

CARIBBEAN 40

POLISHED GEM

Australian boatbuilder Caribbean turns out legendary bluewater classics with a hard-won reputation for their seagoing ability. But it takes a deft touch and hard-core gamefishing experience to add the necessary hardware and refinements that convert a boat like this Caribbean 40 into a fishing weapon of the calibre that Nathan Ghosn and his team at Sylvania Marina are renowned for.

We are definitely in a time of change as the world opens up in ways never before seen. Our isolated island no longer affords the protection to our manufacturing industries it once did. Australians can therefore feel proud of our boatbuilding businesses, if only for the sheer fact of prospering in a new world order where imports are the norm.

International Marine, maker of Caribbean, is a case in point. Since 1958 this family-run operation has built more than 50,500 boats for generations of water-loving Aussies from their extensive factory at Scoresby in suburban Melbourne. Their broad range includes offshore fishing boats and extends from 5m trailerable sports boats to 15m flybridge cruisers. One of their most popular is the venerable 40 Hardtop, which has long been considered among the best choices for a flybridge gameboat. Trouble is, the factory has very traditional ideas about how they build their boats, and while it's great knowing that what you are getting is safe and strong, any suggestion that they change their modus operandi is likely to be ignored. Rather than offer customisation services at the factory, Caribbean are happy to leave it to their dealer base to individualise the boats.

AUTHOR AND PHOTOGRAPHY: JOHN FORD



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Above: The wide dash features a pair of 40cm Raymarine screens connected to a Raymarine 470 1kw dual range CHIRP sounder module, a Navionics Platinum map card and a 48NM radar.

Above right: The Caribbean 40's large cockpit provides plenty of space for heavy-tackle fishing, or even more if a chair is switched to a Reelax pedestal rodstation for stand-up fishing.

Below right: At the bow there's a 350kg ADC davit that easily launches a 3.6m Brig inflatable with a 40hp Honda outboard.

Bottom right: A moulded cabinet/baitstation to port at the cabin bulkhead provides a deep fridge/freezer and sink.

GAMEBOAT SPECIALIST

For the past 35 years, Sylvania Marina in Sydney has been the biggest-selling and most innovative of these dealers. This solves the issue facing those wanting a home-brand product with the proven back-up that such a choice brings, but with creature comforts and specialty fishing features often included on many imports.

The Caribbean 40 hardtop is an enduring flybridge cruiser and in standard trim it will suit many buyers looking for a weekend getaway and coastal voyager. It is also something of a blank canvas on which you can create your own bespoke fishing masterpiece, which is just what the owner of our test boat, Rod May, has done.

Let's not be too hard on the Caribbean team for sticking with a conservative model that works for them. The standard fit-out is very well executed, with fine attention to detail from the timberwork to the upholstery. Boasting a design with classic lines and proportions, the 40 is certainly big enough to command attention. The swept-back windscreen and minimalist hardtop also gives a contemporary impression aided by subtle sculptured lines along saloon the sides.

Standard layout is a twin cabin and single head that includes a private entrance from the master, which is generally acknowledged as the biggest in class.

Stand-up gamefishing is the main focus for Rod and so the boat is set up to reflect that passion, while leaving enough space to enjoy leisure time on board with his family during the off season.

COCKPIT FOR FISHING

The 40 has a 10.3-metre-square cockpit, providing plenty of room for a full crew in heavy-tackle mode, while the slimmed-down Reelax pedestal rodstation takes up less room than a chair. Standard features include lockers along the side decks and a moulded cabinet/baitstation to port at the cabin bulkhead that has a deep fridge/freezer and sink. The steps to the flybridge on the starboard side have also been



improved to now include wider moulded treads with cork inserts, making the climb easier and safer with wet shoes.

Modifications have enhanced fishability and added aesthetic appeal. Marine Deck 2000 synthetic flooring looks like teak, but is 200kg lighter in the cockpit and flybridge fit-out. Advantages over the natural material include better resistance to staining and being easily repairable. Rod says that a quick hose down from the deck wash is all that is needed at the end of the day to keep it looking new.

A hatch near the transom opens for inspection of the steering gear, also serving as a storage space for seldom used items. Further forward, a giant lazarette will handle anything from water toys to a barbecue, although it could be customised for rod racks or dive gear.

Access to the engines and separate utility room are inside the saloon and provision has been made to extract the engines if necessary. Bright LED lighting, coupled with gleaming white walls and the off-white Cummins engines, give the workspace a surgically-clean impression.



Above left: The master cabin in the bow features ducted air with an opulent innerspring queen bed, plus wardrobe space and under bed storage – all in a design that doesn't compromise the sea-taming hull shape. **Above centre:** The large moulded shower should comfortably fit the heftiest of crew. **Above right:** Combined with a starboard side cabinet, the galley offers loads of preparation space, storage and refrigeration.



Above: The L-shaped dining setting has room for six around a polished teak table. The long lounge opposite converts to a Pullman berth with a single over a double.

IMPROVEMENTS

Plumbing has been improved, as has the livebait tank at the transom with the addition of a window and light. Other notable additions include LED strip lighting fitted around the cockpit, underwater lights, six Reelax 60kg rodholders and a rocket launcher rod rack, as well as Reelax Mini outrigger bases with 6.5m fibreglass poles.

Moulded steps lead to the sidedeck where rails and handholds give a safe passageway to the bow. At the bow there's a 350kg ADC davit that easily launches a 3.6m Brig inflatable with a 40hp Honda outboard – a handy addition for fishing shallow waterways or heading ashore for lunch. Further forward, a Muir windlass deploys an 18kg Manson anchor.

A sturdy stainless and glass sliding door opens into the saloon, boasting a well-appointed light timber and cream leather finish. Layout retains the living space aft and a traditional lower-level galley front portside. While modern trends may dictate a rear galley, the 40's arrangement probably makes more sense in a gameboat as it allows more immediate and less restricted access to the cockpit during the action. It's amazing how quickly crew asleep on the lounges and floor can be on deck at the sound of a screaming reel!

SALOON LIFE

The L-shaped dining setting has room for six around a polished teak table. Sylvania Marina have also modified the window to the cockpit here so it now swings out wide to the cockpit, opening it to the breeze and allowing better interaction with the team outside.

The long lounge opposite converts to a Pullman berth with a single over a double, which lifts and can be used for rod storage of up to 12 outfits.

Combined with a starboard side cabinet, the galley offers loads of storage and refrigeration, as well as usable preparation space. It also gives the cook a dedicated place to work without impeding the walkway. Extra bling has been added with LED ribbon lighting, stainless-steel splashbacks and gloss timber facia. However, a convection microwave, four burner induction cooktop, 160L Eutectic fridge, 70L chest freezer and an Engle bar fridge are all standard features.

SLEEPING QUARTERS

Tucked into the bow is the master cabin where an opulent innerspring queen bed is custom fitted with Sheets Ahoy bedding. The island bed takes up most of the space and has steps for easier access. It's really about maximising bed size in a design that sensibly doesn't compromise on hull shape to allow more room inside. It still leaves wardrobe space and under bed

storage and, like the rest of the boat, ducted air keeps things nice and airy.

The second cabin has twin bunks, with the lower berth large enough for a couple. It's neatly finished with a soft hull lining and there's useful storage in a cupboard, as well as drawers and an overhead hatch with screen for ventilation.

Both cabins share the bathroom with additions of cork flooring, a granite benchtop, polished timber and a mirrored door. Hot water flows from a 30L tank with 240v or engine exchange heating. The large moulded shower should find approval from the heftiest of crew and there's a Vacuflush toilet connected to a holding tank. While I didn't find an extractor fan, there is a large roof hatch.

FLYBRIDGE HELM

Seaflex custom clears around the flybridge are a step up from the standard material, giving crystal-clear vision from the twin-helm seats. With an additional L-shaped lounge and a table at the front, it makes the area quite a social scene, especially as there's an Engle fridge on hand as well.

The wide dash has acres of room for specialised equipment and the pair of 40cm Raymarine screens look right at home. Connected to a Raymarine 470 1kw dual range CHIRP sounder module, a Navionics Platinum map card and a 48NM radar, you shouldn't have any trouble finding fish or the way home.

High-water bilge alarms, engine and cockpit cameras are optional features that add to the safe operation of the boat, and the alarms are a feature that Sylvania Marina strongly encourages. Nathan confessed he learnt first-hand from an incident at sea that nearly ended with the sinking of a boat he was skipping. He now recommends the fitting of high-water alarms

"The standard fit-out is very well executed, with fine attention to detail."



"The venerable 40 Hardtop has long been considered among the best choices for a flybridge gameboat."

> SPEC CHECK

CARIBBEAN 40

HIGHLIGHTS

Classic design with enduring looks.
 Fine fit-out with quality materials.
 Great sea boat with a high level of safety and a comfortable ride.
 Sensible power with economic fuel usage.

PRICED FROM

\$714,000

PERFORMANCE

Speed	RPM	Fuel
6.5kts	600rpm	6L/h
8kts	900rpm	13L/h
9kts	1000rpm	19L/h
15kts	1500rpm	70L/h (on the plane)
19kts	1800rpm	100L/h
22.5kts	2000rpm	116L/h
25kts	200rpm	139L/h
29kts	2400rpm	164L/h
31kts	2550rpm	192L/h (wide open throttle)

PRICED AS TESTED

\$867,400

OPTIONS FITTED

Electronics, cosmetic upgrades to galley and head, plumbed livebait tank, custom flybridge clears, outriggers, Reelax pedestal baitstation, bilge alarms, marine deck coverings, davit and Brig tender, among others.

GENERAL

Type: Monohull flybridge gameboat

Material: GRP

Length: 12.2m

Beam: 4.3m

Weight: 12,000kg

Draft: 1.15m

CAPACITIES

People: 17

Rec. HP: 2 x 500hp

Fuel: 2000L

Water: 650L

ENGINES

Make/model: 2 x Cummins QSC 500

Type: In-line 6-cylinder 4-stroke turbocharged diesel

Weight: 896kg each

Displacement: 8300cc

Gear ratio: 1:1.77

Propellers: 65cm four-blade Austral

MANUFACTURED BY:

International Marine

Scoresby, VIC

SUPPLIED BY:

Sylvania Marina

25 Harrow Street

Sylvania, NSW 2224

Ph: (02) 9522 7430

Email: nathan@caribbeanboats.com.au

www.caribbeanboats.com.au



after a bilge pump failure that saw something like 26,000L of water spill into the hold during a fight before he had even noticed. He likes an alarm monitor that shows the three float switches are working and lights in a custom panel to show all bilge pumps are doing their job.

Departing the dock was easily managed with the assistance of the optional bow thruster and the single-lever engine controls. The boat is well balanced in reverse and spins effortlessly, so chasing fish should be second nature after a bit of practice.

The Caribbean 40 makes an ideal gameboat due to great manners at sea – as our ride out of Sydney Harbour reinforced. A steady 2m swell was sending enough backwash from the cliffs to upset any boat not designed for rough water, and we were not disappointed in the performance.

The soft ride and purposeful progress through the water owes much to the influence of the original Bertram design from which modern Caribbean hulls originate. Introduced in the late 1990s, but with some subtle changes to the topsides of the Mk2 version, the hull retains its original lines and works as it should.

SENSIBLE POWER

Power is from a pair of Cummins QSC 500hp common-rail diesels, running 4-blade Austral 65cm props and delivering a wide-open-throttle speed of 31 knots at 2550rpm. Nathan told me later that he has been experimenting with some Veem props, reportedly delivering even better performance.

A 20-knot cruise at 2000rpm burning 116L/h would deliver a range of 349NM, while keeping a 10% fuel reserve. Pushing the speed to 25 knots and 2200rpm only decreased the range marginally to 323NM while burning 139L/h.

While 1000hp might seem conservative among some of the tournament fleet – and these figures won't win a race to the shelf on a mirror-calm day – for those seeking a pleasant and less costly ride, the Caribbean remains a sensible choice.

At \$867,400 fully loaded, the 40 represents good value in today's market, especially as they retain good resale value and are built for years of service. You can buy a basic boat for \$714,000 and join the thousands of Caribbean owners around the country who appreciate a well-crafted boat on a hull designed to take on the open ocean. 

Top: This rig was powered with a pair of Cummins QSC 500hp common-rail diesels, running 4-blade Austral 65cm props.

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