



Arctic Blue 29

In last year's October/November issue 78 of this magazine we carried out boat tests on two Arctic Blue RIBs, the fast 29 and the luxurious cabin RIB 37. But what made this test different was that we encountered the roughest seas of any boat test we have carried out.

Initially the Baltic was so rough that the harbour master was reluctant to let us go to sea, but after some persuasion we managed to achieve our objectives except in one important department – speed. Whilst we conclusively proved their seaworthiness, we were unable to find out how they handled in smoother waters or test the builder's not inconsiderable claims to some pretty impressive performance figures.

At that time we promised to remedy this and consequently travelled to Norway where we tested both craft on totally contrasting smooth water, and the results were a little special. Whilst the 37 we tested in Poland

was fitted with twin Volvo D-350hp diesel sterndrives, the craft on test in Norway was fitted with two of the latest Cummins QSB 480hp inboard diesels, attached to ZF AT300 two-speed gearboxes and coupled to MiniRex 40 surface drives, through five-blade Rolla propellers. Having reported on the 37 in the previous test we now cut straight to the chase with our findings on the same craft fitted with these mighty power plants...in ideal weather conditions.

On mirror-smooth waters, with full fuel tanks (670 litres) and 960hp on tap, we edged onto the plane in 20 seconds (18mph) and settled at a comfortable cruising speed of



49 knots before realising we had not selected second gear! Pushing the appropriate button on the dash, the revs dropped and the craft appeared to take a deep breath before powering on to a very respectable 64 knots (73.6mph) at 3800rpm. Bearing in mind that the engines were new and therefore tight and the water was completely flat, there is no doubt in my mind that the twin-stepped hull would have benefited from a small chop to aerate the steps, which may have edged the speed upwards towards the magic 70-knot figure. At all speeds, the handling remained completely neutral, with no funny or quirky traits, and to be honest it felt no different

to drive than a conventional stern-drive RIB. In the right weather conditions and sea state this craft could comfortably cruise at 55 knots all day long, and with the excellent protection the quality wrap-around windscreen gives, it would be a joy to cover big distances in this remarkably civilised performance cabin RIB. Although we did not have the twin Volvo-engined craft to test, Arctic Blue have attained 54 knots with twin 350hp and 56 knots with twin 370hp. It should be remembered that these boats are comfortably appointed cruising RIBs, not stripped-out racers, and weighing in at around six tons fully fuelled and equipped,





ARCTIC BLUE 29 INBOARD

PACKAGE AS SEA TESTED IN POLAND

Engine: Ilmor MV10 - 710HP Petrol. (Marinised version of the famous Dodge Viper V10 710HP)
 Drive: Teague High Performance Platinum XR Stern Drive with 25" single prop
 Design: Racing designed package speed 75 knots +
 Price: Retail £78,959 excluding Vat

HIGH PERFORMANCE OPTIONS

Engine: Cummins/Mercruiser 600 SCI 600HP Petrol
 Drive: Mercruiser Bravo One XR ITS Stern drive with 25" single prop
 Design: Racing designed package speed 70 knots +
 Price: Retail £69,925 excluding Vat

HIGH SPEED OFFSHORE CRUISING OPTIONS

Engine: Cummins QSB 5,9L 480 HP Diesel
 Drive: Minirex 40 Surface Drive with ZF 300 (2 x speed) Gearbox with 23" prop
 Design: High Speed offshore cruising speed 63 knots +
 Price: Retail £73,895 excluding Vat

Engine: Cummins QSB 5,9L 425HP Diesel
 Drive: Minirex 40 Surface Drive with ZF 280 (2 x speed) Gearbox with 23" prop
 Design: High Speed offshore cruising speed 59 knots +
 Price: Retail £70,940 excluding Vat

Engine: Cummins/Mercruiser 496 MAG HO 425HP Petrol
 Drive: Mercruiser Bravo One XZ Stern drive 26" single prop
 Design: High Speed off shore cruising speed 58 knots +
 Price: Retail £45,975 excluding Vat

Engine: Cummins/Mercruiser P6,2L MPI 375 HP Petrol
 Drive: Mercruiser Bravo One X Stern drive 26" single prop
 Design: Off shore cruising speed 55 knots +
 Price: Retail £42,864 excluding Vat

Engine: Volvo D6 5.5L 350HP, EVC/EC Diesel
 Drive: Volvo DPR Stern drive with 24" prop
 Design: Off shore cruising speed 54 knots +
 Price: Retail £53,898 excluding Vat

Engine: Cummins/Mercruiser QSD 4,2L ES 320HP Diesel
 Drive: Mercruiser Bravo One X Stern drive with 28" prop
 Design: Off shore cruising speed 50 knots +
 Price: Retail £47,884 excluding Vat

MANUFACTURER

Sole Importer for the UK, Isle Of Man and Channel Islands

Clearwater Ocean Craft Ltd

Lakeland House
 Mattersey, Notts, DN10 5EA
 T/F: 01777 818497
 E: ribs@clearwatercompanies.co.uk
 www.clearwatercompanies.co.uk

the above speeds are highly respectable.

From the quiet comfort of the capable waterborne limousine-like 37, we changed steeds to a wolf in sheep's clothing in the form of the outrageous Arctic Blue 29 RIB. Up to this point we had been using the smaller boat as a static photographic platform and, to look at, one would assume this was a quality RIB with a nice flare to the bows; a comfortable layout for fast passage making in a well thought-out overall package. What you would not be thinking is that this attractive craft was actually one of the fastest and definitely the noisiest production RIB afloat!



"Wow! This is one very quick piece of machinery and it is not even dramatic in the way it achieves its speed, the craft running flat and true on the flat, calm water"

We have already reported on the 29's smaller sister, the very capable 27, and at a quick glance it would be easy to dismiss the larger craft as just an extended version, but it is not. Firstly the Geir Arnestad-designed 29 has a modified stepped hull and, apart from being longer and wider, it benefits from subtle changes to the hydrodynamics, and this has improved both the speed and the ride of the new craft. Taking a look around, one can see that the console still sports a professionally laid-out dashboard, with the steering and 'Tec' racing-type controls in exactly the right position and a comprehensive array of quality instrumentation more akin to a fighter plane than a RIB. There is a recess for one's knees on the steering console and a footrest angled correctly for support when sitting or standing on/in the two-man wrap-around seats-cum-leaning post. This simple but effective seat unit really works and is similar to the units fitted in the 10m Scorpion Pioneer we tested,

except their seat bases were electrically operated. Standing at the controls I would go so far as to say this is the best set-up I have ever tested, with everything exactly where you would want it to be, and it's obvious that Arctic Blue have put a considerable amount of thought into correct ergonomics. There are windows in the sides of the steering console and a hinged forward seat which lifts to reveal a very large locker with enough room for an optional toilet, hence the windows for light.

Forward is a raised deck beneath which is a large locker which doubles as a sunbed, and right in the bow a water-ballast tank to keep the bow down at speed, which during our rough-water experience in the Baltic proved invaluable. Attached to the deck and curving outwards above the buoyancy tubes are unusual stainless-steel rails that run from the bow ballast tank to the engine box. Initially I could not see the purpose of these, but on stepped-hull RIBs the steps intrude into the bottom of the hull, making the deck higher than on conventional hulls, and therefore the distance between the deck and the top of the buoyancy tubes is quite shallow. The rails are there to restore the status quo, effectively providing additional security, especially as a good safety barrier for children making their way around the deck and for casual mooring alongside to attach fenders and ropes.

Aft there is a simple but comfortable two/three-person bench seat with a separate, high removable backrest that can be simply

“We changed steeds to a wolf in sheep’s clothing in the form of the outrageous Arctic Blue 29 RIB”



repositioned right aft on the engine box to allow the cushioned top to be used as a sunbed. On either side of the seat are two tube-height, non-slip boarding steps to aid getting aboard from a pontoon without having to step over the rails or step on a slippery tube. This is typical of the Arctic Blue’s attention to detail seen elsewhere on the craft – features such as the removable upholstery for cleaning, the plethora of handholds throughout, the high protective aerodynamic windscreen and the superb engineering, especially in the engine/electrics installation.

The decks are covered in superbly executed ‘real’ teak, as is the GRP bathing platform which features a hidden built-in boarding ladder and, below the bathing platform, two massive stainless-steel exhaust pipes!

Twin drainpipe-sized exhausts are the only external clue that this craft may be fitted with an engine that is somewhat unusual in a RIB. However, no one would expect what lurks beneath the otherwise innocuous engine hatch, and there are two ways to find out. The first is obviously to lift the hatch, but the second is far more rewarding and that is to start the engine and absorb the incredible blood-curdling sound of the 8.6 litre Ilmor 710hp V10! A couple of blips on the throttle has people scurrying to take a look, and boy, is the engine a real looker! To this petrolhead, the Ilmor V10 is the best looking engine I have ever seen in a boat; it is almost worth having it purely for its looks alone but that would be counterproductive,

for it is definitely on the water where this masterpiece of engineering stands head and shoulders above any other naturally aspirated petrol inboard unit.

There is a remote-controlled silent option on the exhausts to quieten the Formula One levels of noise when entering harbour, but for our performance testing we wanted no restrictions, and besides, the sound is addictive.

Fitted with a high-performance Teague TCM XR sterndrive leg, the combination of the engine/leg package promised to be quick – real quick – and with flat water to test in, our expectations were high. Pushing forward the racing-type throttle lever, the craft does not instantly take off as if shot from a gun; there is momentary delay as the propeller struggles to grip, but as it grips the revs drop and the speed just keeps coming in spades. 30 knots is gone before I can catch my breath and we pass 50 before I have a chance to look at the speed on the GPS. The craft is travelling at over 60 knots before the thrust begins to diminish and our top speed hits an incredible 76.5 knots (87.98mph) at 6250rpm! Wow! This is one very quick piece of machinery and it is not even dramatic in the way it achieves its speed, the craft running flat and true on the flat, calm water.

‘Ah,’ I hear you say, ‘that’s what it is like on a flat sea, but what is it like in the rough?’ Well, you may recall that the original test of this RIB was in a full gale in the Baltic Sea in the roughest waters this magazine has ever encountered during a test, and it was simply outstanding. Enough said!

To sum up, this is the first test to have been carried out by us in completely contrasting sea states, and in truth we would have been within our rights to abandon the Polish Baltic test on safety grounds. What we have achieved by default in doing the two tests is to have proved the excellence of the Arctic Blue proven in quality, seakeeping and performance, and 76.5 knots is what we call real performance.

Paul Lemmer

ARCTIC BLUE 29 NEW CABIN MODEL

INFORMATION

This very successful Arctic Blue RIB 29 will from July 2008 be available in a new “Full Cabin Model”, which incorporates an all weather cockpit canopy. The cabin will be fitted with 2/3 berth, toilet and shower, galley inclusive of sink with hot/cold water, microwave oven, fridge, warm air heating, full electrics and associated fittings. The cockpit will be fitted with an all weather cockpit canopy, which can be removed and stored when not required. Warm air heating is installed in the cockpit so that this area provides additional sleeping and entertaining accommodation and the unique design ensures that owners can use, operate and enjoy the full benefits of this RIB, 12 months of the year in all weather conditions. The RIB will be available in a choice of manufacturers, single and twin engine stern/ drive inboard configuration, petrol or diesel with prices from £64,950 excluding delivery and VAT .

Arctic Blue RIBs have been designed for operating in arduous and heavy sea conditions and their unique double-stepped V shaped hull, combines revolutionary safety, fantastic sea-worthiness with impeccable handling which ensures a smooth stable ride and ultimate comfort. These “Norwegian designed and engineered” top performance, high specification RIBs are designed for use throughout the worlds oceans/seas as sporting, cruising and yacht tenders.