

FAR OUT!

Our boat tester reckons that if you're seeking a serious offshore angling craft, you'd be mad not to give the Robalo R222 an equally serious look



Upon the
plane, and
all's good



Words and photography
by **Dave Lewis**

IF YOU READ MY REVIEW OF THE ROBALO R180 (issue 506) you'll know how impressed I was with the design, performance and sea-keeping qualities of this excellent boat.

I suggested she would be a tremendous choice for anyone looking for a serious offshore angling boat, and if I were in that position I'm pretty certain I'd be writing out a cheque to own her – at least I would have been, except that I have just returned from a truly exhilarating sea trial aboard her big sister, the Robalo R222.

The Robalo R222 is a feature-loaded beast of an offshore fishing machine, manufactured by a

company that clearly understands fish, fishing and fishermen. She is built on exactly the sort of wave-slicing deep V-hull that you want beneath your feet if you intend running 40 or more miles offshore to fish deep-water wrecks, drift for sharks, or perhaps even try trolling for those tuna we know are swimming out there each summer, just waiting for someone with the right boat to accurately locate and catch them.

The Robalo R222 would be just the right boat for this ultimate challenge.

Look at the pictures and you'll quickly note that the Robalo R222 is a classic American centre console sport fisher, the sort of boat you'll see lining the dock at every marina in the United States.

Traditional offshore angling boats here in the UK have almost always sported some sort of a cabin, the general consensus being that if it rains you've got somewhere to shelter. Over the years, though, I have spent a lot of time fishing offshore and, speaking for myself, I don't want somewhere to shelter, I want plenty of space from which to fish in comfort.

If it's cold or raining then you dress accordingly, and clearly if the weather is that bad you're not going to be venturing any great distance offshore in the first place. That far out, any smart helmsman will cut and run for home at the first sign of worsening sea conditions and, hopefully, they'll be in a boat that has the performance and hull to make for shore at a reasonable lick of speed.

I'd sooner make a long run in rough sea conditions aboard an open boat than be cramped up inside some stuffy cabin, and I know I'm not on my own in saying that.

GUIDED TOUR

Overall length of the Robalo R222 is 21ft 6in, and she sports a substantial 8ft 6in beam. She displaces 3,200lb, draws about a foot and a half and is rated for use with engines up to 250hp, fuelled from a 90-gallon tank.

Key features I noted include a neat anchor locker at the bow that includes a great rattle-free cradle that snugly holds a Danforth-style anchor. Huge 30-gallon lockers are insulated for fish or general storage, and there's even a forward deck hatch holding a five-gallon bucket to stow a cast net. I doubt it will ever be used for this purpose here in the UK, but it does give you an insight into the amount of thought that has gone into the design of this boat.

A fibreglass door at the forward edge of the console gives access to a toilet cubicle that contains a standard Porta Potti, and is obviously ideal for general lock-away stowage when the boat is left on a berth. The console is perfect for mounting all of today's must-have onboard electronics, along with Yamaha digital ▶

The centre console design means plenty of fishing space



gauges, drink holders and storage trays.

A smart Bimini top includes four rod holders fitted to the aft edge. These supplement horizontal rod racks fitted on the gunnels to either side of the console. Twin seating is provided at the console, with a third seat at its forward edge. A large livebait tank is located beneath the helmsman's seat.

The transom features a convertible aft bench that lifts for easy access to the batteries and all onboard electrical systems, including a 110V battery charger/maintainer as standard. A door within the starboard side of the transom opens on to an aft swim platform, which incorporates a sliding, folding, stainless boarding ladder.

My review of the Robalo R222 had again been arranged by Neville Williams of Pwllheli Marina-based Idealboat, the UK's importer for Robalo. After a quick and effortless launch we idled out of the marina, the powerful 225hp Yamaha purring silently at the stern. Outside, in open water, we were greeted by a lively chop courtesy of a fresh south-westerly wind, perfect conditions to assess the seakeeping qualities of an offshore boat.

The hull's response to the throttle was immediate. She rose rapidly up on to the plane and very quickly attained a cruising speed of between 20 and 30 knots – top speed is in the region of 50mph. I've already mentioned that the deep-V Robalo hull is ideal for slicing through a lively sea, and Neville demonstrated how comfortable a ride was achievable when running at speed through a fair chop – a reassuring feature in worsening weather.

SERIOUSLY IMPRESSED

We played about off Pwllheli for perhaps an hour, and I can sum up the performance of this boat in one word: amazing! No matter how we tried, neither of us could find any flaws at all in her handling characteristics, no matter how hard we pushed her. Often I take the helm of a high speed boat and find I am never really totally comfortable when standing or seated – either the helm or seat is a little too high or low, or the distance between the two is too close or too great for me. Not so aboard this Robalo, which I found perfect for operating both seated and standing, as I could securely brace myself in position when throwing her through the tightest of high-speed turns.

I could go on marvelling about her performance, but I think you should get the picture by now – I was impressed. All I can say is, if you are serious about offshore angling and are considering a new boat, then you'd be a mug not to consider the Robalo R222. ■

WHAT IT COSTS

■ The cost of a Robalo R222, with a 10-year limited hull warranty and fitted with a Yamaha 200hp, starts at £50,785. For more information visit: www.idealboat.com
 Email: sales@idealboat.com
 Tel: 01758 703013 or 07813 581937
 For information on Yamaha visit: www.yamahaoutboards.com



The smart Bimini top includes four rod holders

GREAT FEATURES OF THE ROBALO R222



1. The console has room for lots of gadgets
 3. Powerful Yamaha 225hp outboard engine

2. Toilet cubicle - always better than a bucket
 4. An aft bench gives access to the electrics