

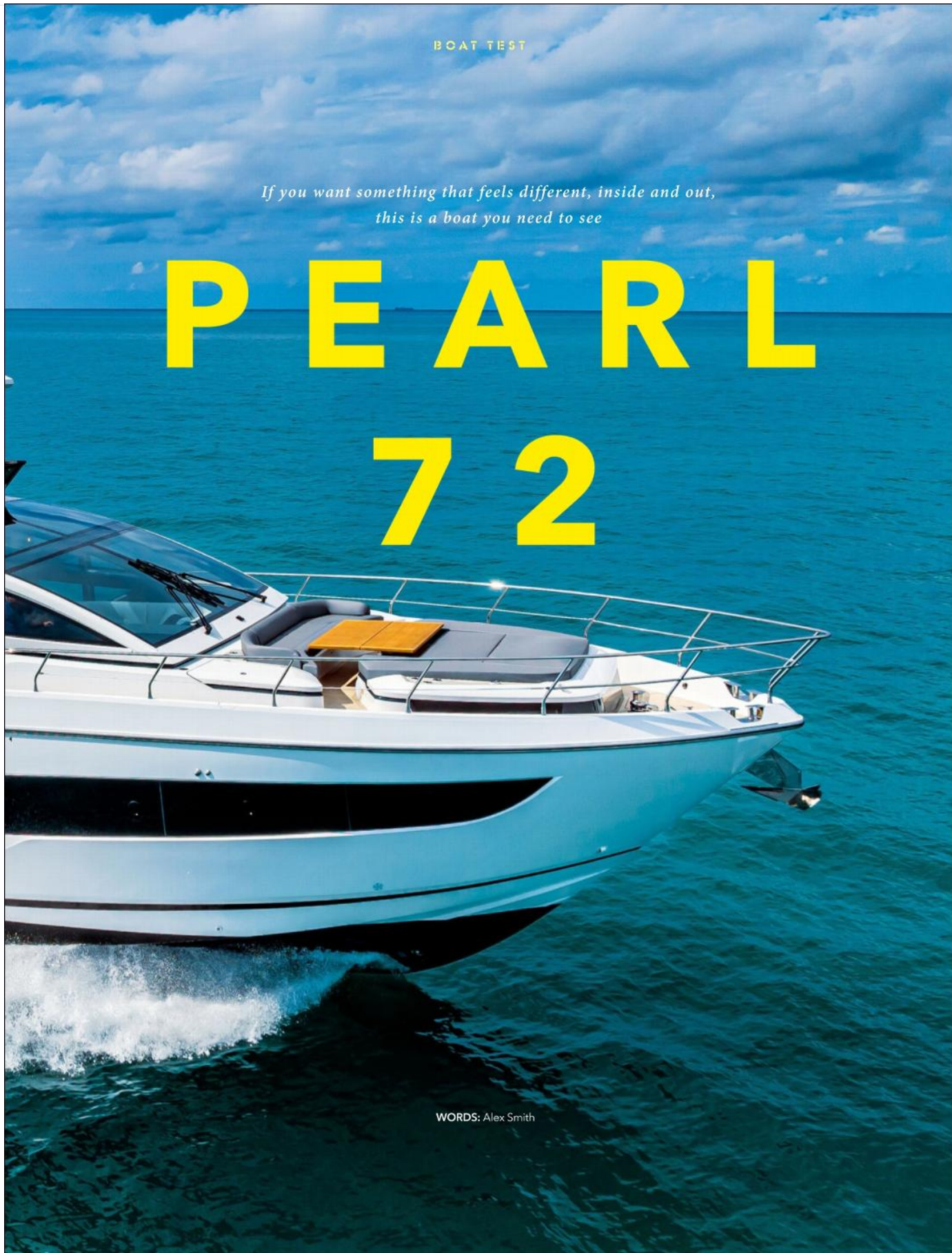


BOAT TEST

*If you want something that feels different, inside and out,
this is a boat you need to see*

PEARL 72

WORDS: Alex Smith



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The louvred sunroof not only tilts for dappled shade but also retracts



The glass balustrade provides shelter without spoiling the view



P

uerto Portals in Mallorca is certainly not short on boating exotica. But as I approach the new Pearl 72, with its stratified ranks of glass, its raked screen and its swept spears of fibreglass, this looks to me like one of the most striking and distinctive boats in the entire marina. The local Pearl crew is on

hand to greet me with crisp croissants and piping hot coffee – and as Cenk Efe, the MD at the Mallorca Marine Group, walks me rather fondly through the boat, it's immediately clear that the internal arrangement is even more divergent than the styling. From the aft terraces and the space-saving V-drives to the galley placement, the light management and the extraordinary owner's cabin, this second smallest of the Pearl fleet immediately feels like a boat with a very big personality.

DAY SPACE DELIGHTS

Bill Dixon and Kelly Hoppen have been a formidable combination over the years – Bill for his proven excellence with spatial management and Kelly for her capacity to make slick high-end environments feel homely and welcoming rather than niche or esoteric. The same is undoubtedly true here. But given that we're basking under the sun on a boat finely tuned to take advantage of that, our first port of call has to be the external day spaces.

While the aft cockpit is not huge, it's easily enough to seat 12 around the twin tables, thanks to a broad aft bench and freestanding furniture.

RIGHT: The aft dinette is more versatile than it first appears



There's also room for a port wet bar so you don't have to head inside for your drinks and nibbles and there's ample shade from the fly deck above. The aft end also enjoys some impressive watersports facilities. The swim platform comes with a three-man aft-facing bench neatly integrated into the hatch for the tender garage. There's also a pair of fold-down water-level terraces to expand the beach area – and to really drive home that advantage, the tender garage itself is cavernous, with plenty of room for a Williams Jet 345, plus a proper two-man sit-down jetski. It does of course steal a bit of volume from the engine room down below, but given that the owner is unlikely to do their own servicing, that seems like a sage design decision.

Head forward to the bow, past the cut-away sections of the bulwarks, and whether you want to sit, lounge, sunbathe or dine, there's easily enough space at the foredeck lounge for the entire ship's company. You can shade this zone with a full-sized awning on carbon fibre poles – or for even more space and flexibility, you can just head for the upper deck.

The flybridge is set far enough back to enable light to flood the main deck saloon through huge glass skylights, but not so far that its scale is in any way compromised. On the contrary, it occupies a very generous footprint and its arrangement is also extremely well conceived. It features a two-man starboard helm station opposite a big C-shaped lounge for easy socialising under way. Aft of that sits a large, fully equipped wet bar, with grill, sink, ice maker and fridge, so you can serve your guests



at the starboard dining station without having to head down to the main deck galley. Above this zone, a retractable louvred sunshade built into the hardtop enables you to tweak the shade in whatever way you fancy – and further aft sits another set of aft-facing sunloungers, plus a glass balustrade with some freestanding furniture.

It's a really first-rate fly deck, so when you step back down into the saloon through the automatic sliding doors, it's good to see that the main deck is virtually a mirror image. On the saloon's lower level, there's a large low-slung lounge on the port side and an even larger galley amidships with a three to four-man bar that projects out into the main space. The hob uses a low-level extractor in the centre of the four rings to whip away smells and moisture without obscuring your light or your view with bulky

high-level extractor units. The full-height fridge freezer is shifted across to the port side for exactly the same reason. And a step up, at the forward part of the saloon, bathing in light from those vast overhead windows, the two-man helm backs onto the midships galley and faces across to a relaxed port dinette that extends beyond the wheel by about four feet. That makes this layout feel about as inclusive and convivial as it's possible to imagine.

As regards the style of the fit-out, there are three standard options. The Luxury package is all deep lustrous fabrics and high-gloss surfaces. The Modern option is defined by clean Nordic freshness. And the Indulgence option you see here sits somewhere between the two, with an attractive combination of burnished finishes, dark satin woods and pale fabrics. It's possible that the Modern option would do a better job of ▶

ABOVE: With its huge tender garage and low-level platforms, the Pearl 72 is ideal for watersports



LEFT: Aft terraces extend the beach zone on both sides MIDDLE: The convertible bow lounge is big enough for 12 RIGHT: Like most of the boat, the saloon's seating area feels very informal and relaxed

manipulating the light. It's possible it might also give you an easier task when the time comes to sell it on. But either way, this latest collaboration between Bill Dixon and Kelly Hoppen has achieved genuinely beautiful things on board the Pearl 72.

SLEEPING FOR TEN

The fact that the Pearl 72 uses V-drives enables it to position its engines a good way aft, opening up plenty of volume on the lower deck. But before we get to the four dedicated cabins themselves, it's worth a quick peek at the crew quarters.

Accessed superyacht-style from the port side deck and running transversely behind the engine bay, they feature a heads with separate shower, a central mess and a starboard bunk room with hanging storage. Headroom is good and the fit-out is of the same calibre as elsewhere, so if you're happy to operate this boat as a self-drive cruiser, this will boost your sleeping capacity to ten.

Moving forward to the permanent guest cabins, the 72's cleverly conceived layout again makes great use of the space. A staircase to port of the saloon leads you down to a transverse corridor. Aft of this, directly against the forward bulkhead for the crew cabin, sits the full-beam VIP guest double with a fore-and-aft port bathroom and a starboard dressing table. Ahead of this sits another pair of guest rooms: the double to port



The entire main deck revolves around the big bar-equipped galley

BELOW: Kelly Hoppen's stylish interior makes the most of the abundant natural light

INSET: The delightful breakfast dinette in the forward cabin



and the twin to starboard. While all three have their own ensuite facilities, the twin's bathroom also operates as a very practical and well positioned day heads. A particular highlight down here are the TVs, which are entirely concealed behind bulkhead mirrors, only becoming visible when you actually want to watch them. And while there is an audible creak or two as you make your way around boat Number 1, the quality feels good and the headroom, natural light and sea views throughout this region of the boat are also particularly impressive.

In truth though, the lower deck's big-ticket party trick comes in the form of the forward cabin. You get to it via a private



Bill Dixon and Kelly Hoppen have achieved beautiful things on board the Pearl 72



LEFT: Inside, or out, this is not a boat you could mistake for any other

central staircase, which takes an unusual dogleg to the port side. This frees up the aft bulkhead to operate as the bed head, and that in turn frees up the space in the forepeak for one of the most gratifying breakfast dinettes you're ever likely to see in a cabin of this scale. Blessed with panoramic views from the hull windows and plenty of natural light from the three wraparound bow lounge panels up above, this unexpected forward seating zone feels lavish but intimate, with comfy curved seatbacks that ease you into the day in the most charming way. There's also a starboard dresser, plus pleasantly curved peripheral furniture around the port side and another spacious ensuite, with generous headroom and a separate shower through the starboard side of the aft bulkhead. In short, Pearl may claim that this boat has two owner's cabins but with its private staircase, lovely seating area and natural separation from the pontoon, engines and guest cabins, this is the spot any self-respecting owner will claim.

SPORTSBOAT PERFORMANCE

Unlike most flybridge cruisers at this kind of size, the Pearl 72 actually behaves like a proper planing boat. It heels hard and carves tight. It lifts its skirts at higher revs, easing the waterline back and picking up speed with gratifying urgency. It behaves in all regards like a genuine driver's boat and it does so without labouring in a beam wind or shuddering through the chop. In fact, as things stand, the only anomaly here is the extravagant pair of rooster tails! In this instance, they're caused not by surface drives but by the aft terraces, which seem to funnel the seawater and shoot it upwards in joyous fountains when closed. While it's not a major problem, Pearl is already designing a pair of low-level deflectors to remedy the issue.

As intimated, the sheer sociability of the two helm stations is also a major plus. You never feel in the slightest bit sidelined at the helm and, while sound readings of 77dB in the mid 20s are ▶



LEFT: In spite of its port ensuite, the VIP double feels wide open MIDDLE: The bed in the owner's cabin backs up against the aft bulkhead RIGHT: Even the bathroom for the port double feels quite lavish

There's almost no part
of this boat that doesn't put
a smile on your face

Balanced, agile and highly responsive, this feels like a proper driver's boat

not especially quiet by the standards of a 70ft cruiser, you can still chat to the occupants of the neighbouring lounge without having to raise your voice or crane your neck.

In terms of visibility, the view aft is a touch limited because the saloon drops down a level and there's a lofty midships fridge freezer to port. But the views ahead and on the beam are very good and when you turn to starboard, the upper window above the fibreglass 'spear' is great for checking all is clear on the inside of the turn. And in any case, given how good this boat is to drive (and the fact that, for most people, the upper helm will be the primary station), this is by no means a critical issue.

VERDICT

Having trawled around the Palma Boat Show, checking out cruisers of a similar size and type, the excellence of this boat is clear. From the expansive flybridge and the expandable aft decks to the brilliant forward cabin and the sociable main deck bar, there's almost no part of this boat that doesn't put a smile on your face. Of course, it's not overtly or flamboyantly ingenious. It doesn't hit you over the head

SIMPLICITY
The helm station feels compact, pared back and distinctly modern



SOCIABILITY
The left-hand helm makes it feel even more sociable

SIDE DOOR
The optional skipper's side door is a major asset in Europe



In spite of that plunging tender garage, space in the engine room is acceptable

with a barrage of industry-defining innovations. But what it does do is work hard in all the key areas to pursue a range of less obvious – and often better – design decisions than its competitors. The combined impact of those choices is certainly very satisfying in terms of this boat's practicality. But in more subjective terms, it's also extremely endearing. If you were to be dropped into pretty much any part of this boat and given a brief split-second glance, you would know beyond doubt that you were on a Pearl 72. And that's very tough not to love. **CONTACT:** www.pearlyachts.com



MULTIPLE TOYS
The deepset tender garage has room for a boat and a jetski

V-DRIVES
V-drives open up plenty of space for the lower deck cabins

SOCIAL HUB
A big central galley with bar sits at the heart of the action

BEST IN HOUSE
The forward cabin feels private, intimate and just a little bit special

TOP SPEED



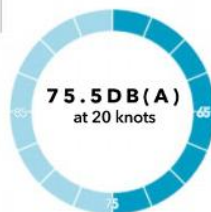
CONSUMPTION



RANGE



NOISE



PRICE



SPECIFICATION

LOA 72ft 2in (21.99m)
Beam 18ft 10in (5.75m)
Draft 5ft 7in (1.7m)
Displacement 52.8 tonnes (Light)
Fuel Capacity 4,250 Litres
Engines Twin MAN V12 1400s or
Twin MTU 10v 2000 M96l 1600s
RCD B

COSTS & OPTIONS

From €2.63m ex vat
Options fitted to test boat include:
Twin MTU 10v 2000 M96l 1600hp
Hydraulic passerelle
Hydraulic aft terraces
Hardtop with sunroof
Skipper's side door

PERFORMANCE

Test engines Twin MTU 10v 2000 M96l 1600s

		ECO				FAST		MAX
RPM	750	1,000	1,250	1,500	1,750	2,000	2,250	2,350
Knots	7.6	9.5	11.9	13.7	19.1	23.7	28.0	31.5
Litres per hour	34	63	138	216	338	428	570	670
Litres per Nm	4.47	6.63	11.60	15.77	17.70	18.06	20.36	21.23
Range (Nm)	760	513	293	216	192	188	167	160

Calculated figures based on real-time readings, yours may vary considerably.
Figures allow for 20% reserve. All prices inc VAT. 63% fuel, 50% water,
4 crew + safety stores. 20 degrees air temperature, F2 and 2ft seas for sea trial.