



Boat Report

SHAKESPEARE 830

A British performance boatbuilder looks abroad for a styling revamp. But how well does Shakespeare translate into Italian?

The first Shakespeare styled in Italy not only plugs a gap in the company's range but also begins to redefine its image.

When Bill Shakespeare died in a powerboat racing accident, he left behind a range of runabouts which were to performance powerboats what the Austin Healey 'frog-eye' Sprite was to sportscars: not exactly pretty, but with a style all of their own.

Successful attempts were made to modernise the image, with the slightly bulbous bow of the original 18-footer giving way to a sleeker 20ft runabout which was seen in offshore competition, and the smaller Snipe, Sigma and Swallow designs of between 14ft 6in and 18ft following the same

lines. But by the time Francis Whitley bought the company in 1990, it had begun to stagnate again, starved of ideas and reinvestment capital.

Whitley quickly recruited successful raceboat designer Lorne Campbell to put some badly needed zip back into the company, which he did with performance-orientated monohulls of 21ft 3in and 31ft 5in, and catamarans of 18ft and 20ft. With the funds to ensure that quality boats get built, the Shakespeare name has been coming gently back into vogue.

Now, conscious of European styling developments, Whitley has looked further afield for his newest mid-range design, commissioning the

Top left: pure poetry? Italian styling has its way with a great British name. Left: the cockpit is white, trimmed with white, featuring a twin helm seat and a sunlounger which is raised electronically for access to the Mercruiser engines. Top right: swing the helm backrest forward and you create a cockpit dinette. Above: interior accommodation comprises a covered galley, comfortable vee seating which converts into a berth, and a compact toilet/shower.

young naval architect and stylist Brunello Acampora to develop a sportsboat which will reposition the company in the market.

Italian he may be, but Acampora is no stranger to England, having graduated from Southampton University, worked his long vacations at Cougar, and been responsible for the 1993 Cowes winner SM Racer. He is currently receiving plaudits for his catamaran Bilba, the fastest Class I raceboat on the water.

He has given the 830 a relatively broad beam, with a deadrise of 24° at the transom, flattening out forward, and the deep-vee running into compound curvature in the hull panels. His thinking was that this easily planing hull form would offer flexibility of power options — single or twin, diesel or petrol — and give a soft, stable and comfortable ride.

There is only so much one can do with a 27ft weekender, but the boat certainly approaches the design brief with brio and style.

It is the topside and deck arrangement which does most to single it out in a crowd, with its sexy curvilinear styling carried through the air-intake scoops and up into the cockpit surrounds and low-level screen. A fairly predictable distribution of space provides for an aft engineroom, a central cockpit and forward accommodation, but the curves carry over into the cockpit itself in an eye-catching way. There are also some really innovative ideas in

cockpit and interior, these owing as much to Shakespeare as to Acampora.

Hull and deck are constructed along fairly conventional lines, with a hand-laid E-glass/multi-axial/polyester reinforcement laminate surrounding balsa cores, and come with stainless steel pop-up cleats, foredeck and bathing platform handrails, forward chain locker, concealed boarding ladder and stainless steel rubrail.

Coloured-out in white, the engineroom can take anything from a single 240hp Yamaha diesel to twin 30hp Mercruiser petrol units. There are three heavy-duty 105Ah 12V batteries and a calorifier mounted outboard, and two 30gal polypropylene freshwater tanks on the forward bulkhead. The hatch, complete with its rolled sun cushions, is electronically operated from the helm.

The cockpit is trimmed in pure white throughout, and the monochrome effect is neat and not at all displeasing. As might be expected, the helm station is intelligently worked instrumentation displays, and all controls immediately to hand.

The twin-seat helm position is neatly engineered, with lifting cushions, covering stowage below, and a swivelling backrest, so that it can be reversed to face a dining table which swings up from the starboard coaming. The aft settee conceals access to both the fuel and power system switching, and the gas bottle compartment is forward to port. Extensive use is made of black-smoked plexiglass to disguise stowage areas.

Walking around the gunwale hardly produces any movement, though a little work in the moulding could have provided a useful handgrip around the screen. And the screen itself would benefit from being hinged at its lower corners, or entirely removable, as the area below it is bound to get grubby and/or wet, and is almost impossible to clean.

Although constrained by its sleek profile, the interior accommodation offers full sitting headroom, with a useful-sized double berth up in the vee below a circular Bomar hatch. To port is a fridge, a sink, a two-burner stove and a circuit-breaker panel, to starboard a hanging locker and toilet/shower compartment. Unlike some other boats of similar size, the 830 is beautifully fitted-out below decks, with white leather trim, and quality has not been compromised for the sake of cost.

Our test boat was fitted with twin 230hp Mercruiser V6 Magnums featuring the latest digital ignition system, neatly installed with copious surrounding space. Sadly the sea conditions were pancake-flat and windless, good for assessing acceleration but bad for confirming the builders' claims of soft riding in the rough.

With a full fuel complement of 60gal and the twin sprayrails on each side doing their job, the boat popped up easily onto the plane and accelerated progressively, clocking 0-30 knots in just over 12sec and reaching a top speed of 46.4 knots at 4900rpm, achieved with little fuss.

Dropping back to 4000rpm, we measured 37 knots on our radar gun, and fuel consumption of around 22gph (100lph), while 3000rpm maintained an easy cruising 26 knots. Sound levels were reasonably unobtrusive, panning out at 82dB(A) at cruising pace.

Extremely flexible through the rev range, the 830 gives the impression of running very flat, intentionally. Unlike deeper-vee hulls, it is not designed to derive much performance advantage by having the drives jacked out; this does marginally improve the ride at mid-range speeds, but gives only around 2-3 knots advantage at maximum revs and does little to bring the bow up.

The boat is responsive to throttles and trim-tabs, and handles predictably at high or low speeds, maintaining complete control and stability even when flung into tight turns. There was one moment, while we were exploring the edges of the handling envelope, that some lateral heel was promoted by the chine, which dug in and flicked the boat over itself to run on its topsides. One look at the shape of hull and topsides explains why, and it is certainly not something which should promote concern.

Whether you drive from a seated position or leaning into the backrest, the boat is comfortable to use and promotes a feeling of confidence.

With the full gamut of available extras, from shorepower and camper-top to VHF and electric anchor winch, the 830 hits the chequebook at close to £52,000 ex VAT, which is quite meaty for a weekender of its size. But it is built to a quality specification, so if you require more creature comforts with your sportsboating, then it could fit your bill. Its rakish lines and innovative interior treatment certainly make it a head-turner.

Shakespeare 830

Loa 27ft 0in (8.30m).
Beam 8ft 6in (2.59m).
Draught 3ft 3in (1.00m).
Displacement 3500kg.
Engines twin 230hp
 Mercruiser Magnum 262 V6s.
Price from £42,126 ex VAT;
 £51,205 as tested.

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The 830's sexy curvilinear styling extends from bow to stern, carried successfully through the cockpit area with the aid of a low level screen.

