

THE CONTENDER



ITALIAN STYLE DEFINES THIS WORLD-CLASS CRUISER

It takes an innovative boat with offshore performance and eye-catching styling to compete in the crowded express cruiser market these days, particularly in South Florida, where Italian builder Sessa Marine established its American headquarters less than two years ago. Luckily, the IPS-equipped Sessa C46 Open Hard Top offers all of the above.

The C46, which made its formal U.S. debut this fall, is packed with features that should endear it to local cruisers, particularly the Bahamas-bound. First and foremost is the integral hardtop that stretches aft to the lip of the sunpad, forming a sheltered dining area that's served by a full on-deck galley. Forward, the built-in lounge chair hides a surprise—a flatscreen TV mounted beneath a flip-up headrest.

This elegant entertaining space, accented by natural teak, makes a great first impression upon boarding the C46. "The boat is made in fiberglass, which is not a natural product. The teak wood, with its natural rough finish, helps to enhance the connection to nature," explained Giuseppe Meneghetti, Sessa

Marine sales manager, during the C46's launch.

On fine days, owners also can let in the breeze by opening the automatic sunroof, which is engineered for offshore use, "even in green water," according to Craig Muir, general manager of Sessa Marine America. Yet another indicator of the boat's seaworthiness can be seen in the walkaround side decks, which are functional rather than merely decorative. There's a grab rail to guide your first step up from the cockpit, full-height side rails running all the way forward and a stainless steel hand rail recessed in the sides of the hardtop.

Once on the foredeck, with its large double sunpad, you are firmly in the realm of Eurostyle. Remote stereo controls, waterproof speakers and drink holders make this an alternative hangout at the dock or on the hook.

In fact, Sessa Marine has done a very nice job of blending sleek European styling elements with the practical features

By LOUISA BECKETT



This 33-knot sports cruiser blurs the line between indoor and outdoor living with an opening hardtop and fore and aft sunpads. The extensive on-deck galley (upper right) saves steps and reduces demands on the galley opposite the saloon seating shown at right.



demanding by American boat owners who do much of their cruising offshore. The C46 is NMMA-certified, and all the wiring meets ABYC standards. The genset and air conditioning unit are both U.S.-made.

One of the boat's main selling points comes from Sweden, however, with its twin Volvo Penta 600 diesels, linked to rotating IPS pod drives. The C46's hull was designed in conjunction with Volvo Penta to accommodate IPS propulsion, which by now has a track record for exceptional maneuverability and ease of use. In addition, it provides outstanding fuel efficiency. At a top speed of 33 knots at 3,600 rpm, the IPS-powered C46 burns 44.4 gallons of fuel per hour, total, according to factory figures. Dial it back to 23.6 knots at 2,750 rpm and reduce fuel burn to only 24.3 gph.

All this, and the C46 also comes with IPS joystick control, which lets you look like a pro while docking. The joystick is located just to starboard of the steering wheel at the raised helm station. Two ergonomic seats put the driver and a passenger in optimum

viewing position behind the raked windshield. The dash panel isn't overly large, but it's laid out well, with space for a good-sized chartplotter along with the requisite digital engine displays.

Five steps down from the helm is the C46's inner sanctum. Light oak walls, a white leather settee with luggage-style detailing and soft shades over the portholes create a serene, spa-like atmosphere. Overhead, white lacquer cabinetry conceals the sophisticated electrical panel. A second galley with a chic stainless steel countertop is built into the opposite wall.

Sessa Marine's designers managed to incorporate a two-stateroom, two-head layout within this envelope. Both staterooms even have wood doors for privacy. Storage is optimized wherever possible within the berths, hanging lockers and cabinetry.

The VIP stateroom in the bow has a V-berth configuration that recalls a traditional sailboat. However, a leather wedge is all that's keeping the two sides of the V separated; take it out, and you can push the beds together to form a powerboat-worthy double. The VIP has its own entrance to the stylish forward



SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 48' 8"
 Beam: 14'
 Draft: 2' 6"
 Displ.: 28,219 lbs.
 Fuel/water: 342/119 U.S. gals.
 Power: 2 x Volvo Penta IPS 600 D6 @ 435 hp
 Top/Cruising Speed: 33/26 knots
 MSRP (as equipped): \$925,000

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It's hard to choose which stateroom is the master. The bow stateroom (upper left) has a large island bed that splits into twins in a V-berth arrangement. Whitewashed oak brightens the full-beam stateroom at left. The lower galley (above) is beautifully camouflaged.

head, which features a separate stall shower.

The master stateroom, amidships, has full standing headroom in the entry and the ensuite head, (which features both a conventional spigot and a "rain" shower). Over the berth, the headroom shrinks to about 57 inches, but you hardly notice because of the breathtaking views through the three portlights on each side. As Giuseppe would put it, these portals definitely make you feel connected with the natural elements outside the boat. The center ports can even be opened.

The master stateroom greatly benefits from the use of IPS in place of traditional inboards, which would hog much

of this space. Instead, the compact Volvos are housed aft in a surprisingly roomy engine compartment beneath the transom tender garage—which in turn has space for an eight-foot dinghy. An electrically powered hatch gives you easy access to the engines.

Sessa Marine's decision to use Volvo's IPS in its new C46 clearly has enhanced the boat's performance, fuel efficiency, living, and utility space. But for Bahamas-bound boat owners, there's one more reason this stylish imported express cruiser is a worthy contender—the pod drives' skinny, two-and-a-half-foot draft. 