

PURE JOY

THE PRACTICAL BACK COVE 41 APPEARS TO BE A TRADITIONAL DOWN EASTER, BUT TECHNOLOGY AND CONSTRUCTION SET HER APART.
BY CAPT. BILL PIKE PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILLY BLACK



LOA: 46'6"
BEAM: 14'0"
DRAFT: 3'9"
DISPL.: 29,436 lb.
FUEL: 400 gal.
WATER: 150 gal.

TEST POWER: 1/600-hp Cummins QSC8.3 diesel
TRANSMISSIONS: ZF286A/2.39:1 ratio
PROPELLERS: 28 x 31 4-blade Nibrall
OPTIONAL POWER: 1/725-hp Volvo Penta D11 diesel
or 1/715-hp Cummins QSM11 diesel
GENERATOR: 9-kW Onan
WARRANTY: 1 year on materials and workmanship; 5
years on hull; 5 years on gelcoat below waterline
BASE PRICE: \$563,000



I was feeling the way I always do when a boathandling jackpot's bearing down. The feeling's a little paradoxical really, part pins-and-needles, part sporty anticipation. Not that there was much current to worry about—the tide was flooding Marker 1 Marina, in Dune-din, Florida, and we were close to high-water slack by the looks of the nearby seawalls. And the wind was no biggie either—it was light, just a ruffle now and then.

But the slip I was headed for? The darn thing was squeezed into a crowded little corner, with a gelcoat-eating concrete pier on one side, a prickly ol' sportfisherman on the other, and a fairway out in front that was, due to a miasma of bow pulpits and swim platforms, not even remotely wide enough to pivot our brand-new Back Cove 41 freely for a proper backdown. Indeed, the slip was such a bear that earlier that morning, just as we were about to depart for a sea trial in nearby St. Joseph Sound, Back Cove skipper Dave Weaver had advised: "Better let me take her out of here, Bill—dealing with a slip like this is bad news—lotta potential for screw ups."

But now Weaver'd changed his take on things apparently. As I eased our test boat back through the marina, with the sea trial on the sound over and done with, he was making nary a move to get behind the wheel again, most likely because he'd seen just how deeply the boat and I had bonded over the past couple of hours. "Go ahead and put her in the slip," he suggested. "You got it."

Bonding with the 41 had been easy. For starters, the boat had lots of oomph, thanks to a single 600-horsepower Cummins QSC8.3 diesel turning a big, 28-inch wheel through a deep, torque-boosting 2.39:1 gear ratio. On a virtually flat stretch of the sound, I'd measured a top hop of 27 knots and—even more significant for long-distance cruisers—a super-economical 1.5-gph fuel burn at a displacement-type speed of 7.5 knots.

The driving experience had been cool, too. Running attitudes were optimum throughout the rpm register, rising steadily from zip to 4 degrees at wide-open throttle. Turns were broad (as is typical of a single-engine powerboat), with an average tactical diameter of about four boat lengths. And the control interface was smooth and unencumbered. All I had to do was switch the optional Lenco automatic trim tabs on and I could drive with free-form simplicity, using just the wheel and the throttle.

Then finally, the 41's close-quarters handling characteristics had seemed pretty straightforward and confidence-inspiring as well, based on the half hour I'd spent maneuvering her on the edge of the sound, using a channel marker as a reference. Like any other single-engine vessel with a left-hand-turning wheel, she'd backed to starboard in slow-mo mode, swung to port through 360 degrees with just a couple of forward-reverse gear changeups, and taken a few more changeups when swinging in the opposite direction, an issue her two standard-issue, Side-Power proportional thrusters, one forward and the other aft, had dealt with quite handily.

"I'll keep an eye on the stern for you," said Weaver, as I stopped the 41 a good ways short of our slip and began a slow turn to port, so I could sneak the boat's nose into a vacant spot between two bow pulpits on the far side and start sidling sideways. With full left rudder, I juiced the throttle ahead for just a second to energize the rotation I'd started and then, after pulling the stick back and centering the rudder, applied a perfect whiff of stern-thruster action.

A two-burner electric cooktop and convection microwave make easy work of meal prep while sharing time with guests at the saloon dinette.

“Whoa,” I commented, enjoying the precision of it all, “this is lovely.”

Getting the transom lined up with the mouth of the slip was tricky and, at one point, I had to walk the boat sideways several feet with the thrusters, while simultaneously inching either forward or astern with the main engine to stay clear of various obstructions. But man oh man—when I eventually got the 41 safely parked in that dicey little slip, without having brushed a piling, swim platform, or bow pulpit even slightly, I experienced a serious shot of gratitude. And what’s more, I experienced a serious shot of admiration, too—the 41’s simple, thruster-augmented powerplant had performed spectacularly, with none of the roar, turbulence, and clumsy drama that pod-type propulsion systems often generate. Cool!

The tour of the 41 that followed was instructive. In the engine room, accessed via a gutted (and drained) cockpit hatch, I gladly encountered two sets of see-through, cross-linked poly fuel and water tanks. Sure, modern electronic or even mechanical fuel gauges work pretty well. But sighting a tank’s levels by eye is fail-safe reliable. Some other features I was glad to see included a bonding system comprised of #6 wire instead of the smaller #8 wire you commonly encounter, even on larger vessels; a giant, easy-to-understand fuel manifolding system; and, of course, oodles of elbow room, a trait that most, but certainly not all, single-engine powerboats share.

I ran into one engineering detail I didn’t much care for, though—access to the raw-water strainer for the genset (in a lazarette space immediately abaft the ER and accessed through a second cockpit hatch) was, to say the least, limited. “They need to move it out from behind the genset,” I told Weaver, “to a spot where it’s easier to clean and maintain.” He agreed, rather heartily I thought.

Aspects of construction I noted while checking out the ER were indicative of modern, highly sophisticated boatbuilding methods. Both the hull and the foam-cored longitudinals and athwartship members inside it, for example, had been simultaneously resin-infused in one shot—there was no secondary bonding. In addition, Corecell had been used to further boost panel strength, thereby making the hull’s bottom rock solid; Coosa board had been substituted for Corecell in way of all through-hull fittings to nix compression; and Weaver said a vinylester-impregnated skin coat had been applied to prevent print-through as well as osmotic blistering.

I was totally down with the practicality and elegance of the 41’s interior. Up forward and to starboard on the main deck, I found a set of cushy Stidd helmchairs, each mounted atop a stout fiberglass molding with a good bit of stowage (as well as an air-conditioning

Better Boat: Bookcases—What a Concept!

At one point during my examination of the saloon of the Back Cove 41, I made a semi-flabbergasting discovery—at the after end of the place, on both sides (starboard and port), up near the overhead, were what appeared to be bookcases! And when I use this term I mean, actual devices crafted from wood so that they can support old-fashioned, analog, can-be-read-even-by-candlelight artifacts that contain paper pages with words printed upon them. Oh yes, there was a flatscreen TV in the saloon as well—a thoroughly modern extravaganza that could be made to materialize from a clever hiding place. And there were charging ports all over the place too, with both 12-volt and USB receptacles. But bookcases? Big, beautiful bookcases? Perhaps we should expect nothing less from a manufacturer based in the sagacious state of Maine, where folks worship elegant, traditional styling, but temper their enthusiasms with old-school practicality? At any rate, I think so.



The use of cherry brightwork and a light-colored composite hull liner in the forward stateroom give a feel that’s both traditional and updated.

unit with plenum) inside. In addition, there was a small, L-shaped lounge opposite to port, an ample, U-shaped dinette farther aft to starboard and, just across the way, a long, chef-worthy galley with a cooktop, under-counter refrigerator, and a microwave oven, all nicely ensconced in some finely crafted, made-in-the-U.S.A. cabinetry. A feature I especially liked here was the door to starboard of the two Stidd seats—nothing facilitates docking a boat (or casting off, for that matter) like easy travels between helm station and side deck. And one more feature I especially liked—virtually everything I was looking at was standard. The 41’s got very, very few options.

Only a couple of steps took Weaver and I down to the accommodation space where there was an island-queen-equipped master all the way forward, with a shower-stall-accoutered head adjoining on the starboard side. Across the hallway, to port, was a somewhat less ample dayhead which also serves the guest stateroom, a comparatively large and luxurious space with a double bunk (running athwartship beneath the saloon sole), plenty of standing headroom, an opening port, hanging locker, a couple of drawers, and more fine made-in-the-U.S.A. cabinetry.

“Nice warm, bright interior,” I concluded, as we finished up, “but what really floats my boat is this baby’s dockside handling—I mean, with those two proportional thrusters and that big wheel she’s as maneuverable—maybe even more maneuverable—than a podster. And, by comparison, she’s gonna be both simpler mechanically and cheaper to buy and maintain.”

“Yup,” he replied, with a grin, “That’s just about it in a nutshell.” □

Back Cove Yachts, 207-594-8821; www.backcoveyachts.com



RPM	KNOTS	GPH	RANGE	dB(A)
600	5.0	0.5	3673	64
1000	7.5	1.5	1800	65
1500	9.2	5.1	649	72
2000	15.2	12.1	449	74
2500	20.8	20.3	369	78
3000	26.6	31.6	303	84
3030	27.0	32.4	300	86

TEST CONDITIONS: Air temperature: 70°F; humidity 78%; seas: 1-2'; wind: 5-8 knots; load: 380 gal. fuel, 75 gal. water, 3 persons, 150 lb. gear. Speeds are two-way averages measured with Garmin GPS. GPH taken from Cummins display. Range is based on 90% of advertised fuel capacity. Sound levels taken at the helm. 65 dB(A) is the level of normal conversation.

NOTEWORTHY OPTIONS: Blue hull color (\$5,150); Ultrasuede upholstery (\$4,650); Lenco auto tabs (\$3,100)