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NEW BOAT TEST

Sea change

Sirius's latest 40-footer sets a new cruising standard



Nominated for
Blue Water Cruiser
of the Year





PERFECT STRANGER

With Brutalist presence, the Sirius 40 DS dares to be different but, just as importantly, *Sam Jefferson* finds her a hugely capable cruiser

A short story before we get down to brass tacks here. Back in the 1980s the Schmidt family was heading off for a quick yachting holiday. Given that they owned and ran the Sirius boatyard in the north of Germany between Hamburg and Kiel and they were cruising their local baltic waters, this was very much a busman's holiday.

After a week largely spent huddling down below while a frigid drizzle gently pattered down, the Schmidts returned. At this point Peter Schmidt, the patriarch and founder of the Sirius factory, felt that it was time for an agonising reappraisal of what a cruising yacht should be all about. Back at the boatyard, he took one look at the coachroof of the Sirius 31 in build and ordered it to be chopped off. No, the drizzly family holiday hadn't pushed him off his rocker; he just wanted a lighter, roomier, more sociable deck saloon added. It was a pioneering move and proved to be an instant hit. Suddenly the whole focus of Sirius Yachts had shifted.

Fast forward 27 years and Sirius has become the absolute specialist when it comes to deck saloon

yachts. Given that the company claims to have invented the term, it's only fair that they should be one of the market leaders.

Peter Schmidt's son, Torsten, who takes a most meticulous approach to boatbuilding, now runs the business. After commissioning the first Sirius 40, he spent 11½ weeks sailing and living aboard her to pick up on any faults. His approach to customer service is similarly

their current range of yachts has also been picking up plaudits from all corners, despite what can only be described as fairly individual looks.

The 40 is the newest and largest of the Sirius range, and was designed by Marc-Oliver von Ahlen. His previous work with now-defunct boatbuilder Etap showed that he is a designer happy to think differently and this is certainly the case with the Sirius 40. She is a thoroughly

PETER TOOK ONE LOOK AT THE COACHROOF OF THE SIRIUS 31 IN BUILD AND ORDERED IT TO BE CHOPPED OFF

exhaustive: many boatbuilders these days claim that their yachts can be customised because you can tweak the layout slightly or change the veneer in the saloon. Sirius takes this to an entirely different level. At present there are 18 different layout options available even for the 310 DS – the baby of the range.

Meanwhile, the 40 DS comes with an option of three different depths of fin keel, swing keel or bilge keel, triple, twin or single rudders... I could go on, but you get the picture. It's hardly surprising that

modern yacht, which errs toward the angular, 'Brutalist' style that Hanse favours. There are a lot of hard angles on show here. Her transom is squared off and her stem is almost plumb while a complete absence of tumblehome means she is rather slab-sided. Yet for all her modernist styling, she is certainly no slave to mere passing trends. There are no chines on the hull, which is deep in form right to the forefoot. There is a generous amount of taper aft, all of which points towards sea kindness on a long passage. →

Monolithic structure

Yet of course, the overriding feature is that massive deck saloon. There is something deeply unapologetic about this monolithic structure; it's certainly not trying to pretend to be anything other than what it is. Aside from adding space and light, that high deckhouse means that stability in the event of a knockdown is greatly improved. This is one of those rare yachts with no angle of vanishing stability. The deck saloon is also less prominent on the 40 than on the Sirius 310 and 35, the longer waterline offsetting the height somewhat.

Step aboard and you immediately know that this is a rather different sort of a yacht from your run-of-the-mill model. For starters, the transom/bathing platform area is a work of art in itself. Unlike a normal bathing platform which simply flips up to enclose you in the cockpit, this one is recessed into the cockpit a foot or so and features a remarkable split/fold mechanism which means half

of it can open out like a door or the whole thing flips fully down in the conventional style. It gives you two options and it's devilishly clever.

Move forward and you're immediately confronted with the next cunning touch: the single steering pedestal can be canted to port or starboard, eliminating the need for twin helming positions.

It's a trick I've seen on some Winner yachts, and it really does give you the best of both worlds. The overall feel is already of quality and that nothing has been overlooked. Everything snaps into place with military precision, while the beautifully-finished cockpit table – which houses the liferaft, incidentally – is a really substantial structure.

Out on to the side decks, which are finished with teak as standard, and things are extremely reassuring. The solid steel tubular guardrail is reminiscent of a motorsailer and gives a tremendous feeling of security, particularly when combined

with the high coachroof, which provides another excellent handhold. Up forward is a substantial twin bow roller and a huge anchor locker which swallows up all of the fenders.

The rig is a powerful 9/10ths fractional affair and because the Sirius is built with a self-tacking headsail as standard, the mast has been stepped well aft – making the yacht more balanced. Nevertheless, it is the big, fully-battened mainsail that does much of the work to push this heavy yacht along. The recommended configuration is therefore to have the self-tacker and a larger genoa on a short bowsprit. This set-up is gaining in popularity and is technically known as a 'slutter' rig – which sounds rather unwholesome but works well.

Beyond that, a Code 0 is another useful addition. I should add that the owner of the test yacht had opted to eschew the self-tacker and gone for a slightly smaller genoa instead.

Sail controls are extremely simple. The mainsheet is within easy reach of





the helmsman, being hooked on to a stanchion that is also an integral part of the cockpit table. The mainsheet is on an 8:1 system and is secured with a Harken camcleat. There are two large Andersen winches set well aft and also within easy reach of the helmsman and a single electric winch on the deckhouse used for raising and lowering sails.

Space ship?

Enough of this technical stuff. The dominant feature is that deckhouse and we all want to know how it affects the interior space. Step into the saloon via the patio-door-style companionway offset to starboard and you're in for a welcome surprise, for there is more space than you could ever imagine possible on a 40ft monohull. In fact, when you talk about the interior, you almost have to talk about the cockpit at the same time, because the two complement each other in a manner rarely seen on a monohull and that is no coincidence. The whole concept of

1 TOP HEAVY?
The large deck saloon is the key to this boat's huge volume

2 PORTLIGHTS
Large hull lights illuminate the double-decker set-up below

3 BOWSPRIT
There's the option of a stubby bowsprit for launching the Code 0

FACING PAGE FROM FAR LEFT
Canting pedestal and binnacle-mounted mainsheet free up cockpit space; clear, flush decks; best seat in the house?



VIDEO

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this yacht was to get away from the need to go 'down below' and retreat into an interior divorced from the deck. The idea here is that everyone stays at the same eye-level whether they are sitting steering the boat, or reading in the saloon. Sailing and relaxing off-watch therefore become more sociable, inter-linked activities.

The deck saloon makes this possible and also allows masses of light in through the wraparound windows (built from the same polycarbonate that the German military use for their bulletproof car windows). It works incredibly well.

The standard layout features a large U-shaped seating/dining area to port with panoramic views via those huge windows. Directly to starboard of this is the chart table area with a height-adjustable seat also affording excellent all-round vision. Just forward of this is the linear galley which features simply acres of storage with the deep hull ensuring yet more under the floorboards. Then there's the communal heads and the forward cabin with ensuite

heads compartment, plus the option to offset the bed to starboard.

Underneath the saloon area is a second double berth and it is at this point that you start to see the real beauty of the deckhouse configuration, for the split-level essentially turns this into a double decker or at least a one-and-a-half decker yacht. This central cabin area is a wonderful space with the three huge portlights giving you masses of light and a wonderful view when you're under way. Being centrally located it is also a very comfortable berth in a seaway, while at anchor there is minimal noise. The finish throughout is exceptional – no creaky floorboards here. The woodwork is superb and the fit out in the heads, with its Italian ceramic finish, would not look out of place in a luxury hotel.

The test yacht also came with the optional extra of a third large double cabin aft but the final *coup de grâce* of the 'double-decker' layout comes if you fold up the settee seat next to the companionway to reveal a secret →

passage which takes you down to a wonderfully appointed workspace replete with custom-fitted multi layered toolkit and excellent access to the engine (below left). Sirius reckons its 40 has the same amount of space as a normal 47ft yacht and I'm inclined to agree. By this point you start to swear that a cruising yacht without a deck saloon is rather like a pencil without any lead – pointless.

Fleet of foot

Ha – all very well you say, but what's the point of a fancy double-decker bus set up when the yacht looks like the back end of one? Well, I admit her looks are certainly individual but they are not without a certain powerful, purposeful, utilitarian charm. The big question is, does a yacht with the practicality of a motor cruiser sail like one? The answer is 'no' - this is definitely a sailing yacht. True, she has a heavy displacement, weighing in at 11,600kg, but her rig is tall and powerful – particularly if you use that Code 0 in lighter airs.

I was lucky to sail the Sirius on two different days and in very different conditions. On the first day the breeze got up to a maximum of 20kt with a malicious short chop. On the second day the breeze peaked at about 12kt and the seas were smooth. I'd have to say the Sirius handled both with aplomb and was very impressive in the blustery stuff. Her deep forefoot ensured she shrugged off the chop and maintained her momentum beautifully. We hit over 7kt comfortably and in these conditions she did not feel at all ponderous – just very reassuring.

That enclosed cockpit with its high coamings was a real boon in these boisterous conditions. Any concerns that the huge deckhouse would make her top-heavy are put paid to by her hefty keel underneath. It would have been interesting to see how the twin keel version performed – and the lift keel for that matter; another time perhaps.

The steering position was excellent and there was a good feel to the helm with a nice little hint of weather helm to keep you interested.



1
TABLE
Can be extended via clever slide-out mechanism that's built in (see video at sailingtoday.co.uk)

2
THE BRIDGE
Near all-round visibility and a very comfy seat

She tacked through 75 degrees, so is no slouch to windward.

Heading into the deck saloon, you still felt part of the action – indeed you can be an integral part of it, because you can actually steer the yacht from the chart table and, as the autopilot is linked to a Raymarine Smartcontroller steering system, you can also steer quite comfortably while seated in the saloon.

Of course, the big test for this yacht was not in the rough stuff, but in light airs and the next day we had

plenty of that. But with judicious use of the Code 0 she performed respectably, with her momentum carrying her through the lulls. Sail controls were simple and in the right place. My one criticism would be the mainsheet which, although ideally sited, requires absolutely miles of rope on the 8:1 purchase system – 40ft (11.98m) is perhaps at the upper limit of where you can get away with using this system. Under power she was predictable, with the saildrive system providing plenty of grunt. ✨

SAM'S VERDICT

If I was planning to sail around the world and live aboard, this is the yacht I would go for. She's solid, meticulously thought out, extremely comfortable to live with and superbly finished.

The 'eye-level' concept in the cockpit and saloon and double-decker accommodation both work a treat, making sailing a much more sociable activity. The only real question mark

here is that 90 per cent of us don't use our yachts for bluewater cruising and all those ingenious touches are frankly a bit wasted on a weekender. That said, you will have the most comfortable and individual weekender around.

PERFORMANCE: ★★★★★
 COMFORT: ★★★★★
 BLUEWATER: ★★★★★

THE SPEC

LOA: 39ft 4in (11.9m)

LWL: 36ft 7in (11.2m)

Beam: 13ft 4in (4.1m)

Draught: standard: 6ft 9in (2.0m);
 shallow: 5ft 7in (1.75m); deep:
 7ft 5in (2.3m); bilge: 4ft 7in (1.45m);
 swing: 3ft 2in-8ft 2in (1m -2.5m)

Displacement:

25,574lb (11,600kg)

Engine: Volvo D2 55hp

Sail area:

with self tacking jib: 875sq ft (81.3m²);
 with genoa: 1,212sq ft (112.6m²)

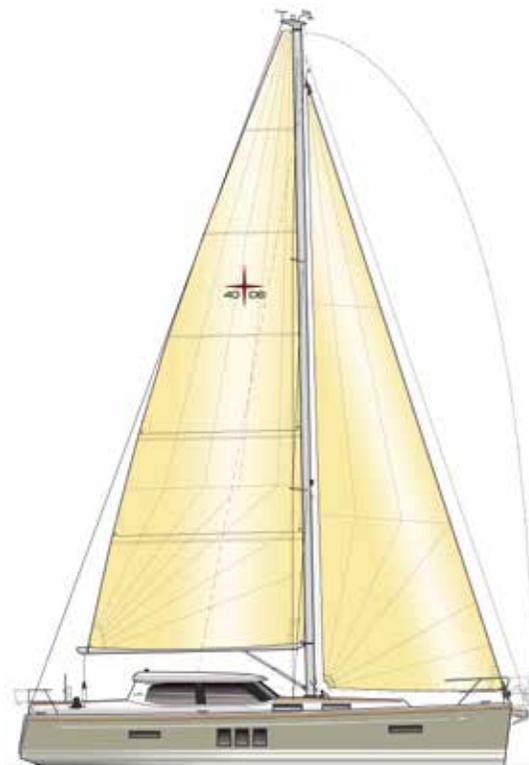
PERFORMANCE

AVS: none

Sail area/Displacement: 22.0

Displacement/LWL: 233

Sirius Yachts: www.sirius-werft.de





Nominated for Blue Water
Cruiser of the Year



Contact: Torsten Schmidt phone +49(0) 173 653 87 21
Sirius-Werft GmbH, Germany: phone +49(0) 4522 744 610

www.sirius-werft.de