

ARCTIC BLUE 37

THE POLAND ADVENTURE

Paul Lemmer braves the furious Baltic to test 2 new craft from Europe but the Baltic had other plans...

Arctic Blue is perhaps not the best known name in the UK but in certain parts of Europe and particularly in Scandinavia, these craft enjoy the finest reputation. For those who know the difference between a good sports RIB and an excellent one, and for those who put dynamics above fancy fittings, Arctic Blue is right up there with the best. The company has a philosophy of producing affordable top quality craft that really perform – without compromise. Having been successful in taking a large slice of the Scandinavian market with their 23 and 27 foot RIBs, the company has stepped up another level with the introduction of new 29 and 37 footers.

Stepped up is the appropriate word for the Geir Arnestad designed Arctic Blue RIBs,

as they all boast 23 degree deadrise, deep ‘V’, twin stepped hulls. Geir Arnestad comes with some pretty impressive credentials, having designed production craft for the respected Windy and Nordic range of cruisers, as well as more interestingly, designs that have won the World and European class 2 and 3 offshore powerboat championships.

Having tested the original Arctic Blue RIBs when they exhibited at RIBEX in 2005, we were pleased to accept an invitation from UK/European distributors, Clearwater Ocean Craft, to test the new models off the Polish coast from the port of Kolobrzec.

The new Arctic Blue 37 RIB is a striking craft, with a long low profile forward cabin complemented by an elegant wrap around windscreen which is capped by a heavy

stainless steel surround, featuring a useful grab rail on its inside radius. The relatively small cockpit comprises a two-man deeply contoured seat to starboard, featuring electric seat bases that can be raised for seating, or lowered for standing in racing style and an L shaped bench type rear seat that can accommodate four or possibly five adults. Behind the rear seat is a double stainless steel radar arch mounted amidships and aft of that is the engine box which is upholstered to make a comfortable looking sun bed. Finally, there is a GRP moulded, teak covered bathing platform that extends out over the out drives and this features a fold away bathing ladder.

Reading the standard equipment list, it occurred to me that perhaps the manufacturers had trawled through an



Our Arctic Turn! 37; airborne in a gale.

☑ ARCTIC BLUE 37 STANDARD EQUIPMENT

- Folding teak table for cockpit and cabin
- 230 volt shore power system
- Hot water supply from engine calorifier and electric immersion heater
- Hot and cold fresh water showers in toilet compartment and bathing platform
- Radio / CD player
- Sink with mixer taps
- Two-ring oil cooking stove
- Refrigerator
- Shaver socket, towel rail, mirror
- Electric trim tabs
- Cockpit covers, pop-up cleats, horn, lights, compass, drinks holders etc.

accessories warehouse with a magnet, so comprehensively fitted out are the craft. The following list is standard on the 37. The matt black dash board is really quite attractive and comprehensively fitted out with instrumentation and I particularly liked the custom switch panel and snazzy detachable Isotta steering wheel, both of which had an air of class about them. The cockpit sole and side decks were finished in non-slip GRP, although the other version we inspected the following day at the factory had teak covering throughout; as always, it is a case of paying your money and choosing what you prefer but I liked the teak, as it seemed more in keeping with the quality image of the craft. There is an anchor locker in the bow and although not fitted to this particular craft, a permanently bow or stern mounted remote controlled self stowing device is offered as an option.



“TO PORT OF THE STEERING POSITION IS A SLIDING TINTED ACRYLIC DOOR TO THE CABIN AND A USEFUL STAINLESS STEEL GRAB HANDLE.”

To port of the steering position is a sliding tinted acrylic door to the cabin and a useful stainless steel grab handle. Having negotiated the steps down into the cabin, judging by the external dimensions one would expect this area to be spacious but as one enters, there is a large moulded toilet cum shower compartment to starboard and this takes up a considerable amount of space. Compounding the issue, to port is a large moulded one piece locker-cum-shelf unit, making the entrance to the cabin quite tight. This unit houses a pull out fridge, a couple of glass fronted lockers and on this particular example, a flat screen TV. I would have preferred a smaller toilet and locker unit, freeing up more space for

Our Arctic Blue 37 was fitted with twin Volvo D6 350hp diesel sterndrives running the standard legs, swinging 24” duoprops and this combination is evidently capable of pushing the five and half ton package at 54 knots, although the conditions on the day of the test were to allow us only a fraction of this speed. The engines sit beneath two large, electrically lifted engine hatches which allow reasonable access but as is the case with most twin Volvo D6 diesel engine setups on RIBs, there is not much space to spare, although all the routine essentials are accessible. The engine installation was very professionally and neatly carried out, utilising quality fittings, with all wiring properly secured and protected from



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the living area in the cabin. The forward part of the cabin is entirely taken up by a large V shaped double berth, with the usual removable centre sections to provide the option of seating but with only a small round plexiglass hatch in the roof and no side windows, this is not somewhere to spend time watching the world go by on a rainy day. Enough about the cabin, after all, these craft are not really for living on, they are about speed, seaworthiness and getting from A to B as quickly and safely as possible and the only way to find out if they have the formula right, is to get out there in the wet stuff and put them to the test.

the elements. The dark grey Henshaw derived buoyancy tubes were curiously dull in contrast to the RIB's otherwise modern dynamics. I would have preferred to have seen a different colour combination or at least a contrasting double rubbing strake, perhaps sporting a coloured strip between the strakes - but this is a personal matter and an owner can specify what ever colour he or she wants when ordering the craft.

With a full gale blowing, intermittent rain squalls and very rough sea conditions, the port authority were initially reluctant to let us out of the harbour but after some negotiating,



we attained a special dispensation and having inspected the craft, I took the helm of the 37, with Arctic Blue's very capable chief tester, Lars Narverud helming the 29.

As we approached the harbour entrance, we could see the enormous waves rolling in and we gingerly rode the very steep seas, not really knowing what to expect from a craft I had never driven before. We accelerated to planing speed and watched the 29 ahead of us become completely airborne as it traversed the full brunt of the open seas, but our craft remained composed and soft riding despite

the angry Baltic doing its best to unnerve us. Heading directly into the steep waves really was too much for both craft to cope with at planing speeds but as soon as we were clear of the harbour and able to run along the waves, we pushed our craft to a relatively comfortable 27 knots. The 37 ran really smoothly, with only the occasional thump as we hit the odd larger wave but not surprisingly, there was a significant amount of spray flying around which mercifully was mostly diverted away by the efficient windscreen. We continued to increase our speed but even with the wipers



ARCTIC BLUE 37

TECHNICAL DATA METRIC

Length overall	11.40cm
External Beam	3.75cm
Transom angle	13°
Hull Deadrise	23°
Draught (hull)	80cm
Weight (dry & without engines)	3950kg
Weight (dry) with 2 x Volvo D6 5.5L 350hp diesels (approx)	5485kg
Fuel tank capacity 2 x 300 ltr and 1 x 70 ltr	670ltr
Bow trim tank	N/A
Fresh water tank capacity	70ltr
Septic tank capacity	35ltr
Maximum load (crew - passengers)	12
Engine size range (single or twin petrol and diesel)	320hp-1200hp
Speed range	35-75kts
CE CATEGORY	B

ARCTIC BLUE RIBS

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working overtime, visibility forward was badly affected by the volume of water on the screen and the situation was not helped by the tinted toughened glass that further hampered our vision. Unable to see properly, it was difficult to judge the waves but it says volumes about the ability of the hull in that we never once felt insecure and I reasoned that we could have safely cruised some distance, even in these nasty seas. Having driven the craft into and along the waves, we now had to run down these steep monsters and expected the inevitable stuffing but it never came, the craft showing absolutely no tendency to bury its nose. With the 29 circulating, we decided to get some action shots of it 'flying', so we potted along on tick over waiting for the smaller craft to make a running pass for the cameraman. At displacement speed and sideways to the sea, we could see just how big the waves were, with six metre high breaking crests roaring down on us, yet despite their





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size only one wave splashed us, the rest just passing beneath the hull as the craft gently rose and fell in a comfortable motion.

Having safely returned to port, we had proved that the Arctic Blue 37 is a very capable vessel and given kinder seas, a real mile eater but then at five and half tons this 37 feet (11.4m) long, 12’6” (3.75m) beam RIB felt like a large craft. It was unfortunate that due to the appalling weather, we could not really do justice to its sporting pedigree but we hope to be able to report on this later once we have tested her in calmer seas at the Stockholm boat show in September.

Overall, this is a very exciting RIB; it has style, it has a pedigree stepped hull from

a renowned designer, it is built to a very high standard and at £135,859.00 plus VAT as tested, whilst it would not be described as cheap, with a host of extras as standard equipment, it is competitively priced in a market that is not exactly overflowing with this type and size of craft. Ah yes; if 700HP is insufficient for your needs, then how about 960HP! When we visited the factory, we were shown another new 37 undergoing tank testing prior to being delivered to its new owner and this craft was fitted with twin Cummins QSB 5.9 litre 480HP diesels coupled to Minirex ZF 300 ‘fully trimable’ surface drives; now that’s serious horsepower and presumably serious speeds. ‘Can’t wait

for Stockholm!’ Whilst at the factory we were able to see first hand the production facilities and were surprised to discover that virtually everything other than the buoyancy tubes is made in house. There is of course the GRP section where hulls and decks are constructed and assembled, a steel section where all metal items including stainless fittings, are made, an upholstery section where everything internally and externally is manufactured and a carpentry section where everything wood is dealt with, including the manufacture of the teak decks and floor covering!

Paul Lemmer

COMING SOON **THE ARCTIC BLUE 29**

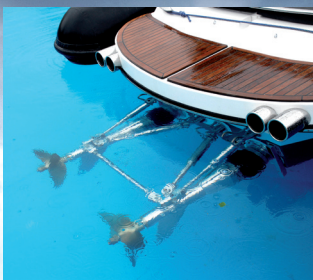
What about the test on the 29?; well we had about fifteen minutes to assess the craft the following morning and this was without a support boat, in dangerous seas! In other words, we were not able to give it the test it deserves, for although the craft is very similar to the 27 that we had previously

tested, it was not just longer and beamier, it also had a serious sting in its tail. It was not fitted with the popular six cylinder 4.2 litre 320HP Cummins-MerCruiser diesel, nor the powerful 425hp MerCruiser V8 option; no, this otherwise normal looking RIB was fitted with an outrageous, “Ken Livingstone eat

your heart out’, Ilmore 8.3ltr 710HP V10 inboard engine, coupled to a performance orientated Teague sterndrive! With the silent option exhausts set on their ‘quiet’ mode, it sounds awesome and turns heads, but on their open setting it makes a sound that is just, ‘Armageddon’ like. But how did it go and how did it

handle the rough stuff; well you will just have to wait until the full test is completed in Stockholm before we can give you the whole picture, but if the brief acquaintance I had with craft is anything to go by, then it will be worth waiting for, oh yes definitely worth waiting for.

Stockholm here we come!



29; 710HP ‘take off!’