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THE NEED FOR SPEED

The new Shogun 43 put
through her paces



Beautiful freak

Shogun Yachts cut quite a dash with the launch of the Shogun 50. A rather wild looking racer/cruiser. Its new 43 is no less exciting as *Sam Jefferson* discovered





I'm going to start this article by going back to the future. Hopefully most of you are old enough to remember the DeLorean DK 12. This was a 1980s white elephant of a car that cut quite a dash when it was launched thanks to its radical styling. So much so that it was featured in the film *Back to the Future* which those with extra long memories will recall involved the car hitting 88mph to travel in time. Anyway, the DeLorean and its rather wild styling was a central part of the plot and frankly it certainly looked the part – I recall as a child being mightily taken with the vehicle. Sadly, fantasy did not live up to reality. In real life the car was an absolute lemon that could only reach 85mph and bits generally fell off it every time you took it anywhere. In other words it wasn't nearly as fast as it looked.

Jump forward in time to 2023 and I'm on a quiet pontoon in Rosättra in the middle of Sweden. I'm eyeing up the new Shogun 43 a boat that looks like it was designed to re enter the stratosphere at Mach 10. The boat has a low freeboard and a big sail plan. More than that, though, the styling is truly radical. The dreadnought bow tipped with a long sprit features wave deflectors sculpted into the gun metal grey carbonfibre hull. Head aft and the stern terminates in a manner that can't help but remind me of the tail lights of a 1950s Cadillac. Moored as it is in the sober surroundings of a Swedish marina surrounded by more conventional yachts, this truly looks like something from another planet. As a child, I used to draw yachts all the time and I would have penned something like this on a particularly wild day when I was desperately trying to represent speed in a yacht. It's truly a fantasy boat.

Yet as I stand there gawping I can't help but think. Well, this boat had better bloody well be as quick as it looks. You can't possibly get away with styling a boat like this and then find yourself bumbling along at 5kts. A quick blast around the Stockholm archipelago later and I can confirm that it lives up to its insane looks by being life affirmingly quick. It's 200 light years from the DeLorean.



So what is this boat all about?

Shogun is a relatively new company that is the brainchild of entrepreneur Mats Bergryd who was the proprietor of the first ClubSwan 50. He noted a number of serious drawbacks in that boat and therefore turned to Swedish designer Håkan Södergren and his son Oskar to pen the lines for his dream boat. The result was the Shogun 50 – and that was a truly wild boat. The next step was to produce something a little less racer/cruiser and a little more cruiser/racer. The result is the Shogun 43. This is again designed by Håkan and Oskar Södergren. And this is the point where we go back to the past because, despite the radical styling of the Shogun, the boat is anchored in Swedish design traditions going back to the long, narrow Skerry cruisers that have graced the waters of the Baltic for more than a century.

ABOVE
The mast is stepped well aft, giving a big fore triangle

BELOW
Relatively narrow aft sections hark back to the Swedish Skerry cruisers

These absurdly slim, slippery boats had to accelerate quickly to deal with the restricted waters of the Swedish archipelago. They also looked great. Håkan Södergren was one of the designers in the 1970s who picked up his pen and carried on this tradition with more modern but equally narrow designs such as the *Lady Helmsman*. Light displacement yachts that were needle sharp and bewitchingly fast and beautiful.

The Shogun 43 is a long way from the *Lady Helmsman* but they share narrow lines, low freeboard and startling looks. The aim is the same too; sail fast and arrive in style. The Shogun has a 3.7m beam on a 12.3m waterline and a 6,330kg displacement. The ballast ratio is a healthy 43 per cent so she's stiff. Draft is a pretty hefty 2.4m but there is the option of choosing a more manageable 2.4m bulbed T-shaped keel. Despite the narrow aft sections,





there are twin rudders which are relatively shallow. Weight has been kept down by constructing the hull in carbonfibre with a Divinycell sandwich. The forward sections of the deck are unusually curved which provides far greater strength, and means a forward bulkhead is not required, which further saves on weight. The construction is the result of an unusual collaboration. While the hull is constructed by Swedish carbonfibre experts Vaxholm Komposite and Marstrom Composite, the boat is fitted out in collaboration with Linjett Yachts at their Rosättra Boatyard just north of Stockholm. Linjett has a reputation for superlative woodwork – in addition to excellent yachts – and Shogun therefore turned to them to ensure the interiors were fitted out in an exquisite manner.

And this is an important factor. Although the Shogun 43 is a true speed merchant, there has been a real effort to also make sure it is a practical cruiser. That fine finish in the interior is just one signpost but the fact that you can have this boat specced with a self-tacking headsail, asymmetric on a roller, plus a conventional shaped mainsail which eliminates the need for running backstays, means that the boat is easy to cruise – particularly if you go for the 2.4m keel. Marry that to 260l and 160l of fresh water and fuel tankage respectively and you have a capable cruiser. The elimination of running backstays is probably the real game



changer in that cocktail because many sailors find these seriously off-putting. I, however, tested the boat in its raciest form which meant a square-topped mainsail, running backstays and an overlapping headsail which was not on a furler. The rig is an all carbonfibre triple spreader affair with hydraulic vang, traveller and backstay deflectors.

On deck

The cockpit is roomy enough despite the relative narrowness of the yacht. The aft section is open and low to the water meaning a bathing platform would be rather superfluous. Right aft are the two winches for the running backstays and a relatively shallow set of lockers set into the cockpit sole. This is perhaps the least cruisey thing about the yacht as storage is relatively modest. Forward of this is the main traveller set just abaft the helm binnacles which feature chart plotters set in pods plus buttons for the electric winches, headsail furler and mainsail traveller. There is a nicely curved perch for

ABOVE
Fast sailing with one reef in

BELOW
Chart plotters set into the binnacles

the helmsman plus extremely well positioned and proportioned foot chocks which proved to be extremely practical. The helm can also easily access the second pair of winches for the mainsheet, positioned just forward of the helm. Ahead of this is the seating area/working 'pit' of the boat with a big canvas rope bin stretching across the cockpit sole and another further just in front of the companionway that is recessed into the deck. This combination worked to keep things in order. There are four more winches on the top of the coachroof for the headsails and two of these are electric. The headsail cars are set well inboard on the coachroof minimising the need for barber haulers – our boat had a second set of cars set outboard however.

Perhaps not unsurprisingly there was no provision for a cockpit table though the boat is in the semi custom bracket so I'm sure this could be arranged if you wanted a more cruisey version of the boat. Out onto the side decks and these are wide clad with Esthec, although the company representatives say that they will use a different synthetic teak on the next boat. The coachroof is reasonably low, is not wedge shaped but retains a height relatively far forward and also extends a good way forward making for a short foredeck with a lot of camber. There are padeyes set into the foredeck that permit you to rig a range of headsails and staysails if you wish plus a long, elegantly shaped sprit at the bow for setting kites. The anchor locker is well dimensioned and the anchor roller is set below the sprit low down in the stem – a very unusual arrangement. →





Down below

The shogun 50 had a very unusual interior layout with the galley set right forward in the boat and the saloon clearly prioritising sail handling. It was also very masculine with lots of carbonfibre. The 43 is a very different kettle of fish. The boat is light, bright and stylish in a much more conventional way that is extremely beguiling. The light comes in via three skylights set into the coachroof (also good for dumping sails through) plus, the lack of a forward bulkhead means the cabin feels open, light and free flowing. Dark floors contrast with light oak laminate on the walls. A distinctive feature is the leatherette headlining which is stitched and tessellated.

The saloon is roomy with two long settees and a large table set forward of the keel-stepped mast. Forward is as double berth with good width right up into the bows. There is no door between the forecabin and saloon, which gives the whole thing a nice airy feel but has a slight privacy problem.

Aft is an L-shaped galley with a four burner hob and double sink plus a decent sized top loading fridge. The chart table is to starboard but has no seat and aft of this is the heads. This is a large space but without a separate dedicated shower stall. The two doubles aft are spacious and generally nicer space than usual although the beds are quite low. The standard of finish is superb and the detailing is also excellent, with distinctive angled corners to the woodwork.

It's worth noting that most of the interior panels are carbonfibre sandwich with an oak veneer but flax has been use in places to fill the voids as this has excellent sound deadening qualities. And certainly

helped make the boat considerably less clattery than a number of other all carbonfibre yachts I have tested.

Under sail

Test day took place in the Stockholm archipelago which dished up sparkling conditions which included bright sunshine, torrential rain, winds gusting up to 23kts and then dropping away to virtually zero as we worked our way through various wind tunnels and dead spots. We headed out of the marina under power with the 40hp Volvo providing more than ample grunt given the weight of the boat. Yet we weren't under power for any longer than necessary and swiftly had the main up with a single reef plus 110 per cent overlapping headsail. This proved more than adequate in the somewhat wild conditions. We cracked off onto a close reach and the boat accelerated instantly and fell into an easy groove. I was fortunate to have people who knew precisely what they were doing on both headsail and mainsheet trim but the boat itself was also helping me out

ABOVE LEFT
A light, bright and reasonably conventional saloon layout

ABOVE
Impressively spacious aft cabins

BELOW
The performance was more than satisfactory

massively. I'm no racing helmsman and I must admit that a boat with a lack of feel can often make a monkey of me. This was the opposite, the boat was razor sharp and could be coaxed through the wild windshifts and gusts with absolute laser guided accuracy. In some of the gusts we were inevitably getting pinned hard over but never for a single moment did the boat flinch. It stayed on its toes in total control thanks to those twin rudders, and was arguably more reassuring than many of its more staid cruising sisters. We were generally going at around 9kts and, in the flat water, the boat was able to keep its way through the sometimes alarming and sudden lulls. What would have been infuriating in some yachts was rewarding in the 43.

Like many fast boats, the Shogun excelled when heeled hard over. Heeled over at 25 degrees is considered optimum. This was no problem at the helm as the foot chocks were superb. The boat could perhaps benefit from a foot bar in the cockpit as the crew found themselves scrambling for the rail in the big gusts. As a performance boat, the 43 did everything you could wish for; pointed high, overtook a motorboat, accelerated in a thrilling fashion, made me feel like a good helm and put a huge smile on my face. Heading down below while we were underway, I was also struck by how silent things were down there. No rattles, no creaks. Bearing away we decided that it truly was not the day for a Code 0 as the wind was simply all over the place. The boat still accelerated to 10+kts with ease. The crew said that the maximum they had got out the boat off the wind was 23.5kts and I have absolutely no reason to doubt them.





SAM'S VERDICT

This is a truly unusual boat and slightly confusing as it serves perfectly well as any other cruiser/racer but definitely has a certain 'X' factor that is intangible but also most definitely gives the boat presence. The performance is superb but the boat is far from an out and out racer. In detuned mode you could doublehand or even singlehand with ease. The interior is a really nice space

with a good ambience. The marriage of the skilled carpenters at Linjett's yard to do the interior fit out also makes for a superb feeling of quality. This is a highly unusual boat with a big price tag but it's also a superb boat and it's easy to be smitten.

PERFORMANCE: ★★★★★

BLUE WATER ABILITY: ★★★★★

LOOKS: ★★★★★

THE SPEC

LOA: 13.1m

LWL: 12.3m

Beam: 3.7m

Displacement: 6,100 kg

Bulb Weight: 2,660 kg (42%)

Draft: 2.4 / 2.7m

Main Sail: 65 sqm

Self-tacking Jib: 49 sqm

Fuel Tank: 140 L

Water Tank: 2x130 L

Category: A-Ocean

Price: Circa €1.1m (Inc VAT)

Contact: shogunyachts.com



ALTERNATIVE BOATS



BRENTA B 42

Italian boatbuilder Brenta has been turning out classy yachts for many years and its 42 footer is described as a daysailer. It's heavier than the Shogun with a more basic interior but it oozes style and promises to be no slouch.

b-yachts.com



CLUBSWAN 43

Coming out next year, this one design from the Finnish masters is guaranteed to be a speed merchant. Unlike her sisters, the Clubswan 50 and 36, this is a slightly less extreme design, with the manufacturer making more concessions to comfort.



NEO 430

The Neo 430 is an all carbonfibre cruiser/racer that boasts similarly startling looks as the Shogun and also combines speed with a decent level of cruising comfort. The boat is heavier than the Shogun but boasts a lifting keel that can reduce draft to a cruiser friendly 1.6m.

neoyachts.com