



Cutwater 28

A WORTHY HEIR TO THE LIVINGSTON FAMILY LINE
BY ROGER MCAFEE

THE BUILDER THAT BROUGHT the very successful Ranger Tug line to market has just introduced another boat — and if early boater response is any indication, the new vessel will rapidly become as popular as the Rangers.

The new fiberglass sedan cruisers, Cutwater 26 and Cutwater 28, are produced by Fluid Motion LLC, a Monroe, Wash., company owned by the Livingston family, which has been building boats since 1958 and is one of the most experienced boat-building groups in the U.S. The new cruiser, following the Ranger Tug lead, is easily trailerable. The only size difference between the two Cutwater vessels is in the length of the cockpit.

There is always a temptation, when a builder has a successful design, to simply slap a different upper works onto an existing hull and call it a new boat.

In this case, the builder has resisted that temptation — the Cutwater is new from the keel up.

A major, and obvious, difference between the Cutwater hull and most others on the market, including its Ranger stable mates, is the fact that it has what Cutwater calls a keel-stepped hull. Most stepped hulls are built for speed and therefore have no keel, but one of the features of the Cutwater hull is that it has a substantial keel in the aft of the hull. This improves hull tracking and adds a bit of roll-dampening when at rest.

Another unusual design feature is

that the keel of this semi-displacement hull has been widened slightly at the engine beds, allowing the engine to be mounted lower in the hull, which lowers the center of gravity and improves stability. Even more important in these days of ever-increasing fuel prices, this feature, combined with what Cutwater calls a prop pocket, reduces the shaft's down angle to allow for a more straight-line application of power. This improves fuel efficiency and reduces draft.

Our test boat, the 28-footer, was built for Port Boat House, the Cutwater dealer in Port Alberni, B.C., and we got to tag along as Mark Mansfield, Cutwater's national sales manager, did some pre-delivery work.

The new Cutwaters are smartly styled with a crisp, chiseled look that bears no similarities to their Ranger Tug

An Inside Look

brethren. The deckhouse of this sedan cruiser features windows all around. There is no glass print-through or hazing, and the hull sides of our test boat — hull number 3 — are fair and true. This is not surprising considering the builder's decades of experience.

Vessel access is through a starboard transom door off a swim grid. The grid itself is positioned at exactly the right height above the waterline, making it an easy and safe step from a floating dock. This is an important feature for boaters with small children or aging parents.

An obvious feature in the transom is the reversible, comfortably padded seat that in good weather makes the self-bailing cockpit a great place to congregate. The cockpit is fishing friendly — no floor-mounted cleats or other toe-stubbers. While the cockpit sides are high enough to be safe and secure, the opening transom gate and large swim grid will make landing a large fish easy. Should, by accident, an angler slip off the swim grid (something many serious anglers have done, or is it only me?), the built-in boarding ladder can be quickly deployed. Our test boat is equipped with the optional cockpit throttle and steering controls — useful while fishing or docking, or during close-quarter maneuvering in crowded marinas.

The cockpit has a freshwater sink and shower, a space for a cooler and an optional barbecue. It also includes the electric/hydraulic engine cover hatch in the sole, which gives full access to the engine and gear when it's open.

Access to the foredeck is along the narrow sidedeck, using grabrails on the salon roof. The foredeck itself features substantial handrails and a bow platform with a ladder that allows beach access over the bow.

COMFY CONFINES

Access to the deckhouse is through an aluminum-framed glass door leading to a traditionally laid-out main salon — a port-side galley complete with a microwave/convection oven, a double stainless sink and a refrigerator/freezer, and a convertible settee/dinette to starboard. Forward of the galley is a



TESTER'S OPINION
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The traditionally laid-out boat packs a lot of comfort into a trailerable package.



mate's seat, and forward of the dinette is a double helm seat with a wine cooler underneath. When the vessel is not under way, the back of both of these seats pivots forward to increase the usable galley countertop and settee space. There is also a 7-foot double berth under the dinette, but it's rather

cramped. However, the space would be great for storage.

The deckhouse of the new Cutwater contains more window glass than fiberglass, and that makes for an interior flooded with natural light. The roof of the salon contains four opening glass hatches, and even on a dull day

Cutwater 28



SPECIFICATIONS

LOA (rigged swim step, pulpit)	32 ft., 4 in.
Bridge clearance (mast folded)	9 ft., 1 in.
Beam	8 ft., 6 in.
Draft	2 ft., 4 in.
Fuel	100 gals.
Water	40 gals.
Holding	30 gals.
Weight (dry)	6,400 lbs.
Engine	Yanmar 6BY2, 260 hp
Base Price	\$169,937

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

See dealer for a complete list, as it is being modified with new builds.

OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT

Aft canopy Bimini top; aft side enclosures; aft steering station w/electronic controls; air conditioning w/reverse-cycle 16,000 BTU heat; anchor package; autopilot; CG safety kit; cockpit carpet; Wallas diesel stove/heater; Mase 2.7 kw generator; macerator discharge w/Y-valve; Garmin navigation package; solar panel, 135 watts w/controller; thruster wireless remote; transom platform (swim step) rails w/gate.

BUILDER

CUTWATER BOATS, Monroe, Wash.; (800) 349-7198; cutwaterboats.com

WEST COAST DEALERS

Cutwater Boats, Monroe, Wash.; (800) 349-7198; cutwaterboats.com

Port Boat House Ltd., Port Alberni, B.C.; (877) 283-BOAT; portboathouse.com

SPECIFICATIONS

Cutwater 26	
LOA rigged (swim step, pulpit)	30 ft., 1 in.
Bridge clearance (mast folded)	9 ft., 1 in.
Beam	8 ft., 6 in.
Draft	2 ft., 4 in.
Fuel	80 gals.
Water	40 gals.
Holding	30 gals.
Weight (dry)	5,900 lbs.
Engine	Yanmar 6BY2, 180 hp
Base Price	\$139,937

there's plenty of natural light inside. The opening roof hatches also help with ventilation.

In fact, the aft pair of roof hatches on our test boat have two features that will allow the vessel to ventilate very well, even when it's running in the rain or punching into a head sea. They are both hinged at the forward edge, which means the opening is aft. This prevents water from being scooped in as the vessel is running. The second feature is that the hatch itself can be dogged open only very slightly, to allow a breeze to blow through while not allowing water to enter. This hatch represents a major step forward in small-boat ventilation.

Forward and down two steps is the forecabin, with a couple of features not found on any other boat in this market segment. The first, and most obvious, is what Cutwater calls a breakfast bar, containing a stainless sink, a microwave and a coffeemaker. While this may be perceived by some as merely a sales tool, experienced cruisers know that if someone is sleeping on the convertible dinette, making even a cup of coffee in the morning is a problem.

The forward double berth converts to seating for four people around a high-low table that is part of the berth base when the area is set up as the master stateroom. A full standup private head, complete with a sink, a hot- and cold-water shower, and an electric flush toilet, is to starboard, and it is where the boat's second unusual feature is found. The head, though located directly under the dash, as is normal in vessels this size, boasts a skylight that brings natural light into the head space through a frosted-glass panel in the ceiling.

The glass panel is located in the main salon dash, just ahead of the helm station and inside the windshield. Light pouring in the windshield floods the head with light through the panel. This is a very effective method of getting natural light into what is normally a rather dark space if the lights are not turned on. The only other new vessel using this feature to bring natural light belowdecks is much bigger and costs almost a million dollars.

UNDER WAY

We fired up the diesel engine, and with a touch of the bow and stern

thrusters, both standard on Cutwaters, we eased away from the dock. The main engine, a Yanmar 6BY2, 260 hp, started easily without even a wisp of smoke. This 183-cubic-inch, 694-pound, common-rail engine ran smoothly and quietly on startup and performed well during our test.

We idled away from the dock at 670 rpm making 3.9 knots and burning 0.3 gallons of diesel per hour. The ability of a vessel to proceed at a relatively slow speed with precise control in crowded marinas is very important, and the Cutwaters, complete with bow and stern thrusters, will perform that job very well.

At 1000 rpm, we made 5.4 knots and sipped 0.6 gph. Even with the aft door open, the noise level was only 67 decibels. At 2000 rpm, we burned 3 gph and made 9 knots. At 3000 rpm, we made 18.6 knots and burned 6.6 gph, while 3500 rpm brought 23.1 knots with a fuel burn of 10.6 gph. WOT, about 4080 rpm, had us scooting along at 28.2 knots and burning 13.4 gph. All speeds were measured by GPS, and fuel-consumption figures were generated by the engine's onboard computer.

The vessel tracked well and responded smartly and precisely to the helm at all speeds. We laid beam on close to a passing ferry wake, and the vessel handled that very well. We then pounded through the wake at speed, and the 28-footer had no problem. In tight turns, the vessel stuck well without skidding or skipping. At all speeds and under all our test conditions, the vessel exhibited no bad habits.

While this is a good vessel, there are a couple of improvements that could easily be made. More handrails inside would be welcome, and many cruisers would like more fuel capacity — 100 gallons is too limiting for such a good cruising boat.

If you want a solid boat made by a pedigreed U.S. builder, Cutwater is worth a look. It handles well, is very comfortable and is economical to operate. At 9 knots (10.3 mph), it gets 3 mpg. It has plenty of space inside, a good usable cockpit and has the speed necessary to outrun the weather. And while it's at home in a marina slip, it is fully trailerable, nicely styled and well fitted out. At a price of \$169,937, it is an excellent value. 🍀