



## Monaro 257

This new take on an old classic lives up to the Monaro reputation

**IF IT ISN'T BROKEN, DON'T** fix it. The original Monaro hull has never changed from its basic form and this is why the Monaro continues to reign supreme in small boat integrity. In the company's 40 years, the same hull has served as the basis for the popular range of fast boats in the 21, 24 and 255 lineup. It stands to reason it should be used for the new 257, an extended version of the 255, but with some distinctive changes that set it apart from previous Monaros.

Dan Parker, principal of the Richmond-based company, began his boat-building days even before being employed in the shops of Spencer Yachts and Lynwood Boats back in the 1960s. As a youngster,

he built and messed about with boats in the local waters of his hometown Nanaimo. In the mid 1970s, he began building the 21-foot fast cuddy cabin styled craft in his garage and this writer became the first boating journalist to review one of his boats in *Pacific Yachting* in 1976, and another in 1978. In the mid 1980s, Parker opened his own shop in Richmond and began marketing his custom built craft seriously.

In the ensuing years, Monaro boats were delivered to a wide range of owners, and became especially popular with those who had limited amounts of time to commute to favourite destinations or cottages up the coast. Before long, Monaros were cruising up the coast, even

as far as Glacier Bay. One was built for the use of *Diver Magazine* to test underwater scuba apparatus. This boat also became an informal cold-water test boat for Mercury Marine's new-at-the-time large, 200 plus hp outboard motors.

The buyer of this latest model, the 257, was looking for a new and updated version of the former boats, having previously owned two Monaros. Like the earlier boats he owned, this one will be used for commuting to an island home. It is appropriately equipped for such with special seating for passenger comfort.

**DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION** After successfully marketing the 21 as the company's only entry for a number of years,

Monaro moved to a 24-footer, using an extended 21-foot hull. The new, lengthened hull gave owners additional space and features as well as extra room in the cockpit. When the 24 was extended to a 255 at a later date, new features and the increased overall load capacity notched up the model range yet again.

The original Monaro hull has always been an outstanding performer, and still is. Stretched to an actual length of 25 feet 10 inches, the new 257 totally lives up to the reputation of its predecessors. It is reworked with changes to the stern that give it a vital, contemporary look, and more space in the cockpit. New graphics and colours enhance the seating and the new, smaller engine cover does not protrude as much into the open space. In fact, it provides additional seating, slightly raised above that of the removable side seats. A hatch has been added to access the aft portion of the engine.

This new boat is identified by its new logo and waterline graphics at the stern, which form a low profile and a sleek look. The hull is built using hand layup with biaxial fiberglass at stress areas. Four fully encapsulated stringers run from the transom to the forward bilges. The engine beds are tied into the main stringers to spread the load. Foam core is used in the dead space under the cockpit sole while accessible space is dedicated to the fuel tank and storage on the centre line. The hull is fitted with an optional bow thruster. ▶



ABOVE The original Monaro hull has never changed from its original form due to its successful design and popularity.

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**ABOVE** Dan Parker of Monaro Marine driving the new 257, which like all Monaro's, has an ergonomic helm station layout.

**ON DECK** The topsides forward take all the style and virtues of the former model, with hatches, windshield, stainless steel welded railings and finish complementing its predecessors. One of the virtues of all Monaro boats is the ease of moving about on the deck. Access from the cockpit to the bow is easily managed along ample side decks, something you don't find on many small boats nowadays.

The new 257 is a hardtop model that features the same cabin structure as the 255 that was raised and extended in a former generation. Visibility from the helm over the bow is excellent. The topsides surface of the molded deck has a non-skid finish. The hardtop and the cabin top are entirely backed with end grain balsa core, which contributes to lightweight strength and good insulation.

What sets this boat apart from most previous models is its optional full bulkhead that forms a complete, weatherproof interior. Stainless steel handrails adorn the outer edges of the hardtop and twin antennas rise from alongside. A radar dome is placed on a custom mount amidships at the rear of the hardtop.

The cockpit is spacious with seating across the face of the transom. A gate gives access to the swim step, a feature that is present on the larger Monaros, and has appeared on several of the smaller ones in the past.

**ACCOMMODATION** This boat was built for an owner who uses it primarily for

commuting, so it has a standard six foot five inch cuddy cabin that will sleep two. Between the V-berth cushions is the standard equipment head.

The main cabin has four forward facing seats including the helm, and all seats are mounted on pedestals above storage bins in the sole. The wide cabin window and the high deckhead with proportionally high windshield provide lots of available light as well as optimum viewing all round.

One of Monaro's outstanding features has always been the ergonomic helm position and relationship to the controls. Seated at the helm, the wheel is in the ideal position as is the throttle/gear shift lever.

A newly designed dash has clean lines and well placed gauges clustered around a Lowrance HDS7 panel that includes GPS, radar and sounder. The lower dash panel includes Blue Seas rocker switches and a Bennett trim tab control with automatic retract when the engine is switched off. To complete the package this boat has a Fusion stereo system and a Heatercraft furnace. There are heat vents below the windows and above the sole.

**ENGINE** This 257 has been fitted with a Volvo 5.7 litre GXI 300 hp EVC electronic gasoline engine (standard is a Volvo 5.0 SX 270 hp). It swings a duoprop through its OceanX drive that has an anti-corrosion coating. It has two sensors (alarms) to detect the presence of water in the oil or in the bellows. The 257 has a top speed of

43 knots at 4,800 rpm and a cruising speed of 25 knots at 3,000 rpm.

**UNDERWAY** The Fraser River can be deceptive. On the day we tested the boat a strong westerly was brewing and by the time we were underway out of Steveston a three-foot chop had built against the outflowing river on a large dropping tide. While upstream the water was calmer, but at the confluence of the main branch and Ladner Reach it was getting snarly. We were running through this to reach more sedate conditions.

In addition to doing this review, the new 257 was being checked for correct propeller pitch and overall performance. The 20-degree deep-vee hull fell softly into the troughs as it cut through the choppy waves. The boat handled very well, responding to the helm instantly. I was pleased to note the builder had installed windshield washers, but while large sprays of water were generated away from the hull as the craft cut through the chop, little splashed over the bow and onto the windshield. The engine responded very quickly to the throttle, accelerating onto the plane very quickly. It remained on the plane all the way down to eight knots.

There is efficiency in getting onto the step as quickly as possible. Usually an engine will use a lot of fuel under full throttle while struggling to get up and go, but not the new 257. Using an inclinometer the bow was observed to rise less than five degrees as it accelerated from hull speed onto the plane without advancing half throttle. The boat planed at 2.5 degrees at cruising speed.

Monaro boats, particularly the smaller ones, have an ability to turn on a dime. The boat could literally snap around to face the other direction if you cranked it over very hard at high speed. And while you would have a tough time holding on, the boat would simply lean into the turn and come about authoritatively. I did not do this while testing this boat but I have done it before and can attest to the hull's high speed turning capability. The boat has a solid feel to it and on inspection the joinery and craftsmanship is up to Monaro's standards.

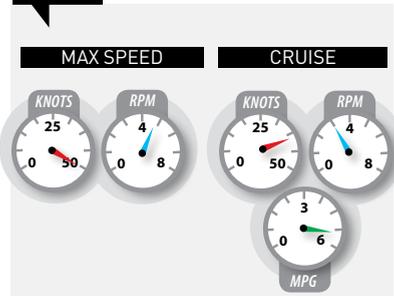
One of the impressive features of this boat was the quiet running, with little engine noise and thumping as it flew

across bumpy water. Even coming down in heavy seas the landings were relatively gentle. Fuel consumption in average running conditions is 5.5 gph at cruising speed.

**IN CLOSING** There is something to be said for a fast boat. It will carry its occupants quickly to a destination where time constraints are an issue. It can enable a person to scurry to shelter at the first signs of an approaching storm or it could simply allow you to take a quick tour of a beautiful cruising area.

For instance, my wife and I once took a Monaro 21 on a one-day trip from Macdonald Beach in Richmond that had us taking breakfast in Powell River. This was followed by a cruise through Desolation Sound to just short of Stuart Island. Then we motored down to Quadra Island to have a leisurely lunch at the Heriot Bay Inn. The afternoon was taken up with a cruise to Hornby Island where we visited friends anchored in Ford Cove. After joining them for refreshments we had lots of time to scoot back to Richmond and head home for a sunset dinner. And with the Monaro 257's base price at \$99,772, you could replicate this trip quite easily. ☺

### THE STATS



|                         |               |           |
|-------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| <b>LOA</b>              | 8.10m         | 25'10"    |
| <b>BEAM</b>             | 2.4m          | 8'        |
| <b>DRAFT TO KEEL</b>    | 0.51m         | 20"       |
| <b>DRAFT DRIVE DOWN</b> | 0.97m         | 36"       |
| <b>DRY WEIGHT</b>       | 1,905 kgs     | 4,200 lbs |
| <b>ENGINE</b>           | Volvo 5.7 GXI | 300 hp    |
| <b>FUEL</b>             | 205L          | 54 USG    |
| <b>WATER</b>            | None          |           |

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