

REVIEW

FAIRLINE

SQUADRON 74



With a 32 knot performance and stunning interior, the new Squadron 74 takes British builder Fairline further into the quality motor yacht sector. Phil Draper takes this first boat for a test from London's Tower Bridge to the Essex coast. Photography: exterior Kos, interiors Beth Evans



Having had her world press launch at St Katherine's Docks in London at the beginning of September 2002, Fairline's new flagship Squadron 74 made her public debut a week later at the Southampton International Boat Show. At both events she deservedly caused quite a stir, as she not only takes Fairline's winning Squadron motor yacht formula to new heights – and volumes – but she also takes the company and its worldwide dealer network into a whole new sector of the market.

In between these two events, *Boat International* got an exclusive first full test. We ran her some 65 nautical miles or so between London's Tower Bridge and the Essex yachting town of Burnham-on-Crouch, a demanding combined tidal river and coastal passage that confirmed she can perform every bit as well as she looks. Conditions for the test proved close to ideal, with a 25 knot breeze and a fair tide for the first 50 miles pushing her along nicely.

The Thames Estuary was taken at speed. Here she cruised on the plane at just under 2,000rpm, which means driving over the water at around 25 knots, but registering up to 29 knots over the ground. The sea state was mostly moderate, although life was much harder bashing against such strong winds and tide coming up the Crouch. For that last bit, with the apparent breeze firmly on the nose at something approaching 50 knots, life on the flybridge was a little fresher than one would normally expect. Nevertheless, the Squadron 74's efficient Bernard Olesinski-designed hull made easy work of it all.

As for power options, the 74 can take twin 1,300hp MAN D2842 LE404s, 1,420hp Caterpillar 3412Es – which the first boat has, or MAN D2842 LE409s, Series 2000 MTU 12Vs or Caterpillar C30s which all come with twin 1,500hp. In her initial sea trials she averaged a top speed of 31.7 knots over two GPS runs in opposite directions. That was at just over 2,500rpm and fully loaded – which in Fairline parlance means full fuel and water tanks amounting to nearly 6kg in weight, a watermaker, a jet RIB, a sternthruster, a flybridge crane and 15 people aboard. Originally her target speed was 30 knots, but the company's engineers are now fairly confident that, after a few things are tweaked and her propellers options are looked at, she will get comfortably to a true 32 knots.

With each of her engines burning around 205 litres per hour at 25 knots, her range at

REVIEW



that speed is a useful 290 nautical miles with 20 percent reserve. Moreover, with just two central tanks emptying synchronously, trim is said to be unaffected by tank levels.

Not only is the Squadron 74 the biggest motor yacht that Fairline has ever built, but she also has some of the strongest lines and design features, not to mention the sound engineering that we all now take for granted from one of the international market leaders.

She has a teak deck across a generous beam of 5.7m. There is a big bathing platform with removable hand rails, large aft deck that benefits enormously from central overhead teak hand rails and good-sized side decks behind stainless steel grab rails. The very impressive flybridge is accessed up teak steps from the port side of the aft deck or via a

sliding glass companionway door and steps down to the main bridge area.

At the aft end of the flybridge, there is more than enough space behind the twin uprights of the radar mast for a personal watercraft and a Besenconi crane. Further forward there is a large social area, which includes a big dinette to starboard with a height-adjustable teak-topped table, and full-height wet-bar facilities, including griddle, sink, refrigerator and icemaker to port.

The forward end of the flybridge is dominated by twin Keiper Recaro adjustable pilot seats, which provide the perfect vista for driver/navigator. They address well-specified controls and instrument consoles set into anti-glare panels. The Rexroth Mannesmann engine controls are smart, both in terms of design and electronics, and there are bow and stern thrusters for slow-speed manoeuvring.

The helm seat itself sits on the centre line and is surrounded by lounging space that provides a fair degree of flexibility. A moveable backrest to the seat lying starboard of the helm station allows a forward-facing observation seat to convert to aft-facing *chaise*

longue. Another neat arrangement sees a triangular backrest/bolster cushion drop at the flick of a switch to open up a dedicated sunpad space.

Moving in from the aft deck through double glass doors is the stunning open-plan saloon. The scheme here and throughout is contemporary and keyed by the most glorious stained and high-gloss cherry and cherry burr veneers. The panelling is plain, but there are plenty of sweeping curves. Contrasting leather upholstery, carpets and headlinings are in light creams, whites and off-whites.

The aft half of the saloon consists of four freestanding chairs, settee and granite-topped coffee table to port and a matching sideboard unit to starboard. This sideboard houses, among other things, a refrigerator, icemaker and a big screen LCD television system that rises up at the touch of a button and is linked to a surround-sound DVD/hi-fi system. A step up takes one into the dining area, which holds a long table and sufficient dining chairs for the full complement of up to ten guests.

Opaque Japanese-style sliding doors at the head of the dining area enable the whole area



Far left: the contemporary open-plan saloon in muted colours has a beautiful cherry burr bar and a forward dining area which can be closed off by Japanese-style doors
Below: the owner's cabin has a dressing table, walk-in wardrobe and en suite bathroom complete with spa bath and stunning glass his-and-hers washbasins





to be closed off formally from the open plan working area forward, which includes the bridge to starboard and galley, fantastic breakfast bar, complete with granite top and stools, to port. This latter feature – opposite the main bridge area to starboard – will undoubtedly prove one of the most popular spots aboard as it provides spectacular views out to the side and forward. No-cost options here allow for companion seating or a third navigator's helm seat instead.

Two electrically adjustable leather-clad Recaro seats face the bridge instrumentation, some of which will drop away at the flick of a switch to reduce clutter when the yacht is at rest. Useful, hydraulically activated doors lead out from this forward area to both side decks.

The galley is well presented along the port side with good visibility out. Matching the saloon furniture, the work tops here are also made from granite.

Access to the accommodation deck below is via five carpeted steps between the breakfast bar and the bridge. The standard layout provides four double cabins. There is a spacious owner's cabin aft, which comes complete with en suite bathroom with spa bath and stunning his-and-hers glass washbasins, walk-in wardrobe, settee and dressing table. There is a striking VIP cabin forward with an en suite shower room and two twin-bedded cabins occupy the amidships area. Only one of the twins has an en suite facility, which is shared with the other cabin and doubles as a day head. For the latter role its door out on to the corridor is cleverly concealed, appearing as merely a dramatically curved bulkhead with no discernible door handle.

An optional accommodation layout offers a larger en suite bathroom and dressing rooms in

the owner's cabin, the same VIP arrangement and just one twin-bedded cabin amidships with its own en suite.

All the en suites aboard are very generous in size. They feature wood laminate floors, granite counter tops and particularly attractive decorative glass washbasins.

The main access to the engine room, which sits below the saloon, is via the door in the middle of the transom. A couple of steps down from the bathing platform level finds a

REVIEW

short central corridor that leads past two small single crew cabins to starboard which share an en suite shower room in-between them that also manages to squeeze in a washing machine. At the end of the corridor there is full-height door with observation glass. Certainly the engine room has been well configured and is surprisingly spacious although, with the bigger 1,500hp units installed, there would be a bit less space between the engines. As it is, there is sufficient space to walk between easily and access at the flanking twin 17.5kW generators.

To port of the corridor is the garage, the door for which slides out and swings up. The motion, just like the majority of deck hardware aboard, is driven by hydraulics, which marks another change for Fairline as its smaller models all tend to make use of electrical equipment. The standard tender choice is a 3.5m Avon Jet RIB.

In the Squadron 74's first year of production, Fairline expects to deliver no fewer than six and then between 8 to 10 a year. Prior to her launch the first year's production had already been sold off the drawings with non-returnable deposits taken – a testament to the undoubted success this model will enjoy. □

FAIRLINE SQUADRON 74

LOA

22.69m

LWL

22.35m

Beam

5.70m

Draught

1.61m

Dry weight

41.25 tonnes

Range at 25 knots

290nm +20 percent reserve

Fuel capacity

5,892 litres

Fresh water capacity

1,263 litres

Engine options

2 x 1,300hp MAN D2842

LE404, 2 x 1,420hp

Caterpillar 3412E, 2 x

1,500hp MAN D2842

LE409, 2 x 1,500hp Series

2000 MTU 12V, 2 x

1,500hp Caterpillar C30

Generators

2 x 17.5kW Onan

Accommodation

8-10 (standard layout)

Builder

Fairline Boats Plc

Oundle,

Northamptonshire,

PE8 5PA

England

Tel:+44 (0) 1832 273661

Fax:+44 (0) 1832 273432

