



Ranger Tugs R29

POWER AND GRACE ALL ROLLED INTO ONE

BY ROGER MCAFEE

THE SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL BOAT SHOW has become the venue of choice for builders introducing new trawlers, and the January 2009 show was no exception. Ranger Tugs of Kent, Washington, happy with the successful introduction of its 25-footer at the 2006 show, launched its new Ranger R29 this year.

The R29 builder is a family-run company owned by David Livingston, who is well known for the ubiquitous Livingston dinghies so prevalent up and down the West Coast.

Despite very difficult economic conditions, five of the new 29s were sold at the show and the company has been building two a month since then.

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

The R29 Sport has a husky, broad-

shouldered look. Bright, shiny and highly polished bronze portholes and port lights in the cabin walls give the vessel a unique touch. Finishing the overall, classic look is the cosmetic smokestack.

The appearance may be reminiscent of the “good old days,” but the construction is up to date. The hull is solid, hand-laid fiberglass both below and above the waterline. The decks and cabin are cored glass. All of the

windows and skylights (and there are plenty of them) are top-quality Diamond/Seaglaze.

The hull is semi-displacement; designed with the displacement sections forward. The planing sections and a reverse chine are located aft. This combination allows for good speed with modest power and excellent stability in high-speed turns or at rest. The vessel is also equipped with both bow and stern thrusters.

ON DECK

Access to the vessel can be either through a transom door off the swim step or via port and starboard built-in steps from the gunnel down to the



cockpit sole. Substantial stainless steel handrails make boarding easy and safe, and the swim step itself has high safety rails. It is positioned at about the same height as most floating docks, making it an easy step from dock to boat. This will be especially appreciated by boaters with small children or elderly parents. The decks themselves are cored glass with a molded-in nonskid pattern.

Moving forward from the cockpit along the narrow sidedeck is made possible by a cabin-top handrail, but this maneuver should not be done under way. Once you're on the foredeck, handrails provide good security. The foredeck can also be reached through a pilothouse sliding door at the starboard helm station or through an overhead hatch from the foc's'le.

The cockpit itself is relatively large and has a stainless sink,

with a pullout shower faucet in the transom coaming. Having water and a sink in the cockpit of a small boat is unusual and will be appreciated by experienced cruisers and avid fishermen alike. Another nice feature is the built-in steps hinged at the coaming that swing up to allow access to equipment and a relatively large stowage space tucked neatly under the steps.

INSIDE

Upon entering the deckhouse the first thing you'll notice is that the entire area is flooded with natural light. There are 10 windows and two bronze portholes in the cabin sides,

An Inside Look



TESTER'S OPINION:

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plus the large glass area in the cabin aft door. There are four overhead skylights in the main cabin, another in the foc's'le and one in a combined head/shower space. The flood of daylight gives the appearance of more window glass than fiberglass in the deckhouse.⁷

The layout is typical for boats this

size; a dinette converts to a berth along one side (in this case to port and the galley along the starboard side). There are two stainless sinks with a central, single faucet, which is an excellent feature. Once again an indication that Ranger designers are experienced boaters. The galley also boasts a propane stove with an

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SPECIFICATIONS

Length overall	29 ft.
w/swim step	33 ft.
Beam	10 ft.
Draft	28 in.
Fuel main	120 gals.
Fuel aux	30 gals.
Water	70 gals.
Height on trailer	13 ft., 2 in.

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Yanmar 260 HP diesel engine, bow and stern thruster for easy maneuverability, propane stove/oven, 2,500 watt inverter (quiet 110 power when away from the dock), island master berth, pilothouse door on starboard side for easy access to the bow and tie lines, level entry into the saloon from the cockpit w/no stairs, midship berth with privacy door sleeps two, large galley with plenty of storage, trailerable.

OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT

Wallas forced air diesel furnace, Garmin 5215 navigation package with radar, GPS, Sonar, Garmin autopilot for those longer cruises, 4kw Mase Generator, air conditioning and more.

CONSTRUCTION

The overall construction technique is modular in design. This eliminates the use of wood for stiffening. All bulkheads are fiberglass and part of the interior module or deck. The hull is hand laid solid fiberglass construction. They do not use any coring in the hull or stringer of the boat. The stringer system is a one-piece fiberglass stringer (no wood) that is laminated to the hull prior to the boat being removed from the mold. This prevents the hull from warping or deforming when removed from the mold. Ranger uses vinylester resin on the entire hull of the boat to prevent osmotic blistering. They even go as far as laminating solid lead ingots into the stringer system to bolt the engine to. This reduces vibration and noise and will last forever.

BUILDER

RANGER TUGS, Kent, WA; (253) 839-5213;
www.rangertugs.com.

oven, a built-in microwave, a 12-volt refrigerator/freezer and a temperature-controlled wine cooler that holds six bottles.

The forward cabin is bright and very spacious for a vessel of this size and comes complete with an island berth, and a separate head complete with a small vanity and shower. There is ample storage space for a cruising couple.

A second, midship berth is located under the dinette and immediately to port on entering the salon from the cockpit. It's not the usual dim, cramped, space one typically finds in a setup of this nature. It is larger and brighter, and the double mattress is large enough for an adult couple to sleep comfortably.

The helm station is forward of the galley, and a lookout seat is located forward of the dinette. Visibility from both seats is excellent all around.

A teak and holly cabin sole promises good wear, and the various items of teak trim are well fitted.

POWER

Our test vessel was equipped with a single 260 hp Yanmar 6BY2 inboard diesel. This six-cylinder, 694-pound, common-rail engine displaces only 183 cubic inches, yet at its continuous rating of 3600 rpm it produces 198 hp. At that speed it's still almost at the top of its torque curve.

The engine is freshwater, heat exchanger cooled and is also turbocharged and intercooled. It operated smoothly, starting quickly and without smell or smoke. That really should be no surprise since Yanmar built one of the world's first small commercial diesel engines 76 years ago. They've had time to get it right.

UNDER WAY

As expected with both a bow and stern thruster, moving away from the dock was no problem. At idle, 670 rpm, the small trawler ghosted along at 3 knots, burning just less than half a gallon per hour. At 1000 rpm the vessel made 4.5 knots, consuming .7 gallon per hour. At 1750 rpm we were making 7.2 knots and burning 2 gallons per hour.

At this speed I hauled out my deci-

bel meter to conduct a noise test (which is really unfair to small, lightly built trawlers). Vessels in this category don't have either the space or the weight allowance for a lot of sound insulation or baffling. At 1750 revs the noise level was 72 decibels — less than the average radio — and much quieter than I expected.

At 2500 rpm we moved along at 9.7 knots and burned 4.7 gallons per hour. At 3000 rpm our speed was 14 knots, and fuel burn was 7.3 gallons per hour. At the engine's continuous rating, 3600 rpm, we scooted along at 18 knots burning 9.8 gallons per hour.

At wide-open throttle — 4000 rpm — we topped out at 22.5 knots and were burning 12.7 gallons per hour. All test speeds were GPS generated.

Sea conditions at the time of our test were moderate and the vessel handled them well. We added in some wake and found that, even with the added wave height and sea confusion, the vessel was stable, solid and well behaved.

We took the way off, cranked the helm hard over and slowly accelerated to full throttle while keeping the helm hard over to port. The vessel picked up a very slight list to starboard until the engine reached about 1000 rpm and then flattened out and leaned slightly to port as it dug into the turn.

We straightened out and after reaching full speed, cranked the helm from hard port to hard starboard. The vessel carved the turns cleanly, without fuss or muss.

IN SUMMARY

The R29 represents a good step up from Ranger's R25. It is economical, capable of a good turn of speed and handles well. The designers have made smart use of space, and all equipment and gear can be easily accessed for routine service.

The ability of the vessel to comfortably live on a trailer substantially reduces operating costs while at the same time allows the vessel to be towed to distant cruising grounds. Tow vehicles get much better mileage than boats. Overall the Ranger R29 will turn out to be a winner. 🍀