

Bull's-Eye

HUNT YACHT'S NEW 44 EXPRESS SEDAN

HITS THE SWEET SPOT.

BY DENNIS CAPRIO



Proving a yacht's value within her market niche requires a bit of time — probably a year or more for the model's owners to sort out their impressions after the *new* wears off. Evaluating her true potential is something that can be done only after many trips in a variety of sea states and long weekends aboard at quiet anchorages. I'd certainly be willing to make these kinds of tests, but no one has offered. Be that as it may, the 44 Express Sedan from Hunt Yachts made quite a first impression on me.

"Straight stem, a bit more than a suggestion of spring in the sheer line, graceful curvature in the transom: These elements determine the aesthetic character of the Hunt 44, placing her squarely within the family of designs from C. Raymond Hunt Associates and Hunt Yachts." I wrote that in my October 2010 Design column, and then I waited impatiently for two years to take the wheel.

I discovered that the Hunt 44 Express Sedan is more of a scaled-down 52 than a scaled-up 36, and she gives owners of smaller Hunts a logical step up to the big time. Her conservative styling is crisp, friendly and practical — and dare I say *timeless*?

I suppose that word's all right, because variations on this basic theme are more than 80 years old and appear to be headed well into the future. The designers at C. Raymond Hunt Associates have artfully blended the practical elements of their military craft and pilot boats with a hint of lobster boat and a sprinkling of whimsy from the runabout era of the 1930s, '40s and '50s. Unlike the general arrangement plans of many contemporary yachts in this size range, which follow artistic European trends in creative use of space, angles and curves, that of the 44 Express Sedan makes perfect sense, even to someone who isn't an avid yachtsman. A newbie — often the buyer's spouse — can step into the cockpit and see a back porch, the furniture placed to form an intimate conversation area. The deck box on the port side of the cockpit hard against the salon bulkhead houses a top-loading refrigerator; the one opposite contains an electric grill. Anyone up for a cookout at sunset?

Sliding open the Manship bi-parting glass doors leads the newcomer into a spacious and bright salon, which feels a lot like a miniature family room. Big windows along the sides and across the front let everyone aboard see everything that's not aboard — porpoises playing in the wake, beautiful beachfront houses ashore, other boats — most of this visible from the settee to port or the free-standing barrel chairs on the starboard side. The

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What could be better than wine and cheese at sundown in this homey salon? The sunroof and acres of glass bring the surroundings inside.



varnished teak coffee table lifts and lowers on a stainless-steel pedestal to be a dining table or a platform for the filler cushion that converts the dinette to a berth. Two loose stools provide seating on the inboard side of the table during meals. Time for a movie? Lower the table, place the insert on it, lie back with your remote and summon the TV from its hideaway on the starboard side. Who's serving the nightcap?

To a die-hard yachtsman, though, this space also feels like an intelligently designed pilothouse, giving him 360-degree sight lines and a fully equipped helm. The electronics displays and instrument faces stand at attention in the teak dashboard. Almost everything appeared in my peripheral vision when I drove. Thick mullions in the windshield create small blind spots, but after a while at the helm, I stopped noticing. Powerful pantograph wipers squeegee rain and salt spray from the windshield, though we didn't need them during our sunny sea trial on Rhode Island's quiet Narragansett Bay. An adjustable dual Stüdd seat likely will accommodate a variety of physiques, and I found it to be quite comfortable during the short time I sat there. Although I preferred standing during my sea trial, I imagined myself perched up there while the autopilot steered to the next waypoint.

Hunt Associates continued its logical and simple arrangement plan belowdecks. The U-shape galley basks in the natural light

HUNT FOR MORE

READ THE DESIGN REVIEW AND SEE MORE PHOTOS OF THE HUNT 44 EXPRESS SEDAN AT YACHTINGMAGAZINE.COM.

from the pilothouse windshield and side windows. Its location just forward of the center of buoyancy, the area of least motion, lets the cook prepare a meal while the boat is under way. On the other hand, anyone who wants to use either head — both well forward of amidships — should ask the skipper to slow down to displacement speed to reduce the boat's motion.

The small guest stateroom opposite the galley had a pair of single berths side by side, but Hunt Yachts also offers it with a settee that converts to a Pullman-style upper and lower. Occupants of this stateroom have private access to and from the head right forward, which also is the day-head via a second door opening onto the public area. A tapered queen-size berth dominates the owner's cabin in the bow of the boat. It has drawers beneath it for stowing clothing and other soft goods that you'd need daily, plus space underneath for bulky stuff. Hanging lockers, one on each side as you enter the stateroom, ought to hold all the dresser things you'll want for a weeklong cruise.

Nowadays, if your motoryacht doesn't have a tender garage, is it even considered a yacht? In the near future we may see a lineup of vessels, each moored stern-to with the garage door

Squeezing a garage into a 44-footer is a stroke of brilliance. Twin 593-horsepower Cummins diesels provide the thrust to reach 32 knots.

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LOA: 45'10"
BEAM: 14'6"
DRAFT: 4'0" (props)
DISPL.: 35,000 lb. (half load)
FUEL: 450 gal.
WATER: 120 gal.
DEADRISE: 20 degrees
ENGINES (tested): 2 x 593 hp
 Cummins QSC8.3 600 diesels
 w/ ZF pod drives
ENGINES (std.): 2 x 450 hp
 Caterpillar C7 ACERT diesels
BASE PRICE: \$1,350,00



TEST CONDITIONS: Speeds were measured by GPS in Narragansett Bay off Portsmouth, Rhode Island, in a light chop and light winds with full fuel and water and two persons aboard. Fuel consumption was measured by the Cummins electronic engine-monitoring system. Sound levels were measured at the helm with the sliding door open.

| RPM | KNOTS | GPH | dB(A) |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| 600 | 5.3 | 1.2 | 62 |
| 900 | 7.2 | 2.6 | 65 |
| 1200 | 9.0 | 5.8 | 67 |
| 1500 | 10.4 | 12.2 | 73 |
| 1800 | 11.8 | 21.1 | 75 |
| 2100 | 15.7 | 30.1 | 76 |
| 2400 | 21.8 | 35.1 | 78 |
| 2700 | 26.8 | 43.9 | 79 |
| 3000 | 31.0 | 57.8 | 83 |
| 3080 | 32.2 | 60.5 | 84 |



open to show everyone that the owner has arrived. All kidding aside, squeezing a garage into the stern of a 44-footer, as Hunt has done, without forcing huge compromises on the interior borders on brilliant. My test boat also had a washer/dryer combo and a stowage locker in the engine-room bulkhead.

Although Hunt permits buyers to specify some custom features, the 44 Express Sedan is still a production boat, but that status hasn't diminished quality the tiniest bit. Custom stainless-steel hardware sparkles on deck. The mooring chocks imbedded in the teak cap rail are welded together from pieces of solid

stainless, then machined to the final shape and highly polished. Hunt says they are stronger than cast chocks. The safety rail also is welded stainless steel, the joints machined and polished to remove any trace of a bead. One of my favorite touches was the fine join in the toe rails' S-shape scarf.

Poking around inside the 44's stowage areas revealed the care and attention Hunt Yachts has devoted to this model. I didn't find any loose ends or scruffy finishes. Doors swing on blind hinges; drawers open and close quietly and latch positively; and the varnished surfaces are top-notch. Hunt chose to recess the

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This island queen-size berth is widest at the head, and a window above it adds to the feeling of space. Sightlines from the helm are super.



portlights into the sides of the trunk cabin and eliminate the customary trim rings, which often are the source of leaks and, from Hunt's perspective, an eyesore.

C. Raymond Hunt invented the modern deep-V bottom about 70 years ago, and the team at his eponymous design firm has refined it to suit each model's purpose. Throughout its history, the deep-V has been associated with a soft ride in rough water, but during my sea trial, Narragansett Bay dozed quietly beneath us. The 44 Express Sedan accelerated quickly, and after she climbed onto a plane, the automatic trim tabs seamlessly established her

optimum running angle. Her response to steering inputs was almost telepathic, which is a characteristic of vectored thrust from the ZF pod drives. Like all the Hunt yachts I've driven, this one tracked very well and cornered with the predictable knee-out, shoulder-down attitude of a MotoGP rider.

I was sad to give up the 44, but she had to take her place at the Newport International Boat Show within two hours of my test. *Sigh.* Rest assured that anyone who buys an Express Sedan will have to be forcibly removed from her at day's end. **Y**

Hunt Yachts, 401-324-4201; huntboats.com

THE VENERABLE DEEP-V DESIGN

When Richard Bertram's deep-V race boat *Moppie* won the Miami-Nassau race in April 1960, who could have guessed that this hull form design by C. Raymond Hunt would become the standard for seaworthiness, speed and comfort in snotty seas? Driven and throttled by Sam Griffiths, the 30-foot wooden *Moppie* set a new course record of eight hours flat, two hours ahead of her nearest competitor in winds of 30 knots and seas of six feet.

Griffiths' skill and bravery likely contributed to this performance, but he couldn't have done it on any other type of bottom. Hunt's original deep-V is a monohedron without any twist, so all of the planing surface is at a constant angle of attack. In order to adapt this bottom to a wide variety of requirements, Hunt Associates has made subtle changes — reducing deadrise at the transom to less than *Moppie's* 24 degrees and adding some twist.

The basic characteristics, however, remain. The deep-V's forefoot is no deeper



than the planing surface, so the bow doesn't try to steer the boat and broach her. This sharp entry dramatically reduces pounding. Carrying the V-shape all the way to the transom evenly distributes the boat's displacement and lateral plane, giving her excellent directional stability, even in quartering or following seas.

Most deep-V hulls nowadays employ fairly wide chine flats throughout the length of the planing surface. They enhance lift and increase lateral stability when the boat is stationary or under

slow way. Carrying these chines forward and upward knocks down spray. The typically wide flare in the forward sections provides all the buoyancy a boat needs to prevent her from burying the bow and shipping solid water onto the decks.

At planing speeds, deep-Vs pick up lateral stability from hydrodynamic forces, reducing roll. Although deep-Vs like to corner with the shoulder down, the increase in wetted surface as more of the hull meets the water keeps them at a respectable angle of heel. — D.C.