



ARABIAN

Gulf Craft is turning up the heat on its Mediterranean rivals with the super-cool Majesty 140. It puts other yachts in the shade, says Stewart Campbell

MIGHT



It's not even summer, the locals scoff, as I raise yet another complaint against the mad dog heat. It's a brutal 39 degree Celsius assault, but I spy respite ahead as we move through the big build hall at Gulf Craft's shipyard in the little emirate of Umm al-Quwain north of Dubai. Sitting out there stern-to against a dock, beyond the ineffective shade provided by the towering ceiling, is the latest Gulf Craft to hit the water: the first 140, freshly christened *C'est la Vie*.

The air-conditioning Gulf Craft installs out here in the UAE is supercharged, with BTUs to burn (720,000 an hour, to be precise). It makes Western air con feel about as effective as a hand fan on the Sun and as *C'est la Vie*'s saloon doors swish open I'm mercifully engulfed in a pool of cool. But it's not just the air that's fresh – the interior is so bright, so welcoming, that I'm immediately quite fond of this latest superyacht from the Middle Eastern shipyard.

The 140 isn't a new hull – it's a stretched version of the Gulf Craft 135, of which seven units were built. But there are significant changes here. The glazing has been maximised, offering huge views from the main saloon; the wheelhouse windows have been raked forward, adding strength to the profile; and touches like cockpit balconies have been installed to improve the guest experience. The finish throughout has

noticeably improved, too, in part thanks to the recent appointment of a new quality control manager.

The whole boat feels like a step forward for the company; it's as if all its 35 years of experience have been poured into this one hull. "Whether it's to do with the practicality or whether it's to do with the use of glass and use of materials, everything is in this boat," says Mahmoud Itani, the shipyard's marketing manager. The best thing, though, is that you get all this for a starting price of \$16.5 million, which works out at €14 million. That's amazing value for a 43 metre, 360 gross tonne superyacht. And a good one at that.

The "quality and value" philosophy of Gulf Craft was recognised with a Neptune trophy at the 2016 World Superyacht Awards – which now sits in the yard's reception area. It's something the company's chairman, Mohammed Al Shaali, has tried to instil throughout the production process. "We don't have too many overheads and we don't have a lot of taxes, so all those savings are passed on to the customer without sacrificing the quality," he says. "If you check the materials in the boat, the quality of everything from marble to the veneer, it's always the highest. But at the end of the day you don't pay that high a price. Not because we have inferior materials or workmanship, but because you have less waste and management costs."

The company is necessarily upping its game. The economy in big-spending Dubai has cooled and buyers from gas-rich Qatar have dried up since a blockade was imposed by Saudi Arabia, so Gulf Craft is looking over the horizon, with the result that this year will be the first in the company's history that it will sell more boats over 30 metres to buyers outside the Middle East than within it. The Med, the chairman says plainly, is the future. And to compete there, with a yacht this size, you've got to have a product that can take on the best of Italy and the UK. The 140 has one immediate advantage – you get a lot more boat for a lot less money.

The owner requested several modifications to the standard spec, including the installation of a waterfall spa pool at the rear of the sundeck (left and below). Above left: the beach club



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The "cigar lounge" upper saloon, left and below left, makes a feature of the bar with its tobacco leaves set in resin. Above: the master suite on the main deck. Below: seating forward on the sundeck

The lighting system comes courtesy of Automation & Co with sensors triggering automatic lights as guests enter a room. Control panels are positioned discreetly on walls



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And it really does feel like a lot of boat. The spaces throughout are wide open, perhaps helped by the tradition in the Middle East of running seating around the edges of rooms, but no area feels compromised – not even around the dining table, which on 40 metre boats with this arrangement can sometimes feel cramped, with crew squeezing behind chairs for service. The volume on offer was one of the things that attracted the owner: “The space that the Majesty 140 offers is beyond any other yacht in its class,” he says. The brief he gave Gulf Craft’s design team was “very basic”, he adds, and it has resulted in what Itani calls a “classic modern” interior, with hints of deco here and there and even a futuristic Jetsons vibe in the shape of the coffee tables and curves of the bedside units.

The marble is all Italian – onyx costa blanca for the floor in the main saloon, set in walnut frames. Upstairs in the “cigar lounge” upper saloon, the stone gives way to a beautiful brushed oak floor. The centrepiece up here is the bar, with its tobacco leaves set in backlit panels making it a real feature. “The cigar lounge was the owner’s request, but we can also fit a normal saloon or even another cabin in this space,” says Itani. One other significant owner modification on this deck is the cabin behind the wheelhouse. Usually the captain’s quarters, on *C’est la Vie* this is an extra guest cabin with elevated views.

The owner has chosen to fiddle with the standard spec in various other ways, too. “I asked for the elevator to be added and heavy-duty kitchen equipment as we will be a group of people staying on board for an extended period of time,” he says. “I also made many changes to the sundeck – I asked to have a storage room as well as a dayhead and for oval seating to be installed at the front of the deck, and a waterfall spa pool at the back.” His decision to move the captain’s cabin

below decks has resulted in an unusual addition to the wheelhouse – a pull-down wall bed for some shut-eye between watches.

There’s also a comfortable raised seating area with a coffee table in the wheelhouse for when guests want to feel part of the action. The views forward through those raked screens are commanding – just three panes of glass, manufactured in Italy by Hard Glass, mean there is little to no mullion intrusion. And for the clearest views, there are two wing stations on each beam. The main audiovisual racks are just behind the helm, and like so much on this boat, the system was designed and built in-house by Gulf Craft. This desire to keep as many trades as possible within the company, from fit-out to furniture making, means the yard can keep a tight control of costs – and quality.

Some expertise has to be imported, however, and Gulf Craft has done that with its lighting system, which comes from Automation & Co. Sensors in the ceiling track movement so lights come on as you enter rooms. Discreet control panels on walls, meanwhile, mean you can customise the display to fit the mood. It’s simple, owner-operated stuff. This low fuss approach extends to the owner’s cabin forward on the main deck. The highlight in here is a balcony to port that opens at the touch of a button, with a nearly engineered railing system that pops up with no need for any crew.

Gulf Craft’s engineers have had fun at the other end of the boat, too, in the shape of fold-down balconies off the cockpit. Usually these would be found amidships, stretching the space outside of the dining area, but here they might actually get used, providing fishing or diving platforms in a popular part of the boat. Then there is the Opacmare Transformer on the bathing platform. After eyeing guests teetering along shaky passerelles with only a thin bit of rope to save them from

Left: the wheelhouse has a comfortable raised seating area for guests who want to take in the panoramic views through the raked windscreen. The space also features a pull-down wall bed for the captain to rest between watches – unusually the captain’s cabin is below decks rather than behind the wheelhouse



a stumble into the marina, GulfCraft decided on a different approach – a large central section of the bathing platform lifts up and out to provide a wide bridge to the dock. It can extend even further and down into the sea to give swimmers easy access back on board.

The installation in the engine room looks solid, with a pair of MTUs putting out 2,600hp apiece for a top speed of 20 knots and a cruise of 16. At 12 knots, you get a 3,300 nautical mile cruising range, which is ample for the kind of boating this owner plans – likely runs up to the stunning Jebel al Harim mountain range in northern Oman and weekend cruising around the UAE. But crucially, this is a boat that would feel very at home in the Med or southern Florida, keeping everyone cool with the amped-up air con. “The shipyards that want to succeed have to succeed in the Med,” says Al Shaali. “It’s the most important market in the world.”

GulfCraft is clearly taking its ambition of conquering *Mare Nostrum* seriously. It’s even, for the first time, started engaging outside designers to lure a new audience in foreign waters. Cristiano Gatto penned the exterior lines of its flagship, the Majesty 175, which is in build and scheduled for a 2019 delivery. “Maybe the future 140 will also be designed by Cristiano,” the chairman teases. “We are working with him on another project, too.” Will all this be enough to make the European yards sweat? Watch this space. ▣



Below: the elevator was installed at the request of the owner to make life easier for guests who may be staying on board for extended periods

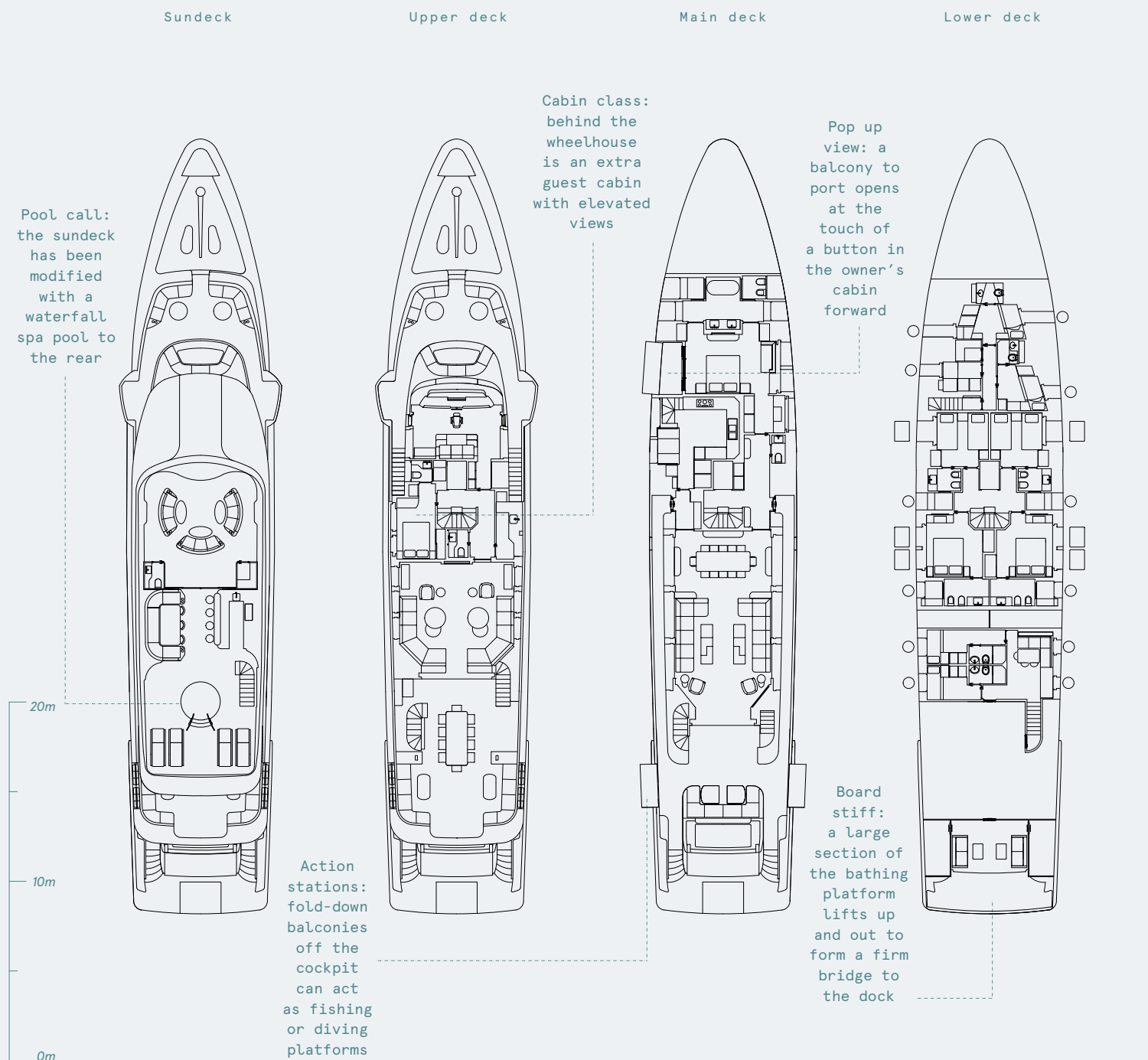


The boat features a “classic modern” interior with wide open spaces throughout, emphasised by an arrangement of seating around the edges of rooms. Even the dining table avoids feeling cramped



MAJESTY 140 - C'EST LA VIE

GULF CRAFT



LOA 43.3m
LWL 35.6m
Beam 8.2m
Draught (full load) 1.8m
Gross tonnage
 360GT

Engines
 2 x MTU 16V 2000
 M94 2,600hp,
 1,939kW, 2,450rpm
Speed max/cruise
 20/16 knots
Range at 12 knots
 3,300nm

Generators
 2 x Kohler 100kW
 230/400V AC 50Hz
Fuel capacity
 44,550 litres
Freshwater capacity
 8,440 litres

Tenders
 1 x 5m Williams
Owners/guests 16
Crew 10
Construction FRP hull
 and superstructure
Classification
 Bureau Veritas

Naval architecture
 Gulf Craft
Exterior styling
 Gulf Craft
Interior design
 Gulf Craft

Builder/year
 Gulf Craft/2018
 United Arab
 Emirates
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