

BY KARL ANDERSON

Fountain 38 LX

Spending time with Reggie Fountain on one of his boats is entertaining. You can't help but get excited about getting on the water and listening to him. He's pumped up from the time he shakes your hand to greet you to the time he bids goodbye. Not only does he know the miles per hour, gallons per hour and gallons per mile for his boats, but he'll rattle off the numbers of other manufacturers' boats in the same size and horsepower class with equal authority. And he is focused on making his boats not only faster, but more efficient. He's a student of the products in this marketplace and a teacher of the nuances of performance boats, from the engineering and construction to the handling and trim characteristics that make his boats fast.

For 25 years, Fountain Powerboats has been building performance boats for cruising, racing and fishing with a very direct focus on speed. In Reggie's world, speed is life. He makes no bones about the goal of his products, and he repeats the mantra regularly: "Be the fastest, smoothest, safest and best handling boats on the water."

During a recent trip to eastern North Carolina, I was able to test Fountain's new 38 Luxury Sport at the factory. Don't let the model name or the speed fool you — the boat is very fishable and very functional. When I look at a boat, I have to approach it from the standpoint of the person who

wants that particular type of boat. In this case, if you like to fish, dive, cruise and hang out for a night or two aboard your boat, and you have limited time to spend getting there and back, the 38 LX should be on your short list. Rigged with Livorsi Marine triple-engine race controls and trim indicators, and powered with triple Mercury OptiMax 225-hp outboards, the 38 LX is capable of reaching speeds in excess of 60 mph. During our test, I never felt that we were on a white-knuckle ride. Granted, we were on a river, but I have been on the ocean going that fast in boats of similar size and didn't feel comfortable about the speed we were doing. At a brisk cruise of 50 mph, the engines are turning a mere 4400 rpm and burning 36 gallons per hour, netting roughly 1.3 miles per gallon. The boat will plane off at 16 mph.

The solid feel and easy handling is due in part to the power-assisted steering. It's tight with no slop and offers a mere four turns lock to lock. Steering components are the same as on the race boats: polished stainless-steel brackets and hydraulic rams from Latham Marine are

standard. This setup is not only super duty, it allows the operator to tilt one or two engines up and leave the others down with no binding of harnesses, cables or ram arms. The boat gets on plane and runs at over 40 mph on two engines, so you can still get home at a reasonable hour in the event of a failure.

The boat is laid out nicely and is spacious from the cockpit to the cabin. The cabin has 6' 5" of



headroom and is finely appointed with plush fabrics and rich woods. The forward wraparound seating area accommodates five people around the dinette table, which drops down to create a large sleeping area for two. With its microwave, single-burner cooktop, under-counter refrigerator and sink, the galley won't help you cook a multi-course dinner, but it's fully capable of providing a tasty meal during a trip. Across from the galley is a very spacious enclosed head with shower, Corian countertops, storage, sink and VacuFlush head. Teak flooring, air conditioning and heating is optional for the cabin on the 38 LX.

The upper helm deck is roomy, with an L-shaped seating arrangement in front of the console that features easily accessible hand rails, drink holders and lots of storage underneath. Fountain makes all of its seating bolsters and cushions on-site, and these are very well done and fit the boat beautifully.

The console is well laid out, with all the necessary controls ergonomically placed within arm's reach of the helmsman. The engine and trim-tab switches are directly in front of the throttles so they can be adjusted with the touch of a finger while your right hand works the throttles. All gauges and power switches are well labeled and easy to see. The two-person bolster doubles as a seat and leaning post with electric rams that lower the seats.

The cockpit of the 38 LX features two large, 150-quart, in-deck fishboxes that run fore and aft on each side of the bolster. A large storage bin along the centerline is located just aft of the bolster. Batteries are located outboard to starboard in an in-deck compartment, and there is room for an optional generator along the centerline aft of the storage bin. A full-length rear bench seat with 50-gallon circulating live well underneath, rod holders, rocket launcher, and walk-through transom door rounds

SPECIFICATIONS

Length	37' 11"
Beam	10' 6"
Fuel	300 gals.
Deadrise	22°
Sleeps	2
Water	31 gals.
Dry weight	12,900 lbs.
Base price w/ triple 225-hp Mercury OptiMax outboards	\$288,457

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out the LX fishing platform.

With the availability of the optional generator, bow thruster and air conditioning, the 38 LX is ready to go for overnights and then some. And you can be certain that Reggie Fountain has made sure you'll be passing people on the way to and from your destination, not in a spartan race boat, but on a well-appointed 38-footer that also offers efficiency and competitive value. *Fountain Power Boats, Washington, NC; (252) 975-2000; www.fountainpowerboats.com.* ↪

NEW 38-FOOTER IS FAST, FISHABLE AND VERY, VERY COMFORTABLE.

