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REVIEW: CHEOY LEE BRAVO 72 MOTORYACHT

Discussion in 'Cheoy Lee Yacht' started by YachtForums, Jul 29, 2017.

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Cheoy Lee Bravo 72 Motoryacht Reviving the Midrange Motoryacht Segment

One of the most respected names in yachting debuted a brand new boat at the 2017 Palm Beach International Boat Show; the Cheoy Lee 72 Bravo motoryacht, a clean sheet design focused on simplicity and ease of operation. The design and function of the next-gen Bravo is reminiscent of certain Apple products, using minimalistic hardware and clever coding to enhance the user experience.

by YF Publisher Carl Camper

In many ways, technology has made our lives better, but it has also made life more complicated. Getting multiple technologies from various sources to seamlessly work together isn't exactly plug & play. Cheoy Lee's goal was to build a boat that put the pleasure back in yachting with a well-conceived layout and integrated systems that relieve operator workload. With feedback from hundreds of customers over their illustrious 147 years of ship building, Cheoy Lee went about building a 72' yacht that could be single handed... and single minded. Space, style, efficiency and price are but a few determining factors in a purchase, but every boat is a compromise. Sure, there are over-the-top yachts that check all the boxes, but can you afford to write the check? Once in a great while a yacht comes along that not only checks all the boxes, it has an intangible X-factor that speaks to you on a subliminal level.

I've got a fairly specific list of criteria when I choose to review a boat. First and foremost, the builder should be financially stable and you should be confident in post-sale support. Next, the people behind the organization are an important consideration because the buyer is entering a relationship with them. There are certain yards (and people) that are difficult to work with. In those cases, we don't even bother covering them. If you see a builder on YF that has received very little coverage from us, read between the lines! My boat buying criteria probably parallels that of most buyers; price, performance, efficiency, design, accommodations, plus residual factors. You can adjust the order to your preference, but one factor rises above all... is it a boat I would buy? There's only a few offerings in the market that would tempt me to become partners with a bank, but occasionally I come across one that tempts me to rob the bank. The Bravo 72 might just be that boat for me...



The challenge of building a midrange yacht with all the amenities consumers have to come to expect is daunting, especially in the 75' foot range as builders try to deliver superyacht amenities, but are limited by volume and buyers' budgets. Yet another challenge is selecting a variety of systems from various manufacturers to work seamlessly together in the confines of limited space. Thus, new boats have bugs and it's the prime reason for choosing an experienced builder with numerous launches in their portfolio. Whether it's a production craft or a custom build, much is learned with each boat delivered. Cheoy Lee has built hundreds of yachts over many decades and the result is a level of usability and refinement that in the opinion of this reviewer, sets the bar high in the segment.



Prior to building the Bravo 72, Cheoy Lee studied the mid-size motor yacht market extensively to come up with a design that would best suit the marketplace. This wasn't about incorporating the best attributes of several different builds into one unique yacht. It was about a fresh start, really examining the yachting experience from an owner's perspective and delivering a product that would not only stand out in a crowded marketplace, but bring back the segment. In recent years, the economy has certainly impacted the midrange (50'-100') market, but other factors play a role factors too. Topping this list is the exponential rise in retail prices of boats which has substantially drained the buyer pool, leaving most shoppers in need of a bottle of Scope to kill the bad taste in their mouths. One of the criteria for the Bravo 72 was to build a boat that mere mortals could aspire to own. When you get north of 75 feet in length, the need for a crew becomes more likely. For couples who want to live the dream of single handing a vessel, the Bravo 72 is a manageable size boat that doesn't require the added cost of crew and provisions that wreak of red ink.



For the Bravo 72, Cheoy Lee worked with naval architect Howard Appollonio who has designed dozens of yachts for various builders over the years including Christensen, McKinna and another YF favorite also built by Cheoy Lee, the 27-meter sportfish El Lobo, marketed under the Affinity Yachts brand...[YachtForums Review: Affinity 90' Sportfish](#). Appollonio was tasked with developing a design to withstand the test of time; a boat that looks fresh today and tomorrow. Appollonio may not be as recognizable as Hargrave or Bannenburg, but he's designed a few notable boats including a one-off 92' Argos Marine motoryacht that was mostly remembered for its considerable bow flair, a design element made useful by the speed the boat could run through heavy seas. It was a real wave slayer! Argos is history now, but it proved Appollonio was a design force to be reckoned with in Force 5 conditions.



Getting to the bones of this build, the hull, deck and superstructure are Divinycell cored fiberglass. Cheoy Lee infuses bi-axial and multi-axial E-glass with vinylester resin, but the lamination schedule is only the beginning. The Bravo 72' was engineered by Gurit Composite Engineering with integral fiberglass tanks for fuel, fresh water, gray water and black, essentially creating a double bottom. No corroding aluminum tanks here! Structural design analysis is based on the Det Norske Veritas (DNV) Rules for Classification of High Speed, Light Craft and Naval Surface Craft (2014). Loads and pressures from this rule were then used to develop an optimized structural design for a stronger and lighter structure, which is one of the reasons Cheoy Lee can offer a 10 year hull structure warranty.



Cheoy Lee uses components, materials and parts that are readily available in the United States; an important consideration over the life of the vessel. The yard has also invested heavily in weight savings and engineering techniques. From the hull construction through to the finished interior, emphasis is placed on building the lightest and strongest fiberglass yachts, utilizing 100% foam cored resin infused, vacuum bagged construction for optimum resin distribution. Bulkheads and soles are cored fiberglass, meaning no wood is used in the construction, but carbon fiber is used strategically for strength. An epoxy barrier system is used on the hull bottom and the entire boat is finished-off with Alexseal coatings. And finally, 316 stainless hardware is used for all exterior decks fittings and fastenings.



If the size of the aft deck seems spacious, blame it on the beam. At 19' 10" wide, the Bravo 72 has a wide footprint. This not only enhances stability, but minimizes draft allowing a 94,000 lbs boat to draw only 5 feet. Truly a Bahamas friendly boat! Counting the swim platform, her overall length is 76', 11", but actually waterline length is 72 feet. Beam to length ratios play important roles in stability, speed and efficiency, but even with a class-busting beam the Bravo 72 cruises comfortably at 19 mph with a sprint speed of 31 mph thanks to a pair of Volvo Penta IPS 1050's (800hp).



Cheoy Lee works closely with Sylvia Bolton's Interior Design who has knack for creating clean uncluttered spaces that look modern without feeling clinical. Sylvia has seriously honed her art over the years with Cheoy Lee, an impressive feat given her geo-location. Sylvia lives in Seattle, but CL's interiors are finished off in Hong Kong as well as Cheoy Lee's yard in Ft. Lauderdale. Given the number of details involved in interior design, i.e. conjuring up the design, sourcing suppliers, materials, trinkets, etc., she does a remarkable job of turning the interior of yacht into a habitat for humans. In corresponding with Sylvia, she notes... "The materials used on board follow the contemporary design concept with walnut wood, unstained showing the beauty of its grain and running horizontally. The use of off white paint, both satin and hi-gloss in areas where reflection was needed to make the light bounce was another element contributing to opening up the space, along with carefully positioned lighting. Other materials used in contrast with the overall finishes were Macassar Ebony and some warm gold finished accessories to spice thing up."



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Sylvia went on to say... " The interior feels clean and spacious and what I like is the juxtaposition of finishes and tactile properties of all elements: gloss versus satin, shagreen leather, knobby chenilles and silky walls. Polished Bianco California granite was selected for the counters everywhere. We kept the number of different materials to minimum, relying on simplicity, light and all the architectural elements of the layout to make the interior elegant, functional and safe. One of the best features of this boat is a wide open, one-level layout with unobstructed views throughout the main deck that are only interrupted by the dayhead located to port, across from the galley. Not shown in this pic is a 48" pop-up television that hibernates in a cabinet on the port side of the salon. As with any build, it's the little things that enhance the experience. For example, there are recesses within the window boxes for shades and to keep pace with the power demands of today's electronic gadgets, USB power outlets are strategically placed throughout.



Bolton's minimalist approach becomes self-evident with the integrated bridge, galley, dinette and dayhead. Short of sleeping, the cruising couple is fully self contained in this space, merely taking a step in any direction for whatever your needs. A staircase to port leads to the lower accommodations and a pantographic door is also located to the port side (not shown). Although a helm chair is secured to the sole, this writer would opt for a freestanding helm chair that would accommodate different operators and could be set aside while the boat is at rest.



Whether you're prepping, cooking or cleaning, very little disrupts your view of the surrounding waters with the exception of the cabinets over the sink, which shouldn't be a problem if you're south of six feet tall. That said, provisions are everything on long passages and the overhead cabinets are welcome in a working kitchen. The galley is equipped with a Bosch oven, microwave, dishwasher, plus an induction cooktop range. Two Sub-Zero fridges are located in drawers beneath the counter-top as well as a garbage disposal unit. Dedicated plate and glass storage cabinets keep clanging minimized.



This helm represents the direction the digital age is going; simple flat surfaces for glass displays and peripheral space for communications. In keeping with the minimalist theme, Volvo's Glass Cockpit Displays are coupled to a joystick that takes all the anxiety out of docking. Credit to Cheoy Lee for incorporating a real Ritchie compass. Some things should remain analogue! One of the best aspects of a free-floating helm is open access to wiring. If you've ever replaced a gauge on a console, you'll appreciate the forward thinking here.



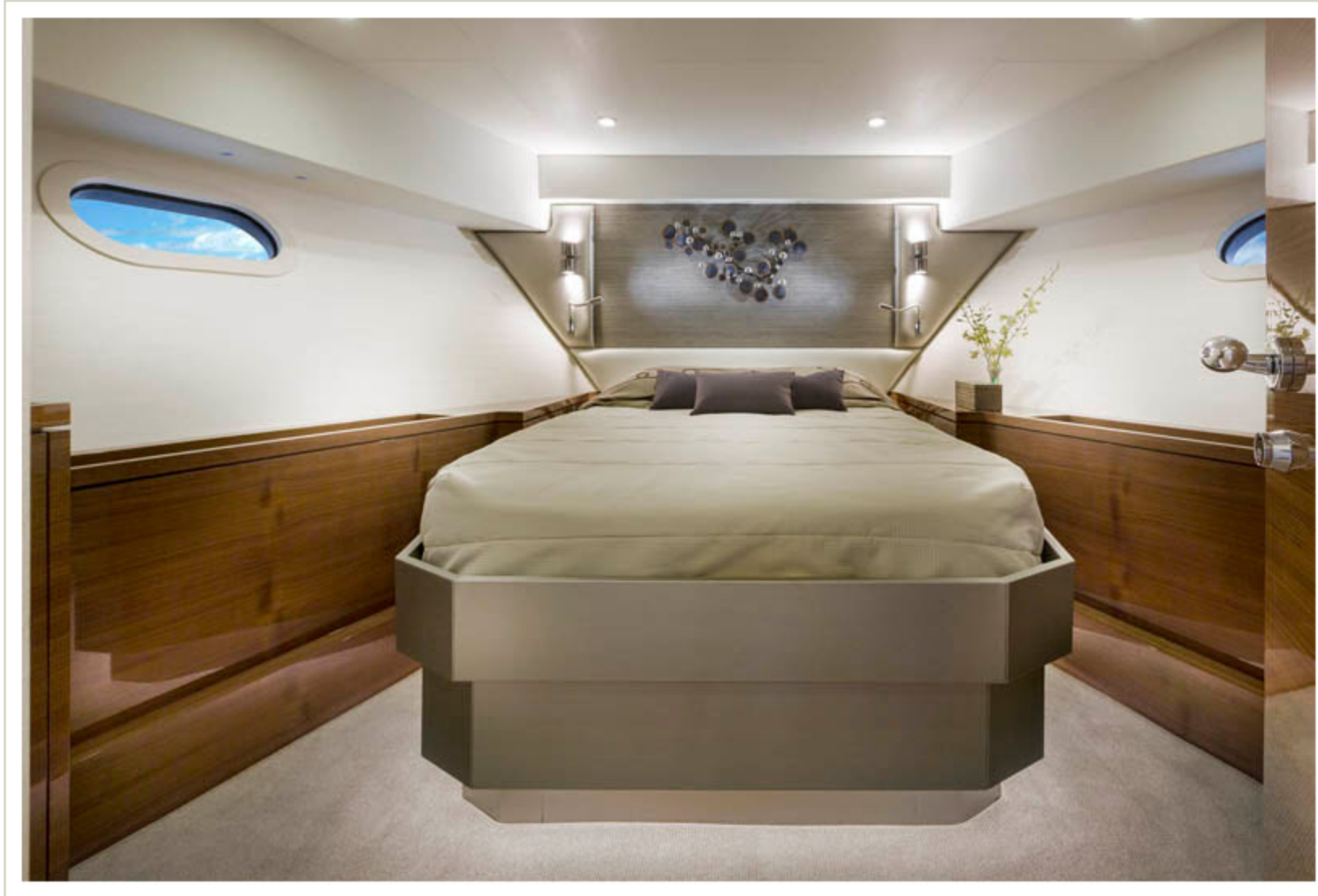
Lower accommodations on the Bravo 72 are more expansive than many other yachts in the segment, even a few approaching the triple digit mark. This is directly related to the space savings afforded by Volvo's IPS drive system which not only takes less space, but the machinery is located further aft granting more accommodation space. The master features a king-size berth on a pedestal with storage compartments underneath. Pocket sliders on the port side close off the master bath for privacy. Note the beveled corners of the bed. It's not a design exercise. Removing sharp edges and blunt corners when plowing through the rough stuff saves shins!



With the pocket sliders retracted, the full beam is realized. The master bath features two sinks recessed into a granite counter (because salad bowls are so 2000's!). Faucets are mounted on the backsplash. Privacy doors are provided for the shower and head.



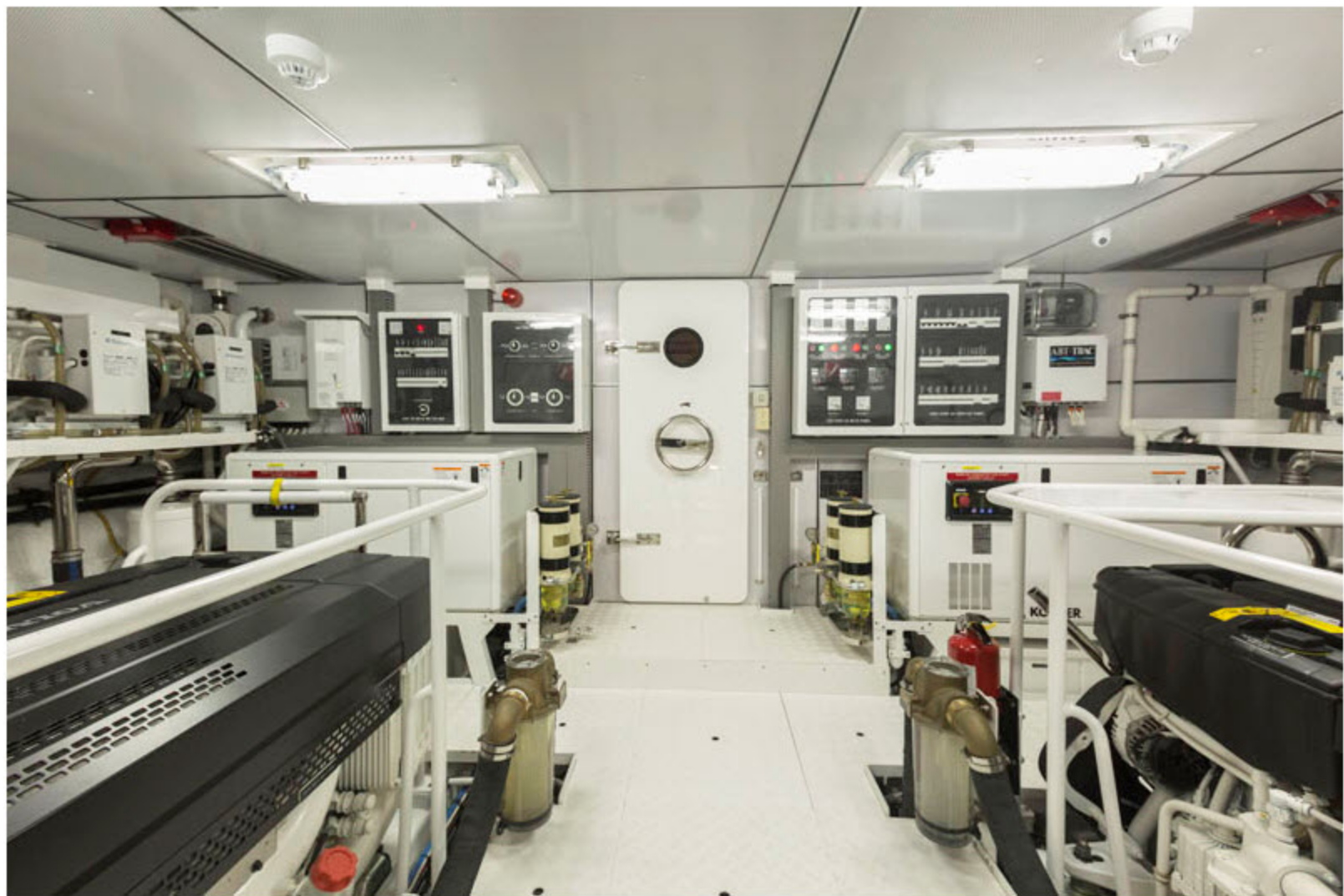
On the day of our sea trial, I measured decibel readings throughout the boat at both idle speeds and WOT. For reference, decibels climb with RPMs, but some boats are better insulated than others. Two rooms are prone to needing earmuffs when underway; the engine room and the v-berth. Seas were 2-3 on the day we ran the Bravo 72, sufficient for wave slap and the associated ruckus that would keep your VIP from getting any rest. Throughout the lower accommodations I measured decibels in the low 70s, not much higher than whispering and among the lowest numbers I've recorded on a boat this size.



Short of being slapped by a freighter wake, what impressed me the most on this boat was the lack of squeaks emanating from the joinery. Boats consist of thousands of parts. Keeping all of them from arguing with each other comes down to engineering and fit. Cheoy Lee has done a solid job of insulating the machinery, plus the sound-deadening of a double bottom configuration that results in a Lexus-like experience. One tends to associate a quiet ride with quality. Truth is, a quiet ride is a byproduct of material selection and good engineering.



Twin 800-hp Volvo Penta IPS1050 diesels are the main motivation on the Bravo, but buyers can opt for Cat power too. Again, the IPS system takes very little space. What's remaining is room to maneuver, which is hard to believe on a 72-footer WITH a dedicated crew compartment. A pair of 23 kW Kohler generators with an auto-transfer function bring the 2nd genset on-grid as needed to meet demand. TRAC zero-speed stabs steady the ride, but buyers have the option of Interceptors and Seakeepers. Components that need frequent service or maintenance are placed in easily accessible locations, while other systems take a subordinate position. Overall, it's a very sanitary engine room that is strangely spacious for a boat this size.



The Volvo integrated IPS technology eliminates much of the equipment typically needed in a yacht including gearboxes, shafts, stuffing boxes, rudders, rudder posts, steering components, hydraulics for thrusters, mufflers etc. The Volvo IPS technology claims to offer similar performance with 25% less power and fuel consumption, less expensive maintenance, more interior space and better range. Additionally, the hull is a completely new design specifically engineered for IPS propulsion. No bow or stern thrusters needed! Everyone has an opinion on pod-based system, but save yours until you've operated a boat with the IPS system. There's a good reason more manufacturers are offering them. The benefits are many. The drawbacks are few. Maneuverability, reliability and efficiency should top your list, but don't take this writers word for it. Examine the system yourself... **Volvo Penta IPS Drive**



For the casual observer, good design is subjective, but good design is much more than aesthetic appeal. It's form, function and access, which are directly linked to your boating pleasure. And ultimately, good design should stand the test of time. Appollonio's penned something fresh, but also familiar. Maybe because the lines make sense, unlike the swoopy stuff that soon becomes the equivalent of a marine mullet! Every boat is a compromise but for me, there are no glaring inadequacies with this build other than my inability to write the check. Cheoy Lee found a real sweet spot with the new Bravo 72' and it should not only become a best seller for them, it could single-handedly resurrect the midrange motoryacht segment.

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Specifications:

Length overall: 72'

Beam: 19'10"

Draft: 5'

Fuel capacity: 1,040 USG

Fresh water capacity: 280 USG

Power: Twin Volvo-Penta IPS 1050's

Gensets: Twin Kohler 23Kw

Stabilization: Trac

For more information contact:

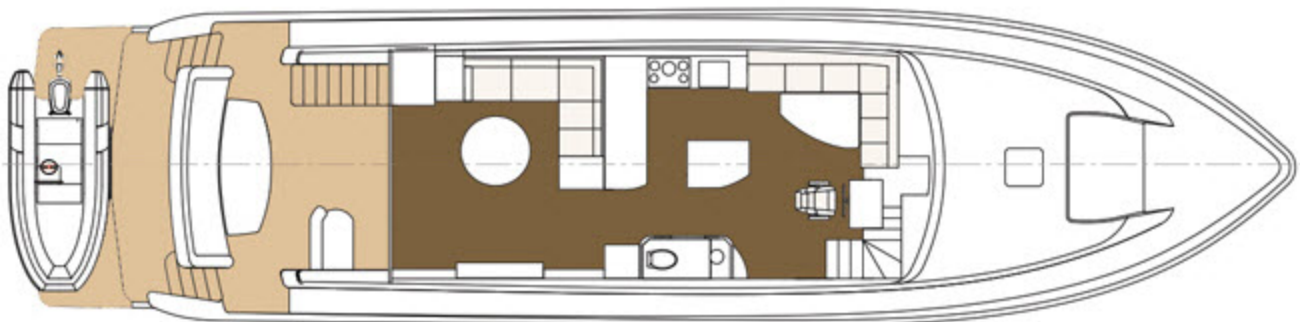
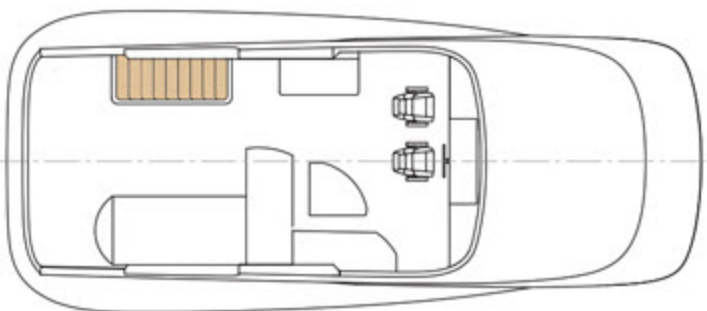
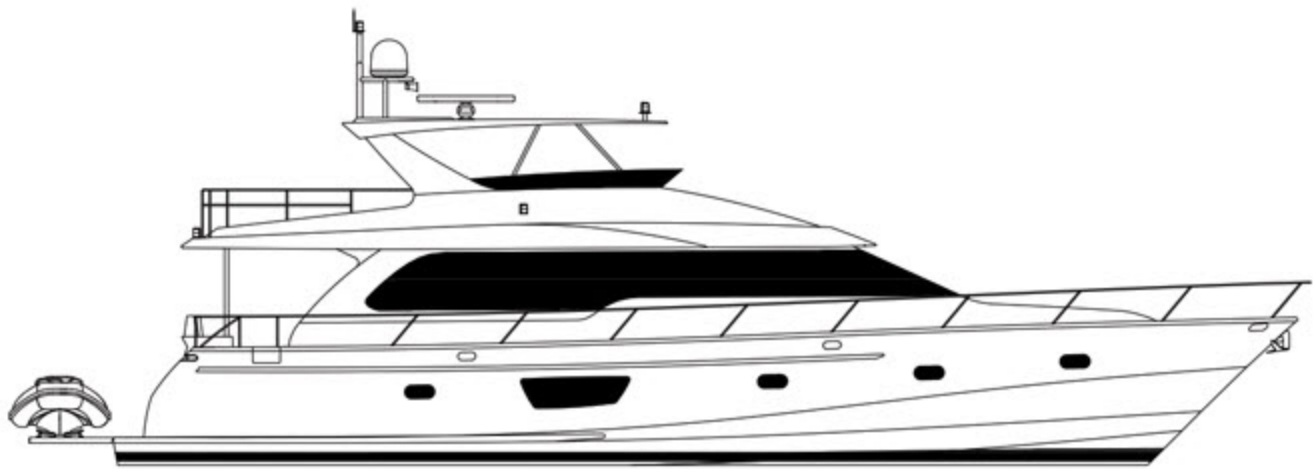
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This review is dedicated to Mel Wolff, an industry friend who worked closely with Cheoy Lee for many years. Mel suddenly passed the day after our sea trial. He will be missed, but not forgotten. One of the last conversations I had with him was the day after the sea trial. He called to ask my opinion on the boat. We both shared the same view... Bravo to Cheoy Lee on the 72!

Godspeed Mel!

