

Alto Bravo

By: Tom Thompson | Sunday, November 01, 1998 12:00:00 AM

Last updated: Wednesday, July 14, 2004 12:00:00 AM

Italy is synonymous with the word style. Everything the Italian people do has a certain unique flair that makes their products highly desirable. Take automobiles for example. Today, many cars look like they come from a cookie cutter, but Ferraris, Maseratis and Lamborghinis are a breed apart from the rest, with a look and feel unto their own.



So naturally, when it comes to boats, the Italians have an edge there, too. Most luxury yachts are head-turners, but then there's the Italian concept of a luxury yacht. A perfect example is the Azimut AZ 46, or Quarantasei, as they call it. Even at rest, this boat is kinetic. The lines flow, from the sweep of the sheer to the elliptical port lights and the curve of the electronics arch that blends with the flybridge.

Throughout the boat, gently flowing curves are the rule -- there are no harsh edges anywhere. And the wood accents are something to behold. The woods are finished with seven coats of a resilient varnish to give an appearance of considerable depth. This is no spray-on lacquer job but a meticulously applied finish that exemplifies the craftsmanship that has gone into this boat.

Mama Mia Bellezza!

Azimut's use of rich fabrics and wood tones in the Quarantasei make its main saloon warm and inviting. A large, U-shape settee is placed to starboard and faces a couch to port. An adjustable-height table opens to provide dining room for six. One particularly nice touch is the table service -- it's compliments of Azimut and is stored in a unique set of protective drawers in the base of the entertainment unit along the aft bulkhead.

The lower station is a work of art without detracting from the saloon's decor. Placed two steps above the main deck, the control console is a stylish quarter-circle arc that maintains the design

theme of the surroundings. The pedestal is molded of white fiberglass, and the instruments and controls are set on burled walnut panels. Even the helm seat has elan. It's double-wide and leather-trimmed, with a gently arcing backrest, and is placed on a wood pedestal.

A discussion of all things Italian is incomplete without bringing up the topic of food. To that end, the Quarantasei possesses a galley that is a gourmet's delight. A large, double-basin sink is set in a granite-finish countertop that has more surface area than some apartment countertops have. The electric stove cooktops are flush with it to provide additional workspace when not in use. A microwave is built into the wall of cabinetry above, which continues the wood accent of the saloon. The full-size refrigerator is hidden behind a large wooden cabinet door on the forward bulkhead.

The Quarantasei measures 48 feet, 6 inches overall. The hull length is 46 feet. It has a beam of 14 feet, 6 inches -- wide by European standards -- that provides space without compromise belowdecks for its luxurious accommodations. The Quarantasei is available in both a two- and three-cabin deck plan; our test boat had the two-cabin plan.

In the two-cabin version of the Quarantasei, both staterooms are approximately equal in size. A light touch of art deco styling prevails in the etched glass door panels, light fixtures and triple pane mirrors above the berths.

The separate but equal treatment extends to the heads, as well. Each head is identically equipped, down to the large circular shower stall with a curved Plexiglas door. The master suite does have one bonus -- a walk-in wardrobe where you can store a complete cruise's worth of clothing on hangers or in shelved compartments.

Both staterooms allow the generous entry of daylight through large, opening windows, not portholes. The master stateroom allows additional light to enter through two skylights in the deck.

Italian Stallion

The flybridge has a circular seating area that surrounds the two-person helm bench. At its center are a built-in circular cooler and a cabinet fitted with a hidden ice-maker and a wet bar sink. The helm console carries the same design as the lower station -- a white molded fiberglass pedestal with a walnut inlaid backing for instrumentation. The driver's position is just slightly to port of the center line, allowing for excellent visibility of all quarters. Just aft of the helm area is a huge sunpad. There is also a pair of large pads on the foredeck, so a boatload of sun worshipers can be accommodated at the same time.

The Quarantasei's cockpit sole is attractively finished teak and holly decking, as is the spiral stairway to the flybridge. There's a forward-facing bench seat on the transom with storage beneath. There is a pair of smoked Plexiglas access gates to the swim platform. They provide an extra measure of visibility when docking from the lower station.

Stern-in docking is the norm in Europe, and boats built there come standard with a passarelle for boarding. This feature performs double duty as an electro-hydraulic davit for handling water toys or a tender on the swim platform. A hatch in the cockpit sole allows for access to the engine room where a pair of 440 hp Caterpillar 3208 DI TA diesels reside. It's also where you'll find -- among other things -- a 135 gallon stainless steel freshwater tank. Headroom is at a premium, but side-to-side, there's ample area to work.

Grand Prix Driving

Through the use of underwater exhausts and extensive sound insulation, the noise level on the flybridge while under way is almost nil. What you hear is the splash of water against the hull and a muffled, but assertive rumble coming from the stern. Close your eyes and you could even envision that you were behind the wheel of an Italian sports car, which is just the way the Quarantasei handles. The 46 feels like a much smaller boat with a very smooth ride, as if it glides across the water.

The Quarantasei cruises 27 knots at 2,600 rpm, and has a top speed of 30 knots. At cruising speed, the fuel burn is 21.98 gph and projected range is approximately 560 miles to empty. The deep-V hull has a 19 degree deadrise that slices through chop and provides excellent directional stability. I hardly realized that we were running at planing speed. We passed a tugboat kicking up a wake that looked to be over four feet, and crossed it without a fuss. Just a slight dip and we continued on our way.

Acceleration from the Cats is solid and smooth. The turbos kicked in at about 1,900 rpm, but I hardly felt them. Time to plane averaged about seven seconds. Slow speed maneuvering is nimble, as well. Even though our test boat was not equipped with optional bow thrusters, docking was easy, considering the boat's size. The MicroCommander single-lever electronic throttles take some getting used to, but you'll like them once you've mastered the touch.

One minor fault with the Quarantasei -- there are no cupholders on the flybridge. It may be a trivial thing, but hasn't Detroit been telling us all along that those things are important? But I digress. This boat is Italian. I'm certainly not going to be the one to complain that Mona Lisa has a crooked smile.

*This article first appeared in the **November 1998** issue of **SEA Magazine**. All or parts of the information contained in this article might be outdated.*