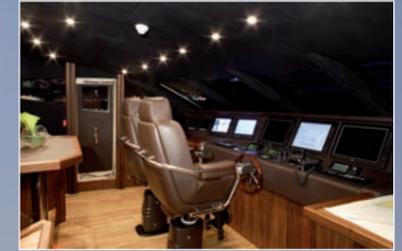


The Snapper

Sunseeker 37 tri-deck

Sunseeker has entered the big league with the launch of its 37 metre tri-deck superyacht. Tom Isitt went on board to assess this important, pioneering yacht.

Photography: running shot by Frances Howorth, interiors by Bugsy Gedlek





A delicious blend of rich walnut and capaccino to pale vanilla furnishings give the interior saloons and dining room a calm, cool and modern feel, perfect for charter guests



Sunseeker's new 37 metre tri-deck yacht is possibly the most important boat the company has ever built, and its launch at this year's London boat show was the moment when Sunseeker stepped up to the big league.

When the yard announced that it was going to build a tri-deck superyacht of over 36 metres, some industry experts were concerned that 'small' production-boat thinking and processes might be applied to the new model. Other production builders such as Azimut and Pershing have not faced this problem – they can draw on the experience of their larger stablemates (Benetti and CRN) to engineer their bigger semi-custom yachts. Sunseeker does not have that luxury. It has entered uncharted territory fraught with potential

dangers, and if it makes mistakes it is unlikely to gain the toehold in the superyacht market that it craves. Indeed, the yard might find that it has hit the metaphorical 'glass ceiling' at around the 30 metre mark. However, if it gets this project right we might be witnessing the start of a new era in European boatbuilding. Success will take Sunseeker to a new level of prestige and assure it a place at the top table.

'It's a bit of a cliché,' admitted Robert Braithwaite, chairman of Sunseeker, 'but I want to build the most beautiful boats in the world. To do this, and for the company to grow, we need a slice of the big-boat market.'

Of course it can be said that the 37 metre is already a success – the first yacht has been sold to Formula One race team magnate Eddie Jordan and orders have been placed for a

further seven. Development is not going to stop there, however. Sunseeker has already announced a 34 metre version, and is certain to have plans for more. Braithwaite said: 'The first 34 metre hull is under construction and we have sold eight already.' Understandably he won't be drawn into too much detail about future plans, but neither will he rule out projects over 40 metres. 'To go bigger than the 37 we need more space. I want to keep production on the South Coast of England, and realistically we won't see a bigger Sunseeker than the 37 for about four years, but that's a market I am very keen to tap into.'

The 37 metre is a distinctive-looking yacht, and, like many things that are new and radical, it grows on you. The naval architecture was in the hands of Don Shead,

the offshore powerboat champion, and Ewen Foster from Sunseeker. Foster said at the launch: 'I wanted to give the 37 an architectural look but without losing the Sunseeker identity. The exterior lines are pre-empting the look of future smaller boats, but this is an evolutionary process rather than a revolutionary one.'

Whether or not you like the yacht's appearance, you have to be impressed by its bold lines and the uncompromising vision that created them.

Braithwaite said: 'Ewen worked closely with Don and we drew on his huge experience designing boats up to 50 or 60 metres. We also brought in Stefan Whitmarsh as shipyard manager because of his wealth of experience working in some of the big Dutch yards.'

That experience really shows when you go aboard. Any fears about small-boat thinking creeping into big-boat production can be dismissed because *The Snapper* is a proper superyacht. She is RINA Commercial compliant, completed to new charter rules with the 'unrestricted' service notation, which is unique, and is the largest luxury yacht to be built to these rules. She is also MCA Large Yacht Code Level 2 compliant, necessary because the owner wants to be able to charter her for parts of the year.

Showing us over the yacht, Whitmarsh was obviously extremely proud of the way she had been built. 'I feel very happy that we've catered for every eventuality,' he said. 'We have full redundancy on all systems on board, we have a custom-made Tjssens

operation, alarm and monitoring system, and we have Trac at-anchor stabilisers. We've also made sure that there aren't any systems such as pumps under the floors of the guest accommodation, so that the crew does not have to disturb anyone if maintenance or repairs are necessary. This is very much a little ship rather than a big boat.'

Despite *The Snapper's* unusual exterior lines, the interior is laid out conventionally. The main deck's sizeable outdoor seating area aft is connected to the saloon by large sliding doors, while a small lobby area is separated from the saloon by a central unit that houses a large flat-screen television. This can face inward to the saloon or outward to the aft deck seating area. Extensive use of black American walnut woods gives the saloon a



Above: one of the yacht's two double guest cabins, with the bed set at an angle, is found on the lower deck. Its spacious shower room features his-and-hers washbasins

this layout. We are a French crew and for us it is important that we can all sit down together, so we asked for a bigger dinette. We asked if it was possible to move the stairs down to the crew quarters from the port side to the centre of the boat to give us a better galley and crew-quarter layout, and they did it. We asked for a water softener to make cleaning the boat easier, and we got that as well. I said to the owner, 'If the crew is happy then the guests are happy. If the guests are happy then the owner is happy.'

'I also wanted plenty of cold storage space because the owner likes to spend a lot of time at anchor and we cannot provision the yacht very often. With 19 people on board eating three meals a day, that's nearly 400 meals a week – you need a lot of storage.'

Back on the main deck, the owner's cabin is accessed from the lobby on the starboard side. This is a full-width room – large enough to accommodate an occasional table and a pair of easy chairs as well as the bed – that was created by running the side decks up and over the cabin. The walnut and cream décor continues here, and large windows let in a lot of natural light. A separate head is located on the starboard side opposite an enormous walk-in wardrobe-cum-dressing room, and the split-level bathroom forward has twin washbasins, a spa bath and a separate shower. On the lower deck the guest accommodation comprises two double cabins aft and two twin-bedded cabins forward – the twins are equipped with Pullman bunks to provide total accommodation for 12.



At first glance the owner's cabin does not feel large, until you realise that it incorporates a huge dressing room and heads opposite. The bathroom is on a different level forward of the bedroom

chic, contemporary look, and the large windows let in plenty of light. Large cream sofas on each side, and two pairs of matching armchairs fore and aft, are placed around two matching ottomans.

Further forward, the dining area is separated from the saloon by nothing more than a pair of floor-to-ceiling pillars but gives the impression of being completely different without losing the feeling of spaciousness. The large dining table seats 12 with ease, which Whitmarsh believes is important: 'On a boat like this you need to be able to seat all the guests together, whether in the saloon or the dining area. It's no use having to eat in shifts or having guests perching elsewhere to eat or socialise.' On either side of the dining

area, elegant sideboards in black walnut display interesting chequerboard panels.

The port-side galley is well equipped with Gaggenau appliances and includes a large central 'island' cooking station and a pantry containing a wine cooler, coffee maker and foodlift. The look is crisp and clean and entirely functional, designed as a place of work. Outside the galley, in the middle of the yacht, stairs lead down to the crew quarters, where there is a large communal area and galley and three cabins with double bunks.

'We had a lot of input into the design and layout of these areas,' said Patrick Miremont, *The Snapper's* French skipper. 'The owner asked me what I wanted, and after a few discussions with the yard we came up with

At the helm

Under the supervision of Captain John Freestone, one of two London river pilots, *The Snapper* headed quickly towards the Thames Barrier; her eager responses to the engine controls taking the pilots somewhat by surprise. On the bridge, it was necessary to check the engine revolutions on the control screens, such was the absence of sound and vibration. This is unusual on a yacht of this size and speed capabilities, although it must be noted that the bridge side doors were kept closed because of the cold outside temperature.

The yacht is highly responsive at slow manoeuvring speeds, reacting well to engine control commands, and you quickly learn to apply throttle with a light touch. Berthing and slow speed direction control is made particularly easy with a bow thruster of 100hp and a stern thruster of 65hp. Both are the result of a special build process initiated through the UK distributors of ABT Trac, Golden Arrow Marine, which has an established relationship with Sunseeker. We tested the bow thruster against a steady wind of 18 knots and she easily moved into it. The yacht is fitted with stabilisers that also come from ABT Trac, and they have proved highly effective in heavy seas even though the yacht clearly has good sea-keeping qualities. Indeed, during rough seas created by a Force 7 off the south coast of England, the stabilisers were switched off to test the handling – and the results were impressive. We did not get the opportunity to test the stabilisation while the yacht sat at anchor; but Captain Ben Young, the trials master with Sunseeker, told

us of an incident when, at anchor off the Sunk awaiting a London river pilot, the 11kW electro-hydraulic motor quickly kicked in once the main engines were turned off, and the stabilisers stopped the yacht from rolling despite the beam-on 1 metre swell.

In open waters, her trials crew say she handled well in moderate seas and achieved speeds of over 20 knots on her way into London for the boat show. Certainly during our time on board she demonstrated the excellent performance found on smaller Sunseekers coupled with handling characteristics found on large yachts, and the 37 metre will almost certainly become a highly successful addition to the company's range.

Michael Howorth



Stairs lead up from the lobby to the upper deck, where, in a surprisingly large saloon, guests can relax at the bar or on comfortable, large L-shaped cream sofas and two armchairs around a central ottoman. Further forward on the port side is another day head and a small galley linked to the main galley below by a food lift. Large sliding doors open on to a huge upper aft deck where another table is capable of seating 12 with ease.

The bridge's full Simrad communications and navigational instrumentation was specified by Captain Miremont, who said: 'I want a functional yacht. I need to see proof that things work, and experience has shown me that it is simpler to stick to one manufacturer. You do not want too many different systems and too many sub-contractors to deal with.'

The yacht's Tijssen monitoring and control system is accessible by the Sunseeker yard, which can log in remotely if there are problems. The system stores two years' worth of data so that if a problem continues to occur the yard can try to find a solution by reviewing the circumstances under which it has happened in the past.

The sundeck, accessed from the upper aft deck, is fully equipped with a bar on the port side, a dining table and chairs on the starboard side and a circular spa bath forward surrounded by an inviting lounging area. A good range of Ketal outdoor furniture aft can be moved around to suit guests' requirements. For those who like the wind in their hair while on the move, the foredeck's alfresco relaxation area is the ideal spot.

Finally, the engine room, accessed from the port-side deck, houses a pair of hefty 5,470hp MTU M90s that will cruise at 23 knots and power up to a maximum speed of 27 knots. This is a proper superyacht engine room, and the quality of the installation is excellent. All the main systems are backed up, and a pair of 70kW Kohler generators put out enough



A top speed of 27 knots is possible from the yacht's pair of powerful MTU M90 engines

power to light up a small city. The engine room has access to the tender garage, where a 6 metre RIB is stored with enough room either side for a pair of jet-skis.

The Sunseeker 37 has been put together with immense care and attention to detail – the equipment and systems are of a quality you would expect to see on a boat 10 metres

longer. 'You know me,' said Robert Braithwaite, with a twinkle in his eye, 'I'm a cautious man.' For a cautious man, he has made a bold statement of intent to the rest of the superyacht industry, and it would be a bold man to bet against Sunseeker successfully completing its move into the serious superyacht market. □

THE SNAPPER		
LOA 36.89m	Grey/blackwater capacity 1,350/1,450 litres	Classification RINA Commercial 100 A-1.1 'Y' MCA Large Yacht code
LWL 30.8m	Sewage system Hamann	Yacht management Sunseeker
Draught 2.4m	Fire-control system FM 200 (engine room)	Naval architect Don Shead/Sunseeker
Beam 8m	Alarm & monitoring system Tijssen Electro	Exterior styling Don Shead/Sunseeker
Displacement (full) 190 tonnes	Air-conditioning Dometic	Interior design Sunseeker
Engines 2 x MTU V12 4000 M90	Communication/ navigation electronics Simrad, V Sat,	Broker n/a
Propellers 2 x Rolla, fixed pitch	Entertainment systems Kalaidoscope server/Denon	Charter Camper & Nicholsons, London Tel:+44 (0) 20 7491 2950 E-mail: info@lon.cnyachts.com
Speed (max/cruise) 27/23 knots	Owner and guests 10 + 2	Charter rates £100,000 per week MYBA terms
Fuel capacity 22,000 litres (+ 5,800 optional)	Crew 8	Builder/year Sunseeker International/2007
Range 1,700nm at 12 knots	Tender Pascoe 6m	27-31 West Quay Road Poole BH15 1HX, UK Tel:+44 (0) 1202 381 111 Fax:+44 (0)1202 777005 E-mail: marketing@sunseeker.com
Thrusters ABT	Tender-launching system Sunseeker	Web: www.sunseeker.com
Stabilisers ABT Trac	Passerelle Opacmare	Price guide £11 million excluding VAT
Generators 2 x Kohler 70kW 380/220V	Gelcoat Lwellyn Ryland	
Watermaker Idromar, 5,000 litres per day	Construction Hand-laid GRP hull, infusion top sides	
Freshwater capacity 3,950 litres		