

Leisure 27SL

TEST REPORT by Dave Greenwell

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When is a Leisure 27 not a Leisure 27? Answer — when it's a Mirage 2700. They are, in fact, the same. But the complications don't end there. Exactly ten years ago we reviewed the then Leisure 27 which was subsequently stretched to the Leisure 29 and was then taken over by Jaguar Yachts and became the Lynx 29.

History lesson over we can now turn to the current Leisure 27 SL which owes little to her predecessor of the same name. She is, in fact, only 25 feet 5 inches from stem to stern; the 27 comes from including her rudder in the measurement. Her beam is 9 feet 5 inches and she has a draft of either 3 feet 6 inches in twin keel form or 5 feet as a fin keeler. This makes her remarkably similar in size to the Sadler 26. But whereas the Leisure 27 has a displacement of 6,000lb, 2,850lb of which is accounted for in her keel, the Sadler 26 has a displacement of 4,800lb with ballast weighing 2,000lb.

As we rowed towards *Lyrn*, the Leisure 27 SL owned by Mr and Mrs Lloyd Batt who kindly allowed us to use her in our trials, first impression was that she was trimmed down by the bow. Closer inspection, however, showed that her bows down look is the result of her reverse sheer deck moulding, which tends to catch

the eye more than the hull to deck gunwale joint below her wide styling strip. But the reward for this rising deck line is full standing headroom below decks.

Her boarding ladder mounted on her transom is essential for easy boarding — like her smaller sister, the Leisure 23 SL, she has rather high topsides for her size. Once aboard, you step down into a comfortable, well protected cockpit which has a large locker to port, a gas locker aft and a main sheet traveller on a bridge deck across the companionway entrance. The cockpit is large enough to seat four when sailing in good weather, but when conditions become more lively, three in the cockpit is almost a crowd. Halcyards and so on are led back across to the cockpit but you still have to go forward to reef the main. *Lyrn* is fitted with a pair of substantial handrails on her coachroof, offered as an optional extra. For safety sake, however, we would regard these as essential equipment.

Using an owner's boat for our appraisal provides a chance to see exactly how the boat works in service and how she withstands the rigours of sailing. *Lyrn*, although a year old, had hardly lost her showroom polish and was a credit to her owners. Below decks her rich teak



finished woodwork contrasted well against the white of her internal mouldings and for a boat with a waterline length of just 21 feet, she is surprisingly spacious with a homely and comfortable feel.

She is proof that a boat of her size need not have a skimpy galley. Her galley is to port of the companionway and extends beneath the bridge deck, giving plenty of working surfaces, a gimbaled gas cooker with oven and lots of stowage. A very practical feature of the main saloon is the chart table which folds away, swinging up into a locker fitted with shelves for books and plotting instruments. This leaves a large area of the saloon for lounging in when in port and means that the navigator is not squeezed in and also does not interfere with anyone sleeping in the quarter berth when on night passage. Two settees, to port and starboard, serve as single berths and a central, two-leaf table completes the saloon furniture.

Sleeping accommodation for two is provided in the forward cabin, reached through a walkway between the heads compartment to starboard and an open topped wardrobe to port, forward of the main bulkhead. In all, she offers up to six berths, but more realistically she sleeps five.

When we sailed *Lyrn*, it was one of those days that started with a moderate breeze which gradually strengthened through the day. After dropping her mooring, we tested her manoeuvrability under power. She behaved well — she is equipped with a Volvo Penta 2002, 18 hp sited beneath the bridge deck — and showed no great vices apart from a tendency to pay off down wind when creeping forward at tickover. At the other end of the scale, she had power to spare at full throttle, easily reaching her displacement speed of just over 6 knots. As standard, the Leisure 27 SL has a 9.5 hp Volvo Penta 2001, which is perhaps adequate but leaving little in hand for rough conditions.

We began our sailing tests by setting the headsail which was bent on a roller reefing system. She sailed with confidence, tacking through the wind easily and tramping along at a good speed. She was not quite so

willing to sail under main alone and certainly didn't point so high but still remained perfectly manageable. With both sails set, she was well balanced and pointed high on the wind. As the wind increased, we gradually reduced sail by reefing the main and rolling in the headsail a little, keeping her sailing at comfortable angle of heel and with a nicely balanced helm. Indeed, with a little joggling of the sheets she would hold a course to windward with a free tiller. Hove to, she quietened right down, making just over a knot down wind. Overall, she is well behaved under sail but she will certainly tell you if you are over pressing her.

Talking to her owners, they were very happy with both the boat and the treatment they received from the builders. Leisure Yachts have adopted the policy of building each boat for a particular customer, rather than 'mass producing' them without the facility for variation. They are also quite happy for owners to visit their factory to see work in progress and can accommodate 'special' requirements not part of the standard boat.

Some say that it's impossible to build a comfortable family sailing cruiser with separate forecabin and heads and a good sailing performance in a boat under 27 feet. Leisure Yachts, with their 27 SL prove otherwise.



Above left: Good size galley to port. Above right: Fold-down chart table. Below: Main saloon looking forward.



Specification:

LOA: (hull)	25ft 5in
LWL:	21ft 0in
Draft — Twin:	3ft 6in
— Fin:	5ft 0in
Beam:	9ft 5in
Ballast:	2,850lb
Displacement:	6,000lb
Ballast ratio:	48 per cent
Mainsail:	155 sq ft
No 1 Genoa:	270 sq ft
No 2 Genoa:	210 sq ft
Working jib:	128 sq ft

Builder:

Leisure Yachts,
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