

Catalina 22

For those to whom price is all-important, the Catalina 22 is appealing—but it's lacking in performance.

In its 10th anniversary issue in 1980, *Sail* magazine named the Catalina 22 the boat that had represented the “breakthrough” in “trailer/cruisers” in those 10 years. We might quibble with its selection over more out-and-out trailerable boats such as the Ventures, but there is no denying the popularity of the Catalina: more than 10,000 have been built and sales continue to be strong.

For many buyers the Catalina 22 is their first “big” boat and an introduction to the Catalina line. Many remain with Catalina and buy up within that line.

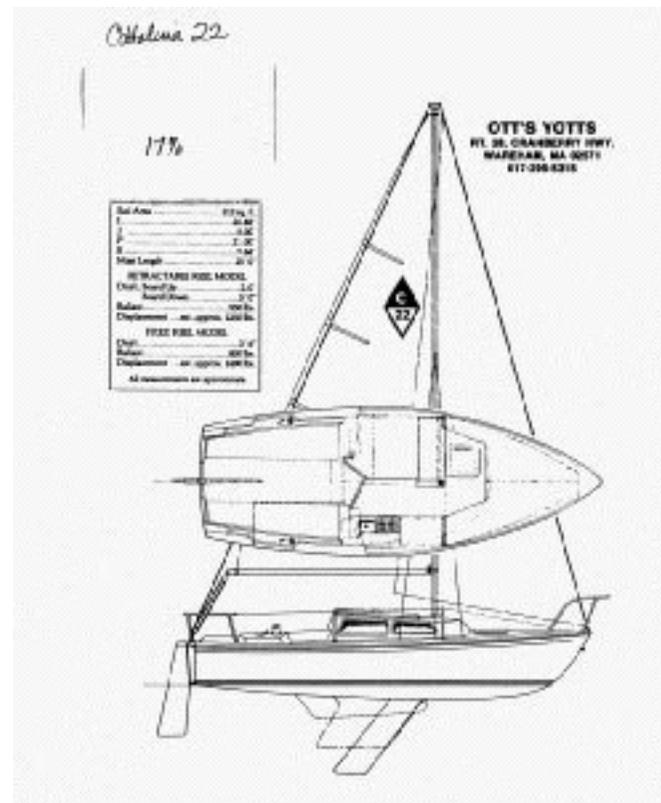
Catalina is the largest boatbuilder in the world in dollar volume and the firm is one of the lasting success stories in the industry. It foregoes national advertising in favor of local dealer-sponsored ads, and has remained a privately owned (in fact, one man—Frank Butler) company while the trend has been toward conglomerate-owned boatbuilding.

Simply stated, Catalina builds boats to a price—a low price—making the most of volume buying of materials and hardware, long-lived models, a high degree of standardization, and all the cost savings of high volume production. The Catalina 22 was the first boat built by Catalina.

The 22 is a dated boat. A lot has happened in boat design and construction since she was introduced. Not all that has happened has been good, but many of the boats on the market with which the Catalina 22 competes for sales perform better and have accommodations more comfortable than the venerable Catalina. Yet it is to Catalina's credit that the 22 continues to sell and continues to be many sailors' first boat.

Construction

It's hard to argue with the construction of a boat after 10,000 have been built, but we do. The *PS* evaluation



Specifications

LOA	21' 6"
LWL	19' 4"
Beam	7' 8"
Draft	3' 6" (fixed), 2' (swing keel)
Displacement	2,490/2,250 lbs.
Ballast	800/550 lbs.
Sail area	212 sq. ft.

of the Catalina 30 notes that the hull-to-deck joint—a plywood reinforced hull flange joined to the deck with a rigid polyester “slurry” and self-tapping fasteners—is not our idea of acceptable construction. The same type of joint is used on the 22 although we are less concerned because obviously the structure is for a much smaller boat which, unlike the 30, is not marketed for offshore sailing.

Catalina Yachts is proud of the contention that the Catalina 22 has remained essentially unchanged from the day it was introduced in 1969. Only the pivot for the swing keel version was changed about boat #250 and then, according to a Catalina statement, it was done for production purposes. Later a pop-top option was added and now 90% of the boats sold have this feature.

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Catalina takes credit for pioneering the one-piece hull liner that has become standard in most high volume small boats. However, it should be noted that the liner is basically a cosmetic component, not a structural member, and the hull must get its strength from the hull laminate and bulkhead reinforcement.

The swing keel, also chosen by 90% of the buyers, is cast iron and, when retracted, remains substantially exposed (accounting for more than half of the 2' draft of the shoal draft model). It is a rough 550 lb iron casting of indifferent hydrodynamic efficiency. Oddly its configuration hoisted encourages ropes and weeds hanging up on its forward edge.

The swing keel is hoisted with a simple reel winch located under a vestigial bridgedeck with its handle protruding through a plywood facing. We'd guess that Catalina owners soon become conditioned to its presence, though it can trip those stepping up or down through the companionway.

The drop keel of the Catalina evoked a number of observations from owners in the *PS* boat owners' questionnaire. Several note that the keel mounting bolts loosen and leak in time. Another reports he had to replace his wire pennant twice. Replacing the pennant requires hoisting the boat high enough to have access to the top of the keel.

As with all Catalina-built boats, decor is a major selling point. The line, including the 22, is attractively appointed. They create a highly favorable impression which has to encourage sales, especially for first time boat buyers.

In fact, the Catalina 22 outside and inside is one of the most visually appealing small boats we have

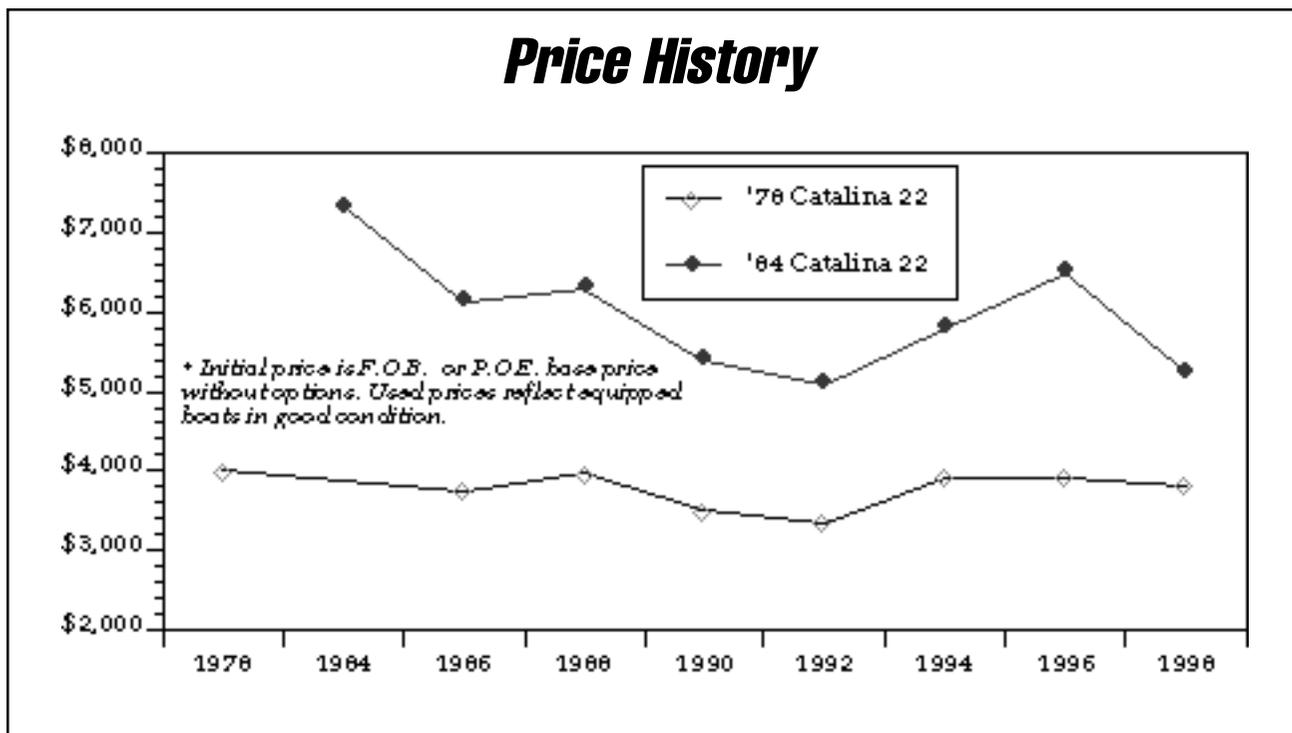
seen. It has enough trim and finish to look pretty. Similarly, her hull and rig, although dated, are well proportioned. It is about her performance and livability that we have the most serious qualms.

Performance

By any objective standard the Catalina 22 is hardly a sprightly performing small boat. There have been too many compromises to performance: trailerability, shoal draft, cockpit space, low cost, and interior accommodations, as well as giving her a placid disposition for novice sailors. The boat needs a genoa jib, a smoother, and more efficient swing or fin keel shape and some hardware of even the most modest go-fast variety. Even then the prognosis is that she will remain a rather tubby boat in an age when much of the fun of boats is in their responsiveness, if not speed.

With almost all the Catalinas having been built with the swing keel, the appeal has been her shallow draft for trailering. Yet even with 2' of draft with the keel hoisted, the boat has too much draft for beaching. Given the tradeoff in performance, the difficulty of maintenance, and loss of stability, one hopes that indeed buyers of the swing keel 22 have made good use of it for trailering.

The deck of the Catalina 22 is a decidedly unhandy working platform. The sidedecks are narrow and obstructed by jib sheets and blocks. The three shrouds per side effectively block access to the foredeck, and complicate headsail trim and passage of the jib across in tacking. In fact, so difficult is it to go forward on the 22 we recommend getting rid of the



lifelines. They are already too low to offer anything but token protection and they anchor near the base of the bow pulpit where they give no protection. Instead, handrails should be installed on the cabin top.

Livability

Ironically for a boat as popular as the Catalina, the boat incorporates the most incredible amount of wasted space we have ever seen in a sailboat large or small. In a size where stowage is at such a premium, there is a cavernous unusable space. The entire area under the cockpit and most of the area under the port cockpit seat (except where the gas tank sits) is all but inaccessible. The loss of this space limits stowage to scuttles under the berth bases.

The convertible dinette which seats only two with elbow room is a vestige of the 22's design era and the vee berths forward form that singularly noisome combination of bathroom and bedroom away from which human beings evolved about the time they moved out of caves.

The result is that the Catalina 22 has but one berth suitable for sleeping, the settee on the starboard side, and even that berth is shared with the optional galley facility that in use takes up about half the berth area. The Catalina 22s now have a pop-top as standard; most of the cabin top lifts 10" on four pipe supports. Most owners we have heard from seem to like the system, particularly those in warmer areas. Headroom at anchor is pleasant but we'd rather see room for stowage, sleeping, etc. as well.

One definitely unappealing and even unsafe item is the stowage for the remote gas tank for a transom-mounted outboard auxiliary. The tank sits on a molded shelf (part of the hull liner) in a seat locker at the after end of the cockpit. This puts the gasoline inside the boat including the cabin. The locker is vented but it should also be isolated. Spilled fuel can make its way unimpeded to the inaccessible low point under the cockpit. Moreover, there is no way to strap the tank securely nor a way to route the hose without pinching.

There's a strange and stubborn attitude at Catalina Yachts in reaction to any criticism of its boats, a righteousness that is exemplified by the notion that if one has sold several thousand of them, then nothing is wrong with them. Well, there *are* things wrong, and the gasoline stowage in the cockpit locker of the 22 footer is one egregious example.

One of the Catalina's better features is her cockpit. It is long (7') and comfortable, a place where the crew can sit with support for their backs, a place to brace their feet, and with room to avoid the tiller. It is unobstructed by the mainsheet that trims to a rod traveler on the stern.

Conclusions

Many boat buyers shop for a boat of this type with price foremost in mind. They probably will get no farther than their local Catalina dealer, where they can get a boat that is the same size and similarly equipped as boats costing far more. It's apt to be a boat identical to many of those sailing on the same waters. Better still, they are more than likely to have sailing friends who not only have (or had) a Catalina but belong to one of the most widespread and active owners' class associations in the sport. The whole package has a powerful appeal superbly orchestrated by the Catalina organization.

For performance, accommodations and even construction they might do better at a higher price, but the prospective buyer of the Catalina is likely to be unsure of what to look for. Understandably they turn to the 22.

At a weight of about 2,500 lbs. loaded for the road plus a trailer, the Catalina 22 has marginal trailerability behind the modern small car. For this reason *PS* urges buyers to consider carefully before purchasing a trailer with the boat. Unless and until they are convinced they will trailer the boat enough to make a trailer's purchase worthwhile, it could be a waste of money. One Catalina salesman we overheard talking with a client gave this advice and spelled out the reasons. High marks to that chap. Later he ruefully admitted to us that many buyers ignore his suggestion.

For the "sailaway package" price, the buyer gets some features he might not opt for if he had a choice (e.g. the pop-top, Mercury outboard, and lifelines and stanchions). However, Catalina Yachts, like Hunter Marine, has learned the advantages of packaged boats with bottom line pricing that is still lower than competitors' so called base boat prices. And boat buyers get what they need (and probably want) without having to know what they need or want.

Other than price, *PS* sees little to recommend the Catalina 22 over many other boats of the same size on the market.

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