

COMMANDER 30

More power and equipment added to this contemporary classic



PETER VASSILOPOULOS PHOTOS

If it ain't broke don't fix it. The crisp, traditional lines of the Commander 30 have not been altered since its inception in 1977. The interior layout has also proven to work well and has changed very little over the years. What has changed, however, is the available power and equipment.

Morley Munro, a Commander dealer for nearly 20 years, bought the Port Moody-based company when the manufacturers, Harry Skelton and John Maitland, decided to sell it in 1999. A good move, considering his long experience with Commanders and the boating industry. As the broker, he understands what buyers look for, and as the builder he is able to produce what customers want.

UNDERWAY I met the boat on the Fraser River and it was smooth and graceful as it sped by for photos. Climbing aboard, I soon nudged Munro aside and took over

Although the Commander's lines date back almost 30 years, they remain contemporary today.

the helm, wanting to get the feel of the electronic controls. The boat accelerated fast as I eased the throttles forward. It responded to the softest touch and climbed up onto the plane almost immediately. I had never felt such smooth operation of gear shift and throttle controls.

The Volvo D4 diesels were extremely quiet, smooth and smoke free. When I slowed down to idle, there was just the slightest shake, but that disappeared again as soon as I throttled up. Taking the boat across its own wake, I expected some bumpiness due to the low profile bottom, but the weight of the vessel just flattened out the chop, making it a smooth ride.

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION Although the lines of the Commander date back to 1977, they remain contemporary. The

COMMANDER 30

LOA	9.5 m	31' 1"
Beam	3.6 m	11' 11"
Draft	76 cm	30"
Displacement	5,454 kg	10,200 lbs
Deadrise		17°
Fuel	745 litres	164 Imp. gals
Water	265 litres	58 Imp. gals

Built by Commander Boats
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Commander lines are similar to those found in dedicated sport fishing hulls. This optimizes its beam and capacity with a functional house that allows for lots of interior room as well as a large cockpit and spacious command bridge.

One-piece hull and deck construction follows the fibreglassed and bolted shoebox fit (the shoebox fit is where two halves of a boat are brought together—the hull and the superstructure). The superstructure is rigid, as it is molded in one piece, except for the bridge cowl, which is added later. This unit is strengthened around the area where the windows are cut-out which eliminates any tendency of the sides to twist or move. This prevents water leaks that could otherwise be caused by shifting of the windows in their frames.

The integrity of the construction is shown in such procedures as the foaming and glassing-in of edges where water would otherwise collect. The water and fuel tanks are aluminum, covered by fibreglass and painted with gelcoat for a water-repelling finish. This translates to less potential for oil canning and longer life as the sides of the tanks do not flex, which eventually could lead to leaks.

The stern-drive leg cut-outs are also beefed up. The transom has a plywood component that could be compromised if water penetrates into the transom through the cut-outs. They have two layers of laminate (glass) and a gelcoat seal closes the cut-out surfaces to prevent that from happening.

ON DECK The deck arrangement leaves enough room to walk from the cockpit to the bow easily and yet doesn't compromise cabin space. Up forward are sturdy stainless bow rails inset slightly on the edge of the deck. A wraparound bumper, or rubbing strake, runs along the sheerline and has been enlarged from previous models.

Up on the bridge, deep padded swivel seats are covered in doeskin-like vinyl. A sleek venturi windshield protects seated passengers from the breeze. The dash is well laid out with nicely-positioned gauges and engine controls. The wheel can be angled from about 45° to almost horizontal, which is handy when standing up.

Under the cowl are large lockers. One owner installed a compressor to run a freezer in the space. The freezer itself was mounted at the back end of the bridge. A hatch in the cockpit sole provides access to the engine. The swim step has molded-in hand holds for the convenience of swimmers.

There are several lockers built into the transom. One holds the two propane tanks, and two others are insulated for fish, ice

or other storage. There is also a cockpit shower. All the lockers drain into a collector box.

The fishing rod storage system incorporates a small receptacle dropped into the deck just behind the cabin. Rods are stored upright with the reels and handles vertically placed into the hatch. A lid with cut-outs for the rods closes and locks them in place.

INTERIOR The cabin is box-like, but with its nice finish and bridge, it looks stylish and seakindly. The large house design and the wide beam make for plenty of room inside. The cabin door is wide and tall enough for most people, but a lift hatch above the door allows even more headroom. There is between 6' 5" to 6' 10" of headroom in the saloon. A single vertical window and a picture window in the aft bulkhead combine with the large side windows and windshield to let in plenty of light.

The lower helm station is located to starboard with a large bench seat behind the wheel. It holds all the necessary gauges, controls and electronics. The engine monitoring systems are relayed through optional electronic display panels and duplicated at the upper helm station. (On the test boat, the gauges at upper and lower stations were as standard.)

Visibility over the bow is about as good as it gets. I have known buyers to pass up many a boat where the only way they could see over the bow was to operate the boat from the command bridge.

There is plenty of storage in the galley, under the helm seat and beneath the dinette seating. The booth-styled dinette can be converted into a double berth. Forward of the passenger seat is a shelf that can be used as a breakfast and coffee bar counter.

Light-coloured upholstery, drapes and headliner add to the saloon's airy feel and the use of vinyl in key areas makes the interior easy to maintain. The teak-finished galley in the test boat was located at the port aft quarter of the saloon, a variation from the standard location to starboard aft of the helm. It is complete with fridge and propane stove.

In the forward stateroom is a large V-berth, teak shelves, an upholstered folding seat and a vanity. It is separated from the rest of the boat by a louvred teak door.

The head is located to starboard against the aft bulkhead. The shower stall includes a molded fibreglass self-draining tray. The sink counter is low slung and Spartan, but serviceable, with the sink mounted a little too close to the bulkhead for my liking, but because Commanders are locally built, modifications can be accommodated by the builder.

POWER AND EQUIPMENT For many years gas engines were the choice for power for Commanders. And while they are still shown as standard, buyers almost always choose optional diesel power.

The spacious interior provides between 6' 5" to 6' 10" of headroom in the saloon.





(Above) The test boat contained two Volvo D4 diesels.
(Left) The dash is well laid out with nicely-positioned gauges and engine controls.

The test boat was fitted with a pair of new Volvo Penta D4 four-cylinder diesel engines. The compact size of these new engines and the Commander's wide beam means there's plenty of room to reach the engines for service and maintenance.

The D4 is shorter in length than its predecessor, the 40 series, and is lightweight, smooth and quiet running. It starts readily, idles smoothly, with only the slightest bit of the traditional diesel shake, but

nothing like earlier models. It smoothes right out the moment you open the throttles. These engines produce 210 hp each and run economically at 3,000 rpm at cruising speed of 26 kts or at 3,500 rpm for 32 kts. Top rpm is 3,800. The engines crank a pair of stern-drives with duo-props for efficient performance and fuel economy.

The Commander 30, like many of today's boats over 26', is fitted with a bow thruster. The bow thruster on the boat was quiet

and nudged the boat gently when deployed.

Commander owners, many of whom have owned two or more during their boating years, respect the Commander 30 and its sibling, the 26. The resale value has remained high, and because of the convenient location of the boatyard, modifications and re-powering have never been a problem.

The list price for the Commander 30 is \$204,000. ☺

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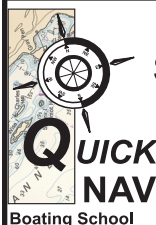
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