STORY BY CHRIS CASWELL PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILLY BLACK

This Luxury Cruiser Offers Comfortable Accommodations, Well-Thought-Out Systems, And A Wide Range Of Speed And Economy

Any conversation with David Marlow is like watching a seagull soaring over the wake of a yacht. It swoops and wheels, turns gracefully, and then, just as suddenly, breaks away in a new direction.

On a sea trial, we talk boats, of course. About Marlow yachts, certainly, but with enthusiasm and respect about other boats, too, whether a modern competitor or a nearly forgotten classic.

But the conversation may zig onto a tangent—why the idling thunder of a rare 427 Ford hot-rod engine is almost orgasmic, why winglets on business jets are such a great idea, why most sunglasses don't work worth a damn.

There is never a dull moment with David Marlow, which is why a Marlow boat review is always a special occasion. Most builders send the press out with anyone available: a temporary captain, a low-tenure salesman, an office secretary. David, on the other hand, is always present, if only to make sure that you "get it." So what does "get it" mean?

MARLOW 577 EXPLORER







It means that he wants you to understand that he eats, sleeps, and dreams about yachts. He's not a naval architect. He's not an engineer. He's not the VP of marketing. He is, first and foremost, a boat guy. A comment made centuries ago by the captain of a fishing schooner applies perfectly to David Marlow: "If you sawed that boy's head open, you'd find a boat inside."

With his new Marlow 57E Explorer, what he wants you to "get" is that this beautifully crafted and impeccably built yacht is remarkably—no, make that astonishingly—economical to run. At one point, we were moseying along at 8.6 knots and 900 rpm, and

Above: Protected by a fiberglass hard top, the 57E's flybridge includes seating for guests, as well as a console to port with an outdoor galley and barbecue. Left: The upper helm duplicates the lower electronics in a fiberglass console, with a dedicated waterproof chart table at the skipper's elbow.

I kept looking at the fuel-flow numbers on the Cat engine monitors.

"Nope, they're not broken," David said with a Cheshire cat grin. What they were reading is that we were using just 4gph.

Total.

Pull the throttles of the twin 1,150hp Cat C18s back to 700 rpm, and you're sliding along at just a freckle under 7 knots. While consuming a gallon per hour. Uno. Eins. One.

At that rate, we would have to cruise 9,642nm to empty the standard tanks. We could make two transatlantic crossings from Florida to England and have a comfy safety margin. All without flashing that Am Ex Platinum card at a fuel dock.

And yet, when it comes to getting the best moorings for the weekend or outrunning a line squall back to the harbor, the Marlow 57E picks up her skirts and hustles along at just under 30 knots. If that isn't best-of-all-worlds flexibility, well, I don't know what is.



Designed for comfortable entertaining, the saloon benefits from oversized windows and a built-in sofa that faces a pair of recliners.

CHANGE IS GOOD

Like all Marlow yachts, the 57E has benefited from David's constant tinkering. (The "E" designates a Euro reversed stern with protected platform.) In some cases, changes are as simple as making lockers bigger when David finds some space. Or rearranging the layout for more comfort. Or adding new standard equipment that he thinks everyone needs.

In the case of the 57E, the yacht started as a 53-footer (which is still available) and was stretched for more living space. After building 32 of the Marlow 53s, David just had to start fiddling. What he did was reduce the prismatic coefficient of the hull a smidgen, narrowing the waterline beam aft by about 8 inches and making the buttocks lines a little straighter. These are subtle changes, but David is a former ocean sailboat racing guy, and he understands the concept of reducing drag.

The second thing he did was make the prop pockets more efficient. The Marlow Explorers all incorporate his proprietary Velocijet Strut Keel, a combination of twin keels with prop pockets. The keels serve as roll dampers, while the pockets reduce the draft and make the propellers more effective.

By making the prop tunnels absolutely symmetrical, David created a nozzle effect, allowing him to drop the reduction gearing from 2.5:1 to 2:1. Our test boat was running a pair of 38-by-37-inch, five-bladed wheels with 105 percent surface area. (The blades of the propeller overlap slightly, achieving a surface area that is 5 percent greater than the area of a circle scribed by the blade tips.)

Still tinkering, David thinks he could increase the wheel size by 2 inches, since the engines are running at just over 90 percent load. On the other hand, at long-range, ocean-voyaging speeds of around 7–9 knots, they are running at just 1psi of turbo boost, which makes for a clean exhaust and good cylinder scouring. To hedge his bet, he's going to up the prop pitch by 1 inch, hoping for that delicate balance between economy and performance.

Our test boat was built for a previous Marlow owner who plans to do the Great Loop, and this hull is just about the largest that will fit under all the bridges and in the locks. To facilitate the owner's cruising plans, the electronics mast atop the arch folds down electrically to meet the clearance needed for the Chicago railway bridge (19 feet max), the lowest bridge on the Loop with no alternate route.

I will do the galley-here-dinette-there tour momentarily, but first let me tell you about a few things that impressed





me on the Marlow 57E. First, the pilothouse is truly the skipper's office as well as a gathering place under way, with a single Stidd helm chair for the skipper and a curving settee/dinette for guests. The dinette table doubles for laying out full-size charts, and the dashboard has more than enough room for all the electronics you can imagine (or afford!).

In this case, we had a pair of VEI monitors, plus the Cat readouts, a FLIR system, Twin Disc QuickShift throttle/shifters (fitted to accept the new Twin Disc joystick docking system currently under development), Above: The galley is just aft of the pilothouse, making this an ideal gathering place for guests during meal prep or while under way. Note the deep fiddles on all counters. Inset: Every inch of the 57E has been used for stowage; a fine example is this bar and china cabinet in one corner of the saloon. Left: The pilothouse is thoughtfully arranged for maximum efficiency and visibility, and guests can enjoy the passing scenery while seated at the dinette.

DC-powered Side-Power bow and stern thruster controls, plus a joystick for the emergency steering. The last of these operates a separate (third) hydraulic pump attached to the rudder linkage that is not powered up until needed; it is designed to give enough control for get-home capability. (The other two hydraulic pumps are for the power steering and the autopilot.)

Second, the galley is on the same level as the pilothouse, so no chef is going to feel left out, and there is an aft opening so the chef (or skipper) is still connected to the saloon. If I planned to make overnight passages on a regular basis, I would fit a light-tight screen aft of the pilothouse to reduce unwanted glare.

Down in the master suite, which spans the full beam amidships for the easiest motion at sea, the oversized shower impressed me—not just because I like long, hot



Above: All of the showers, including this one in the forward VIP cabin, are sized for real people. Right: The midship owner's stateroom is warm and inviting, with an en-suite head to port and two oversized hanging lockers out of sight to starboard.

showers without banging my elbows, but because the built-in seat cleverly provides good access to the Naiad stabilizer system. David Marlow also pays attention to details, such as the teak fiddles on the medicine cabinet shelves and the shoji screens on the ports for privacy.

Actually, David scores big points by having fiddles on all the galley counters to corral those inevitable spills, as well as on every other surface from nightstands to vanities.

REDUNDANCY, REDUNDANCY, REDUNDANCY

This is a three-stateroom, three-head layout, but the guest cabin to port is closed off with a bifold door. (The guest cabin is furnished with two bunks, including a large lower.) With the doors open, the foyer is immense, and you could use the bunks as a place to fold laundry from the concealed full-size Bosch washer and dryer.

The lazarette is finished to the same high yacht

standards found throughout, including a teak-andholly sole. While this space could be laid out as a comfortable crew cabin, the owner of this 57E specified a workshop with sink and storage. There is superb access to the batteries (solidly strapped down in boxes), steering gear, emergency pumps, and various systems in this glossy, gelcoated compartment that is almost museum-like in its tidiness.

Construction is dear to David Marlow's heart, because he's spent a great deal of time, energy, and money to perfect his Full Stack Infusion process, which permeates each fiber with precisely the right amount of resin under considerable vacuum. Each Marlow yacht has unidirectional stitched fibers, such as a hybrid Kevlar roving with Core-Cell foam, as the sandwich material bound with epoxy and vinyl-ester resins. The entire hull is cored; bulkheads, floors, and stringers are all sandwich construction, also vacuum-bagged, with unidirectional fibers for strength. The result is that Marlows are certified by ABS and Lloyd's Register and have achieved the Bureau Veritas "unrestricted navigation" category. This means they also carry a CE Category A "ocean" rating and meet NMMA/ABYC standards.

David Marlow, seaman that he is, believes almost fiercely in redundancy, so there are backups for



everything from water pumps to sea chests, of which there are two, connected with a 3-1/2-inch pipe. "It's hard to get a piece of plastic blocking two well-separated sea chests," he says. The only place where he doesn't have dual systems is on the steering—which has three backups! Another example of dual redundancy is the hydraulic power take-offs on both engines for running the stabilizers and crane.





Standard power for the Marlow 57E is a pair of 575hp Cat C9s, but our test boat had the largest option, 1,150hp Cat C18s, topping a list of choices that includes 700hp Cat C12s and 715hp Cummins QSM11s.

While you're standing in the engine room, take a look around and you'll see some of the items on the long inventory of standard equipment that Marlow Yachts puts aboard just because David doesn't think necessary gear should be optional. There is a powerful Headhunter freshwater pump that draws from fiberglass tanks built to USDA food-grade standards, and the fiberglass fuel tanks have sight gauges, sumps, and large clean-out ports. Above: Our test yacht had Cat C9s, with excellent access from the central walkway, protected by stainless steel rails. Left: Fuel manifolding is clearly marked, properly secured, and neatly routed for easy access and serviceability.

All of the copper piping for fuel, water, and hydraulic systems is color coded; the engine beds and risers are polished stainless that is flawlessly welded; and the gray/blackwater tanks have mil-spec OdorSafe hoses to keep the bilge fresh.

On the electrical side, the standard single 17kW Onan generator was increased with a second generator, a 21kW Onan on this yacht. But that's only the start of an electrical system that includes a Xantrex Trace 4,000-watt pure sine wave inverter, twin Charles Industries 50-amp isolation transformers, shorepower inlets both fore and aft, and dual (of course!) Glendinning Cablemasters for the shore cords. Other multiple goodies include dual Newmar battery chargers, a dual gypsy Maxwell anchor windlass, Kahlenberg dual air horns, and no fewer than five 3,700gph bilge pumps.

Also noticeable in the engine room is the care that Marlow takes to reduce noise and vibration. The lead/foam/fiberglass composite insulation knocked the noise level in the pilothouse to somewhere in the 60dBA range at long-range speeds.

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SKIING, ANYONE?

Unless the weather is nasty, I would spend my time on the flybridge of the 57, because it is both huge and comfortable. Two Stidd pedestal seats are protected by a Venturi windscreen topped by a sturdy stainless steel rail. Just aft is an L-shaped settee with fiberglass table, next to a console with a barbecue grill, sink, and fridge.

The fiberglass helm essentially duplicates the lower helm, but with an all-weather Lucite chart box for those belt-and-suspenders guys like me who always want paper charts nearby.

Aft, the boat deck easily handles the 12-foot Nautica center-console tender, launched by a proprietary Marlow hydraulic crane. Our test boat had a fiberglass hard top, beautifully finished with built-in lighting and speakers. The flybridge is reached from the pilothouse via open steps that don't block the view, or by means of gentle stairs from the cockpit.

Wide, covered side decks make line handling safer when it's raining, and the high bulwarks and double stainless steel rails forward add security when anchoring. Our test boat had optional shifter and thruster controls in a fold-out box in the cockpit bulkhead, but David notes that many owners are now choosing either plug-in or wireless controllers for flexibility.

Under way, the Marlow 57E Explorer is a delight. She slides along with no fuss, a testament to her slippery hull and faintly tapered aft sections. When the helicopter arrived for some aerial photos, the hammers went down, and we were off like a shot—or like a sporty cruiser, rather than an offshore voyager capable of nonstop ocean crossings.

At higher cruising speeds, I found she has a sweet spot around 2000–2100 rpm, giving her speeds in the 23- to 25-knot range using just 70 percent power for long engine life. This was not a man-against-theelements sea trial; the Gulf Stream was fairly benign, but we went through enough steep-sided wakes from large, hurrying sportfishing boats to know that this is going to be a pleasant yacht at sea.

Sitting in the helm seat next to David Marlow, who couldn't stop grinning as his newest creation zipped along at 30-ish knots for the aerial photos, it struck me that this is perhaps one of the few yachts featured in *PMM* from which you could water-ski. You might giggle at the thought, as I did, but the fact remains that this well-found craft offers speed when you need it, economy across a wide performance range, and the reliability and comfort you'd expect in a luxury cruising yacht.

MARLOW 57E EXPLORER

LOA	62' 2"
LWL	53'
BEAM	18' 2"
DRAFT	4' 11"
DISPLACEMENT	69,000 lb.
BRIDGE CLEARANCE	17' 8" (to top of arch)
FUEL	1,500 U.S. gal.
WATER	310 U.S. gal.
HOLDING TANK	120 U.S. gal.
GRAY WATER	120 U.S. gal.
GENERATOR	17kW Onan (standard)
ENGINES	Twin 575hp Cat
	C9s (standard); 1,150hp
	C18s (optional); 700hp
	C12s (optional); 715hp
	Cummins QSM11s (optional)
MAXIMUM SPEED	29.8 knots (with Cat C18s)
CRUISE SPEED	7.6 knots (with Cat C18s)
RANGE AT CRUISE SPEED	4,500nm (with Cat C18s)
DESIGNER	David Marlow
BUILDER	Marlow Yachts
BASE PRICE	\$1,443,000
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