

A TOUCH OF CLASS ON THE HIGH SEAS

"PEOPLE have accused us of being gimmicky," he said as I played with the push-button television, the fitted radio, and eight-track stereophonic tape recorder, "but we're nothing of the sort really".

"It's just that up here at Moonraker we see no reason why a customer who is investing over £25,000 in a superb boat should forgo any of the little luxuries he takes for granted in his own home".

I eased round on the softly upholstered settee and looked out of the tinted saloon windows. A couple of ducks stared up at me enviously, then back-paddled in alarm as, deep in the bowels of the boat, 350 eager young horses began pawing impatiently at their stable floor, keen to be weaned from the tranquil waters of the River Yare which gave them birth.



EXHILARATING

When, later that morning, they took the bit between their teeth at the entrance to Great Yarmouth harbour, I knew exactly what the builders meant by their sales slogan, "Moonraker ... the passport to a different way of life!"

I take issue with them on one point only: in my opinion this class of fast 36ft. all-glass fibre, six-berth luxury cruisers should be renamed . . . ALCHEMIST!

For when those twin 175-horsepower turbo-charged Perkins diesels lift her seven and more tons of pleasure and send you creaming toward the horizon at 22 knots, life takes on a dramatic and exhilarating sea-change!

Costing just over £27,000 (including VAT), this enclosed wheelhouse version with an owner's stateroom aft is built by JCL in their yard at Brundall, Norwich, Norfolk. And she is exciting.

Moonraker 36 packs a lot of spacious accommodation and all her furnishings, fittings, joinery, and equipment are of top quality.

You step aboard on to an after sundeck which is in fact the top of the owner's stateroom.

It provides a large open area ideal for sunbathing immediately aft of the enclosed wheelhouse, and from it one has the choice of either mounting a short stainless steel ladder up to a "flying bridge" atop the wheelhouse or stepping down into the wheelhouse itself through a large sliding toughened glass door.

THE NERVE CENTRE

This wheelhouse is the nerve centre of the boat. A neat console houses an impressive array of instruments (in duplicate - for her two engines), and the helmsman sits in a comfortable upholstered seat behind a large stainless steel wheel.

Before him are the twin throttle and gear controls, a steering compass, an automatic "pilot" which locks the boat onto any pre-selected course after which she steers herself, and a neat but sophisticated radar scanner.

There are controls for an electric bilge-pump, depth recorder, domestic water pressure pump feeding all washbasins and showers as well as the galley sink, and even a remote control fire extinguisher which operates on the galley cooker in case of an accidental flare-up!

While handling the boat from this position the helmsman has an excellent all-round view through tinted toughened glass windows, the side units of which open to give ventilation.

A large navigating desk lies across the entire front of the wheelhouse and this takes a fully opened Admiralty Chart. A second upholstered seat is provided for the navigator.

Underfoot, five hatches in the glass fibre decking lift to give good access for servicing the engines, and her 200-gallon fuel tank is moulded in glass fibre to fit the "V" shape of her hull and is sited down low on the centreline under the floor of the main saloon.

A 90-gallon glass fibre fresh-water tank is similarly built in beneath the floor of the owner's stateroom aft.

Three steps down from the wheelhouse take one forward into the saloon where to one side is a beautifully fitted galley area housing a two burner bottled-gas cooker with grill and oven.

Alongside this is a stainless steel sink with draining board and beneath the latter is an electric refrigerator.

Cupboards, shelving and stowage racks for unbreakable crockery and cutlery for six persons, all of which is provided, are tastefully built in around the galley.

Opposite the galley is the toilet, a lavishly equipped and well-ventilated separate room with flushing w.c., gas water-heater, hand washbasin and shower, plus mirror and electric shaver point.

Forward of this toilet a dinette area, to seat four, converts at night into a luxurious double berth, and on the opposite side of the saloon is a large settee the backrest of which cunningly hinges down to reveal a self-illuminating cocktail cabinet with its own drinks

counter.

A half-height bulkhead divides this main saloon from an open-plan forward cabin where two single berths and two wardrobes complete the furnishing.

When required, this fore cabin is separated from the saloon by tastefully chosen draw-curtains, and has its own hatch giving direct access on to the foredeck.

The saloon and fore cabin drawers and lockers under the berths provide ample stowage for bedding.

STATEROOM

All interior furniture is faced in natural sapele mahogany, and the fitted carpets, combined with lining at the ship's side and deckhead, give a rich warm feeling down below.

Moving back through the wheelhouse one passes through double hinged doors down five steps into the owner's stateroom where at one side there is a large double berth.

Opposite this is a dressing table with chair, mirror and drawers plus a fitted radio.

As in the other cabins the tinted windows are supplied with good quality draw-curtains and this stateroom also has its own private toilet with wash basin, mirror and shower. A serviceable wardrobe and fitted carpet completes the furnishing.

Headroom in the saloon and at the aft end of the forecabin is 6ft.2in. while in the stateroom it is 5ft.11,5in.

But the real fun of handling this fast cruiser whose range, on a full tank of fuel, is more than 300 miles comes when you climb atop the wheelhouse to the open "flying bridge" where the wheel, throttle and gear controls and the main instrumentation is duplicated.

Here, again, the helmsman is provided with a weather-proof, upholstered armchair and on either side is seating for up to four passengers.

She is a delight to handle, even on one engine alone, which is a severe test for any twin-engined craft. With sternway I also found her very responsive and she presents no problems manoeuvring into those crowded anchorages and marina berths.

ROBUST

There is a robust electric anchor winch, an automatically inflated six-man life-raft, a tough stainless steel pulpit round her bow, and well-positioned grabrails up on deck, not to mention a fixed boarding ladder down the stern, leading to a useful slatted diving platform just above water level, and stowage racks for fenders and warps, twin electric horns, windscreen wipers, and a self-draining chain locker for the anchor - all these are the little touches which really put this boat out in a class of her own.

There is even a first-aid kit, distress signals, six individual life-Jackets, a waterproof torch, and a current Reed's Nautical Almanac supplied . . . but a pair of davits aft to carry a small dinghy will cost you an extra £220.

In fact when you point the bows of a Moonraker 36 seaward there is not much by way of equipment you could possibly need ... the rest is up to you!