

# CORE VALUES

PHOTOS JACK MURPHY

The Hunter 40 is a dedicated cruiser that ticks all the boxes for the aspiring offshore sailor, reports **KEVIN GREEN**

The fortunes of Hunter Yachts have pretty much reflected the trend of its domestic market in the US, where the company had been building yachts for four decades until the recession temporarily halted this mid-sized builder. Emerging under the new ownership of entrepreneur and motorboat builder David Marlow in 2012, the Florida-based yard is seeking to modernise its range and the Hunter 40 heralds very much a new beginning. Sporting a newly designed hard-chined hull, sleeker topsides and folding transom, the H40 combines the new with the old Hunter values of good practicalities.

American-built production yachts – such as Catalina, J/Boats, and Hunter – tend to be strong on the basics and utilitarianism such as functional sail-plans, good general usability and build. Where these mid-sized manufacturers tend to struggle against their mass-produced European competitors is in the refinement and the new Hunter 40 pretty much fits this profile.

## SEAWORTHY INTERIOR

While acknowledging the global trend of more liveable, rather than nautical interiors, Hunter has laudably continued its pragmatic build below decks combined with a modern level of comfort. So, as you enter the cherrywood-clad interior you're supported by handrails, handholds and a pole which guide you safely to the U-shaped dinette, an area dominated by a lustrously varnished table. Lifting it reveals a smaller cocktail table, but storing the bigger one in a padded bag lacks that aforementioned refinement.

Opposite the dinette, the longitudinal lounge shares the space with the navigation table. The latter is rather small by traditional Hunter standards but nevertheless fairly efficient as the hardwood seat abuts the bathroom bulkhead, thereby supporting the skipper's back while he studies the instrumentation.

The new Sydney owner of our test boat had fitted the Raymarine remote autopilot handset, but of particular interest was the factory-fitted iPad that now comes standard. The iPad uses Raymarine's wireless app to link



Plenty of room for lunch with friends. Note the Raymarine e-Series 120 in situ.

the cockpit e-Series 120 plotter which is also linked via a VGA cable to the flatscreen digital television on the dinette bulkhead, so charting information abounds. Ideally, the iPad should be removable allowing the skipper to monitor navigation/autopilot data from his aft suite.

Across from the nav-station the L-shaped galley neatly fits behind the dinette. Again a no-nonsense layout with two-burner gimbaled Force 10 stove/oven, small microwave and deep double sinks surrounded by hard-wearing white Corian worksurfaces, the rounded edges ensuring cookie isn't too bruised at sea. Lockers come with solid-wood doors and frosted panels but are let down by the

flimsy plastic catches. Perishables have plenty room in the household-sized front-opening fridge plus icebox/bin. Ventilation and natural light is good, Lewmar hatches facing both fore and aft, while an opening hatch airs the cooker and traditional dorade vents ensure constant airflow.

#### COMFORTABLE AFT

Accommodation and ablutions are commodious for a 40-footer, with either two or three cabins offered. The test boat's two-cabin two-bathroom layout works well and the owner's suite encompassing the entire aft section. Design constraints in this layout mean the choice is either a shallow cockpit to

increase overhead space or constricting interior space with a more seaworthy deep cockpit. Hunter chose the latter option for the 40 with head space restricted over the bed but standing height (2m) is good around it. Sensibly, a headboard at the inboard end allows you to sleep either way. The wood-clad interior gives a warm ambience and twin wardrobes and other lockers can store plenty of clothing for extended cruising – though a dedicated wet locker would be welcome in the en suite. The bathroom has the shower sharing the head, covered in a drop-down teak-slatted cover, with separate cubicle for the sink.

Moving forward into the bow the V-berth is rather pinched at the



Lustrous wood tones throughout the interior are a pleasing change from many more contemporary looks we see.



## WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THE GLOBAL TREND OF MORE LIVEABLE, RATHER THAN NAUTICAL INTERIORS, HUNTER HAS LAUDABLY CONTINUED ITS PRAGMATIC BUILD BELOW DECKS COMBINED WITH A MODERN LEVEL OF COMFORT

forepeak – as Hunter has chosen to include a seat in front and chain locker forward – but is an effective berth with ample head space, side shelving, a wardrobe and good natural illumination from the portlights and deck hatch. Annoyingly, a mirror is positioned right where your feet lie, which is rather unnerving and ideally should be placed up on the forward bulkhead. The spacious en suite is similar to the owner's, with deep sink and Corian top, a curtain and

Perspex screen separating the shower/head.

The engine bay is opened by removing the front panel at the base of the companionway stairs and a hinged top cover but this requires a bolt to hold it while engine access is hampered by a wooden crossbar. Nearly all the opposition use a hinged companionway on gas-assisted struts and this important part of the H40 requires reworking, though there is engine access from both



DEDICATED CRUISING BOATS REQUIRE EASY SAIL HANDLING AND THE NEW HUNTER 40 OFFERS PLENTY OF THIS, ESPECIALLY WITH ITS OPTIONAL IN-MAST REEFING SELDEN RIG

sides as well and main service points for the impeller, oil and water are reachable. The test boat had the upgraded 54hp Yanmar saildrive fitted rather than the standard 40hp model with 80amp alternator (plus 40amp battery charger) to charge the lithium batteries.

For running white goods there's even space for an optional 4kW Fischer Panda generator. Electrics are good generally but some tidying is required in the aft locker where exposed wiring is open to dampness and being snagged by warps and other gear. Another commendable feature on the H40 is the deep bilges – at least on this shoal-draft version – which trap excess water safely low-down in the hull, not to mention stashing wine from the searing effects of the Aussie summer. Another plus is the cabin sole – hardwood slats backed with marine ply laminate – which felt solid under foot.

**SAFE COCKPIT**

The cockpit remains largely the same seaworthy standard of all Hunters thanks to high coamings, a deep well and tall sprayhood, all protected with the trademark stainless steel and canvas bimini. My only gripe here was the small protruding bulkhead that tripped up several of us during the test sail, hidden as it was in the bottom corner of the cockpit well. The twin binnacles open up the stern nicely, giving easy access to the drop-down swimplatform.

On this highly optioned boat some items didn't quite fit and most annoying where the buttons for the electric Lewmar 46 primaries; the button covers jamming the steering wheels and hurting a few fingers during the sail, while the throttle also impinged the stainless steel spokes of the wheels.

The German mainsheet system can be conveniently controlled from the coachroof or the jammer near the helm and is another well-proved Hunter feature, while all halyards arrived via gutters to the Lewmar jammers either side of the companionway. On the binnacles the optional tunnel bowthruster's controls had been duplicated across each helm. Sharing the cockpit table, the swivelling housing for the Raymarine plotter works well and along with the

- [HIGHS]**
  - › Spacious and quality feel below deck
  - › Lustrous woodwork
  - › Practical overall nature of yacht
- [LOWS]**
  - › Electric winch button and throttle blocking steering wheels
  - › Hidden cockpit protrusion causes tripping



Drop-down stern platforms add form and function. We like it when the designers keep the mechanics of such a feature simple – like the rope and pulley type on display here.

i70 multipurpose instrumentation gives the steerer clear information.

**OVERSIZED ANCHOR SETUP**

On deck, plenty of non-slip mouldings and handrails offer good support and at the bow the oversize horizontal Lewmar windlass with capstan further adds to the cruising credentials of the Hunter 40. The capstan can run off the second bowroller as well while the chain locker is sealed, with access through the V-berth. An innovative touch are the new folding cleats, which again are oversize and are midships as well, though I continue to disagree with their placement on the transom rather than the deck.

Hunter has been careful not to change its reliable B&R Selden rig featuring swept-back shrouds (with inboard inner shrouds and outboard cap shrouds) plus twin spreaders. Also, tie rods from the inner shrouds connect directly to the hull grid completing an ocean-ready rig. The test boat came with the optional in-mast furling mainsail which significantly reduces the roach (and 10 per cent sail area) of the standard slab

reefing one, but is a good option with cruising comfort in mind.

Our test boat was hull number four and came with the optional shoal-draft keel rather than the deep 2.03m fin, plus deep spade rudder. The big change is the inclusion of the fashionable chine, which does help tracking and heeling angle. Hunter's sensible rubbing strake continues on the new hull which looks to have more vertical topsides, abruptly stopping at the stern where the hard chine tucks the aft section in. The bow is fine with enough rake to give the H40 a traditional profile, enhanced with the reverse counter stern. Hull layup is strong with 10 layers of multidirectional and woven fibreglass with Kevlar in the forward impact zones (bow through to the leading edge of the keel), while underwater is solid GRP and sandwich balsa core above.

**GUSTY HARBOUR**

As Sydney's CBD is increasingly built-up with skyscrapers, the southerly wind finds more creative ways to flow around it and making for a tough test on the Hunter 40. An ideal day to have a thruster fitted as the owner of our test had

done, guiding our bow against the gusts before bowling down Darling Harbour.

Motoring past the speed-limit zone I accelerated to a top speed of 8.4kts as we sped towards Circular Quay and a sail hoist sheltered from the blustery conditions in Farm Cove. On days like this the in-mast furling is particularly welcome – simply unclip the lock on the mast then return to the sheltered cockpit to unwind the sail with the electric Lewmar coachroof winch. Similarly, the 110 per cent genoa rolled off the Furllex 2000S as I steered us on a broad reach while stopping the engine and folding the two-bladed propeller.

Trimming the primaries is comfortably done with manual handles right beside the helms, but as mentioned the optioned electric buttons were a hazard for fingers due to the wheel spokes. Sitting out on the gunwales is also comfortably done, although when heeled the footplate moulding gave insufficient support. Weather protection is excellent with sprayhood and bimini combining well, and there are clear views forward with enough window in



**[tradeboat SAYS...]**  
This 40-footer from the rejuvenated American marque proves that it's usually wise to stick to what you do best, which in Hunter's case is to make good-value, solid cruising boats. Sure they may lack the refinements of their mass-produced European competitors but opting for substance of over style is no bad thing, especially when you're in the middle of an ocean.

the bimini to eyeball the mainsail.

The Hunter 40 revelled in the broad reaching and beam reaching – ideal cruising conditions – with the 8.5kts SOG registering on the Raymarine plotter. As we began to harden-up, my host for the day Ed Penn from US Yachts simply rolled in some of the Doyle Dacron mainsail to reduce our heeling angle while I spun the primary winch to bring the genoa into the shrouds. We crept up to 50 degrees in the gusty 20-knot wind with our speed settling to 8.1kts. Not bad considering this was the shoal-draft keel with compromised mainsail, which loses its shape even more when reefed.

Easing off the mainsheet, which I could do from the jammer on the bimini, crew Lisa then wound it in on the cabin top to centralise the long boom before our gybe, which went without dramas. We did this manoeuvre several times as I buzzed our *Trade-a-Boat* RIB, allowing photographer Jack Murphy plenty of close-ups. Amid the stronger gusts the H40 simply rounded up gradually, showing a sensible amount of weather helm,

but at all times I felt quite happy steering with the wheel mostly nicely balanced; again showing good cruising credentials.

Dedicated cruising boats require easy sail handling and the new Hunter 40 offers plenty of this, especially with its optional in-mast reefing Selden rig which allows couples to sail this yacht while being well protected in the deep cockpit. Hunter's move to twin binnacles also gives the helmsman good steering options while increasing cockpit access, and the inclusion of the Quick tunnel bowthruuster adds a level of insurance that makes berthing drama free.

Overall the Hunter 40 is the kind of boat that I wouldn't hesitate to cruise with because it's a solid yacht with practical sail handling, a seaworthy layout and comes from a company with a well-proved cruising pedigree. ⚓

Test day weather information supplied by

**Facts & figures**  
HUNTER 40

**PRICE AS TESTED**  
\$335,000

**OPTIONS FITTED**  
In-mast furling, electric halyard winch, bowthruuster and controls on both helms, stereo/CD player and speakers, 23in TV w/ BOSE upgrade, inner spring mattress (aft cabin), 54hp engine upgrade, electric anchor windlass, Quiet Flush toilet, frontloading freezer, LED interior lighting, Raymarine i70 package (w/ autopilot, remote and four displays), new Raymarine e120 chartplotter with GPS, digital TV antennas, 4G Broadband internet, two-blade Flexofold propeller with Prospeed application, and electric helm winches

**PRICED FROM**  
\$298,000

**GENERAL**  
**MATERIAL** GRP  
**TYPE** Keelboat  
**LENGTH** 12.57m (overall); 12.19m (hull); 10.97m (waterline)  
**BEAM** 4.01m  
**DRAFT** 2.03m (deep keel); 1.57m (shoal draft keel)  
**WEIGHT** 8936kg (total); 2461kg (deep keel ballast); 2734kg (shoal draft keel ballast)

**CAPACITIES**  
**CABINS** 2/3  
**FUEL** 189lt  
**WATER** 341lt  
**HOLDING TANK** 151lt

**ENGINE**  
**MAKE** Yanmar  
**RATED HP** 40; 54 (optional)

**SAILS**  
**TOTAL SAIL AREA** 93.46m<sup>2</sup> (standard); 84.54m<sup>2</sup> (w/ furling mainsail)

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