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A WEEKEND WONDER

Easy on the driver, easy on the eye – the Palm Beach GT60 delivers lots of fun efficiently, says *Cecile Gauert*

It's the end of March, the pandemic has reached Florida and my inbox is quickly filling with Covid-19-related cancellations and postponements – except for one bright spot: an invitation to get a taste of the performance of the newly launched Palm Beach GT60.

Just before its debut at the Yacht & Brokerage show in Miami, hull No 1 of the 64ft GT60 was sold to repeat clients. Named *Dawn*, it had just returned from a maiden trip to the Bahamas, allowing builder Palm Beach Motor Yachts to show off the newest addition to its portfolio.

Palm Beach Motor Yachts (as in Palm Beach, Australia) builds a line of more classic boats from 43ft to 70ft and in 2018 introduced a more modern “supercar-inspired” dayboat, the GT50, which comes in both open and express versions. This is the next step: longer, wider, with space for a 10ft RIB fitted with a 20hp outboard in a garage, two large cabins and a complete galley – all with lots of headroom.

The GT series is the brainchild of company founder and competitive sailor Mark Richards, who established Palm Beach Motor Yachts in 1995 and since

2014 has taken over leadership of a larger group that includes Grand Banks.

I spot the boat and its shapely blue hull, slick hardtop and long bow at the end of a dock at the Old Port Cove Marina. The lines are pure, almost minimalist, as if molded by hand out of clay. It's an easy hop down on to a nice teak swim platform. Past the cockpit, set up with table, banquette, wet bar, cooktop and storage, I step into the salon and walk to the forward end of the deck, peeking down 7ft into the galley. I have to pause here because I can't believe the space. The windscreen is one piece of glass wrapping around the front of the deckhouse, which provides a fantastic view all around. The deck also gets great light and ventilation from electrically operated windows opening on both sides and a large sunroof above the helm. The air conditioning – a total of 56,000 BTUs in four units – works great, however, and is much appreciated on a hot, sunny day.

Bright sun and clear, blue sky notwithstanding, it's windy and the Atlantic is pretty riled up on this particular day. *Dawn* being someone's personal boat, the decision is made to take a dash down the Intracoastal Waterway instead of venturing out into the inhospitable ocean.

It's fine by me – what's better than an open seaway for some exhilarating speed? Right out of the no-wake zone, the boat gets to 38.4 knots without even trying. With optional twin 1,000hp 1350 IPS (the other option being 725hp Volvo Penta IPS950s), this boat's top speed is 42 knots and it happily cruises at 37 knots (although the official number is 35). The wake of a boat heading north as we speed



FULL THROTTLE

Fast and fun to drive, this GT60 is equipped with Garmin electronics and Volvo Penta IPS1350s for a top speed of 42 knots



south produces one of few significant bumps we encounter. The GT60 reacts with a solid thud, nothing dramatic causing me to levitate out of the helm bench, and if there are any vibrations, they've been absorbed by the insulation. The hull is built in composite with a foam core and the deck and superstructure are full carbon fiber. To minimize sound and vibrations, insulation is everywhere from the engine mounts to an acoustic layer under the teak floor. The company also favors Fischer Panda generators, because they run quietly, says Grand Banks' marketing director Joel Butler.

The GT60's hull is similar to that of all the Palm Beach yachts. "They are warped semi-displacement hulls, super fine at the

bow, then you get a nice, soft shoulder where the helm seat is, which rolls the waves away and then you go very flat in the aft section, so you have about six to eight degrees of deadrise in the transom depending on the model and a lot of stability at rest and under way," Butler says. "We keep the weight low, with a very low center of gravity and then we evenly distribute the weight longitudinally as well."

The engine blocks are positioned nearly amidships, and carbon shafts connect them to the pods for weight distribution and stability, which contributes to efficiency.

Fuel consumption varies with the sea conditions and load, of course, but at



CLASSIC TOUCH

A generous serving of teak adds warmth to the salon, the helm and the master cabin (top). A washer/dryer combo is hidden below the stairs



35 knots and fully loaded, it's a total of 75 gallons per hour with this larger engine package.

Another tenet of Palm Beach Motor Yachts is to make boating easier and it seems to me like anyone can feel comfortable at the helm of the GT60. The two-seat bench faces a user-friendly set-up. I appreciate the seat-down driving position, especially since the seat is so comfortable. The bench arms are in smoothly polished teak, which again, suggests a gentle human touch. While my knees are safely away from the console, I can easily reach everything on the dash. The boat is as easy to handle and as reactive as a car with muscle, but unlike most cars, it has no blind spot. An automated anchor and a joystick help ease mooring or docking procedures and you can just lean out of the window to tell a helper when to tie the lines.

ON BOARD



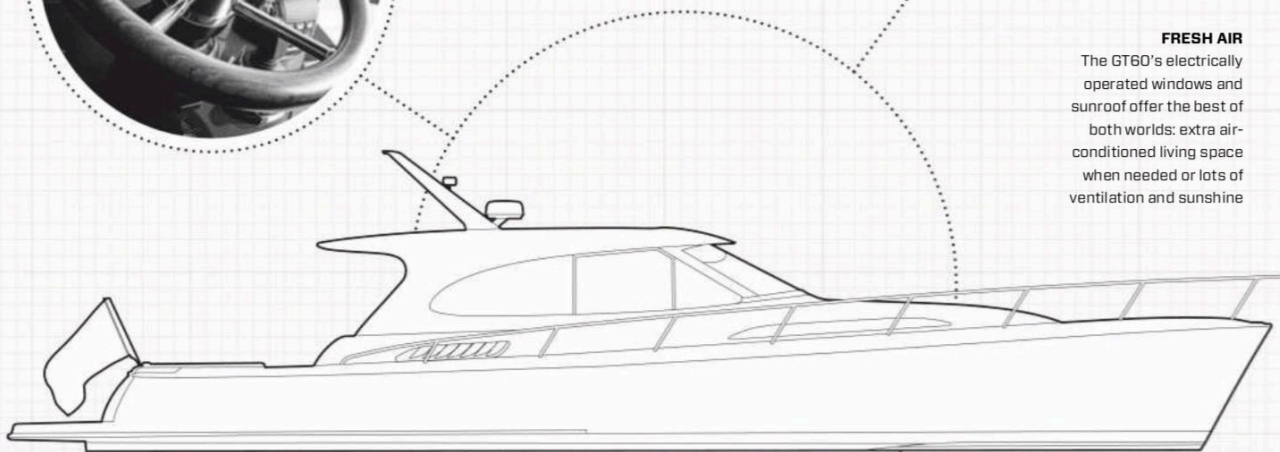
SMOOTH OPERATOR

Throughout the boat are beautiful details, such as this polished teak wheel with responsive steering



FRESH AIR

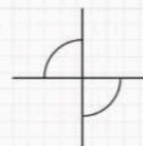
The GT60's electrically operated windows and sunroof offer the best of both worlds: extra air-conditioned living space when needed or lots of ventilation and sunshine



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SITTING PRETTY

The GT60 has very little bow rise and with its wide windscreen, the visibility is great, so the seating position on the very comfortable helm seat works just fine



SPECIFICATIONS

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| LOA 64' | Water capacity 264 gallons |
| Beam 17' 2" | Engines 2 x 1,000hp |
| Draft 3' 9" | Volvo Penta IPS 1350s |
| Displacement 21.5 tonnes | Top speed 42 knots |
| Speed (max/cruise) 42/35kts | Cruising speed 35 knots |
| Fuel capacity 845 gallons | Price from \$2,577,000 |

While the GT50 was conceived more as a dayboat, this is a true weekender that's perfect for two couples. Judiciously placed portholes bring more light below. A double berth in a V-shaped cabin is at the front and another large bed accessible from both sides is in a comfortable cabin opposite the galley. The two showers are full size. There is storage for suitcases and loads of closet space and drawers. The

galley is well equipped with a cooktop and induction oven but there is also the option to grill outside.

On this particular boat, the builder has used teak with a satin finish on cabinets and as accents, for a light, classic nautical veneer over a modern concept. The finish, however, is hardly relevant. "Every one of the boats is different," Butler says. "We are almost allergic to saying no."

Dining is in the main salon, with a convertible table and comfortable banquette, or out on the cockpit, which can be shaded with a bimini. The space also handily converts for sunbathing with an up-down table or could even be set up for fishing. And if you need to put some distance between yourself and the rest of the world, it will take you 400 nautical miles away on one tank of fuel in a hurry. ■