



SUV OF THE SEA

Flagship of a new U.S. boat line, this single-diesel cruiser is swift, seaworthy, economical—and trailerable.

Cutwater Boats are a bit like Swiss Army Knives. They look promising on the outside, but it's not until you open them up and start testing the blades that you understand their true capabilities. A product of the post-recession economy, the new Cutwater 28 and 26, which debuted this winter, are not ostentatious; they are easy on the wallet, and they offer impressive creature comforts and performance.

These pocket cruisers are made by Fluid Motion, LLC, which also builds the well-established Ranger Tugs line. Like Ranger Tugs, Cutwater Boats are trailerable and operate on single diesel propulsion—but there all resemblance ends. (They don't even share the same dealer network.)

The Cutwater series is based on a unique hullform called the Keel Stepped Hull, designed by Fluid Motion owners David and John Livingston. Drawing on long experience with performance hulls (the father-and-son team created a patented stepped running surface for Regal in the 1990s), they gave the Cutwater hull a transverse step that draws air under the boat, breaking the water's drag, along with intake tunnels to distribute the air evenly. The hull has reverse chines and, in an innovative twist, a keel pad and a skeg to protect the propeller. In addition, they lowered the engine to optimize the center of gravity, creating a shallower, six-degree shaft angle. Finally, each Cutwater has a raked stem and a bow designed to be beached—in fact, an integral bow ladder

is standard. The lay-up, which is done in Monroe, Washington, is wholly in fiberglass with no wood parts, resulting in lower maintenance over the life of the boat. The tooling is divided into four parts: hull, stringer system, liner and deck/pilothouse, which are glassed together for greater overall strength.

"It was more expensive to design it this way initially, but it saves on labor during construction," said Mark Mansfield, national sales manager for the Cutwater brand. We went for a run on the flagship 28-footer, which has a single 260-hp, 6-cylinder Yanmar 6BY2 diesel. It's the only engine option, but thanks to the Keel Stepped Hull, it gives the boat a top speed of nearly 30 knots with a half load of fuel, according to company figures—while only burning a total of 13.5 gph. "It's the right engine for the boat," said Mark.

Under way in the Atlantic in lumpy three-foot seas, the hull broke free of the water's drag and planed off at about 13 knots at 2700 rpm. As we accelerated to a top end in the 4000-rpm range, we took some spray, but the boat felt nice and stiff and there was no banging, even in head seas. The builder says the Cutwater 28 is capable of handling a short offshore leg in good conditions. Its shallow draft and keel certainly would make it a great island gunkholer. Mark called it, "The perfect Abacos boat".

The diesel's operation was very quiet, especially from inside

By LOUISA BECKETT

the pilothouse, which has near-360-degree views of the water around the boat. The helm seat, which can hold the driver and a small companion, is comfortable, but you can also stand securely between the dash and the seat while driving. Docking this single-engine cruiser is greatly facilitated by the SidePower bow and stern thruster—surprising standard equipment in a 28-foot boat. A wireless remote for the thrusters is optional, as is a cockpit steering station with electronic controls, installed on the starboard side of the cockpit. The aft station is a \$5,000 upgrade. “Everyone is ordering it,” said Mark Schulstad, a Chesapeake Bay boat dealer who is one

of the first in the nation to take on the new brand. Another top option is the \$1,200 135-watt Kyocera solar panel that fits in the center of the boat’s “sport rack” (an SUV-style rack for kayaks or bikes.) The panel helps to charge the boat’s four batteries. There’s plenty of power to run the coffeemaker and other galley appliances via the standard inverter. Air conditioning and the genset required to run it add a little under \$12,000 to the boat’s base price.

The large water-sports platform has integral fenders to cushion the dinghy—a “Why didn’t I think of that?” feature. The “rumble seat”, which can be flipped to face forward or aft, is sure to be



Specifications

LOA: 32' 4" (w/platform & pulpit)
 Beam: 8' 6"
 Draft: 2' 4"
 Weight: 6,400 lbs. (dry)
 Fuel/Water: 100/40 gals.
 Power: 1x 260 hp Yanmar
 6BY2 diesel
 Max/Cruise Speed: 29.6/18 knots
 Range: 255 miles @ 18 knots
 Price: \$169,937

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The Cutwater 28 has a versatile bridge deck, above, with a helm seat that flips over to form a dinette seat, as shown. The rear dinette seat opens, right, to reveal the mid-berth. The single diesel, far right, is accessed via an electric hatch in the cockpit sole.



Clever features include the integral bow ladder, far left; the optional aft helm station, left, which is mounted near the cockpit sink, and the forward cabin with private sink, microwave and coffee maker for leisurely mornings afloat.

popular judging by the smiles it provoked at the recent Miami International Boat Show. The cockpit also has a built-in cabinet with ice chest and a place to store the barbecue. A sink with faucet that doubles as a cockpit shower is opposite.

In the Cutwater 28's cleverly designed interior layout, David and John were able to accommodate six people overnight on board. One couple shares the cuddy cabin forward, which boasts a private nook with a coffeemaker, sink and microwave. An enclosed head is also in the cuddy. The pilothouse dinette converts to a double

bed, accommodating a second couple. The real surprise is the hidden mid-berth under the dinette, which is an amazing 6'10" long and wide enough for two. You access it by flipping open one of the dinette seats, Swiss Army Knife-style.

On longer cruises, however, owners probably will stick with just the family, since cabin space is necessarily a little tight in order to maintain an 8'6" beam. The trade-off is in the ultimate versatility that trailerability brings. You just fold down the mast—there's a slot that holds the radar safe—and hit the road. 🚦

