

BOAT REPORT

WORLDLY WISE

Designed in Australia, tank-tested in Holland, built in Taiwan. The Ranger 47 has an international pedigree, and three years of worldwide sales to match.

RANGER Marine are one of Australia's established motorboat builders. They had already manufactured a 35 and 39 in their own country, but when they decided to move up the scale the decision was made to build the new models in Taiwan. Horizon Pacific were chosen as the Far Eastern end of this operation, and the 47, together with its 43ft and 50ft sister ships, became a joint venture between the two companies.

Since the deal was struck three years ago, more than 50 of the boats have been sold in Australia and the USA. When the first version to hit European shores arrived at the 1989 Southampton Boat Show, it immediately impressed us as a powerful sea boat with an expansive interior layout, and we were determined to put it through its paces at the earliest opportunity.

Design

Australians expect their boats to be tough. Exposed southern ocean coastlines produce heavy seas and, with the limited number of safe havens often having difficult entrance conditions, anyone wanting to undertake serious cruising has to have a boat capable of looking after itself. This is the philosophy behind all Ranger boats.

Designed by company boss David Kinsman and naval architect Marino Gomes, the 47 features medium-vee sections, with a midships deadrise of 18°, flattening off aft to a transom section of 12°. A broad chine flat has a slight down angle, giving extra planing lift and deflecting spray, but no further spray rails

RANGER 47



Photographs William Payne



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Our test boat was finished in Japanese light oak which gave a very open feel, although teak is on offer for the traditionalists. In fact, the Ranger 47 has a large internal volume which shows in every area, including both toilet compartments, each featuring a separate shower stall.

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are incorporated. Topsides forward are flared to give buoyancy in following seas, with an added bonus of extra working deck area. A shallow keel runs three-quarter length, giving directional stability and some protection when grounding. The designers also claim that the keel and chine flat reduce the tendency of the boat to roll, important on long passages in beam seas.

The hull was tank-tested at the Marin Institut of Utrecht, Holland, to check out its powering and performance characteristics. The results indicated a boat which would happily run up to more than 30 knots, but be comfortable at 20. The company wanted a form that could be extended or shortened, to allow three models of 43, 47 and 50ft to be produced from the same basic mould, and the viability of this was confirmed by the tests. The design has recently been given Det Norske Veritas certification.

Accommodation

Together with the other models in the series, the 47 is available in two different versions, Sundeck and Convertible. The latter designation refers to an aft-cockpit/flybridge boat. The former is an aft-cabin/aft-deck version, and this is the model we tested.

The accommodation is reached via five

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steps leading down from the aft deck into the saloon. We were immediately impressed by the very solid stainless steel bannisters to these steps — good handholds both inside and out are essential on any boat intended for serious sea passages. The saloon itself has a large L-shaped settee to port, a television cabinet also to port, and a two-seater settee to starboard. Headroom is generous at 6ft 8in, and the spacious feel is further enhanced by large windows, the side ones sliding for ventilation. The stowage space is not very adequate as there are only a couple of small lockers to port and no room under the seats.

The lower helm position is at the forward end of the saloon, to starboard. A solidly-mounted pedestal seat is comfortably placed for the wheel and controls. Engine instruments are well sited, as is the ready-use switch panel. We liked the two-speed rotary control for the windscreen wipers, though the wipers themselves were mounted too high to give a good view ahead, a design feature that is being rectified. The general view from the helm is good, except aft, where the stern deck dodgers block your vision.

A comprehensive electrical panel is mounted on the inboard end of the helm console. This is protected by a wooden door with a Perspex panel in it, but the panel is tinted, making it difficult to see through. A hatch beneath the wheel gives access to the main electrical distribution board. A half-height door alongside the helm leads out onto the sidedeck, which is useful for quick access when docking. The step under the door doubles as a locker, with a manual Henderson bilge pump inside.

Steps down from the saloon lead to a dinette

to port, with the galley opposite. The dinette features a large square table with hinging leaves, large enough for five or six people to sit around. The height of the table can be adjusted electrically; with it right down, the area could be used as a double berth, but surprisingly the length available is only 5ft 9in. Lockers are found under the settees, though getting at these is not easy. Storage here is completed by three small lockers which are located overhead.

Opposite, the galley is spacious and well-equipped, with a large fridge/freezer, microwave oven, and either gas or electric for the three-burner hob and oven, depending on whether the generator option is taken. Worktop space is ample, complemented by a deep double sink and a hidden rubbish bin. Storage is good, with two lockers and six drawers below the worktop, plus four lockers overhead. For a seagoing boat we would have expected these to provide for the positive location of crockery and glasses, though this could be added later.

The sole in this area is attractively and practically finished in teak with holly stripes. A hatch gives access to the bilge, and reveals that several of the skin fittings have been sited in the one location, a good safety feature. You also have access to the holding tank, and the shower water sump — though this has no lid, which could give rise to smells. We were also unimpressed by the paintwork revealed down here, which appears to have been splashed liberally over everything.

The boat's main toilet compartment is found to port. This has only one door, from the galley area, and we would have thought that with a little ingenuity a second door could connect it

Above left: our Technical Editor in company with the ship's Cats. Above: the Sundeck version of the 47 has a raised aft deck to facilitate the master cabin below. As a consequence, access to the flybridge is particularly easy.

RANGER 47

Ranger 47

Engines: Twin Caterpillar 3208TA diesels, 375hp at 2800rpm, V8 10,400cc

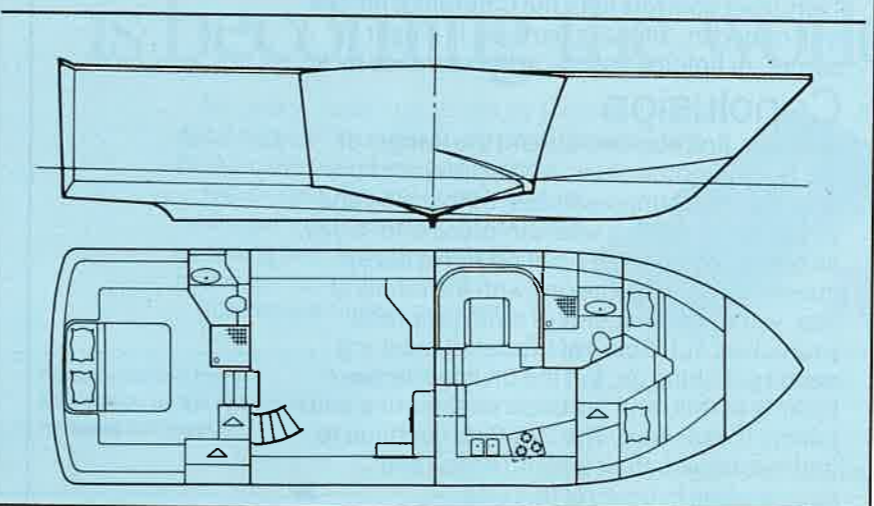
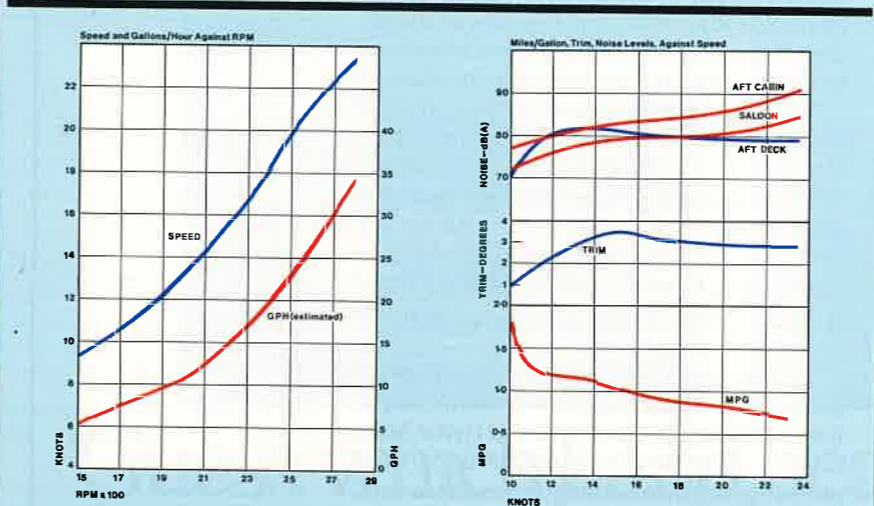
Conditions: Wind NE 3, sea slight. Load: Fuel 50%, water 100%, crew 4.

							Sound levels dB(A)			
rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	trim	saloon	aft cab	aft dk	fly bdg
1500	9.5	5.8	26.4	1.64	754	1.0	73	78	72	67
1750	11.0	8.6	38.2	1.28	589	2.0	75	79	78	71
2000	13.2	11.0	50.0	1.20	552	3.0	78	81	82	73
2250	16.1	16.4	74.6	0.98	451	3.5	80	84	81	74
2500	20.2	23.3	106.0	0.87	400	3.0	81	86	80	75
2800	23.5	34.3	156.0	0.69	317	3.0	85	92	80	77

LOA	52ft 6in (16.0m)	Fuel	Total Cap 460gal (2090lt)
Hull length	46ft 6in (14.17m)	Water	400gal (1820lt)
Waterline length	39ft 6in (12.04m)	Designers	David Kinsman/Marino Gomas
Beam	15ft 2in (4.62m)	Price ex VAT	
Draught	3ft 5in (1.04m)	with 2x 375 Caterpillar	£183,400
Displacement (approx)	16.75 tons	with 2x 425 Caterpillar	£190,800
		(generator £6500 extra)	

Builders:
Pacific Yacht Co, 8 Kuang Yang Street, Hsiao Kang, Kaohsiung, Taiwan. Tel: (886) 7 802 1203.
Ranger Marine, 2A McCarrs Creek Road, Church Point, New South Wales 2105, Australia. Tel: (02) 997 4111.

UK Supplier:
Alan Morgan Yachting, 27 Shamrock Way, Hythe Marina Village, Hythe, Hampshire SO4 6AA. Tel: 0703 845819.



directly to the forward cabin. The compartment is large, with a separate walk-in shower stall and generous headroom. The sink and surround are attractively finished in moulded marble-effect, while the WC is a somewhat noisy PAR electric unit.

Stowage here consists of a tall locker, which could do with a shelf in it, plus a locker under the sink. This rather untidily leads straight into a poorly finished area of the hull, which is not pretty, though it does give good access to the skin fittings. Similar comments apply to the locker door, whose poor finish lets down an otherwise high standard of workmanship throughout the boat. An opening hatch overhead gives light and ventilation.

Forward is a compact double cabin, with two large vee berths, 6ft 3in headroom, a large wardrobe, and several lockers under the berths. These again run straight out to the hull side, and revealed sawdust and shavings; removeable linings would be desirable. A hatch in the forward bulkhead gives access to the anchor locker. This has no seal round it, but three washboards should keep the chain in place.

At the after end of the boat is the master cabin, an expansive stateroom with en suite toilet. The bed is a large fore-and-aft double, while stowage comprises two full-height wardrobes plus plenty of lockers and drawers, though the former are shallow. The bathroom is large, and features a separate shower stall. The lockers are not so big, with the one under the sink full of pipes. Again an electric WC is fitted, but it is a pity the pipes and motor are not concealed. A sliding window and ventilator provide air.

Joinery on the 47 can be in either teak or Japanese light oak. Our test boat had the latter, and the effect was excellent. The craft felt light and open, with the woodwork well offset in the galley area by white Formica panels. Finish was of the high standard we have come to expect from Far Eastern yards.

Exterior

Immediate impressions are of a big and solid craft. Wide teak laid side-decks are bounded by 6in-high bulwarks amidships and tall strong guardrails. The latter are made from 1½in tubing, and we liked the fact that the top tube and the uprights are not welded together but joined with T-pieces. It may not look important when you buy the boat, but if you should damage a section, you will realise the benefit when you come to pay the bill for the replacement. We also liked the neat telescopic opening section amidships, though the supporting leg for the gate stanchions was a bit of a tripper.

Walking forward, you encounter a step up in the sidedecks, and from this point on there is no gunwale lip, which (together with the deck camber) will encourage feet and gear to slide off. The coachroof has a moulded non-slip

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surface, making it safe to walk across quickly. The foredeck working area is good, with a big electric windlass to handle a plough anchor which self-stows in the stem head platform.

The aft deck is a spacious area, also with a teak laid surface. Not a cheap option, this will always be the safest and most comfortable non-slip. The deck has loose chairs and a table, but needs some stowage area for fenders and warps, to take the place of the lazarette you would have on an aft-cockpit boat. Combined seat/lockers are the usual recommended solution to this problem.

The stainless steel rail continues all round, with GRP dodgers to keep off the wind and an opening section leading down to the bathing platform. Fender racks on the rail would be beneficial. Stainless steel bollards are fitted forward, midships and aft, but at 10in these could do with being upgraded one size. This is a big boat, with a lot of windage, and secure mooring points are a must.

A stainless steel and teak ladder leads up to the flybridge, another spacious entertaining area. The helm console is located centrally, with a four-person bench seat ahead of it, a further one astern, and another to port. All these have stowage lockers underneath, and the theme is continued by a huge locker to the right of the helm and further storage under the forward apron.

The driver has a complete set of engine repeaters ahead of him, together with twin-lever controls. Charts and instruments can be stowed under a lift-up hatch to starboard. The good high screen around the flybridge kept the wind off effectively while we were sitting down, even on the very gusty day of our test.

Engines

The 47 is available with a variety of power options, from twin 260hp to twin 550s, but preferred units for the UK are 3208 Caterpillars, either 375hp (as tested) or the updated 425s.

These compact V8s nestle unobtrusively in a generously-sized engineroom under the saloon. Access is gained either by lifting the steps down to the aft cabin or, for a quick look while underway, via a manhole at the forward end of the saloon. The latter is under the carpet, and would benefit from a cut-out to make things quicker.

Once in the compartment you have plenty of crouching space, and good access to all maintenance and service points. Seawater filters, stern glands and dipsticks can all be reached quickly, together with large Racor fuel filters, and an excellent fuel-management system for switching supply from either tank.

An aluminium treadplate walkway takes you up between the engines, but it is a shame that the large battery boxes are sited across its aft end: we liked the solid boxes and secure lids

but not their position. We also liked the excellent battery switch panel, and the colour-coded piping throughout the engineroom, together with an identification diagram on the bulkhead. We were less impressed by the soundproofing, which consisted of aluminium sheet with fibreglass insulation behind it in some areas, and nothing behind it on the fuel tanks. This is one item the UK importers intend to improve.

Handling and performance

The Ranger is a big boat, but the 375 Cats were well matched to the hull. On the day of our test we achieved 21½ knots, but the UK importers subsequently replaced the Taiwan props with a pair of four-bladed Monaco units from Power Propellers, which boosted the figure by just over 2 knots at the maximum 2800rpm. Acceleration was also good for a heavy boat, turning in 11.0 seconds for 0-20 knots.

Fuel consumption estimates would indicate 34.3gal per hour at the top speed, giving 0.69mpg, and a maximum range of 320 miles. Dropping to a cruising rpm of 2250 gives 16.1knots, 0.98mpg, and a range of 450 miles.

Noise levels were high. At top speed the saloon 85dB(A), the aft cabin 92dB(A). We have already mentioned the lack of sound proofing in the engineroom, and steps are being taken by the importers to increase this.

You would have to look hard to find weather that would trouble this boat, and regrettably the day of our test offered nothing taxing. Our trials took place at the end of last year, when the current crop of gales were not even a blip on the meteorologists' charts, but if the Australians are buying Rangers it would suggest they have adequate sea-keeping qualities for our waters.

Slow-speed handling was no problem. We could put the boat just where we wanted it. Even in the restricted waters of Hythe Marina Village using either engines or rudders for steering, despite some gusty cross-winds. Twin-lever controls kept the Caterpillar horses well reined in, allowing berthing in a tight corner, or holding station in the entrance lock.

Conclusion

When we first stepped aboard the Ranger at the Southampton show, it was the size of the boat that most impressed us, both inside and out, and this feeling was reinforced after a day on board. Whether day-sailing with a dozen guests or passage-making with the family at sea, you will have plenty of room to spread yourselves out. Some of the detail finishing needs polishing up, but the UK importers are looking at this, and the basic engineering and joinery is excellent. The 375 Cats continue to impress us with their smooth power and acceleration in boats of this size. ■