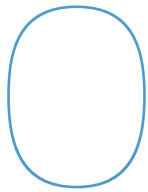


A highly polished gem

Saffier yachts has taken the daysailer concept to its logical conclusion with its breathtaking new 37 Lounge as **Sam Jefferson** discovers





ne of the great beauties of sailing is that it can take so many different forms; the experience of skimming above

the waves on a foiling Moth is markedly different from powering across oceans in a heavy, long-keeled classic yacht. Yet both are thrilling in their own way. But whether you are a cruiser, racer or dinghy sailor, one of the unifying pleasures of sailing is simply moving rapidly and effortlessly across the water. There can't be that many sailors out there who don't love the effortless thrill of being borne forward by the power of the wind. We all love that.

Which brings me neatly to the Saffier 37. This was the precise thought that occurred to me as we cracked out the gennaker and surged off down a wave at an effortless 15kn. It was hard not to smile and it would take a curmudgeonly sailor indeed who objected to the sheer life affirming joy of it. Indeed, it is a big part of what sailing is all about. Of course, Another important factor is being able to relax, enjoy the feeling of space the sea gives us and chill out in the comfort of a pleasant anchorage. Perhaps enjoy a sundowner or two. Imagine if someone had designed a yacht specifically for those dual purposes.

You can probably guess where this is going; essentially the Saffier 37 ticks both those boxes. She is a 37' weekender which combines blistering performance with a really comfortable and stylish cockpit space. I know what you're thinking – 37' is an awful lot of length for a weekender but bear with me on this because it really works. You might be thinking how very opulent and decadent but, ultimately yachts are both those things. Even your humble Westerly Centaur is a potent symbol of a society that enjoys high levels of free time and disposable income. The 37 is just working that premise somewhere towards its natural conclusion.

Modern classic

Saffier Yachts was set up by a pair of Dutch brothers, Dennis and Dean Hennevanger and their early yachts



were modern classics. That was until they rather broke the mould with their SE33; a yacht that had a combination of modern classic looks and blistering pace. The 37 has, if anything, continued and expanded upon that theme. The trad lines have been rather supplanted by a very individual yet contemporary shape that is both aggressive and muscular but also harmonious. She features a low freeboard, sleek coachroof that barely breaks the

ABOVE
A roomy and extremely comfortable cockpit is also extremely practical

BELOW
In fresh winds the 37 is a spirited performer

feature is undoubtedly the twin wheels located almost amidships This was a feature of the Saffier 33 and remains a strong departure from the norm. What it means is that all the running rigging runs straight from the mast to twin banks of jammers set right next to the helmsman where a pair of electric winches deal with all the donkey work. It couldn't be more simple and the premise of one person doing everything is perhaps realised in its purest form with this

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sheer and black spars. The effect is striking, purposeful – a wolf in wolf's clothing – or so it seems.

Yet beneath the surface this is no untamed beast; yes she has carbon spars and a modest displacement of 4,800kg but there are plenty of refinements. The concept is to have a pure weekender and also a fast boat that behaves well. It's not a racing yacht it's just a nice yacht that happens to sail very fast. To that end, she needs to be uncomplicated without being stripped out. Certainly when you step onboard you don't feel as if you are on a massively over-complicated racing machine. Make yourself comfortable in the cockpit and you are immediately surrounded by masses of open space with barely a line in sight. The most striking

yacht. Other than that, there is a broad, shallow cockpit with very comfortable seats and a decent amount of storage beneath. There is a modest cockpit table that can be unshipped if needs be. With the





wheels shifted forward this is a huge space, although it is broken up by the mainsheet set aft in a track, there is then an extra lounging section aft of this which can be entirely filled with cushions if required. It makes for a vast amount of space to enjoy while at anchor. To add to this, a small electric grill has been fitted beneath one of the locker lids.

Down below

Stating that you head 'down below' on this yacht is a tad overblown; the companionway is wide and the step down shallow so it doesn't really feel like that. The basic premise is weekend sailing for a couple who might ponder staying on board for a night or so. As such, she is beautifully fitted out but in an uncomplicated manner. There is a V-berth up forward which is comfortable and roomy, a couple of settee berths, a small galley area to port with an electric cooker (no gas on this boat at all) and a fridge. To starboard as you step down the companionway is a small heads compartment.

That's really about it. There is nothing fancy or complicated down here and there certainly isn't standing headroom but it makes for a comfortable bolthole. If you're after a liveaboard, buy a different boat.

Take off

This is the point where things really got interesting. I firmly believe that the natural domain of this yacht is the Cote d'Azur on a hot summer's day with a brisk sea breeze crisping the waters but, for my sins, I tested it in Ijmuiden in 25-30kn of breeze and a horrible short North Sea swell churning the waters. This was not entirely bad news, as the 37 was

about to demonstrate: As already mentioned, sail handling was a breeze and she was also well behaved under power with only minimal engine noise from the 21hp Yanmar saildrive. We put a single reef in the main and headed out of Ijmuiden into a maelstrom of confused seas and spume. The yacht has a deep torpedo keel with a narrow chord width and a bulb that accounts for getting on half of the boat's total weight. That made her good and stiff and we were soon powering through the nasty chop with a good deal of poise, hitting hull speed of about 9kn with ease. The self-tacking jib came into its own here and I was also impressed with the sail control set-up, which meant that the person sailing the boat was almost 100% in charge if they so chose. Push buttons took any effort or stress out of this.

There is a single rudder and this provides all the grip you could really wish for given that the yachts was fully powered up and

LEFT
A simple yet stylish living space down below

getting battered by some heavy gusts. Pop-up foot rests kept the helmsman comfortable even with the boat over on its ear and you can soon settle in and just enjoy the ride, throwing her through the tacks with minimal fuss.

Cracking her off the wind, it was time to unfurl the gennaker. The development roller furling has really revolutionised downwind sailing for cruisers because – let's admit it – many of us were a bit scared of spinnakers and poles. But now it's easy and this one unfurled with a whizz and a mighty WHOMP and suddenly we were flying; hurled forward on the waves and hitting 14kn with minimal fuss or effort. Had we chosen to go all out and shaken out the reef I was assured we would have been hitting 18-20kn range and I have no reason to doubt that. Again, the grip was phenomenal and the boat handled like a big dinghy. Ultimately it was fast, fun but it was also effortless. ✦

SAM'S VERDICT

Yachts are generally compromises and there is always a danger that too much compromise results in a yacht that pleases nobody. This is not a charge you can level at the Saffier and the results are spectacular. This is not for bluewater it's for looking a million dollars off St Tropez or feeling a million dollars as you charge down a wave at breakneck speed. Ultimately, it has a clear aim and it achieves that aim supremely well.

PERFORMANCE: ★★★★★

BLUEWATER: ★★★★★

LOOKS: ★★★★★

THE SPEC

LOA: 11m (36'1")

LWL: 10m (32'10")

Beam: 3.45m (11'4")

Draft: 2.1m (6'11")

Displ: 4,800kg (10,580 lbs)

Sail area: 68 sqm

Price: £186,500

Contact: saffierjachts.com

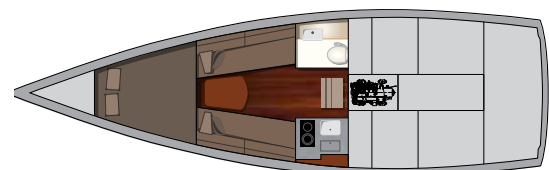


ILLUSTRATION: CALISTA PAXTON