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Hunter e33

Hunter's latest model ushers in a few "firsts" for this high-volume builder



HUNTER'S CORPORATE turnabout began in the late 1990s, and the past dozen years have seen the Florida-based builder gain serious credibility for delivering laudable quality and all-around value—not merely low price. Hunter's new e33 follows the lead of the e36 as the second in the company's new "extended cockpit" series, but it breaks new ground as the first Hunter cruiser with a chined hull, as well as the first to fit a sail drive auxiliary.

The e33 is fundamentally an updated version of the Hunter 33—a model that sold over 625 units during an eight-year production run. The sheer popularity of its immediate fore-bearer means that the new e33 will be facing stiff market competition, not only from other manufacturers' products, but from late model H-33s on the used boat market. To achieve sales success, Hunter's R&D team recognized that their new 33 would need more than just a superficial makeover, and to their credit, they've come up with a markedly improved sailboat.

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION Noted naval architect Glen Henderson drafted the 2004-vintage H-33, and is again responsible for the lines of the e33. Although the basic hull parameters—length, beam and underbody shape—remain very similar, the topsides of the new boat have grown a little higher, presumably to gain interior headroom without resorting to an overly prominent trunk cabin. Although the e-33's cabin remains quite tall and substantial, the dramatic, down-sweeping window treatment tends to draw the eye and prevent this from becoming an aesthetic issue. Of course, from an ergonomic perspective, the relatively tall cabin positions the hand rails at a height where they're easily grasped without stooping over.

Also new, of course, are the hull chines that begin amidships and sweep gently upward as they near the transom. Interestingly, the chines on the Hunter e33 are much lower on the hull sides than is typically the case in recent designs out of Europe. Even when viewed from astern, these low-slung chines are hardly visible, in part because they are rounded off just forward of the transom (presumably to enable Hunter's trademark wrap-around vinyl rub rail to conform to the transom lip). The ▶



The "e" in e33 refers to the boat's extended cockpit, which features a swing-down transom that becomes a stern platform when lowered. It's a good height to line up with docks, but might be a little high for swimmers to use without a ladder.

company claims they added these chines primarily to boost form stability, and thanks to their shape and position, I believe they will have more positive impact in this regard than a majority of the chines we've seen on cruising yachts of late. Certainly Hunter didn't add these "stealth chines" as a fashion statement, and I think it's unrealistic to expect them to transform a six-ton cruiser with a nine-metre waterline into some sort of breakaway planing machine.

Like other Hunters, the e33 has a single skin, hand-laid fibreglass hull from the waterline down with extra Kevlar anti-collision reinforcements in the fore-body, and a massive fibreglass build-up where the external chainplates attach. Unlike the outgoing 33, the new e33 gets Hunter's unusual, but by now well-proven, trademark external hull/deck joint, where a high strength polysulfide adhesive/sealant (3M 5200) provides the primary bond with stainless steel through bolts for secondary reinforcement.

Hunter offers three different keels for the e33 with the optional deep keel version extending five feet, six inches and two shoal draft variants—one a standard bulb/wing keel and the other a twin bilge keel—drawing a foot less.

COCKPIT, DECK AND RIG The "e" designation for the Hunter e33 refers to the extended cockpit, which is actually a swing-down transom gate that becomes a stern platform when lowered to horizontal. Unlike most competitors' transom platforms, this one is high enough to overhang an average dock float. However, swimmers who wish to climb aboard will certainly need to use the built-in boarding ladder. Thanks to the folding wheel (included as part of Hunter's popular Mariner Package), stern boarding access is superb. Indeed, the cockpit as a whole is a highly workable, livable space thanks to sail controls close the helm, secure yet comfortable seating, and of course, the arch-mounted mainsheet.

Over the years, Hunter's mainsheet arches have evolved from chunky fibreglass moldings into artistically curved structures made of polished stainless steel tubing. Current versions are fully integrated with the stern pulpit and its raised transom seats. Not only do they keep the mainsheet blocks and traveller safely overhead and out of the way, but they also provide solid support for a bimini or even a full cockpit enclosure.

Cockpit stowage aboard the e33 is remarkably generous thanks in part to added volume aft where the hull shape was tweaked to accommodate the hinged transom gate. The bows are also relatively full, especially at deck level, so there's ample room for a spacious anchor locker with a recessed mount for the optional electric windlass.

The Hunter e33 can be ordered with a ▶



standard rig, but virtually all buyers in the northwest will opt for the in-mast furling option (supplied with the popular “Mariner” upgrade package). In the case of the e33, the standard rig boasts a square-topped, “fat-head” main (because there’s no backstay to interfere with the very generous mainsail roach).

The furling version comes with a substantially higher mast—some 1.6 metres more above the hounds. This allows for a mainsail only marginally smaller than the standard square top, particularly when the furling main is ordered with the vertical batten upgrade. Tradeoffs are a reduction in aerodynamic efficiency and extra weight aloft, but the difference likely won’t be noticeable except perhaps in very windy and/or rough conditions. On the other side of the ledger, the convenience of in-mast furling is a major boon, particularly for family crews or when single-handing.

SYSTEMS The e33 is equipped with a sail drive, which is another first for Hunter Marine. Standard power is a 21 hp Yanmar diesel, but nearly all boats come with the 29 hp upgrade as part of the mariner package. The sail drive is positioned forward of the engine, and the companionway steps are built into an extended, lift-top enclosure. As a result, the slope of the stairway is much shallower than was the case in the preceding H-33—an

improvement that older sailors and those with pets will surely appreciate.

Under power, the 29 hp sail drive pushed the Hunter e33 with authority: 6.6 knots with the engine turning 3,000 rpm (typical fast cruise), and 5.4 knots at a 2,400 rpm “economy cruise” setting. Wide open, the boat topped out at seven knots and 3,450 rpm. Sound levels measured in the main saloon ranged from 73 to 76 dBA—a testament to a good effort at soundproofing as well as the inherently quiet sail drive installation.

The big hinged engine cover (equipped with gas support struts) swings up to expose the entire transmission and most of the engine. There are removable panels at the sides and rear of the engine compartment for access to everything else.

Hunter’s plumbing and electric installations conform to ABYC standards, and are laid out with an eye to future additions and/or repairs. The basic boat comes with an engine battery plus a single group 27 house battery—certainly not enough to hang at anchor for long if refrigeration (again a Cruise Pack option) is specified. Accordingly, the B.C. dealer routinely upgrades the house bank to four substantial golf cart batteries, as well as adding an engine fire suppression system and various other upgrades.

BELOW DECKS The two-cabin interior layout of the e33 has changed only slightly from

ABOVE The new e33’s two cabin interior is largely the same as the H-33, but now has “wood look” laminates for most wood surfaces.

the proven arrangement of the previous 33, but a few details are worth noting. Hunter now uses realistic “wood look” laminates for their bulkheads, furniture faces, and cabin soles. These hard-surface materials wear better than natural wood, and it’s difficult to tell the difference barring close inspection. Genuine wood continues to have a place in highly varnished interior tables and trim joinery.

The expansive main cabin table features a crank-action “Easy Lift” system that quickly converts it to either a coffee/cocktail table, or a full-sized double berth. Similarly, the starboard settee incorporates a flip-over middle section that transforms it into a serviceable nav desk flanked by two seats.

The aft galley on the e33 is quite spacious and nicely equipped. By comparison, the head compartment opposite feels decidedly compact. Angled bulkheads were strategically employed to pare away head volume, freeing up the necessary space for an aft cabin entry alongside the companionway stairs. And considering the small amount of time that’s actually spent in the head, it hardly makes sense to lavish space in this area of a compact cruiser.

The main cabin, as well as both

sleeping cabins, are expansive and appealing thanks to generous headroom (up to six feet, four inches), and abundant natural lighting. One feature worth noting is the big aft cabin hatch—large enough to work as a fire escape should this ever be necessary.

UNDER SAIL The Hunter e33 is a well-equipped, substantial cruiser with a displacement-to-length ratio of 228. All the same, it performs very nicely in winds of nine to 12 knots true. Optimal upwind performance in these conditions was achieved at boat speeds in the 5.2 to 5.5 knot range, while cracking off to a close reach produced speeds up to seven knots. Even more impressive was the boat's reluctance to develop excess weather helm, even when deliberately pressed through a gust. Glen Henderson's hull design for this (and other) Hunters incorporates substantial fullness in the topsides by way of the chainplates—a feature that helps prevent the centre of buoyancy from shifting rapidly aft as the boat heels. In the case of the e33, the immersed chine may also contribute

to the excellent tracking characteristics. At least in moderate conditions, this boat nearly steers itself, and will doubtlessly manage well under autopilot.

CLOSING REMARKS Hunter's e33 follows hard on the heels of the e36 with similar styling and features plus a few new additions like the hard chines and sail drive propulsion. Despite the fact that both models feature virtually the same layout, systems and standard equipment, the junior sibling sells for nearly 25 percent less, making it an impressive bargain for those willing to forego a little elbow room and some tankage/stowage capacity. At the time of writing, a stock e33 commissioned in Vancouver and equipped with Hunter's mariner package plus a fair bit of dealer-optional gear, was available for \$155,890 US.

All in all, Hunter Marine is clearly on a roll with their new "extended cockpit" series, and while the company declines to hint at what's next in the pipeline, odds are they'll soon be launching something like a 30-footer to fill the gap between the H-27 and e33. Ⓜ

THE STATS

| | | |
|----------------------------------|------------|------------|
| LOA | 10.21 m | 33' 6" |
| HULL LENGTH | 10.08 m | 33' 1" |
| LWL | 8.97 m | 29' 5" |
| BEAM | 3.51 m | 11' 6" |
| DRAFT (deep) | 1.67 m | 5' 6" |
| DRAFT (shoal) | 1.37 m | 4' 6" |
| BALLAST (deep) | 1569 kg | 3,459 lbs |
| BALLAST (shoal) | 1,623 kg | 3,579 lbs |
| DISPL. (deep) | 5,570 kg | 12,280 lbs |
| FURLING RIG SA (50% IJPE) | 46.51 sq-m | 501 sq-ft |
| SA/D | 15.1 | |
| D/L | 228 | |
| FUEL | 95 L | 25 USG |
| WATER | 189 L | 50 USG |
| HOLDING | 57 L | 15 USG |

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