

Albin Ballad

BEAUTY may be in the eye of the beholder, but few could deny the attractiveness of the design embodied in the new Albin Ballad. Her well-raked stem, reverse transom and low, smoothly profiled coachroof give her a very sleek appearance, indicative of her high sailing performance. Ballad's design is strongly influenced by racing considerations—small mainsail, large headsails—but has sufficient internal comforts to make a happy cruising boat with a good turn of speed.

Two V-berths are provided in the forecabin, two settee and two pilot berths in the main cabin, all with cushions covered in short pile, washable, fur fabric, which is attractive but possibly less practical than vinyl as it retains moisture. The backs of the settees fold down to extend the width of the berths, and to reveal lockers outboard. Though doubtless comfortable in harbour, I feel that either leeboards (an optional extra) or a cushion under the mattress would be needed to stop the sleeper rolling out of these bunks in a seaway. The other possibility, of course, is to sleep in the pilot berths, but again these could be awkward to clamber into when going to windward. With curtains fitted across their entrances, these berths make ideal retreats for the times when you want to tell other crewmen to go jump overboard, or for navigators who miss their landfall.

A bulkhead, down which the foot of the mast runs to stand on a plate above the keelson, divides fore and main cabins, with a hanging locker to port and a toilet compartment to starboard between that and the forward berths. The door for the loo folds out rather neatly to enclose the occupant without damaging his knees or inhibiting embarrassed whistling during lulls in saloon conversation.

A small but adequate chart table is provided just inside the cabin to port, with its own seat rather than the head of some poor crewman's berth. On the starboard side is the galley which has provision for a stove of the owner's choice, together with sink and salt and freshwater foot-operated pumps. A gash locker beside the sink can be emptied via the cockpit locker. The cabin is well ventilated and has a 'cold wall' intake from the cockpit, emerging under the starboard settee.

Deck layout is clean with clear working space, although the trial boat was not fitted with an anchor. A Meon anchor would stow neatly enough on the split pulpit, but other types might clutter up the foredeck. With the shrouds led down to the inboard edge of the wide sidedecks, a headsail can be sheeted inside the guardrails. Though all the working surfaces have a moulded non-slip surfacing, the downward slope of the coachroof forward of the mast could become slippery in heavy going. The translucent forehatch forms part of this slope and opens forward (in line with modern racing boat design) to facilitate easy sail handling, but I



would much rather see the hatch reversed for cruising use.

The cockpit extends right aft to the transom, making it big enough for a full protest committee meeting. The genoa sheet winches, which are included in the standard inventory, are well positioned and plenty powerful enough for the job. Cockpit lockers are also of more than adequate proportions. In fact the only real drawback is the tiller which effectively halves the cockpit area because it is too long and too low, although we are assured that this is being improved.

The mast is fitted with a halyard winch, has internal halyards and is well stayed, having one cap and two lower shrouds on each side, and a forestay and backstay. Roller reefing is fitted on the boom which has a downhaul and kicking strap at the mast, and is sheeted down to a track across the bridgedeck. Sails are Dacron and are, like most of the boat, racing influenced; mainsail tiny and a selection of small to enormous headsails.

Alternative motive power comes from a 10hp Volvo Penta MD 6A diesel tucked away under the cockpit out of sight and (almost) sound. It is fitted with both a starter generator and an alternator for charging the two batteries stowed in the bilge under the cabin sole. One of these is simply for starting, and the other for lighting. Their stowage place is far from ideal and again we are told this is being looked into. I would also like to see gas cylinders stored in a locker vented outboard rather than the present one which allows gas into the bilge.

The engine really is very well sound insulated and access for maintenance is reasonable by removing the companionway steps, which are attached to the compartment's cover. The stern gland has a white metal bearing running in an oil bath and is said to require attention only once or twice in the season. The outer bearing is water lubricated. Engine controls are Teleflex single lever type, making handling under power very simple. By using astern the boat can be manoeuvred round in very tight turns, and entry to a crowded berth should not present any problems.

On the day we tried out the Ballad we met a variety of conditions from about Force 1 in the Hamble to a roaring storm Force 4 in the mildly heaving Solent, with temperatures down in the Long Johns region. Under main and number two genoa we beat down Southampton Water and soon found that the very hard turn to the bilge (almost a chine) gives the boat great buoyancy when heeled over. We also found that Ballad could be a wet boat. There is very little sheer at the bows and though this gives her a very pleasing appearance, it does indicate that in anything of a sea she might scoop water on to the foredeck.

Ballad is certainly no sluggard, and with the wind on the quarter will really charge along. Despite her fin and skeg arrangement, we hove to and, in the prevailing conditions, she lay quietly, forereaching at about half a knot. Try as we would, we found it very difficult to make her miss stays, even under main only. One point to note, and it applies to many boats, is that the low-cut headsails make a huge blind area for the helmsman.

The standard inventory is very full and includes, sensibly and unusually, a winter cover and cradle. Prices quoted are for the boat in the water at Harwich. All in all, Ballad is a reasonably priced, easily handled, fast cruising boat which should also give a good racing performance. CJ



DATA

LOA	29ft 11in (9.14m)
LWL	22ft 7in (6.90m)
Beam	9ft 8in (2.96m)
Draught	5ft 1in (1.55m approx)
Displacement	7276 lb (3300kg)
Ballast	3417 lb (1550kg)
Rated sail area IOR	463sq ft (43m ²)
Mainsail	167sq ft (15.5m ²)
Genoa	271sq ft (25.2m ²)
Water	14 gals (65 litres)
Fuel	7½ gals (33 litres)
Berths	6
Headroom	6ft (1.8m)
Engine	Volvo Penta MD 6A diesel
Designer	Rolf Magnusson
Importer	Albin Marine Ltd, 108E Bridge Road Sarisbury Green, Hants. Tel: 048 95 5185
Standard price	£6,570 (afloat Harwich)

YM inventory to include following. Asterisks indicate items *not* included in builder's standard inventory: engine, spars, rigging winches, guardrails, pulpits, mainsail, jib*, storm jib*, genoa, spinnaker and gear*, anchor and cable*, mattresses, galley with cooker*, all lights, pumps, echo-sounder*, log*, compass* warps, fenders*, deck hardware, tanks registration*.

YM index price £7,203.

