



# Surfhunter 29

*The New England-style overnighter offers a refreshing alternative to today's production express cruiser—one that will turn heads in the harbor, but won't beat you up at sea.*

**C**ruising boats are often built from the inside out, with interior volume being the priority. The hull design takes a back seat, and the builder gives birth to a bloated tick of a boat with gobs of creature comforts but a ride that will split your spleen.

There are a few boats—and not just fishing boats—that are built from the outside in, however. The builder first worries about the shape of the hull below the waterline. Creature comforts aren't ignored, just dealt with after the ultimate goal is achieved—to deliver a smooth ride in rough water.

Hunt Yachts is one of these builders. We tested its Surfhunter 29.

"We want to make good-running hulls first, then fit them out," said John Deknatel, president of C. Raymond Hunt and Associates, the design firm that launched the Hunt Yachts boatbuilding company in 1998 with the Hunt 33. "We insist customers take the boat out so we can show them why it's worth it."

## Design

Ask some boatbuilders about the design of their boat and the conversation can be over in five minutes—or less. But Hunt Yachts' President Winn Willard could go on for hours.

With the Surfhunter 29, the goal was to capture the style and function of the original Surfhunter 25, designed first in the early 1960s and later modified, and to blend in advances and improvements that Hunt has realized over the past 25 years. In addition, Hunt wanted the 29 to work well with the growing variety of propulsion packages in today's market.

The original 25 was pure deep V—23 degrees of deadrise aft with very



*Above:* A gently sloping sheer, high windshield and trunk cabin are all marks of a New England-style boat. The Surfhunter 29 has them all. Note the bow's narrow forefoot and sharp entry.

little twist in the after sections, and plenty of deadrise forward to ensure soft entry. Hunt wanted to maintain that aspect of the 25 but also add more stability at rest, quicker planing, and greater load-carrying capacity. Consequently, the 29's chines are considerably wider aft and somewhat lower than the 25's. The strakes on the bottom are straighter than those of the 25, and there are only two per side rather than three.

"We have learned that fewer strakes can be as effective if they are more parallel to the waterline," said Willard. "There is also less noise and construction complexity with fewer strakes."

The 29 carries less deadrise aft—20 degrees—but just as much as the 25 forward. "The lower deadrise is a consequence of lowering and widening the chine, but this is a small sacrifice, only noticeable if you were to fly the boat clear off the wave and land ... a 23-degree deadrise will give you a slightly softer landing," said

Willard. Above the chine, the builder gave the 29 generous flare for a dry ride. The flare in the topsides also adds buoyancy to raise the bow when running into large seas both upwind and downwind. "These hulls will rise up and over seas rather than plunge through and soak everything," said Willard.

## Sea Trial

The 29 did indeed plane quickly, rising to its running angle in about 3-1/2 seconds. With the tabs tucked up, the boat climbed onto plane with minimal bow rise, which allowed us to see the horizon even while seated.

We ran the boat, powered with a single 375-hp Volvo gas engine, through one of Miami's choppy inlets and into the ocean.

With its power-assisted hydraulic steering (3-1/2 turns lock to lock), the Surfhunter was one of the nimbler boats we've tested. In fact, boat tester Erik Klockars had to whip the boat to port at 35 knots to avoid a submerged ob-