

# The **THRILL** of the **HUNT**<sub>32CC</sub>

*History* tells us that **luxury** and **center consoles** don't go together, but this new **32-footer** proves otherwise

By Dennis Caprio



## AT A GLANCE

**LOA:** 31 feet, 1 inch **BEAM:** 10 feet, 6 inches **DISPLACEMENT:** 9,000 pounds (fully loaded)  
**DRAFT:** 2 feet, 1 inch (props) **TRANSOM DEADRISE:** 21 degrees **POWER:** twin F250 Yamahas with controls, gauges, stainless props and Yamaha Helm Master joystick control (optional twin F300, F350 Yamahas; single Volvo Penta EVC 6.2 380-hp gas engine with jackshaft or OceanX sterndrive; single Volvo Penta D6 370-hp 6-cylinder diesel with jackshaft) **TANKAGE:** 225 gallons fuel, 25 gallons water, 15 gallons waste **PRICE:** (base) \$269,000; (as tested) \$310,000 **CONTACT:** Hunt Yachts, Portsmouth, Rhode Island, (401) 324-4201. [hunt-yachts.com](http://hunt-yachts.com)



Once upon a time, center console boats were bare-bone machines dedicated to the requirements of offshore — and inshore — fishing. Rod holders perforated the gunwales on both sides of the cockpit, and rod racks nestled in the hollows beneath. Hinged hatches in the cockpit sole opened a bait well here, a fishbox there. Hardcore center consoles had a dual seat at the helm, with a fold-up cushion that became a leaning post for runs out to the fishing grounds. Forget seating in the rest of the boat. That would infringe on the square footage of the deck and compromise the 360-degree fish-fighting arena.

The sprightly performance and utilitarian nature of a typical center console encouraged owners occasionally to invite family to join in the fun — a picnic on the beach, a quick trip to a harborside restaurant, swimming in a favorite cove — but that wasn't always an easy sell. Savvy boatbuilders recognized that they could broaden the appeal of the popular style by adding a few essential comforts. Hunt Yachts is one such builder, and the 32CC represents its take on today's luxurious center console.

Expanding the footprint of the console and placing a simple head within it has been the single most significant improvement in the usefulness of center console boats, but Hunt has taken the concept a step further. The design team extended the console on the port side all the way to the rail. Although this eliminated one passageway forward and aft, it allowed Hunt to provide a locker for fenders and open the interior of the console to house a small galley — *gallette* in Hunt-speak. Unlike many consoles with accommodations, the entrance to which is on the side or on the front, Hunt placed the companionway on the port side of the console facing aft, giving everyone safe access via a lockable pocket door and allowing easy communication between the galley and the cockpit.

The 32CC's beam of 10 feet, 6 inches permits standing headroom at the galley, to port, and in the head, which is on the starboard side. This wouldn't be the case on smaller, narrower center consoles because the bottom's angle of deadrise amidships would require the sole to be higher. That's why you usually find the minimal head on smaller boats placed near the centerline. Natural light from the open companionway, a port on each side and a one-way portlight in the console's front fascia turn night into day below deck. The area is bright even with the companionway door closed.

*Gallette* perfectly describes the 32CC's galley. It has a microwave, an icebox and a surprising amount of stowage in a locker at eye level and under the counter. Our test boat had a removable insulated soft-side cooler in the icebox — better than bags of ice, I'd say. Although the galley doesn't have a sink, you can use the one in the head to wash dishes, cups and flatware.



The console is protected by a Plexiglas windshield that diverts wind and keeps the noise level low. A table in the bow welcomes family lounging but can be removed and stowed when the fish are biting, so everyone stays happy.



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The controls are within easy reach, and the joystick makes low-speed maneuvering a snap. The 32CC is fast and quiet.

A fully functional head/shower and sump pump in a center console is the height of luxury. Closed off by a bifold door, it has standing headroom and enough area to be truly useful on this boat, rather than barely adequate. Although the 32CC has a freshwater shower at the transom, nothing beats a real shower on a chilly evening. The head has a molded sink, Corian countertop, electric freshwater toilet, towel rack, clothes hooks and a mirror.

The single berth lives under the foredeck. It's perfect for the solo angler who wants to spend the night aboard, and small children likely will find its cavelike coziness ideal for make-believe adventures. Racks on the inboard and outboard sides of the berth stow four fishing rods.

Outdoor spaces, however, are what make center consoles so appealing to the family. Hard-core anglers may thumb their nose at comfortable seating on deck, but non-fishing family and guests won't. Snugged up against the transom is a double seat, which folds on clever hinges that allow it to be completely out of the way in the stowed position. Removable corner seats at the transom are optional. The helm has a double seat, the cushion of which folds up to form a leaning post. Arm rests/bolsters pivot up and down and add to the feeling of safety in hard cornering or rough seas.

Abaft the helm seating is a molded multipurpose area. Our test boat had a sink, counter and optional DC refrigerator, but you may order the 32CC with the entertaining leaning post — it has an electric grill and inverter, drawers and cabinets— or the fishing leaning post — with a 30-gallon live well with top access, sink, tackle station, bait station, drawers and knife storage.

More luxury awaits guests in the forward area. Comfortable J-shaped seating has enough room for eight adults. The optional removable teak table on our boat would be the perfect spot to share lunch or evening cocktails with guests and family. The hook at the end of the seating on the starboard side encourages a person to lounge, feet up facing forward. At night, an electric candle, which lifts from the counter adjacent to the hook, will cast a romantic glow over the forward seating, which may make you wish you'd left the kids at home. A door in the starboard side base of the seating opens a storage area for fishing rods, a boat hook or other long items. Drink holders are everywhere, but my favorite was the one that folds down out of the backrest on the wraparound seating in the bow.

C&C Fiberglass Components, of Bristol, Rhode Island, molds all of the composite components in the Hunt 32CC. The bottom is a solid laminate; the topsides and deck are cored with PVC foam. The structure is lightweight and very stiff. Molding the complex deck required some ingenuity. In order to provide toe-kick beneath the starboard gunwale opposite the console, Hunt devised a removable box to complete the tooling on that side. When the molded part is ready to be popped, workers remove the box first, allowing the multifaceted part to lift from the tooling.

While Hunt Yachts president Peter Van Lancker and I chatted about the 32CC, the Yamaha F300 outboards had been idling unobtrusively on their Armstrong bracket. These 4.2-liter V-6 engines are very quiet, and the 60-degree angle between the banks of the cylinder block nearly eliminates vibration. Bore and stroke are equal, making them square in engine-speak. (Longer stroke than bore is undersquare; shorter stroke

than bore is oversquare.) I was jotting notes while the shore crew cast off our lines and Van Lancker tweaked the Yamaha Helm Master joystick control to ease us off the dock. "It looks like the engines are broken," Van Lancker said when I commented on the system's slick maneuvering. Indeed, they point in different directions to aim the thrust.

After we cleared the mooring area of Little Harbor Landing in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, Van Lancker opened the throttles to the stops. The 32CC gathered up her skirts and scooted toward the open waters of Narragansett Bay. The Hunt/Yamaha test data, recorded a few days before my time aboard, show a 0-to-20 mph (17.4 knots) time of 4.81 seconds. That was with two people aboard, full fuel and full water. Seems plenty quick to me, and the kick in the butt reinforced my impression.



The area abaft the helm can be equipped with an electric grill or a 30-gallon live well with top access. A pop-up electric candle (right) adds a cozy glow in the forward seating area once the crew's thoughts turn to relaxation.

We had less than 5 knots of wind and flat seas — quite pleasant conditions. We headed toward the Newport Bridge cruising at 4,000 rpm, or 30 knots. I recorded a sound level of 84 dB(A), and we didn't have to raise our voices much above normal to carry on a conversation. The Plexiglas windshield wraps around the helm area, reducing buffeting and wind noise. I reckon that's part of the reason she's quiet at speed. Van Lancker cycled through the trim-tab and outboard trim settings to demonstrate their effect on our speed and the boat's feel. We found a sweet spot at zero tab and engines trimmed out slightly. I watched our wake migrate aft as he made the adjustments.

Our top-speed run showed 50 knots, which impressed me, but I have no use for that much speed on the water. Although the boat is perfectly capable and easy to control at this speed, it seems like a wasted experience. I like to enjoy my surroundings and can't do that when my attention is glued to the patch of water ahead.

I took the helm and immediately slowed to 3,500 rpm, or 25 knots. Fuel burn at this speed was about 16 gallons an hour, or 1.8 mpg. The test data confirm that this is also the most fuel-efficient speed in smooth water. All bets are off when the wind and seas pick up. The hydraulic steering was creamy and precise. The 32CC responded immediately to the slightest input at the wheel but was in no way nervous. One of the boat's most impressive characteristics is its ability to remain on plane all the way down to about 10 knots. Although our fuel burn dropped to around 10 gph, the fuel efficiency suffered, falling to a little more than 1.1 mpg.

Typical of Hunt deep-vee hulls, the 32CC leaned into high-speed turns and held its line. At cruising speed, she cornered at a reasonable radius without scrubbing speed.

A combination of luxury and utility in a center console boat appeals to me, as it likely will to lots of folks who prefer smaller boats. The Hunt 32CC is beautifully finished, practical and fun to drive. ■