based on the running attitudes I measured over the entire rpm register during our trial, I'd say the 40 swoops over her bow wave (at a maximum angle of just four degrees) and planes off at just 1250 rpm, an almost unheard-of feat of hydrodynamics that, among other things, allows a driver to remain on a comparatively efficient plane at speeds as low as 12 or 13 knots. Additionally, if you continue to back off on the 40's throttle, efficiency increases significantly—at 1000 rpm, for instance, she gets nearly 2 mpg by my calculation and at

▶ *FOR MORE PICTURES of the Bruckmann, cruise on over to www.pmymag.com.*

RPM	KNOTS	GPH	RANGE	dB(A)
600	6.1	1.2	1,372	67
1000	8.8	4.6	517	74
1250	10.9	8.4	350	74
1500	16.4	12.0	369	76
1750	19.0	19.7	260	79
2000	24.4	22.8	289	82
2350	27.7	33.7	222	85

TEST CONDITIONS: Air temperature: 80°F; humidity 80%; seas: calm; load: 60 gal. fuel, 75 gal. water, 3 persons, 100 lb. gear. Speeds are two-way averages measured w/ Furuno GPS sensor. GPH estimates taken via Cummins display. Range based on 90% of advertised fuel capacity. Sound levels measured at the helm. 65 dB(A) is the level of normal conversation.

NOTEWORTHY OPTIONS: 6-kW Onan generator ($15,200); upgrade to 670-mhp Cummins QSM11 diesel inboard ($8,500); thruster upgrade to variable speed, both bow and stern ($13,270); teak decking in cockpit ($8,200); 16,000-Btu Cruisair AC for pilothouse ($9,200); 2/8,000-Btu Cruisair AC for interior ($16,800).

Strikingly optimized running attitudes ***ensure efficient performance. Note that the main engine is virtually beneath the helm seat.***

idle speed (6.1 knots) she gets more than twice that. Indeed, even at a high cruise of 24.4 knots at 2000 rpm she achieves more than 1 mpg, a figure that trounces the performances of numerous other vessels in this size range, many of them only half as efficient.

Open-water handling was also cool. Sightlines from the helm were excellent, port, starboard, fore, and aft. Coming out of the hole (with our Bennett trim tabs slightly deployed) required only a slight lift of the chin to see over the bow. And while sound levels were fairly high, most likely because our single 670-metric-horsepower Cummins was almost literally underfoot, the layout of the Epifanes-coated mahogany helm station compensated nicely—the thing was configured in a heartwarmingly savvy, easy-to-read manner, with a Furuno NavNet front and center, Furuno depthsounder to the left, Furuno autopilot to the right, and an engine-monitoring panel just above the big, destroyer-type wheel.

I did eventually cross courses with the aforementioned vexation, however. Upon returning to Lake Park after our sea trial, I attempted to back the 40 into her slip and, it pains me to admit, mangled the maneuver. Yeah finally, I "got 'er in there," as they say, but it wasn't pretty. What happened?

Let's consider single-screw boats for a moment. In general, there are two ways to set one up for a backdown. The first entails using lots of fast, hard-over rudder coupled with dramatic bursts of forward propeller thrust to adjust the stern's position. And the second entails centering the rudder and using a thruster or thrusters in league with sternway to accomplish the same thing.

I went with the latter method to dock our 40, primarily because she was optionally equipped with a set of powerful, variable-speed Side-Power thrusters (bow and stern), a combo that seemed worthy of a rousing tryout at the time. But hey, the Side-Power system apparently demanded way more juice than the battery bank onboard possessed, a quirk that made the thrusters stop and start unpredictably and lent a certain flightiness to my whole docking extravaganza.

There's a happy ending, though. According to a recent telephone conversation I had with the folks at Bruckmann, they've since expanded the battery arsenal and also installed a dedicated bank near the thruster. "Decreases the length of cable runs and voltage drop," explained Mark Bruckmann, "and addresses the problems I think you had."

Of course, if the changes work even half as well as the Abaco 40 runs (and looks), everything should be, at least from a dyed-in-the-wool traditionalist's standpoint, perfect. ❐

Bruckmann Yachts, 905-855-1117; www.bruckmannyachts.com

Better Boat: Smooth Operator

Years ago Mark Ellis worked for C. Raymond Hunt Associates, the outfit that's more closely identified with deep-V hulls than any other design firm. But once he'd hung out his own shingle, Ellis began looking for something a bit more cruiseworthy—a hullform that would boost lower-speed performance but maintain directional stability and cut the deep-V's hefty horsepower demands. What he came up with was a running surface that features deep-V-like sections forward, sections amidships with a lesser V (and radiused apexes), and after sections with radically broad chineflats. The upshot, as we saw during our sea trial of the Abaco 40 (with 2-foot-wide chineflats), is a rough-water-capable vessel that planes flat at relatively low speeds due to stern lift. "This makes sense for cruising people," says Ellis, "I mean it's great to ram around in a runabout doing 22 knots all day but, if you're cruising, you want to go slow sometimes. My chineflat boat will let you do that efficiently."
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