



Chris-Craft 25 Corsair

What do you mean, things ain't what they used to be? Here's a classy modern sports cuddy in period dress, from revered boatbuilders who have gone back to their roots. **REPORT BY JOHN WOOD**

highlights



DECK FITTINGS
Lots of teak and stainless steel are key to the boat's classic ambience.



FLARED BOW
It helps the boat look the part, and ensures there is plenty of beam in the cuddy cabin down below.

Mention the name Chris-Craft to any motorboater over the age of 50 and an involuntary smile will spread across their lips. Back in the 1960s, Chris-Craft were to American sports cruisers what Aston Martin were to cars.

Now, after a couple of decades spent languishing in the hotly contested mass market, this once proud marque has gone back to its roots in a brave bid to restore the glory days.

Their new range of retro-styled craft covers everything from a 22ft open-cockpit launch to a 43ft cruiser, but to our eyes the 25ft Corsair sports cuddy is the most relevant and appealing to UK boaters. It looks sensational

for starters, dressed up in copious quantities of traditional teak and chrome. A flared bow, tapered stern and minimalistic windscreen complete the image of a boat that wouldn't look out of place on the set of a Marilyn Monroe film.

But what's this? Almost £80,000 for a 25ft dayboat? We're afraid so. You can buy a basic Corsair for just over £50,000, but that would mean forgoing the wood and glitter Heritage styling pack, not to mention the beefier engine options. And frankly it would be hard to be the boat without them.

Even so, a fully kitted-up 25 Corsair needs to be something special to justify that price. And, as you'll discover, it is.

DESIGN & LAYOUT

Despite its drop-dead looks, the layout of the 25 Corsair is actually fairly conventional.

The cuddy cabin sits forward under the flat foredeck and, judging from its limited dimensions, is intended primarily for use as dry storage and comfort breaks on the portable toilet. However, a simple vee-berth arrangement means occasional overnighting is perfectly possible.

The cockpit has swivelling bucket seats forward and a wraparound bench aft with a neatly integrated bar.

Good quality GRP mouldings blend surprisingly well with the period teak and stainless steel fittings to create a convincingly classical ambience. For us, the only element that doesn't quite work are the deck-mounted horns. They are prone to spray in windy conditions, and vulnerable to damage from a stray warp.

POWER OPTIONS

A wide choice of both petrol and diesel single stern-drive engine installations is available.

decks

The cockpit is the key area on what is a day boat at heart, and its layout is conventional, with twin bucket seats forward and an L-shaped bench seat aft, with the option of a table.

One deviation from most modern sportsboats is the lack of a walk-through transom gate. Whether this is to stay true to the original design concept or to open up more options in the engineroom is unclear.

It seems a shame on a boat of this type that there isn't more provision for sunbathing beyond the aft sundeck. An infill to convert the



facilities Sink, fridge and coolbox are hidden within smart teak-topped mouldings and in an underfloor locker.

seating area into a sunpad would have been the obvious solution.

A moulded unit to port integrates both a sink, under a hinged lid, and a small locker. A bigger one to starboard houses the optional fridge, alongside another small locker. Topped by teak steps, both of these mouldings double as stairways down when boarding from alongside.

A large underfloor locker, set between the forward seats and opening on a gas strut, reveals a coolbox. The port section of the aft bench also includes a large carpeted locker which could take skis, and a draining locker that houses the battery master switch.

The forward passenger seat has a glove compartment, incorporating

the stereo system, just below a well-placed grabhandle.

Access to the bow is through the centre opening section of the windscreen, assisted by a moulded step. The anchor locker is a good size and you can opt for an electric windlass with remote control.



foredeck The anchor locker is large, and the teak toerail is both stylish and practical.



bathing platform A neat design incorporates a shower, a tow ring and a fold-out ladder.

BOAT REPORT Chris-Craft 25 Corsair • cuddy-cabin sportsboat • £79,216 as tested

accommodation



cabin The vee berths are wide but headroom is limited.

Access to the cuddy is through a double-hinge teak-slatted door and down one step.

Even though the flare of the bow allows a generous amount of under-deck space, the flat foredeck limits headroom inside.

Chris-Craft have kept it really simple down here, providing just vee-berths with an infill, and a recess for a portable toilet underneath.

Fittings are minimal, limited to a mirror in the bow and spot lights, but the first rate finish of the mouldings still succeed in giving the cuddy a surprisingly spacious feel.

Whether they will attract looks of envy or disapproval is another matter.

Setting the throttle at 4000rpm churns out a fast cruising speed of 35.4 knots, while 3000rpm gives a more relaxed 25.2 knots. Pick up from tickover is swift, punching the boat over the hump and onto the plane in short order. Good mid-range torque means you power through turns with minimal drop-off in pace and pull away smoothly.

Calm water meant we had only our own wash in which to test the ride, but Chris-Craft hulls have always proved seaworthy.

It certainly handles more like a relaxed gentleman's cruiser than a sensitive sportsboat, reacting faithfully to helm inputs without feeling jitterish. The DuoProp leg means that left-hand turns have a slightly larger turning circle, but cornering remains predictable and positive in either direction.

The helm and co-pilot's seats each have a lift-up bolster for a lean-back driving position. Whether you use this or remain seated, your comfort is guaranteed thanks to a wide range of seat and wheel adjustment.

Although the shallow screen does not wrap round the cockpit, protection from spray is sufficient for most conditions.



helm Modern function is expertly combined with a classic feel. Instruments and switches are set on a stainless steel background, and the gauges have a retro look, with fine graduations on a black background. Switches are set below, on another panel, flanking the steering wheel.

the rivals



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specifications

BUILD	glass-reinforced plastic
RCD	design category B
LENGTH OVERALL	25ft 0in (7.62m)
BEAM	8ft 6in (2.59m)
DRAUGHT	3ft 7in (1.09m) with leg down; 1ft 11in (0.58m) with leg up
DISPLACEMENT	2.1 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	69gal (311l)
ENGINE	single 315hp Volvo Penta 5.7 GXi V8 petrol
SUPPLIERS	Bates Wharf Marine Sales, Bridge Wharf, Chertsey, Surrey KT16 8LG. Tel: 01932 571141. www.bateswharf.co.uk
BUILDERS	Chris-Craft, 8161 15th Street East, Sarasota, Florida 34243, USA. Tel: +1 941 351 4900. www.chriscraft.com
PRICE	from £52,574 inc VAT; £79,216 as tested

conclusions

LAYOUT

A contemporary layout has been squeezed into a classic-looking boat, partly by using modern dimensions and partly by adding retro features. Though there is a cuddy, this is really a dayboat.

BUILD

At these prices, you expect a very well built craft, and that is what you get. The quality shows through in the attention to detail and price of the options, which are not for the faint-hearted.

PERFORMANCE

Even with a mid-range petrol engine option, the boat has plenty of pace to match its grace. Pick-up is swift and handling surefooted.

MBM's verdict

The Chris-Craft 25 Corsair is neither the most spacious nor the most exhilarating sportsboat available. If that's what you want, look elsewhere.

But if you are seeking something more special, something that captures the style and elegance of yesteryear with the convenience expected of a modern craft, this boat delivers by the bucket load.

It is a vessel for someone with money and style, just like Chris-Crafts always used to be.

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