



# MAREX VS CORVETTE

Two superb hulls, one serious rough-weather test, and accommodation that turns all the rules on their head. The battle of the aft cabins is here, and it's a corker

Text: Jack Haines Pictures: Lester McCart

**W**hat do a Cadbury's Wispa, Take That and the Skoda car company have in common? Reinvention. Take That have had one of the most successful comebacks in the history of the music industry, Skodas are no longer to be sniffed at since VW started cracking

the whip, and there was such unprecedented public support for the return of the Wispa that Cadbury's felt obliged to bring it back.

What then, has all of this got to do with the Corvette 340 and Marex 370? Well it seems the perception that aft-cabin boats are for people who treasure space over pace may be dying out and we might be seeing a comeback of our own. To see if this was the case we took both boats on a trip from Poole to the new marina in Portland, the venue for the sailing events in 2012's Olympic Games and a place which is experiencing a certain resurgence of its own.

The boats themselves are two very different takes on how to build an aft-cabin cruiser. The Marex is a revolutionary design and has undoubtedly helped ramp aft-cabin boats up on the cool scale. From the helm it feels like you're driving a sportscruiser but beneath its sunpad-clad rump there is, of course, a huge cabin. The Corvette, as you would expect from such a brand, is a far more traditional take on the breed with its raised aft cockpit and flybridge. Both work well and both were about to get a serious test as they housed two blokes each plus the kit for our overnight stay in Portland.

## TO PORTLAND – IN THE ROUGH STUFF

On the first leg of the trip heading west from Poole I took the wheel of the Marex which throws up some pleasant surprises from the helm seat. The single Volvo Penta 435hp on a shaftdrive is eager and punchy and the steering, despite suffering from an air lock in the hydraulics, is light and accurate. In short, as well as having an



exceptional amount of accommodation for a boat of its size, the Marex is also a real hoot to drive. As we spear out towards Old Harry rocks though, with the Corvette in pursuit, it becomes apparent that our trip to Portland is going to be a tough one. There is a nasty 3 or 4 ft chop coming directly from the west meaning both boats are taking it right on the nose and kicking up epic clouds of spray. We drop down to 12 knots to ride out the worst of the waves around the verfalls off Anvil Point and Peverill Ledge, with 15 knots being the most we can comfortably muster in open water.

On board the Marex, more surprises are being revealed but this time it's how confident and refined the hull is. The landings are soft, there is no slamming and the helm position fits like a glove meaning it is easy to try and work the boat around the worst waves. Due to the waterfall of spray that is showering down on both boats, because of their flared bows and the direction of the wind, we have the soft, electrically retracting roof shut and the pram hood up at the stern on

the Marex. Even with bucketfuls of water colliding with the windscreen every few seconds visibility remains good but it's hot in the wheelhouse because it's impossible to have the side window open in these conditions. The side window is an odd design; you twist a bar to open it but then it won't hold itself open so as a ventilation tool it isn't effective. It's better for communicating with crew though as you can hold it open from the helm. Judging by the lack of squeaks and rattles coming from the structure the Marex is a well built piece of kit, the luxurious woodwork and use of classy materials in the accommodation and around the helm substantiate this too.

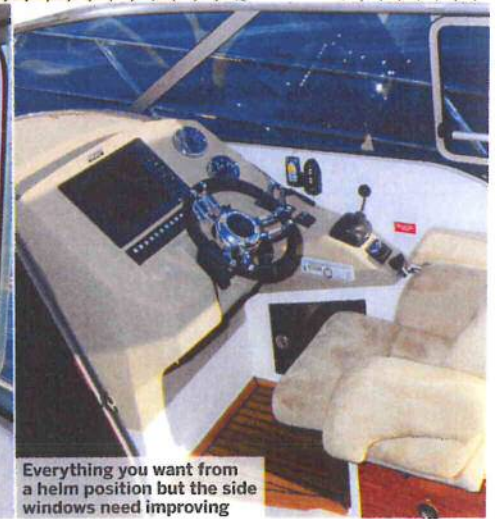
Alongside us the Corvette is busy showing the conditions who's boss. Karl and Alan from Corvette UK are tucked up inside the wheelhouse while our photographer, Lester, is getting the drenching of his life on the flybridge and ends up looking like a soggy figurehead on the bow of a pirate ship. These boats may have a comfortable up-wind ride but they do kick up some serious spray.



Aft-cabin functionality with sports cruiser fun on board the Marex



The fabric roof and aft canopies mean the Marex's saloon is fantastically versatile



Everything you want from a helm position but the side windows need improving



## Portland marina

When finished, the marina will have 580 berths as well as 44m (144ft 4in) superyacht berths and a 320 tonne crane

We battle on and the conditions fail to relent but the feeling of these two boats fighting their way to Portland with waves pounding against their hulls and spray and water dive-bombing their decks is fantastic. Who needs a knife-sharp planing hull and thousands of horsepower? Right here, right now, these boats feel absolutely sensational and soldier on in the most endearing fashion.

### PORTLAND'S NEW MARINA

As we near Portland things do start to settle down but it's not long before the relentless waves are replaced with flocks of sailing dinghies competing in the Sail for Gold competition. This event is billed as a warm up for the Olympics, with many of the countries using this as a vital opportunity to train at the venue itself. It seems bizarre that with the Solent being so close to London that Olympic organisers have chosen Portland as the 2012 venue but they're certainly making a good job of injecting some pizzazz. The modern, curved marina buildings soften the hard, utilitarian backdrop of Portland and its MOD barracks. After we have berthed both boats it becomes clear

that Dean & Reddhyhoff, the marina owners, fully understand what problems might arise with a marina in such an isolated location.

Issues are solved by employing super-friendly staff who bend over backwards to help by handing out maps and personalised restaurant suggestions as well as giving you the numbers for cab firms and all of the local bus routes. When was the last time you had that in a marina? Portland doesn't have the buzz of nearby Weymouth yet but the facilities are outstanding and as a springboard to the West Country it's excellent.

### ACCOMMODATION SHOOT OUT

Back to the boats and side-by-side in their berths it's the perfect opportunity to crawl over them and find out how well the individual designs work. The Corvette's main advantage over its 320 sibling is the full-width aft cabin; it doesn't help the aesthetics of the boat much but it trumps its rival by giving you a split shower unit and toilet compartment within the aft cabin. On the Marex you have to head through the saloon and use the bathroom forward.

The small table in the aft cabin is the perfect place for a spot of breakfast in bed

The sink is useful but the journey forward to the toilet is a pain

Guests don't lose out at all in the light-filled VIP ensuite forward

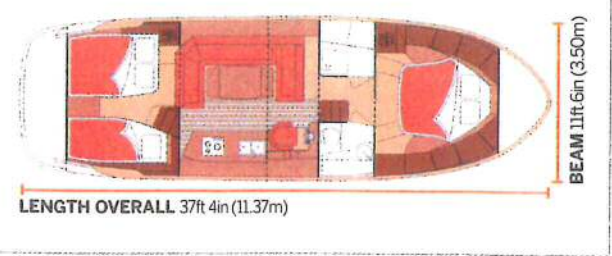
The Marex impressed with its mightily soft ride and agile handling



*As well as having exceptional accommodation for its size, the Marex is a real boot to drive*

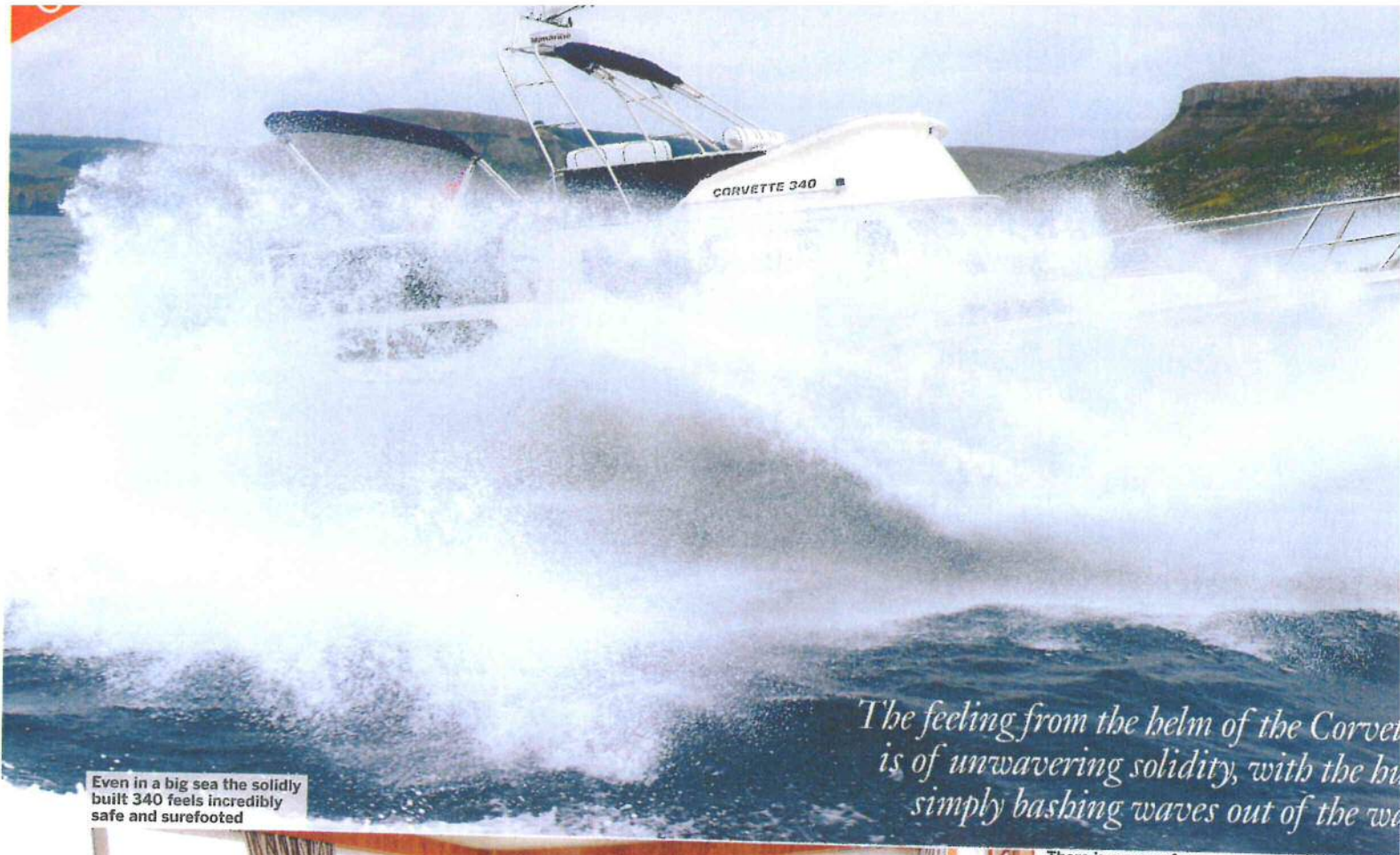
## THE DATA

- MAREX 370**
- DISPLACEMENT** 7.8 tonnes loaded
- DRAUGHT** 3ft 0in (0.90m)
- AIR DRAUGHT** 12ft 0in (3.66m) *MBY* estimate
- FUEL CAPACITY** 143 imp gal (650 litres)
- WATER CAPACITY** 66 imp gal (300 litres)
- TEST ENGINES** Single 435hp Volvo Penta D6
- FLAT OUT** 31.1 knots, 188 miles @ 3,630rpm
- BASE PRICE** £307,497 inc UK VAT (Single Volvo D6 370hp)
- TESTED PRICE** £328,001 inc UK VAT (Single Volvo D6 435hp)



The Corvette may have the benefit of two separate living areas because it has a saloon and flybridge but the Marex's living space is so versatile that it doesn't want for more space. The Corvette's traditional layout still works well and although most owners will specify the benches and table in the raised cockpit it can be left open for you to do your own thing with. The saloon is cosy and comfortable with plenty of light flooding in from the windows and the extra helm seat over the 320 is a valuable addition.

On the Marex you have only one place to go but because you can have the roof open or closed and the rear pram hood up or down it can be altered to suit your mood or the weather conditions. Despite the table arrangement in the aft cabin, which gives a separate chill-out area, it will never be able to match the Corvette's snug, home-from-home feel. The Fleming influence feels like a reassuring hand on the Corvette's shoulder; details like the Fleming-grade stainless steel work and sumptuous, solid woodwork give you faith in the boat long before you've ventured out to sea. You pay the price for this quality mind – the Corvette is expensive for its size but it's

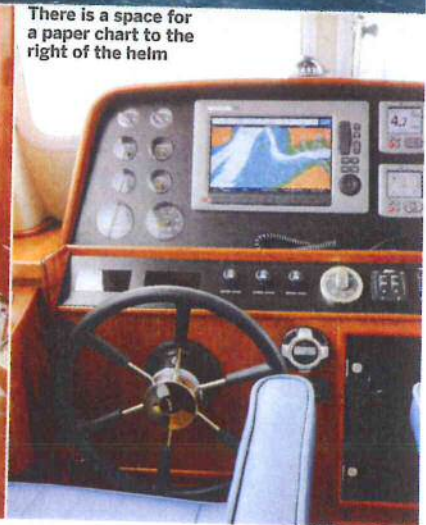


Even in a big sea the solidly built 340 feels incredibly safe and surefooted

*The feeling from the helm of the Corvette is of unwavering solidity, with the boat simply bashing waves out of the way*



The 340's saloon is home from home comfortable for extended cruises



There is a space for a paper chart to the right of the helm



### Storms

The roughest boat test we've had in 2010! Both boats carved through 4-metre waves and wrestled with Force 4 gusting 5 conditions admirably

important to bear the amount of accommodation in mind before your sharp intake of breath at our price as tested.

When it comes to the real sword-clashing and the small matter of which master cabin you'd rather spend the night in, they both do a great job of boosting the credentials of aft-cabin designs. The Corvette's is worthy of a boat nearly twice its size; there's a generous island berth and the luxury of a split toilet and shower compartment. Large windows ensure light is abundant and they open to help with ventilation too and headroom is so generous. The Marex's aft cabin can't quite compete because, as mentioned, you have to journey forward to go to the toilet. It does get two large beds though so three can sleep in reasonable comfort, two with ease and one in sheer luxury. There is a sink as well so you can at least clean your teeth without heading to the loo in the bow.

Guests on board both boats aren't hard done by in the VIP cabins although the berths on the Corvette are more pinched than the spacious double on the Marex; one could argue that the Corvette's two singles are more useful though.

After a peaceful night's sleep it's an early start because there is some angry weather on the way. I'm at the wheel of the Corvette at slip out of the berth with a childish grin as the exhausts rasp and burble away below – the 340 sounds fantastic at idle.

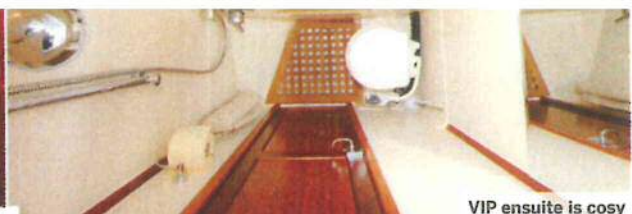
### ON THE WATER

An ominous grey sky hangs above us for the return trip. But the overwhelming feeling from the helm of the Corvette is unwavering solidity. The steering is heavy (in a good way) the throttles are stiff (in a good way) and the hull feels like it could shatter concrete. Set around 3,200rpm (just under 18 knots) you won't have to touch the throttles again as the twin Yanmar 315s hum away and the extra tonne that the 340 has over its 320 sibling helps bat off the sea before you. It's not as fluid as the Marex and can't be guided around trough and crests as easily but then it doesn't need to be because it will just bash the waves out of the way. The flat aft sections on the hull and generous keel mean that the 340 can wallow at times in a following sea but it will ride it out, you just have to be prepared for it.

Two single berths and a heads make up the 340's forward cabin

The boats were thoroughly tested by the conditions on both legs of the trip

VIP ensuite is cosy but well specified  
The split toilet and shower rooms add to big boat feel



## THE DATA

- CORVETTE 340**
- DISPLACEMENT** 7.5 tonnes
- DRAUGHT** 3ft 3in (1.00m)
- AIR DRAUGHT** 10ft 6in (3.32m)
- FUEL CAPACITY** 200 imp gal (890 litres)
- WATER CAPACITY** 112 imp gal (510 litres)
- TEST ENGINES** Twin Yanmar 6LPA-STP2 315hp diesels
- BASE PRICE** £390,135 inc UK VAT (Twin 315hp Yanmars)
- TESTED PRICE** £390,135 inc UK VAT (Twin 315hp Yanmars)



BEAM: 21ft 10in (6.65m)

LENGTH OVERALL 33ft 2in (10.12m)

## AND THE WINNER IS....?

It's mightily refreshing to see such variation in one single sector of the market. The basic idea of one cabin at the front and one cabin at the back is not all that special but it's the way that it's executed that is critical. You couldn't really have two more different interpretations of the style with the Corvette and Marex. If a second ensuite, solid dynamics and an inescapable home-from-home feel are high on your list of priorities then the Corvette is just the ticket. If you want design flair and a more sporty drive then the Marex ticks those boxes.

Individual talents aside though there's one inescapable aspect which bonds both boats solidly. Whilst regular flybridge boats and sportcruisers hit the headlines with flamboyant designs and ever-more intricate interiors, the Marex and Corvette cement aft-cabin boats in to our consciousness and breathe new life into the genre.

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