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FAIRLINE PHANTOM

THE TEST

65



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FAIR

PHANTOM 65

Can Fairline's first foray into the sportsfly market successfully combine the versatility of a flybridge with the performance of a sportscruiser? We head to the Med to determine if the British boatmaker has mastered the art of compromise

WORDS: Hugo Andraee





LINEA

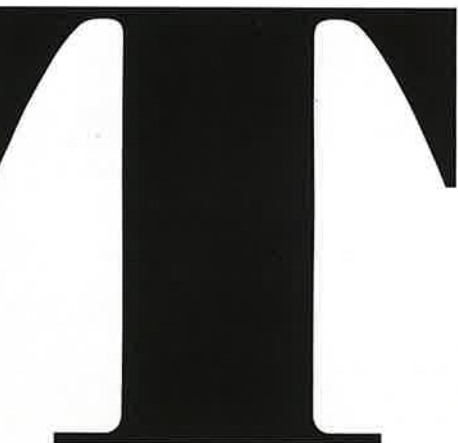


RIGHT: The opening sunroof over the saloon seating is a lovely feature



ABOVE: Sliding doors and a drop down window link the saloon to the cockpit

Once free of the harbour's confines the massive torque of those 32-litre diesels comes into its own



he best of both worlds or a compromise too far? That is the question hanging over all sportsfly models. Can they really combine the space and versatility of a flybridge boat with the sleeker looks, performance and handling of a sportscruiser or do they simply end up being a halfway house that doesn't truly satisfy on any front?

The all-new Phantom 65, Fairline's first attempt at a modern sportsfly boat, certainly has its work cut out. Not only is it relatively late to the party (both Sunseeker and Princess have been offering similar-sized sportsbridge boats for a while) but the Squadron 68, with which it shares its hull, is a big, handsome beast with a full-length flybridge

and up to four cabins, while the Targa 65 GTO is a long, lithe two-deck sportscruiser with a big sunroof, tender garage and more sunloungers than an LA pool party.

The new Phantom 65 nestles somewhere between the two. It's 4ft shorter and five tonnes lighter than the Squadron 68 yet somehow manages to pack in exactly the same three- or four-cabin layout below decks as well as a crew cabin and tender garage. The Targa GTO, meanwhile, is lower, lighter and leaner still, but lacks the Phantom's upper deck with its lovely outside helm position and extra outdoor socialising space – and even if you did want one, production has stopped to make way for the new Phantom. In other words, Fairline is gambling that the Phantom won't just replace the Targa 65 GTO, but generate extra sales too. It's a brave punt



LEFT: The foredeck table folds away under the seats MIDDLE: The cockpit corner cushion slides backwards to give access to the starboard side deck RIGHT: Wide, gently sloping flybridge steps are backlit for use at night



INSET ABOVE:
Aft galley is right
next to both the
indoor and outdoor
dining areas

but an informed one; the Targa never seemed to perform quite as well as its looks suggested and at this size it's as much about style, comfort and convenience as outright performance anyway. On the face of it, the Phantom seems to offer a bit more of everything than the Targa while still looking considerably sportier and more manageable than the Squadron.

POWER TO SPARE

Easing out of Port La Napoule, less than a month after its debut at the nearby Cannes boat show, a few things become clear. First up is just how smooth and relaxed the optional 1,622hp CAT C32 engines are compared to the standard 1150hp CAT C18s. Being V12s rather than in-line sixes they are beautifully balanced and deliver the kind of effortless shove that feels entirely in keeping with the Phantom's sporty but elegant styling. We hesitate to draw comparisons with its automotive namesake at Rolls-Royce but perhaps Fairline had one eye on that other V12-powered icon of luxury motoring when they decided to revive the Phantom name after a 15-year absence from the range.

With such big engines, it does mean that even at idle the boat is running at 8-9 knots but the throttles and gears are so smooth that it's no hardship to slot each engine in and out of gear to keep

the speed down around the marina and manoeuvre it out of the berth. Once free of the harbour's confines, the massive torque of those 32-litre diesels really comes into its own. For a boat of this size and weight, the pick-up is immense, pushing the hull onto the plane with so little fuss that you barely notice it's happening. There is certainly no need to deploy the trim tabs to help keep the nose down while it clambers over its own bow wave because it's up and over it before you've even got to them.

It all appears so effortless and occurs over such a short rev range that it's easy to underestimate how fast you're going. On several occasions, I glanced down at the chartplotter expecting to see a figure in the late teens only to realise we were closing in on 30 knots. Flat out at 2,340rpm we just exceeded 38 knots, a very impressive figure for a 38-tonne craft on standard shafts rather than slippery IPS pods or surface drives. You do pay for it at the fuel pumps, at 20 knots it's burning 255lph compared to 200lph in the IPS1350-powered Sunseeker 65 Sportyacht (a gap that carries on widening the faster you go), but the flip side is effortless cruising across a wide range of speeds, and the mechanical simplicity and planted feel of a straight shaft set-up.

A TALE OF TWO HELMS

It handles very tidily too. The steering is finger-tip light, requiring no more than a single digit to spin it round, although we'd question whether it really needs to have eight turns lock to lock. It makes sense at higher speeds where a couple of quick twirls will send it powering into a gently curving arc, but at lower speeds or when wanting to apply full rudder one way or the other a higher gearing ratio with fewer turns lock to lock might be preferable. It's certainly an agile enough hull with quick witted ►

It is lovely to have an outside helm. In weather as nice as this it would be a travesty to shut yourself away inside

responses and just enough lean for it to be genuinely fun to drive but you can't help thinking it would feel more nimble if you didn't have to spin the wheel as much.

There wasn't a lot in the way of waves to challenge the Phantom's hull but powering through our own wake it felt immensely secure with only the faintest of shudders emanating through the structure and no hint of a slam, squeak or rattle to spoil the reassuring solidity of the build. What the calm conditions did highlight is how lovely it is to have an outside

helm. There was never any question of where we'd choose to drive from, in weather as nice as this it would be a travesty to shut yourself away inside and thanks to the powered bimini

overhead there is always enough shade to make it usable at anchor as well as underway. The low, swept-back windshield up here doesn't provide a lot of shelter from the apparent breeze but at the normal cruising speed of 20-25 knots this isn't really an issue. If you plan to cruise faster for any length of time or the weather proves less accommodating, the lower helm is always there to cosset you. Comfortable as this indoor set-up is, the helming position isn't quite as ergonomic as it is up top. It works well when standing

but the seats are set quite high and take a bit of effort to slide back and forwards. Even then you need to lean forward a bit to reach the wheel and throttles, although it works a treat on longer passages when you can kick back and let the autopilot do the work. The lovely thing about this inside helm is that you can still open up the sunroof, drop the windows and enjoy the sensation of fresh air and sun on your face without the windblast.

DECK DELIGHTS

Guests are just as spoilt for choice as the skipper when it comes to selecting where to hang out during the day. The big news is the sportsbridge, which unlike Sunseeker's fun but minimalist Skyhelm/sunlounging area on the 65 Sportyacht is a proper compact flybridge with a sizable dinette, plenty of seating and even a wet bar with a fridge, grille and sink. The steps up to it are wide and shallow, the seats are tall enough

BELOW: This forward section of seating converts to a sunpad with an infill



to provide comfort and security (Perspex screens prevent phones and sunglasses disappearing through the gap between the cushions and the backrests), and the sociable wrap of seating next to the helm can be converted into a sunpad with the aid of an infill cushion. The electric bimini is a £20,000 option but a valuable one and folds neatly out of sight in front of the helm when not in use.

The main deck cockpit is just as appealing with a large folding triangular table that maximises dining space without compromising movement around it. A clever pull-out cushion in the transom bench fills in the gap left to allow access to the starboard side deck, while a pair of freestanding stools stored under the inside dining table can easily be carried outside to complete the third side of the triangle.

The foredeck lounge is more or less identical to the Targa 65's. It's not quite as deep or practical as the Squadron 68's (you have to enter it from the bow rather than cut through from the side decks) but the drinks table folds neatly away under the seats to help maintain the Phantom's sporty lines when not in use.

Last but not least is a brilliant mini beach club area at the stern with a fold down bench, a swing-up shower, a 500kg hydraulic platform large enough to carry a three-person jet-ski and a tender garage for a Williams 345 Sportjet. Somehow they've even found space to cram in a small crew cabin alongside it, although its pull out bed makes it better suited to use as a day heads and storage facility than somewhere to sleep for any length of time.

The most obvious compromise over the Squadron 68 is its smaller saloon and galley, although the way they open up to the cockpit, with the aid of patio doors that slide away under



Starboard side unit includes a pop-up vanity station



the flybridge stairs to port and a drop-down electric aft window to starboard, means they all blend into one seamless indoor/outdoor entertaining space. By restricting the use of wood to below countertop height in the galley and saloon, while using lighter finishes up above, the whole main deck feels bigger and brighter than it did on the Targa.

ABOVE: The full beam owner's cabin enjoys plenty of headroom and fine views out

As ever some of the little details like the backlit glass cupboard in front of the galley, the pull-out crockery drawer under the dinette seating and the maple-inlaid dining table are a pure delight.

SURROUND SOUND

But perhaps our favourite feature, albeit another pricey option, is the Sonos sound system complete with a built-in charging dock for the four waterproof roaming speakers you can move around the decks or even take to the beach with you. Our test boat featured walnut cabinetry with a matt finish but high gloss alternatives for both this and the lighter oak are also an option. The choices continue below deck with no less than four different ►



LEFT: The owner's ensuite bathroom MIDDLE: The optional extended forward VIP cabin
RIGHT: This is the extra lobby space you gain by ticking the extended VIP option



Aft moulding lifts to reveal tender garage. Opening sections are for shower, bench and cover storage

There's no doubt it delivers a formidable blend of pace, refinement and style



layouts to choose from. The standard layout is three ensuite cabins with an extra day heads to starboard but this can be swapped for a utility room, a fourth bunk bed cabin or an extended VIP cabin and bathroom in the bow. This is what our test boat had and, unless you need the fourth cabin or utility room for extended cruising, it is likely to be the most appealing option for most buyers. The extra floor space this creates in the forward VIP as well as the larger bathroom makes for a much more luxurious guest experience while a fourth heads compartment feels like overkill on a boat of this size.

The full beam owner's suite is predictably lovely but as with the Squadron 68, the door inhibits access round the foot of the bed when opened and the sofa to port is a little too close for comfort – it will be pushed further outboard in future examples. Our only other minor gripe is that the twin cabin to port has just one hanging cupboard with no extra shelves or lockers large enough for clothes other than an awkward access hatch under the mattress – a couple of drawers would be so much handier even though they would only be accessible with the beds separated rather than slid together.

VERDICT

Having only tested the Squadron and Targa with the smaller of the two engine options, it's hard to know how much of a difference those big V12s make to the Phantom's appeal, but with them fitted there's no doubt that it delivers a formidable blend of pace, refinement and style. The fact that it can do all this while still offering three or four cabins and a surprisingly spacious sportsbridge with all the trappings of a 'proper' flybridge is a deeply impressive achievement. Perhaps the ultimate compliment is that this first boat has just been snapped up by the owner of a nearly new Squadron 68 who is selling it to fund his new purchase. Clearly, we're not the only people who think the new Phantom 65 really does appear to offer the best of both worlds. **CONTACT:** Fairline www.fairline.com



UP OR DOWN

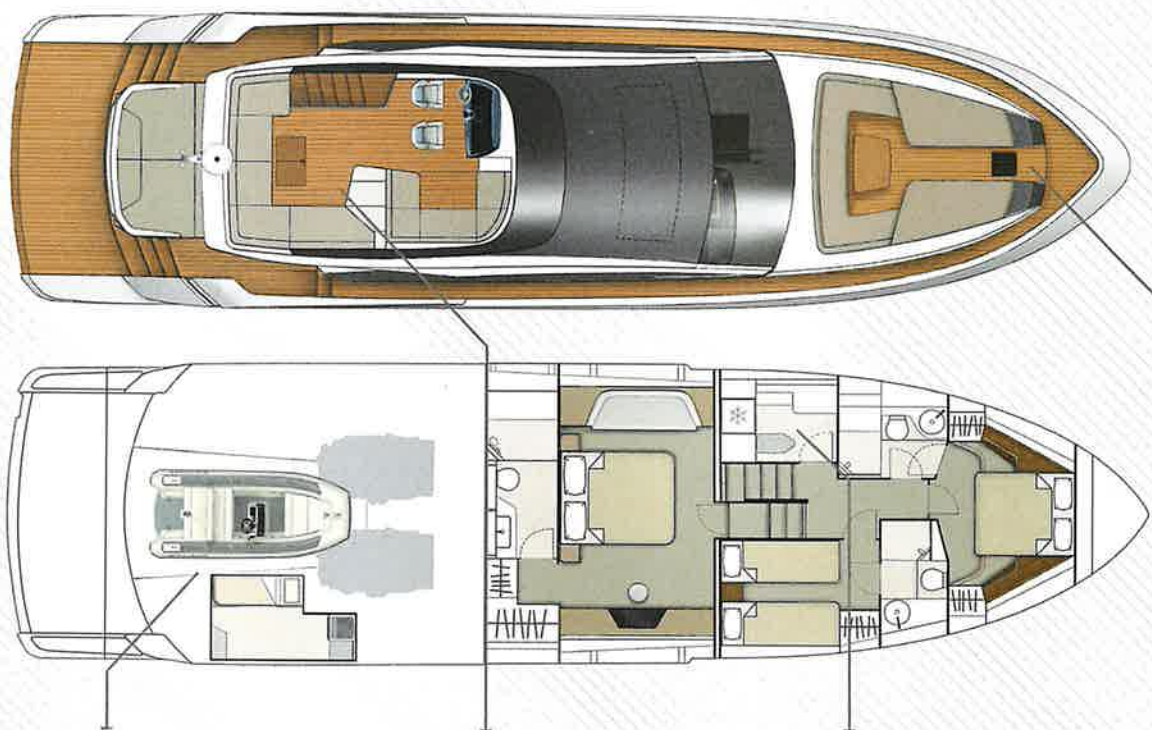
The ergonomics are a slight compromise between standing and seated helm positions

SECRET PANEL

This lifts to reveal ignition keys and controls for Seakeeper as pictured above

HELM DOOR

There is an option to replace the drop down window with a small side door

**STERN TRICKS**

Clever packaging includes a tender garage and a small crew cabin

FULL FACILITIES

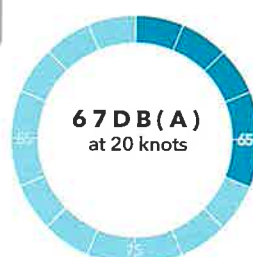
Wet bar and fold out table make this the perfect spot for lunch

LAYOUT CHOICE

This shows the utility room option but it can be a day heads, fourth cabin or extended VIP

BOW LOUNGE

The only access to this sociable outdoor space is from the bow

TOP SPEED**CONSUMPTION****RANGE****NOISE****PRICE****SPECIFICATION**

LOA 65ft 4in (19.96m)
Beam 17ft 2in (5.23m)
Draught 5ft 2in (1.58m)
Air draught 20ft 6in (6.29m)
Displacement 38.3 tonnes (dry)
Fuel capacity 4,177 litres
Water capacity 1,080 litres
RCD Cat B for 16 people
Designer Fairline design team

COSTS AND OPTIONS

From £2.05 million ex VAT (CAT 1,150hp)
CAT C32 engine upgrade £363,000
Seakeeper 18 gyro stabiliser £139,950
Hydraulic passarelle £39,250
Bimini (powered) £19,450
Bow and stern thrusters (proportional) £17,800
4 x Garmin 16in GP5Map £32,400
Sonos audio system £26,950
Williams 345 Sportjet £30,775

PERFORMANCE

Test engines 2 x 1,622hp CAT C32 V12 diesel 32.1 litres

			ECO				FAST		MAX
RPM	800	1000	1200	1400	1600	1800	2000	2200	2340
Knots	8.3	11.0	15.5	19.0	23.6	26.9	31.3	35.2	38.1
Litres per hour	26.5	95	167	230	301	399	502	619	670
Litres per mile	3.19	8.64	10.7	12.1	12.7	14.8	16.0	17.6	17.6
Range	1048	387	312	276	263	226	209	190	189
Noise (helm dB(A))	57	59	63	66	68	70	72	73	74

Calculated figures based on real-time readings, yours may vary considerably. Range figures allow for 20% reserve. All prices ex VAT. 25% fuel, 50% water, no tender, 4 crew. 26 degrees air temp, F1-2 and calm for sea trial