

Money Shot

MJM ADDS TWO FEET TO ITS SUCCESSFUL 34Z AND ENDS UP WITH A BOAT THAT'S BOTH FASTER AND MORE FUEL EFFICIENT. BY CAPT. RICHARD THIEL

LOA: 39'3"
BEAM: 11'0"
DRAFT: 2'6" (props down)
DISPL.: 13,100 lb.
FUEL: 200 gal.
WATER: 100 gal.
STD. POWER: 2/170-mhp Volvo Penta D3 diesels matched to Ocean X stern drives
TEST POWER: 2/220-mhp Volvo Penta D3 diesels matched to Ocean X stern drives
OPTIONAL POWER: 2/300-mhp Volvo Penta D4 diesels with Ocean X stern drives
BASE PRICE: \$515,000
PRICE AS TESTED: \$734,748

The first time I saw an MJM 34z I fell in love with it. I wanted it. And I fell in love with it again every time I encountered one at a boat show. For me, it was the perfect boat come to life—conservatively stylish, exuding both quality and seaworthiness, and a real pleasure to pilot. But what sealed the deal was the 34's efficiency. With her single Yanmar diesel she could top 20 knots loaded up and still return 2 mpg.

Only one thing stood between me and a 34z: money. This boat is pricey. But you can see why. The reason she's so efficient and sporty is that she's light—just 10,600 pounds (half load)—and the reason she's so light is her construction, which employs the latest in high-strength, lightweight composites—Kevlar, PVC coring, and Corecell—assembled using (here quoting the MJM brochure), “a proprietary, wet-epoxy, pre-preg, vacuum-molding, and oven-post-cure method.” If that isn't enough, the extremely complex job of putting it all together is in the most capable hands of Boston BoatWorks, which has to its credit a host of successful, light, and strong racing sailboats.

I never got my 34z, but I made peace with that fact and bought a low-tech lobsterboat instead. All went well, even as MJM introduced more boats employing the same successful formula—a lovely 29 (whose price I still couldn't hack) and a twin-diesel 40 that managed 1.25 mpg. But when MJM doubled down on the 34 with a twin-diesel 36 using basically the same Doug Zurn-designed hull, it broke my heart. Because the 36 is everything the 34 is and more.

For starters, it's fast—I measured a top speed of 32.3 knots—and yet she's even more fuel efficient than the 34. At that WOT figure, she gets nearly 1.5 mpg, but throttle her back to 3000 rpm and you'll get 21.9 knots and 2.11 mpg. On top of all that she is not just fun to drive, she's downright exciting. Wheel response is immediate and precise, and she'll heel over and carve a grab-onto-something-quick turn like a center console. And if you order the optional (\$22,500) joystick control and electronic steering, you can dock her so deftly, you may not even need to order the Side-Power bow thruster, a savings of \$8,475.

One key to all this magic is stern drives—Volvo Penta's Ocean X drives, to be exact. Oh, I can hear the collective groan out there from all of you who have vowed to never own a boat with those things because they're such a maintenance nightmare. Trust me: An hour or so at the wheel of this boat will convince you to reconsider that prejudice. You simply could not get the combination of response, acceleration, maneuverability, and efficiency on this boat without stern drives. As for maintenance, note that these are Volvo's Ocean X drives, which employ a titanium ceramic coating that Volvo claims is four times more corrosion resistant than conventional coatings.

And performance is not the only benefit stern drives yield on this boat. There's a draft of just 2 feet 6 inches (props down), and in order to cover the props so that swimmers don't make contact with them, MJM has fitted a big, easy-to-reach platform that extends well aft. It makes swimming and diving a lot easier, and a second seating area just above it provides the perfect spot for those who want to be near the water but not in it. To maximize access to the area the 36 is available with a walk-through transom, a \$7,950 option and worth every penny. The centerline gate provides easy access to the transom, but install the center-filler cushion and you have a full-beam transom seat.

Because the four-cylinder D3s are right

up against the transom, there's bonus stowage just ahead of them and under the saloon sole where straight inboards would be. And when you lift that aft bench seat, you'll find the engines are accessible on three sides, so maintenance and repairs will be easy.

But while she breaks a lot of new ground for MJM, the 36z retains key features that have made this builder so successful. A single level from helm to transom reduces the chance of tripping, and the three-side Strataglass enclosure can be put down to give everyone in the saloon relief from inclement weather or rolled up to let the warm breezes flow through—aided by the two opening windshield panels and a couple of overhead hatches. Sociability is maximized by facing saloon settees and twin pedestal helm seats (Stidds are optional as part of the \$22,900 Deluxe Trim Pilot House Group). And cruisers can order the Cruising Galley Group (\$7,565) that includes an innovative 110-volt refrigerator that can be accessed from the top via a drawer, and the Island Queen Layout (\$4,275) that replaces the circular forward settee with a berth featuring a super-cushy 8-inch-thick mattress. Owners might also want to consider the optional enclosed shower (\$7,400).

Of course, this level of engineering and excitement has its price. The 36z carries a palatable base price of \$515,000, but that's before confronting the options list. My test boat topped out at just shy of \$735,000, loaded with every option I've mentioned plus air conditioning, a 5-kW Northern Lights generator, an LCD TV, and upgraded electronics. So equipped, she was a viable cruising boat albeit probably for no more than a long weekend, although water tankage is a surprisingly generous 100 gallons.

Despite the fact that the 36z is even farther out of reach for me than the 34z was, I came away convinced that she's worth every penny. Indeed, setting aside price, I was impressed with every aspect of this boat. How impressed? After the test I immediately stopped at the first convenience store I could find that sold lottery tickets. □

MJM Yachts, 617-723-3629;
www.mjmyachts.com



The 36z comes with a settee in the bow (below), or an optional island queen layout (left) suited for cruising.



SEE MORE photos of the MJM 36z @ www.pmymag.com

RPM	KNOTS	GPH	RANGE	dB(A)
1000	6.1	0.9	1,400	69
1500	8.6	2.7	661	72
2000	11.5	5.6	425	77
2500	16.8	8.6	394	79
3000	22.0	12.0	380	84
3500	31.6	27.5	326	85
3900	32.3	25.0	266	86

TEST CONDITIONS: Air temperature: 70°F; humidity: 45%; wind: 5 mph; seas: flat; load: 200 gal. fuel; 2 persons; 50 lb. gear. Speeds are two-way averages measured w/ Raymarine GPS. Range is 90% advertised fuel capacity. Sound levels taken at the helm. 65 dB(A) is the level of normal conversation.

NOTEWORTHY OPTIONS: Colored hull; express hardtop; walk-through transom; extended bowrail; Muir windlass; Deluxe Trim Pilothouse Group; teak decking; Side-Power bow thruster; 110-volt AC system w/ inverter; 16,000 Btu A/C; 5-kW Northern Lights genset; 26-inch LED TV; Raymarine navigational electronics w/ E120W touchscreen MFD; Raymarine autopilot and VHF; deluxe cherry trim interior group; island queen layout; cruising galley.

Speedy and maneuverable, the 36z utilizes two Volvo Penta Ocean X stern drives for incredible handling and responsiveness.



Better Boat: Beyond Infusion



Boston BoatWorks, the builder of the MJM 36z, is a cutting-edge outfit. At the onset of its association with MJM, the forward-thinking company considered resin infusion as a means of producing a super-light, super-tough boat. The methodology was flashy, fairly cost effective, and engendered displacement projections that were in the ballpark.

These qualities did not quite satisfy either Mark Lindsay (Boston BoatWorks' director of new construction) or MJM's founder Bob Johnstone, however. What seemed to guarantee the lightest, toughest laminates, at least to these two guys, was the pre-impregnation technique Lindsay had been using and refining on racing sailboats for years.

The technique was simple, at least generally speaking. For starters, a precisely measured epoxy/hardener mix (epoxy is a stronger, more resilient material than either vinylester or plain general-purpose resin), along with swaths of Kevlar (in the hull only) and fiberglass fabric, is fed into a device that has rollers much like on an old-fashioned washing machine.

Coming out, the fabric (having been precisely "pre-pregged" with the resin) is then laid carefully into a female mold (Lindsay uses both 0-/90-degree and +/- 45-degree biaxials on the 36z) and the laminate that results, Lindsay says, surpasses the glass-to-resin ratio achievable with infusion and, in league with Corecell foam core (in the hull) and PVC core (in the deck), produces the super-light, super-tough characteristics both he and Johnstone require.

There's one more step, though. Although the room-temperature cure of one of MJM's epoxy hulls or decks takes roughly eight hours (remember how years ago pot life on most epoxies was measured in minutes?), Lindsay adds an extra 48 hours of cure time afterward via a portable oven (framed up around the part and heated by an electric furnace with a blower) that adds strength through a literal cooking process at approximately 150 degrees.

Then the finishing touches: The 36z's hull bottom is further strengthened with a cored-fiberglass grid of longitudinals and transversals (vacuum-bagged in place) and the hull and deck, as well as all structural bulkheads, are secured with Plexus, a methacrylate adhesive with a whopping 300-percent elongation factor.

"The bottom line is straightforward," concludes Lindsay, "you've got a very strong, light vessel that's virtually impossible to take apart." — Capt. Bill Pike
Boston BoatWorks, 617-561-9111; www.bostonboatworks.com