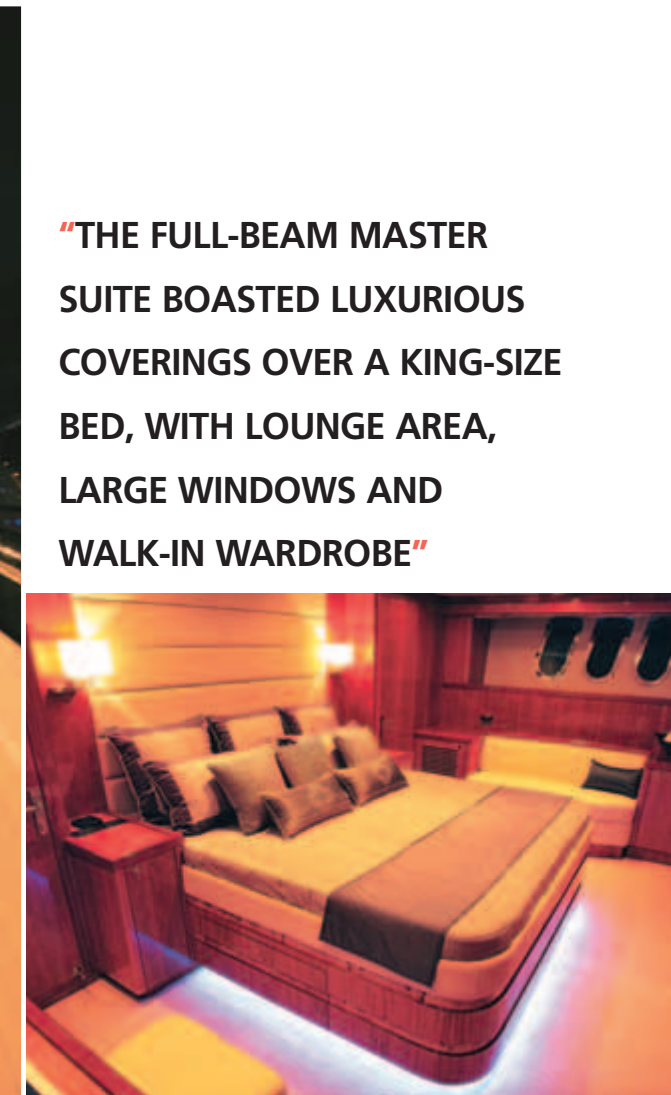
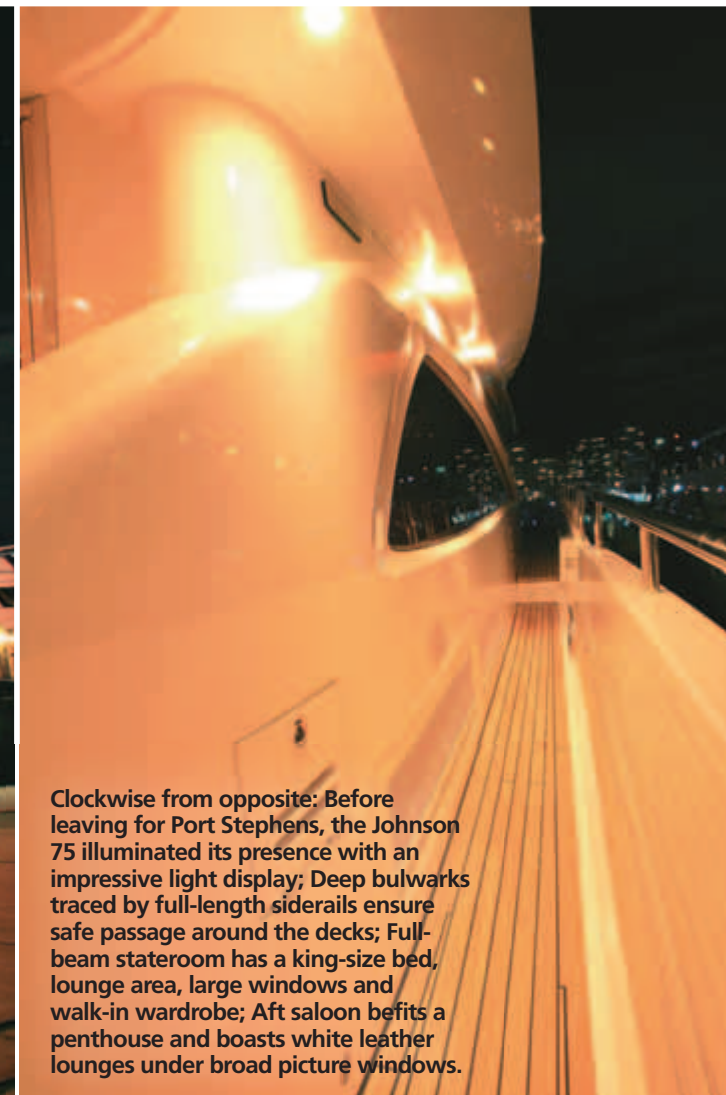


"I thought I'd died and gone to heaven," quips ALLAN WHITING after dipping his toes in the luxury motoryacht pool and coming away mightily impressed by the Johnson 75



Heaven
CAN WAIT



“THE FULL-BEAM MASTER SUITE BOASTED LUXURIOUS COVERINGS OVER A KING-SIZE BED, WITH LOUNGE AREA, LARGE WINDOWS AND WALK-IN WARDROBE”

Clockwise from opposite: Before leaving for Port Stephens, the Johnson 75 illuminated its presence with an impressive light display; Deep bulwarks traced by full-length siderails ensure safe passage around the decks; Full-beam stateroom has a king-size bed, lounge area, large windows and walk-in wardrobe; Aft saloon befits a penthouse and boasts white leather lounges under broad picture windows.

At *Trade-a-Boat* the demarcation is pretty clear: the editor does the powerboats and I get to do the yachts. However, sometimes the edges blur, mainly when there's too much of one boat type to be evaluated.

So, that's how I found myself walking along the dock at d'Albora Marina in magnificent Port Stephens, NSW, in search of a Johnson 75 powerboat.

I'd already been on the phone to Johnson's Paul Woolmer.

"Paul, where will the boat be?"

"Oh, you won't have any trouble finding it," was his confident reply, and so it turned out.

The Johnson's twin radomes rise nearly seven metres above the waterline, so the big 75 advertised its grand presence amid a cluster of vessels that, in any other company, would have been impressive.

In fact, the Johnson 75 filled a four-cruiser berth space and was separated from more humble boats, giving ample space around its hull for us to admire the beautiful lines. Big isn't always better, but the designers have done a superb job with this craft.

The proportions are so well balanced that,

while it has significant dock presence, the big Johnson looks smaller than its 23-metre overall length when you see it under way. Incidentally, the Johnson 75 has a broad beam of 6.3m, giving it more below-deck space than many of its competitors.

Johnson does two profiles for the 75: one is the 75-A with an open flybridge and the 75-B, our evaluation boat, with an enclosed flybridge.

THE PEARLY TRANSOM

We stepped onto the teak faced swim platform, up a broad flight of transom stairs and entered another world. Maybe, I thought, this is what it's like when old boats dip over the horizon of life and enter the port of heaven.

On this bright, early-summer morning the dazzle from the immaculate white gelcoat, the deep-gloss aft deck table and its highly polished, multi-adjustable stainless steel pedestals was blinding, softened only by the broad expanse of immaculately laid teak decking. Another blast of light reflected off the heavy stainless steel cabin doors — pneumatically sliding of course — so we plunged into the aft saloon for some respite.

There we found white leather lounges

contrasting with high-gloss finished cabinets and ceiling. With its popup, flatscreen TV/ DVD screen, sculptured glass ornamentation and extensive cocktail servery, it would have done a top-shelf apartment proud.

From the saloon we could see pale marble flooring extending for'ard, so we ventured into the kitchen, passing the day-use toilet on the way. This was no galley, being a home-sized food preparation area, complete with an L-shaped cupboard array, topped with black granite. An ice-making two-door LG fridge, Miele electric cooktop and microwave/convection oven, Fisher & Paykel dishwasher and U-Line wine cooler made for a state-of-the-art appliance collection.

Immediately for'ard of the kitchen was a raised dinette — marble floored of course — with adjustable tables and flanked by vertical square-framed windows that gave the area the feeling of a home rather than a boat.

From this area a stairway descended to the sleeping zones. The full-beam master suite boasted luxurious coverings over a king-size bed, with lounge area, large windows and walk-in wardrobe. Just outside this cabin was a recess housing a washer and dryer.





The VIP guest stateroom was situated forward, under a cunningly worked, wood-framed, round skylight. Marble-floored was the en suite, of course. Both these cabins also had flatscreen TVs.

Between the two main cabins were port and starboard guest cabins — one with double bed and one with a pair of singles — and both cabins opened into their own marble-trimmed en suites.

Naturally, the entire boat was air-conditioned, had central vacuum cleaning and carried a watermaker.

MAKING IT TICK

OK, we'd adjusted to the fact that the Johnson was a luxury home afloat — what about the go-bits.

From the galley we climbed the

marble, wood and stainless steel staircase (companionway would not be the correct word) to the enclosed flybridge, an enormous space with ample lounging room and sliding door access to the boat deck, with its BBQ module and Besenconi tender crane.

The steering station consisted of twin, powered, leather-covered captain's chairs behind a destroyer wheel and multi-screen console, flanked by a keyboard, throttle levers and polished wood cabinets. One screen caught our eyes, being a split display of camera images from the bow, the stern and the engine room.

Invited by the image of what looked like the ideal engine room, we went below, via a fireproof transom door, through another fireproof door into the home of twin MTU V10 1500hp diesels. On the way we passed

the remote steering station on the aft deck and twin-berth crew quarters behind the transom. The crew score an en suite and the same degree of fit and finish as the rest of the boat.

The engine room was in its own way as great an achievement of layout and style as the accommodation areas: everything accessible and brilliantly lit with 240V and 12V lighting. The work tables atop each engine made us wonder why all large vessels don't have them. Soundproofing, aluminium deckplate flooring and automatic fire control were installed.

Aft of the engine room was a storage area that again showed Johnson's attention to detail, housing an inertia storage reel for the deck washing hose.

BENEATH THE GLOSS

Johnson Motor Yachts Pty Ltd is a Taiwan-based, family owned business that has been operating for 21 years. The Kaohsiung shipyard was expanded in August 2007 and now occupies 21,500m² with a workforce of 260 people who produce between eight and 10 boats each year. Around half the production is shipped to the USA and the balance headed to Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

Johnson's track record is mainly in 15 to 20m motoryachts, but the range expanded with the release of the Johnson 87 in 2002. This boat was developed in response to requests from the company's US distributor and 16 have been delivered to the USA.

Since then, the company has successfully released the Johnson 103, while design and



HIGHS

- Exceptional high-quality fit and finish
- Home-like accommodation
- Stable performance

LOWS

- Having to walk away

development of the Johnson 125 are in their final stages.

These larger boats and the Johnson 75 were penned by British designer Bill Dixon, of Dixon Yacht Design.

STAMPED BY DNV

The construction process of all Johnson motoryachts is specified by the European branch of the NZ-based boat construction innovators, High Modulus, to meet strict Det Norske Veritas (DNV) rules. DNV is an independent foundation with the objective of safeguarding life, property and the environment that dates back to 1864, when it was established in Norway to inspect and evaluate the technical condition of Norwegian merchant vessels.

DNV classification is based on three main elements that apply to new-build and operational phases: setting standards; verification of compliance; and, documenting compliance.

In a new-build project, such as the Johnson 75, DNV reviews design plans and conducts



Opposite: Pale marble flooring extends from the saloon forward to the home-sized galley and raised dinette beyond. Above and above left: The VIP guest's stateroom features wraparound wood-framed windows and a similarly framed circular skylight above the queen-size bed. Below, right to left: Flybridge helm highlights include twin leather captain's chairs, destroyer wheel and multi-screen console to name a few; Thruster and throttle controls flank the helm console on high-gloss wood cabinetry.

surveys during construction. The scope covers hull structure, electrical and piping systems, engines, generator, steering gear, propellers and other major machinery components.

Construction of the Johnson 75 is fibreglass mat and roving with a balsa wood core for the hull above the waterline and the decks. Below the waterline the hull is solid fibreglass. The hull structure incorporates an outer layer of fibreglass, laminated with an anti-blisters resin.

The Johnson 75's equipment list is truly comprehensive and too long to print in its

entirety. The electronics package includes Nobeltec open array radar, In-View GPS and navigation PC with easily updatable programming, Simrad autopilot, Icom VHF, Ericsson phone/fax/data, Panasonic intercom, electronic gauges for fuel, water and waste, Trac stabiliser control, MTU electronic engine control and Maxwell auto-anchor.

Given the size of the Johnson 75, the designers opted for hydraulic sub-systems, rather than electric, so the thrusters, trim tabs, stabilisers, steering and windlass can't suffer



Taiwan's YACHT-BUILDING BUSINESS

The Taiwan Yacht Industry Association represents more than 50 associated shipyards that collectively have the greatest experience in motoryacht construction outside Europe and the USA.

Taiwan has accumulated an enormous amount of expertise in boatbuilding that has progressed in recent years from being based on cheap, highly skilled labour to include much greater technical ability.

Over the last few decades, the

most dynamic shipyards have gone from competing with the European industry merely on the basis of price to incorporating new construction technologies and higher quality control. However, the traditional Taiwanese ability to adapt designs to suit the wishes of each owner has been preserved.

Taiwan is currently the world's fourth largest producer of superyachts, behind Italy, the USA and Holland.



overload burnout.

Other items that impressed me included five-blade props, underwater exhausts, cathodic bonding to anodes, nine 225amp/h gel batteries with separate 12 and 24V chargers, easily scanned circuit breaker panels, colour-coded plumbing, freshwater vacuum toilet flushing and twin hot-water tanks.

OUT TO SEA

Johnson's demonstration skipper, Rob Trussell, showed how easy it was to manoeuvre the 75 out of its bay, using the main engines, aided ably by the powerful bow and sternthrusters. It backed and filled neatly, and spun in its own length to aim beyond the breakwater for the open waters of Port Stephens.

The week before, Trussell had brought the boat down from Queensland and had to moor it while a 30-knot westerly howled across his deck.

"It was a bit tricky," said Trussell, "but the thrusters worked well to keep the boat aligned perfectly."

Out on the bay he gave the throttles a prod and the big craft surged happily to 22kts. It lifted its nose slightly, the engine note rose to a pleasant hum as the turbos started to work harder. And no drinks were spilt.

Trussell wheeled the Johnson back and forth across some steep wake and there was almost no change in attitude, as the stabilisers did their thing.

Throttled back to 16kts, the Johnson settled into cruise mode and that's the speed he reckoned was the happiest compromise between fuel consumption and trip time.

"We sat around that speed coming down from the north and the boat loved it," said Trussell.

With the speed down to 10kts, which is

where most owners would be happy when pottering about in closed waters, the fuel consumption stabilised at 60lt/h. Not bad for 55 tonnes of luxury afloat on the move. There was also little disturbing wake at this speed.

I jumped aboard Allan Bridge's Riviera 40 to snap some photos and, from this perch, was instantly impressed by the 75's graceful appearance underway. Anyone looking to make a nautical statement could do a lot worse. But with the wicks of both boats well lit, we couldn't get past for a bow-on shot, so we had to plead with Rob to back off in the 75.

All too soon it was time to return to the marina, where the big Johnson demonstrated its agility in dockland, slipping neatly into its bay and holding station while the mooring lines were secured. The bow and stern cameras were a boon in this manoeuvre and twin electric stern capstans employed their amps effectively as the lines were tensioned.

With the big, beautiful Johnson 75 snugged down for the night it was time to return to reality, with many a departing glance as we trudged along the dock.



Johnson 75

PRICE AS TESTED

\$4,625,000 (a relative bargain because this boat was built when the A\$ was worth a lot more against the US\$)

GENERAL

Material: FRP/balsa sandwich hull and deck with monolithic FRP below waterline

Type: Monohull

Length overall: 22.87m

Waterline length: 19.17m

Beam: 6.3m

Draft: 1.87m

Weight: 55,000kg

CAPACITIES

Berths: Four doubles plus twin-berth crew cabins (other layouts optional)

Fuel: 6866lt

Water: 1280lt (75lt x two hot-water)

Holding tank: 378lt

ENGINES

Make/model: 2 x MTU 10V 2000 M93 diesel (Caterpillar optional)

Type: Shaft drive

Rated HP: 2 x 1500

Prop: 2 x fixed five-blade

SUPPLIED BY

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Clockwise from top:
The massive Johnson 75 made other craft look like lesser lights at d'Albora Marina, Port Stephens; Anchor chain passes through heavy-duty stainless steel fairleads with rollers; Transom's portside aft docking station is under a hatch; Brilliantly lit engine room houses twin V10 MTU diesels, each with its own worktable.