

MOTOR BOATING & SAILING

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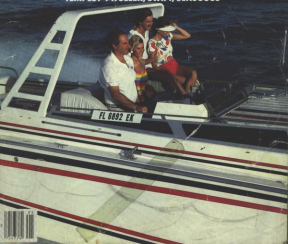
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TEMPEST 44: SLEEK, SWIFT, SENSUOUS





Photos by John Blusdon

TEMPEST 44

SLEEK, SWIFT, SENSUOUS

Luxurious? Yes. Decadent? Perhaps.
But it's also one of the fastest—and
most dependable—twin diesel
sportboats in the world.

By PETER A. JANSSEN



It starts with a low growl and a surge of power, then a lull, and suddenly you're up on plane, cruising at more than 50 miles-an hour in one of the most sensuous 44-footers in the world. There's no lurch, no G-force of a race boat pulling at your face and pushing you backward, no pounding as you come down on the waves. The Tempest Riviera is just powerful—powerful and smooth. So smooth that it could cut butter. And it's more fun than should be legal.

Even tied up at the dock the

Tempest holds out an air of inevitability, intimations of immortality, more than a hint of sexual adventure. It turns your head with its sleek, flowing, clean lines, and it makes all your ideas of traditional cruising obsolete. The Tempest, it seems, suggests that almost anything is possible—or at least within reach. With its twin Caterpillar 3208TA diesel producing 155 hp at 2400 rpm, the Tempest will hit 35 miles an hour, cruise in a bit to 2800 rpm and, with the boat's nine-foot, six-inch beam and 25-degree transom dead-end, you can cruise comfortably and safely at 30 mph all day. At cruising speed the Tempest burns 30 gallons of fuel an hour, and its tanks hold 80 gallons. If you want land it sounds like a good idea to me, you can head over to Nassau from Miami in three hours, have lunch, do some diving or fishing, and come back home again—without stopping to refuel.

Clearly, the Tempest is not for everybody. This is a boat that belongs at Turnberry, Newport Harbour, Catalina. "Anybody buying this boat knows there's no pricing on having a good time," says Tempest Marine President Dick Simon.

Indeed, Tempest buyers include some heavy hitters. Simon says he sold one Tempest to a wealthy yachtsman a few months ago, when it came time to ask for a check, the buyer asked Simon to walk outside to his car. The buyer then spread the trunk and pointed two stacks of two dozen checkbooks. "Which one do you want?" he asked Simon. A bit confused, Simon said he didn't care as long as the check didn't bounce. No, the buyer insisted, point to one. Obligingly, Simon chose one of the checkbooks. The buyer pulled it out, wrote the check—the more

than \$200,000—and, sure enough, the check cleared.

Less than two years old, Tempest Marine is a new name in world-wide yachting. And the story of Tempest is very much the story of Dick Simon. About ten years ago Simon moved to Ft. Lauderdale from Chicago, where he ran successful insurance and real estate companies. He liked boating, diving, the Bahamas, and the winters in Florida were definitely better than they were in Chicago. At first, he spent half his time in Lauderdale and half in Chicago, until he finally told his partners that "I never wanted to see of Chicago winter again," and he settled in for good, expanding his insurance business in south Florida.

When I asked him the name of the insurance company, over Sunday brunch at Turnberry, Simon rattled off a few

names, then a few more, then he amended the first ones, and finally volunteered to draw me an organization chart. There are so many companies he has trouble keeping track. As if the insurance and real estate companies weren't enough to keep him busy, a few years ago Simon decided that insurance agents needed computerized software programs to help them give quotes to clients faster. There weren't any such programs on the market at the time—so he developed them. The idea took off, and Simon now has an extremely successful software company. In addition, last year he realized that his insurance and computer companies were using a lot of paperwork, and he wasn't getting the kind of service he wanted from local printers. So, in typical fashion, he started his own printing company.

A large, friendly, generous man, Simon



Tempest founder and chairman Dick Simon, left, and designer and president Adam Erilberg, above. Below, spacy-age, push-button controls at the helm station.





The engine compartment cover lifts hydraulically with the touch of a button for easy access to the twin Cummins V-4 diesels (above). The stand-up head (left), stainless mirrors, dressing-room lights, a shower—and a toilet.

clearly likes to do things his way, but he doesn't like to be crossed. He ended up with Tropes Marine two years ago (largely by accident)—and as a result of getting angry. All he was trying to do, he says, was to buy a boat, instead, he ended up with the entire company.

Simon has been floating for years, starting with a 24-foot Sea Ray that he traded to Florida behind a GMC pickup from Chicago, making several roundtrips a year. Then a Florida friend bought a Cigarette 33 and asked Simon along for a test run. "So," he says matter-of-factly, "I had to buy a boat to keep up with my friend's Cigarette." Simon picked up a 1973 Magnum 35, trading it in after a few years for a candy-apple-red Bvva 42. Next came a Hatteras 38, but after a few years Simon realized he wanted a smaller, faster, more open boat. He had bought a vacation home in Treasure Cay, the Bahamas, and he wanted something to run over to visit, to hold his with Phyllis and their two college-age sons, and he

wanted twin diesel performance and reliability for safety.

Simon ordered such a boat from a small company in north Florida, but he was not happy with what they produced. Instead of a boat, he ended up inventing a suit, ultimately, he walked away with the company itself. "I figured that if I wanted a high-performance, direct, 44-foot-offshore boat," Simon says, "I'd have to make it myself."

First, however, he had to find someone who knew the boat business. And Simon found one of the best in the world. While Simon was organizing his insurance business in Chicago, Adam Gilling was designing boats in Israel. Not sailboats, not runabouts, not even high-performance, twin diesel sportsboats. Gilling was designing boats for the Israeli navy, including a 140-foot guided missile boat with four synchronized engines producing a total of 32,000 hp.

In 1978, after the Yom Kippur War,

Erlberg came to the U.S. "I planned to stay for a year to refresh myself," he says now. "It turned out to be a long year." At the time, Erlberg spoke little English, and he needed a job. A friend sent a help-wanted ad placed in the Sunday local paper by Bertram Yacht in Miami, and Erlberg applied. Bertram put him on the assembly line making through-hull fittings. "As Bertram," he jokes, "I learned the business from the ground up."

Bertram had a suggestion box for its production line workers, and Erlberg made sure he put in at least one suggestion per day. After four months the head of the engineering department called him in and asked his background; the next day Erlberg reported to work in engineering. All in all, he spent five years at Bertram, designing the 33, 34 and 38 convertibles, among others. Then he moved to Cigarettes, and designed the 41.

When Simon started searching for a boat designer, he wanted someone familiar with high-performance clients. The people at Caterpillar put him onto Erlberg. They talked, and Simon hired him to run Tempest. Simon (as chairman) putting up the money, and Erlberg (as president) putting up the expertise.

An Instant Success

They developed their own plug and molding and showed the finished product for the first time at the Miami boat show in February, 1985. The boat was an instant success; a yachtman in St. Tropez, who had only heard about the Tempest, bought one right away.

Then the greenies hit. In an effort to give the boat some visibility, Simon chartered out a Tempest 44 sportfish, a luxurious yacht with everything from a tuna tower to a heli, in seven newspapers and magazines (including *Motor Boating & Sailing*, *The New York Times* and *Sports Illustrated*) to create as the press boat covering the America's Cup last summer in Newport, R.I. It personally was on the boat the day it arrived in Newport in June, and I was on it again many times over the course of the summer, including the very last—and deciding—race of the Cup in September.

When it ran, the Tempest was wonderful, handling the not infrequent rough water and heavy weather offshore with ease, cutting through even massive waves with a firmness and ease that belied its 30 mph speed. Unfortunately, there were days when the Tempest did not run, when

there were severe problems with the engine and the drives. The engines, pushing the sportfish's 17,000 pounds, were overheating and blowing; the drivers often could not handle the torque from the giant diesels.

The good news is that those problems have been solved. Caterpillar has changed the aftercooling system on its engines (previously, and Erlberg had developed better shafts and props for the surface drives. There is no question at all about the Tempest's reliability. The week before Christmas one of Simon's captains delivered a 44 from the factory in Ft. Lauderdale to St. Bart's on its own bottom in five days without a single mishap. Simon himself drove the boat on the last leg with five people onboard in ten-foot seas. "We use boats ourselves," Simon says, "and we design boats for people who use boats. Their boats can take anything."

Since then, Erlberg has perfected his own surface drive system; a patent is pending. The "T-Torque Drive," as he calls it, is the essence of simplicity, with no gears, nothing to break, just an enormous 1½-inch shaft running from the engine through the transmission with a flex coupling.

Ready for Decadence

Simon, meanwhile, adopted a provocative and aggressive ad campaign that made sure the boat was noticed. "Love her on the outside, love her on the inside," read one ad. "This vessel has to be luxurious enough to provide not just comfortable overnighting, but nearly decadent elegance," read another. Noting the bids, the color, the indirect lighting—in general an interior that would make Hugh Hefner blush—a friend from a major metropolitan newspaper commented this summer that "I'm ready for some decadence," only to learn to her disappointment that covering the Cup was in fact a lot of work.

The Tempest display at the New York boat show last January (where the Tempest was queen of its show) drew crowds with its innovative videography intoning the boat's virtues. The two-and-a-half minute tape consisted of slides of the boat in action, all standard enough, but the narration—in a low, sultry, suggestive voice by a woman-disc jockey on station 1-99 FM in Miami (known as the Madam)—absolutely stopped traffic. Even for the boat show, the tape was judged too racy. Simon used it down for the Miami

show the following month.

Tempest now makes three 44-foot models—all on the same hull, the sportfish, with a center console, the sport model, with a large teahut in the cockpit, and the Riviera, (pictured here). So far, the Riviera is the most popular. The boatman built to last, with a two-inch core of plywood transoms, Klegecoiled coiled topsides, Baltic birch teak-cooled stringers forward, and heavy plywood stringers under the engines. The combination of space-age Kevlar, Klegecoiled and Nomex honeycomb never weighs—yet adds strength. "This boat," says Erlberg, "will last forever."

As long as it lasts, it will carry as many of your friends as you want to have aboard. Even for a large 44-footer, the cockpit in the Tempest is generous. There's standing room, sitting room and—best of all for guests—plenty of sunning room. In fact, there's even a large sun pad in front of the cockpit, over the entrance to the cabin, which is a perfect spot for catching some rays while still being close enough to enjoy conversation with the driver of the boat.

The two 34s deck out almost two-thirds of the way back in the cockpit; a push button on the console lifts the engine compartment hatch hydraulically for at most total access. A built-in bar and an make-up attractive options, as is the fresh-water shower on the transom to wash all the salt off when you come in from a swim. The boat comes with four heavy-duty batteries.

Suede and Leather

The cabin, at the first of three curving stairs, is lavish, to say the least. Many boats claim to have stand-up headrooms; on the Tempest, it's true. I'm almost six feet, two-inches tall, and I didn't even have to stoop. On the port side is an unusually large stowaway shower, including the bidet and super-synthetic foam-type makeup lights. On the starboard side is a well-equipped galley, complete with the by-now requisite microwave. Forward is a lounge area with suede and leather—almost whatever you want—and a heavily-padded full V berth looking forward. Lighting in the lounge and sleeping areas is indirect, a sensor on the galley bulkhead, next to the electronics control panel, automatically turns on the interior lights. One nice safety item: The air conditioning unit takes its air from an enclosed compartment in the lounge area.

Since it covers every corner of the luxury market the Tempest is made for, and he has included some nice touches. Each boat comes with four china plates, four crystal glasses, four place settings of cutlery, a complete set of towels (with the owner's monogram), a Tempest tool kit, even a portable, hand-held vacuum cleaner.

Justifiably proud of his creation, Simon says, "I will boats to my friends. I'm not going to sell them anything less than a high-quality product. I'm going to make the best high-performance 44-foot diesel that anybody can make." And that's exactly what he's doing. ☺

TEMPEST 44 RIVERS

LOA	43'8"
Beam	8'8"
Draft	3'3"
Deckline at transom	25"
Fuel capacity	300 gal.
Water capacity	50 gal.
Displacement	(approx.) 13,000 lbs.
Power	Two Cummins 200HP Diesels
Price	\$225,000
Tempest Marine, Dept. MMS, 4800 S.W. 48th Ave., Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33314. 305/791-0300.	



Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33314
4800 SW 48th Avenue,
(305) 791-0300

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