All-American

The newest Ocean Alexander shows just how far this Far East builder has come—literally. By Capt. Richard Thiel.

LOA: 70’ 6”
BEAM: 18’ 2”
DRAFT: 5’ 0”
DISPL.: 78,000 lb.
FUEL CAPACITY: 1,040 gal.
WATER CAPACITY: 300 gal.
TEST POWER: 2/900-hp Volvo Penta IPS 1200s
OPTIONAL POWER: none
TRANSMISSION: Volvo Penta IPS; 1.88 gear ratio
PROPELLERS: 30-inch Q-2s
GENERATOR: 2/20-kW Northern Lights
WARRANTY: One year
BASE PRICE: $3,750,000
PRICE AS TESTED: $4,200,000
A lot has changed in the marine industry since Alex Chueh launched the first Ocean Alexander back in 1978. Designed by Ed Monk Jr. and built in the Kaohsiung yard in Taiwan, the 50-footer struck a distinctly salty profile, with its lofty forward freeboard, covered side decks, and Portuguese bridge. With a displacement of 55,000 pounds, a beam of 15 feet 5 inches, and a nearly full-length keel, the first Ocean Alexander didn’t threaten any speed records at the time but like all of Monk’s boats, it excelled in seakeeping. And it was priced well below many of its competitors.

The boat and the company eventually became a success, but along the way they had to contend not only with competing vessels of the type but also with skepticism fed by considerable mendacity on the part of other builders seeking to explain away the boats’ attractive pricing. It was often claimed that Taiwanese boats were poorly built, poorly engineered, had inferior plumbing and electrical systems, or were just too heavy and slow. (Indeed, they were often comparatively heavy because the builders were so obsessed with creating a strong and durable laminate.)

Eventually the quality and engineering inherent in Taiwanese boats in general and Ocean Alexanders in particular overcame whatever brickbats competitors threw at them. In fact, as Taiwan’s economy matured and its labor rates rose, virtually erasing the vaunted price advantage they had once enjoyed, these boats were able to compete on an equal footing with those built anywhere else in the world—this even though they had to contend with the not-inconsiderable shipping costs required to bring them to America.

To see just how far Ocean Alexander has come from its humble beginnings you need only look at its latest model, the 70e. The e stands for evolution, something you see everywhere onboard this boat, starting with construction. Gone are the days when strength was equated with weight: The 70e is the first Ocean Alexander that is fully cored with high-density foam and resin infused throughout. From the cockpit to the helm, the Ocean Alexander 70 accomplishes single-level living while also providing some separate social spaces.
The boat is also quiet, benefiting from a variety of acoustical reduction methods designed to minimize interior sound levels, including a proprietary vibration-damping system for the gensets. (OA says that the 70E’s sound and vibration levels are at times one-half to one-tenth of the standards set by ISO 6954.) Propulsion has also evolved, well beyond that 50-footer’s straight-inboard configuration. The only package offered on the 70E is twin 900-horsepower Volvo Penta IPS1200s, the largest and most powerful pod drives currently offered by Volvo. Unfortunately, a glitch in our 70E’s hydraulic system on test day obviated a sea trial, so the performance numbers you see here have been supplied by Volvo Penta. The top speed of 28 knots is a benchmark owners of the 50 could only dream of, as is the superb maneuverability provided by the IPS propulsion and generous tankage. The boat is also quiet, benefiting from a variety of acoustical reduction methods designed to minimize interior sound levels, including a proprietary vibration-damping system for the gensets. (OA says that the 70E’s sound and vibration levels are at times one-half to one-tenth of the standards set by ISO 6954.)

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