

BOAT TEST



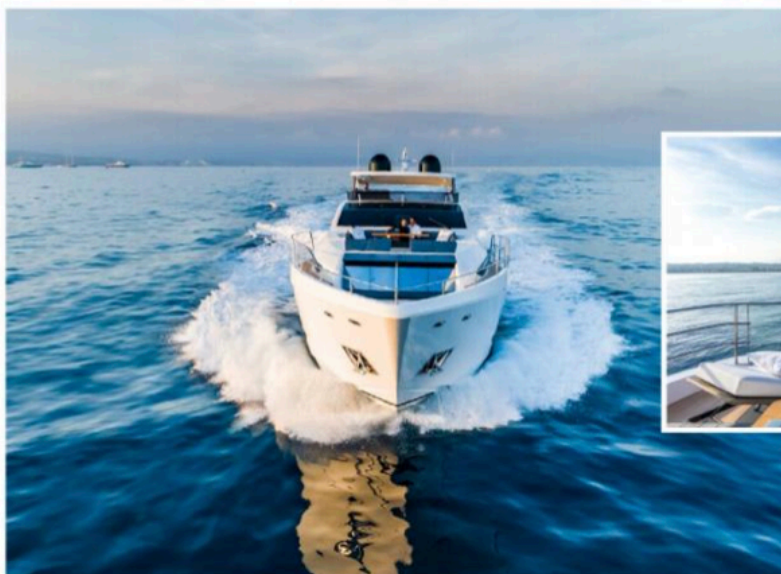
WORDS Hugo Andrae

# PEARL 95

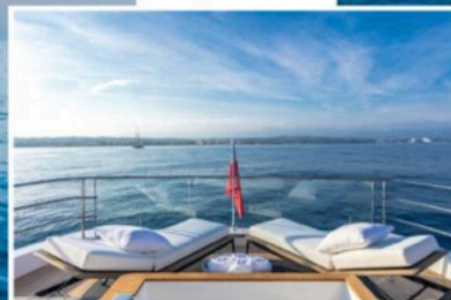
*It has taken us a while to catch up with the flagship of the Pearl fleet but has the wait been worth it? We find out on a sea trial in Mallorca*



## BOAT TEST



BELOW: Glass balustrade at aft end of flybridge enables fine views from the hot tub



**T**

hey say that good things come to those who wait, but in truth, circumstances conspired to delay our sea trial of the Pearl 95 rather longer than we had hoped. Originally launched in 2019, the first 95 was whisked to its new owner before we got a chance to test it, and our plans to jump on board during 2020/21 were scuppered by

our old enemy Covid 19. So it wasn't until April this year that we finally caught up with the Pearl flagship.

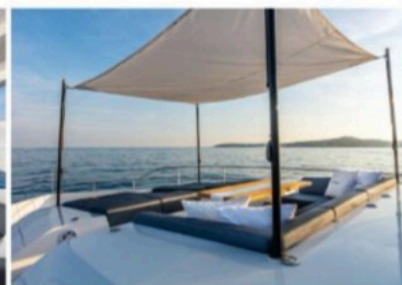
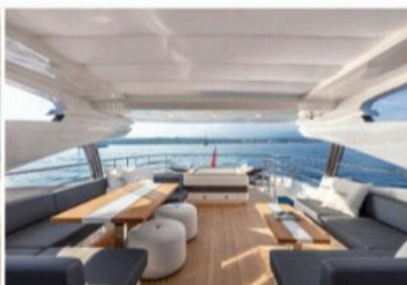
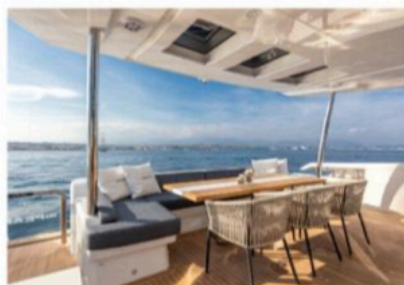
Designed for the UK-based Pearl Yachts by Bill Dixon but built and fitted out in Xiamen, Asia, to one of three luxurious schemes created by renowned interior designer Kelly Hoppen, it is said to combine the best of British design and engineering with a high quality of build and finish at a price that simply wouldn't be possible if it were built in Europe.

ABOVE LEFT: Raised pilothouse is subtly integrated into the svelte lines

ABOVE RIGHT: Fold-down side wings add to the beach club vibe

It's a bold claim but one that, on the face of it, looks entirely credible. It's immediate competitors from the likes of Sunseeker, Princess, Azimut and Ferretti all appear to cost more than the Pearl's starting price of £5.95m once you've factored in the 95's impressive list of standard equipment that includes twin generators, air-conditioning, hydraulic bathing platform, a full suite of AV equipment and even a built-in centralised vacuum cleaning system.

Perhaps even more impressive is the five year warranty (three for charter yachts) that covers the entire vessel for the first two years with an extended warranty on major items for years 3-5, ensuring owners' peace of mind and helping to retain residual values as its fully transferrable to the next owner.



LEFT: Frosted glass skylights allow diffused light to filter into the shaded cockpit MIDDLE: Full-length fabric sunroof gives the best of both worlds on the flybridge RIGHT: Even the foredeck lounge has its own canopy



**INSET ABOVE:**  
Tender garage  
becomes a water-  
level lounge once  
emptied of toys

### GREAT EXPECTATIONS

All of this would count for little if the yacht itself failed to live up to the standards expected of a semi-custom superyacht, albeit one that just sneaks under the regulations governing boats with a load line length of 24m or more, so we approached the sea trial with an even more critical eye than usual.

There was no reason to expect that the build quality would be inferior to a European-built boat, after all, premium brands such as Grand Banks, Fleming and Horizon all build their craft in Asia, but would the engineering and finish also live up to expectations?

In a word, yes. And then some. The positive impressions start the minute you step on board and seem to gather momentum the further you delve into its interior. So let's start with the things you can see, such as the design prowess of both Dixon Yacht Design and Kelly Hoppen. The Pearl 95 is, to most eyes, a good looking boat for a 95ft raised pilothouse design. It may not be as voluminous as a Princess X95, as beamy as a Sunseeker Ocean 90 or as adventurous as a Sanlorenzo SX88 but it's a well-balanced, harmonious design that manages to look modern but not aggressively so. In short, it's unlikely to offend anyone but still

has enough going on to engage the eye and shouldn't date too quickly. It certainly still looks as fresh today as it did in 2019.

However, there is far more to this design than the way it looks. Foremost among these are some of the best deck spaces you'll find on any boat this size. With fold-down side wings adding real estate to the large hydraulic stern platform and a capacious tender garage that doubles up as a shaded sea-level lounge when empty, this is a proper beach club zone, not just a bathing platform with a folding bench and a fancy name. Admittedly, it doesn't have quite the same connection to the cockpit as the Sunseeker Ocean (made possible by the Poole yard's clever Xtend seating and glass transom) or the sheer acreage of the Sanlorenzo's aft deck, but as a standalone space it works a treat with plenty of room inside the garage to stow a jet ski, Seabobs, paddleboards and freestanding furniture in addition to the tender on the platform. But once emptied, the lockers around the perimeter allows it to double up as a water-level lounge complete with full wet bar facilities as well as stowage for snorkelling gear, towels and other watersports paraphernalia.

### THE HIGH LIFE

It's a similar story at the pointy end where the raised foredeck features a large but secluded sofa and table away from prying eyes on the quay with a wonderful view over the bow in addition to three big sunpads. Steps lead down from here to an even more sheltered spot right at the bow where another cosy bench seat provides the perfect spot for a sunowner or two. Then there's the vast flybridge shaded by a hard top with a full-length retractable fabric sunroof and a full suite of amenities including a bar area, dining table, hot tub, helm and a pair of freestanding

**There is nothing here that gives any indication of scrimping - quite the opposite in fact**

sunloungers overlooking the stern through a glass balustrade. It's not just the array of features that impress, it's everything from the smoothness of the mouldings to the thickness of the teak tables and the quality of the stainless steel supports. There is nothing here that gives any indication of scrimping or cutting corners – quite the opposite in fact.

**HIDDEN DELIGHTS**

Move inside and the positives keep on coming. Pearl has a reputation for innovative layouts that make the most of the available space and the same is true here. Placing the owner's suite forward on the main deck not only makes it look and feel more special than the usual location amidships on the lower deck but brings a number of other significant benefits. Foremost

among these is exceptional natural light thanks to a bank of windows facing forward onto the bow as well as a double layer of windows in the hull and deckhead respectively. It also means it's in the quietest possible location, as far removed from the engines and generators as can physically be achieved on a boat but also insulated from the chine slap and hull noise that can affect the lower deck by the crew cabins below. Watch the accompanying video and you'll see just how pronounced this is, especially underway when you can hear the difference between the noise levels in all five cabins. It's not that the other guest cabins are noisy, far from it, it's just that the owner's cabin is in another league.

The rest of the main deck is given over to the saloon and dining area with just the galley and a day heads amidships providing a buffer between them and the owner's cabin, since the helm is housed on a separate bridge deck up above. It's a brilliant solution that gives the owner and guests the run of the main deck while the crew still have their own space above and below. The saloon itself is almost totally surrounded by full-height windows, letting the light flood in and giving guests uninterrupted views from both the lounge and dining areas. Glass bulwark sections along both sidedecks ensure these don't block the view while the optional twin sliding patio doors on either side encourage cooling breezes and easy movement of guests around the boat. A change in the direction of the floor boards and a band of white marble and stainless steel provides a clever visual separation between the socialising spaces to port and the passageway to starboard that ensures you don't have to thread your way

**INSET BELOW:**  
Glazed bulwarks allow unimpeded views out from the saloon



Opening doors on both sides of the main deck enhance the flow of fresh air



through sofas and seats when making your way forward.

This layout also leaves the lower deck free for either three or four more generously proportioned guest cabins, all with their own ensuites, and a surprisingly big crew space forward with its own mess area, three cabins and two bathrooms (one ensuite).

A choice of three carefully curated Kelly Hoppen interior schemes (Studio, Taupe and Luxury) also gives owners the freedom to pick the style that best suits their tastes without having to go to the trouble of picking every last cushion, art work and light fitting. The end result is a calming, coordinated interior in which guests feel instantly at home. Our test boat had the Luxury scheme featuring more modern, high contrast colours with dark glossy woodwork, stainless steel inserts, white ceilings and accessories. Even the display cabinets came fully fitted

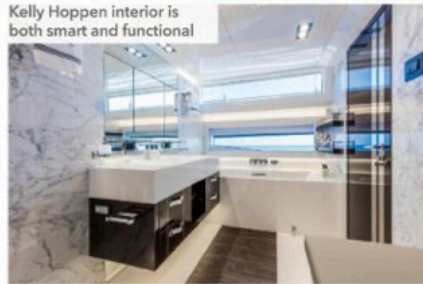
with white coral sculptures, vases and lamps, all secured in place by hidden fixings to ensure they didn't shift around at sea. Some buyers might balk at having all these decisions outsourced, and doubtless Pearl will accommodate a certain amount of individual customisation requests, but others will relish the prospect of having it all taken care of by a professional with a track record for creating luxurious interiors for some of the world's finest private residences and boutique hotels.

#### DRIVE FOR PERFECTION

Easing out of Puerto Portals bound for the Palma Boat Show one thing very quickly becomes clear; this is a very refined boat. The optional 2,400hp MTU M96 engines (1,925hp CAT C12's are standard) are mounted on v-drives to enable them to be positioned further aft than usual. One of the benefits of this is the space it frees up ahead of them for that generous guest accommodation, while still allowing plenty of room behind them for



Kelly Hoppen interior is both smart and functional

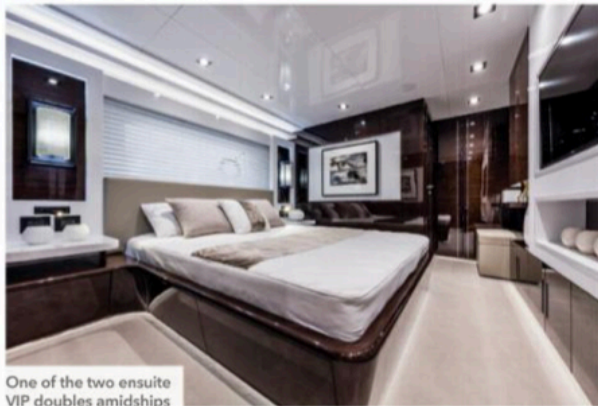


ancillary equipment and that all-important beach club. The other is that it keeps the main source of noise well away from the sleeping and socialising spaces. Even in the saloon you'd barely know the engines are running while on the bridge, and on the flybridge deck it's all but silent.

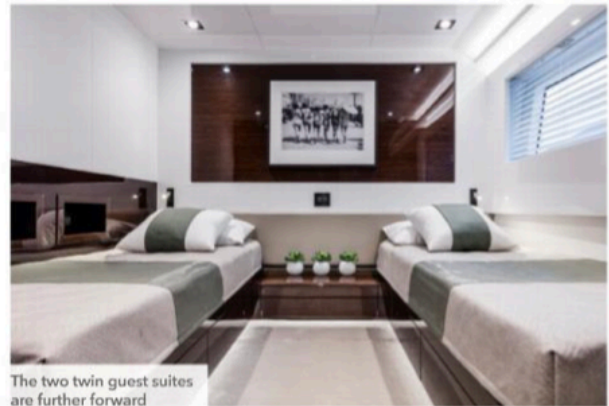
ABOVE:  
The main deck owner's cabin enjoys exceptional natural light and tranquility

We did most of our driving from the outside helm on the flybridge rather than the raised pilothouse (unlike the Princess X95 you still have both an indoor and outdoor helm station to pick from) but noise and vibration levels were equally well suppressed at both. The hull and sterngear had a couple of month's fouling growth on them so our speed trials were a little down on expectations but 24.6 knots flat out is still plenty fast enough for most people's cruising requirements on a craft of this size and style, especially given the current focus on fuel efficiency.

These days most big flybridge boats seem to spend the majority of their time at 8-12 knots with their stabilisers on and their guests enjoying drinks on deck while watching the world roll by rather than being bounced around at 25 knots with the wind buffeting their faces and the fuel gauge nose diving towards empty. This is certainly where the Pearl 95 feels at its most civilised, burning around 10 litres per nautical mile at 10 knots for a range of around 800nm from its 10,000-litre fuel



One of the two ensuite VIP doubles amidships



The two twin guest suites are further forward

## BOAT TEST

**BELOW:** The engineroom is clean, bright and spacious

**RIGHT:** The 95's hull feels solid and refined underway

**BOTTOM:** Galley is situated next to the dining area

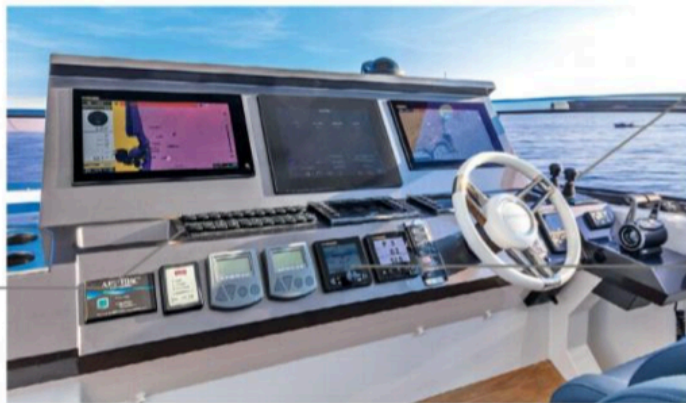


Pearl's ability to carve itself a niche of its own has allowed it to punch well beyond its weight

tanks. It's perfectly capable of romping along in the early to mid 20s without feeling remotely stressed but the fuel burn trebles to 36 litres per nm and the range drops to the low 200s. It's not as if any 95ft superyacht delivers much in the way of driving excitement, other than the thrill of having 4,800hp on tap to push all 95 tonnes of it on to the plane. Once up and running, the steering is so fingertip-light and far removed from the action that you might as well be driving an arcade game. In fact, it's pleasantly agile for such a big beast, turning full circle in around three boat lengths with just a bit of inward lean allowed by the Sleipner curved fin stabilisers.

Hydraulic bow and stern thrusters and a well judged mix of physical switchgear for often-used items and digital control systems for more complex monitoring and adjusting makes the skipper's lot as easy as it can be on a craft this size. The raised pilothouse bridge is a particularly comprehensive set-up with no less than six huge flush-fitting MFDs giving instant oversight of everything, including a full suite of cameras covering all the main areas of the boat. Surrounded by lockers for all the ship's manuals and a cosy settee for crew or guests to sit alongside, it can be both a private workplace for captain and crew or left open for guests to admire what it takes to control and navigate a craft such as this.

**SWITCHGEAR**  
Bank of rocker switches are for regularly used items such as nav lights and sunroof



**THRUSTERS**  
Hydraulic bow and stern thrusters help with tight berthing manoeuvres

**SCREEN TIME**  
Multiple secondary screens look a bit busy but help keep an eye on systems

## VERDICT

Competing against brands with the worldwide recognition and financial clout of Sunseeker, Princess and Azimut might appear to be a thankless task but Pearl's ability to carve itself a niche of its own based on Bill Dixon's design ingenuity, Kelly Hoppen's carefully crafted interiors and a quality to price ratio that is hard to argue with has allowed it to punch well above its nominal weight. Supported by a high level of standard equipment featuring big name suppliers for everything from the engines and stabilisers to kitchen goods and nav systems, and backed up by a comprehensive warranty, it all adds up to a very enticing package, particularly for those wanting a ready-to-go turnkey solution for private and charter use. It has taken us a while to sea trial it properly but it turns out that good things really do come to those who wait.

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## BOAT TEST



**SIDE DOORS**  
Optional side doors are almost as good as balconies and less hassle

**ONE OR TWO**  
This full beam VIP cabin can be swapped for two ensuite doubles

**CREW SPACE**  
This whole zone is for crew and includes three cabins and a mess area

**OWNER'S CABIN**  
These forward-facing windows allow light to flood into the cabin

### TOP SPEED



### CONSUMPTION



### RANGE



### NOISE



### PRICE



### SPECIFICATION

LOA 95ft 9in (29.22m)  
Beam 22ft 0in (6.7m)  
Fuel capacity 10,000 litres  
Water capacity 1,600 litres  
Draught 6ft 9in (2.06m)  
Displacement 95 tonnes

**COSTS & OPTIONS**  
Price from £5.95m ex VAT  
Price as tested £7.25m ex VAT  
Hydraulic platform Std  
2 x 20kW generators Std  
Reverse cycle air con Std  
Opening doors to side decks £35,800 each  
Sleipner fin stabilisers £124,950  
Flybridge hard top £112,250  
Hot tub £45,500

### PERFORMANCE

Test engines Twin MTU M96, 2,400hp, V16 diesel on vee-drive shafts

	550	750	ECO	1250	1500	1750	FAST	2250	MAX
RPM	550	750	1000	1250	1500	1750	2000	2250	2360
Knots	5.4	7.4	9.5	11.8	13.5	15.5	18.8	23.0	24.6
Litres per hour	24	44	88	164	286	436	660	836	928
Litres per nm	4.44	5.95	9.26	13.9	21.2	28.1	35.1	36.3	37.7
Range in nm	1,800	1,345	864	575	377	285	228	220	212
Noise in dB(A)	51	54	57	60	61	64	63	68	66

Calculated figures based on real-time fuel readings, yours may vary considerably.  
Figures allow for 20% reserve. All prices ex VAT. 65% fuel, 95% water, 7 crew + stores.  
20 degrees air temp, F2 and calm seas