



BOAT REPORT

Doral 310 SE

Not many 30-footers have such a strong specification. But are there other good reasons to favour a Canadian boat over its American rivals?

Doral's Canadian version of North American boat design has been finding favour in Europe in recent years, competing in the middle to upper slice of market in terms of specification and pricing. The 310 SE itself fits into the middle of the builders' five-boat sportscruiser range.

Interestingly, fixtures and fittings vary little across the whole range, with the smallest model, the 250 SE, having nearly all the features of the biggest, the 360 SE. This seems to reflect a trend for existing

Helm

A double helm has become a popular feature on craft of this size, and this is a tidy example, very well thought-out.

The driver's seat tilts upwards to offer both a better standing position for close-quarters work and the option of a lean-back stance, although there is no fore-and-aft adjustment and the inevitable compromise of a double helm is the lack of lateral support if you set about using the handling capabilities of the hull. The steering wheel tilts to help in achieving a comfortable driving position.

Set against a wood background, the

instrumentation is displayed in a primary bank across the top of the main dashboard plus a few secondary gauges set in a console above this and another just below the wheel.

The white-faced instruments are easy to read at a glance, and

their logical layout enhances their effectiveness. The rocker switches are clustered together forwards of the twin throttle control, an ideal location, and this leaves a vast expanse of the dashboard available for fitting additional electronics.



owners to trade down in boat size, as smaller craft are made available with all the facilities to match their needs.

Design & layout

The Canadian approach to boat design mirrors the American in aiming for clean-cut sporting lines with a high specification in both cabin and cockpit. Doral add some neat design touches and a mix of finishes, to offer a highly stylised craft with a contemporary feel.

In the layout of the 310, the emphasis is towards the space below decks, though there is not too much sign of awkward compromises.

The forward-reaching radar arch that extends nearly from the transom is a consistent feature of Doral sportscruisers, and is employed here to good effect. The boat's lines run smoothly from bow to stern, integrating the bathing platform, which adds up to a very good-looking vessel indeed, without the perceived need for hull graphics and aesthetic embellishments.

The 310 we tested had a Platinum Series specification, which to the standard fit-out adds a cockpit table and sunpad, deck sunpad, anchor windlass, remote control CD player, cockpit fridge, television aerial and a Vacuflush toilet, and benefited from a boat show promotion which added a Garmin GPS, alarm system and anchor pack. There is also a Platinum Plus spec, which adds

air conditioning and a generator, and a Deluxe version, with extra wood effects in the cabin.

Engine options are twin Mercruiser and Volvo Penta installations, either petrol or diesel, all with twin-prop drives.

The base model has 270hp Volvo 5.0GXIs, and 320hp Volvo 5.7GXis provide the most potent petrol option. Diesel choices go up to 260hp KAD44P EDCs, while our test boat featured 225hp Mercruiser 4.2L D-tronics.

Performance & handling

The 4.2 Mercruisers spin over keenly to get the 310 SE up and onto the plane, and progress is fairly prompt up to the top speed we recorded, just under 32 knots at 3600rpm.

Even at this pace the hull is comfortable through the water, and progress is assured. Running at

3000rpm gives a good fast cruising speed of just under 27 knots, and a noise level in the cockpit of 80dB(A). If you ease back the throttles so you are just on the plane at 23 knots, the decibel level remains the same.

Through a series of tight turns the boat responds well to the steering wheel, and comes round assuredly with only the occasional indication of any propeller ventilation. When it does occur, it is easily controlled. At all times, the handling feels confident.

We tested the 310 SE in a good breeze that was roughing up the waters of the Solent. The ride was good, with the hull coping well with the conditions. It hardly slammed when running into the waves; whilst running with them it showed a slight tendency to dip its bow, but never actually came near to doing so.

It is easy to settle into a



Bathing platform

Space on the bathing platform gets a little bit tight when the cockpit's aft seat is moved to its rearward position, but otherwise there is plenty of room available for boarding from the water by means of the telescopic boarding ladder, which retracts under a hatch when not in use.

As the platform is integrated into the hull styling, boarding from alongside means stepping more carefully, but there are footholds outside the transom extensions to aid you. A glass transom door then leads through to the cockpit.

Standard features include a locker in the platform itself and another in the transom, fender holders, grab-bars and a transom shower.

Decks

Access to the foredeck is either up the steps set into the console and through the centre opening section of the windscreen, or via the steps on either side of the transom and the narrow side decks.

The sunlounger cushion hinders your foothold if you use the through-screen route, and compromises the boat's styling into the bargain, but it is a feature Canadians seem keen on. But the walkway is otherwise flat, and a windlass is fitted as standard.



Galley

The galley, to port, has a generous worksurface, there being a circular infill section for the sink and a hinged cover for the ceramic stove.

A porthole sitting just above the level of the worktop throws light over the area, and there are powerpoints aft.

A microwave oven is located above the sink and the fridge is located aft of this. Cupboards at two different heights supplement a large one under the sink.



comfortable lean-back driving position, with full control of the wheel and throttles and also good all-round visibility and protection from the screen. On our test day, though, some spray was being thrown up, and found its way into the cockpit in the wind.

Conclusions

In a competitive sportscruiser market, the buyer's choice hinges on styling, specification and price.

The Doral 310 SE follows North American styling, as distinct from, say, Italian, but through some tidy detailing manages to be that bit different. It is pricier than average, but there is plenty in the specification and build quality to justify the price tag.

A welcome option for those wanting a good-quality mid-sized sports cruiser, this is a boat that should satisfy owners every time they get behind the wheel. □



Doral 310 SE

BUILD
glass-reinforced plastic
RECREATIONAL CRAFT DIRECTIVE

Design Category B: Offshore (offshore voyages in wind up to Force 8)

DIMENSIONS

LOA
30ft 6in (9.38m)
BEAM
11ft 2in (3.40m)
DRAUGHT
3ft 3in (0.99m) with drive down
DISPLACEMENT

5.7 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY
138gal (628lt)

ENGINES
twin 225hp Mercruiser 4.2L D-tronic diesels

PRICE
£120,528 inc VAT as tested with Platinum Series specification

SUPPLIERS
Simco Marine Ltd,
St Peter's Quay, Totnes, Devon
TQ9 5EW. Tel: 01803 866986.

BUILDERS
Doral International,
1991 3rd Avenue Grand-Mère,
Quebec, Canada G9T 2W6.
Tel: +1 819 538 0781.

Cockpit

A reclining seat forward to port, a common option on this size of sportscruiser, allows plenty of headroom in the midships cabin underneath and also provides both sociable seating and a sunbathing option. Moreover, it does a good job of linking together the forward and aft parts of the cockpit to make it more sociable.

The cockpit entertainments centre is set aft of this, and to starboard is the U-shaped

seating that takes up much of the cockpit. The space in between can be occupied either by a table or by cushions to form a large sunbathing area.

You will find larger cockpit areas on other sportscruisers of this size, but the 310 SE competes with these in that the aft seat can be pushed back to overhang the bathing platform.

The seat-bases of the forward and starboard sections of the U-settee provide good stowage; when it is in the forward position, there is open storage under the aft section.



Cabin

The bow area provides a formal double berth with a raised forward section that can be curtained off from the rest of the cabin.

A deck hatch and two portholes light this area, with reading lights for night-time. Raised shelves provide stowage for small items, and the whole of the berth's base raises on twin gas struts to swallow bedding and quite a lot more besides.

The dinette, set aft of the

forward berth, can be converted to sleep two, so the 310 SE has a total sleeping capacity of six. There is stowage in its seat-bases, and its circular shape ensures economic use of space, especially near the galley where it is always in demand.

The only weakness here is the table, which limits access to the seating; according to UK importers Simco Marine, it will be altered on 2002 models.

There is plenty of headroom in this central section of the cabin and this is maintained a good way towards the bow.

Toilet

The toilet compartment is a little tighter on space than on some other craft of this size, but fully moulded units ensure the space is well used. There is full standing headroom.

A Vacuflush toilet comes as part of our test boat's Platinum Series specification, and the mixer tap incorporates a wander lead so it can double as a showerhead.

A locker in the sink base and a small cabinet offer the stowage, and fittings include a full-size mirror on the inside of the door.



Midships cabin



Doral have utilised space well in the provision of what is a roomy mid-cabin, which occupies the full beam of the craft and is lit by portholes port and starboard.

The berth will probably be the one preferred by a boat's owners, as it has a lockable door. Lockers at the starboard end double as a bedhead, and there is also a double seat with stowage in its base, a small table and an open locker. Headroom in the seating area is very good.

Just forward of the mid berth is a good-sized hanging cupboard.

Engine room

Access to the enginebay is through two hatches: a small angled one to port, and a larger one to starboard lifting on a powered strut. The underside of the latter incorporates a tidy stowage for the cockpit table.

The fit-out of the compartment is very tidy, with good access to the main services of the twin engine installation. Filters are easily accessible on the forward bulkhead, and the only inconvenience is the cross-beam that supports the split hatch; it means you have to get out and then in again if you need a closer look at the port side.

There is enough space forward of the engines for a generator, an option which was fitted to our test boat.

