



The hunt is over!

By Neil Holmes



## The Review

There was once an old chicken farm in the depths of Wiltshire, and on that farm there was a chicken shed and in that chicken shed Jeff Hunton built his first Hunton powerboat, a 23ft gazelle (why didn't they name it cockerel?). It was originally intended to be a one off but it created so much interest from its first race appearance that many orders followed. The year was 1979 and nearly 30 years later Hunton Powerboats are a well established and respected company producing top quality performance cruisers.

Jeff's interest in boating started early in life and by the mid 70s he was racing in classics such as the Cowes –Torquay – Cowes, Class 2 and Cruiser classes and doing pretty nicely for himself thank you! Combine this with his background in engineering and you have all the skills necessary to produce a top quality performance boat. The company now produce both cruisers and RIBs. The Hunton XRS 37 is a sleek stylish sports cruiser and Martin from Hunton sales kindly lent me his boat to play with! Although they come

in pretty much any colour you want the one we tested was 'Tusk (imagine café latte) and Black' with 'parchment' (imagine champagne) upholstery making it look very sophisticated. Hunton boast their craft have a super yacht finish all stainless steel fittings with no visible welding and all custom made.

Onboard there is plenty of storage for ropes and fenders which makes a change from having to poke them into whatever gap you can find, teak decking, led lights and lockers under all the seats. The seating area on deck is arc shaped and has high quality upholstery and breathable cushions. The front bolster seats although luxurious were surprisingly not electric; although I believe you can have this option but it's not as standard, these seats are custom made to fit your requirements (i.e. large or small bottom, long or short legs!) The dash is made of stainless steel laser cut and is clean and uncluttered with just the important gauges at hand and the rest of the gauges placed above the cockpit door.

### WHATBOAT?

A cruising boat with a race pedigree.



"Runs like its on rails"



"Luxury and comfort"

The Review

A touch screen Garmin was well placed in the centre of the dash enabling the driver easy use. Attention to the difficulties of boating seem to be something Hunton has addressed, with a locker on the starboard side containing all the wiring and a light to see what you are doing when you try to fix it and easy access to all services. A cool box is hidden in the side panel of the aft seating section allowing you to easily get your beers when cruising, although I do have my doubts that the lid wont bounce off if its rough as it didn't seem to have a latch, but my companion who sat in the back didn't see any evidence of that as we bounced over the wash!

Inside, the cabin is spacious with a diesel powered ceramic hob but if you want a fridge you would need to sacrifice a cupboard but that's not really a hardship as there is plenty of storage on board. There is an rectangular table which stores

away in a purpose built holder under the bed leaving floor space if you want to dance when you plug your I Pod in the specially adapted connection a drop down DVD in case you fancy watching the latest release on your weekend away. And there lots of LED mood lighting! Although not massive the shower and toilet is adequate and well planned. The toilet has a freshwater flush so you don't get a nasty smell! And a hot water immersion ensures hot water for the shower and washing up. The super yacht quality continues with real leather upholstery, wool carpets and a materiel called Alcantara covering the walls and ceiling; this is similar to look at and has the same feel as suede but is incredibly strong and hard wearing making the cabin very cosy.

Back on deck there is a nifty little piece of teak walkway over the engine hatch allowing you to reach the bathing

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platform without 20 Whatboat? January, February 09 traipsing over the cushions or the sunbathing babes you have with you! Underwater lights complete the luxury of this boat.

A flick of a switch lifts the engine hatch revealing two Volvo D6 diesels nestling snugly inside. You can choose your engine package from twin Yanmar 315s, twin Volvo D4s, D6s and in the petrol range choose from twin 350 Magnum MPI or top of the shop is the twin Magnum 496HO.

Getting down to the boat's performance: an impressive 5.49 seconds was all it took to get the boat on the plane, not bad for a boat weighing around 4.5 tons. This stunning out of the hole shot performance has a lot to do with the D6s being both turbo and supercharged whilst running a 'common rail fuel system' and to add to that the engine is controlled 'fly by wire' maybe not something you would normally expect to produce this sort of performance.



On a fairly flat day the boat achieved a 62mph average speed with standard Volvo props and took 19.37 seconds to reach 60mph from a standing start, a remarkable time considering its just 2mph short of the top speed the boat is capable of! When driving the boat, the first thing I noticed was the incredibly matched engine RPM, I haven't seen that happen for a long time as it can be quite difficult to achieve on multi engine installation.

There is nothing I like better than putting a performance boat through its paces and the XRS 37's non stepped hull slices through the water beautifully like a hot knife through butter! Throwing the boat into a tight corner didn't present any problems, gripping well and giving a feeling of security, and whilst I appreciate there isn't often a need to suddenly change direction especially at full pelt, if a yacht just happens to cut in front of you there are two choices hit him or take evasive action, if you choose to do the latter then this boat will handle it well.

As the water was flattish when we went for our spin, it was hard to determine its performance in the rough, although I have been in a few similar size Hunton's when there's been a good old chop out there and they certainly seemed to handle it without any problems. Cruising along at 40knots (not something I often do) it was a surprise to be able to hold a conversation with the person next to me and with fuel costs high on everyone's agenda its was a pleasant surprise to find that at WOT, the fuel consumption is only 140 litres per hour and at 35 knots (cruising speed) it drops to just 60 litres per hour with the D6 engine package.

After a bit of searching I managed to find a patch of bumpy water (ok it was the wash from the IOW ferry!) opening the throttles we hit the wash at about 55mph it jumped cleanly, staying level and with a great soft entry upon landing. Manoeuvring the boat back on to the pontoon is made easy with the addition of a

bow thruster you also have good vision when at the helm and the cleats are in the right places to attach fenders without too much effort (don't you just hate having to lean over or walk the sides?)

I think this boat is best described as being like an Aston Martin of the water, comfort, quality, and performance but with the slight air of that car you used to race your mates away from the lights in when you were in your teens. If I had the opportunity I would love to take the XRS37 along the coastline, it's a boat that needs to be used for what it's designed for,

**Specifications:**

LOA: ..... 11.35m / 37' 3"  
 Beam: ..... 2.59m / 8' 6"  
 Sleeping Accom: ..... 4 persons  
 Engine Options:  
 Twin Mercruiser 350 Magnum MPI petrol  
 Twin Mercruiser 496 Magnum HO petrol  
 Twin Volvo 260 HP D4 diesel  
 Twin Volvo 350 HP D6 diesel  
 Twin Yanmar 315/Bravo diesel  
 Propulsion: .....Stern drives

**Performance:**

Maximum Speed: .From 45 knots to 65 knots  
 Cruising speed: .....From 30 knots  
 Fuel capacity: .....680 litres / 150 gallons  
 Fresh water capacity: .....90 litres / 20 gallons  
 Cruising range: .....From 250 nm

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