

■ NEW BOAT TEST

ENAVIGO 33

It sounded good: workboat style but in strip/WEST, and with all the mod cons. *Martin Smith* went to Croatia for a test sail. Photos by *Steffan Meyric Hughes*





For such a heavy boat, Enavigo 33 is sprightly in light winds

The Croatians are a proud people. They were proud as part of the former Yugoslavia and were even prouder to regain independence in 1991. They're also proud of their nation's achievements globally: it was a Croatian who unearthed the benefits of alternating current electricity – not Thomas Edison; and Croatian oak was used in the construction of England's Parliament. I can't vouch for the accuracy of these facts, and I'm not going to check them: the point is the pride with which these and other details of national excellence were related to me while in Croatia to test the Enavigo 33.

Croatian pride extends to their seemingly limitless hospitality, but this trip was no archetypal press junket; for three days we were given unrestricted access to sail *Slavonka*, the first, and as yet only finished, Enavigo 33. And we were allowed to pick, prod, push and pull, bang and batter the boat as we enjoyed ourselves sailing in the country's Kornati National Park. The only casualty after sailing in some sporty winter conditions was one Harken block that, until it disintegrated, had been part of the kicking strap. That we had a great time

sailing an enjoyable and endearing craft is surprising considering it's the first boat of any kind to be produced by Enavigo.

The trip started with a visit to the company's boat-production facility in the town of Virovitica and a talk with company owner Tomislav Matasic. Mr Matasic explained that the reality of becoming a boatbuilder had been a dream that was 15 years in formation in his mind, and derives from a long love of sailing. Until now his money has been made from an engineering business, which manufactures components for large-scale printing machines, and a furniture manufacturing company – both also based in Virovitica. Mr Matasic is keen to point out that along with Enavigo's own boats, the company intends to produce one-off boats to individual customers' specifications.

Quality was a word much used during the factory tour and Mr Matasic has taken Enavigo's principles of quality control straight from his engineering business: each component is individually numbered, tested and catalogued so its origins and details can be traced, and the environmental conditions inside the building are

checked, recorded and adjusted four times a day. These internal factory conditions are vitally important, too, as the boats are built of wood-laminate construction, using an epoxy saturation technique, all adhesives being supplied by West System. For this system to be effective, the moisture content of the materials and environment must be closely controlled, and this is a criteria certainly not overlooked by Enavigo.

The Enavigo 33, designed by American designer Tony Gondola, is intended to be a high-quality, liveaboard passage-maker, with all the style of a Mediterranean cruiser, and it looks good, too. Externally it appears reminiscent of a cruising workboat, while, beneath the water, the wetted area is kept low in the modern fashion. Internally, it's a hospitable blend of dark, solid teak, comfortable, simple upholstery, and clean hardwearing surfaces. *Slavonka's* hull is of 1in- (25mm) thick pine strip-planking laid horizontally, topped by two, 45-degree diagonally crossed layers of ½in (6mm) khaya strips, all sheathed in two layers of 350gsm glass matt and epoxy. On subsequent boats the initial layer will be cedar now that a suitable source of this wood has



Walk-out bowsprit contains the clutter of the anchor, windlass and stays



been found, and this should save some weight: at 8.2 tons, these are no lightweights. It's a boat to be used and appreciated – so use it we did.

On the dock

Following a four-hour, high-speed drive along Croatia's excellent motorway system, we finally descended from the coastal mountains into the town of Biograd, where we were at last confronted with *Slavonka* in the flesh. Though I'd previously seen many pictures, I was still taken aback by the attractiveness of the boat close to. The first aspect that draws attention is the large, shapely transom with a modicum of tumble-home, but the eye is soon taken forward along a curvaceous sheerline, encapsulating a rich mixture of epoxy-coated and varnished mahogany, exposed, weathered teak and a white Awlgrip-coated coachroof.

Stepping aboard via a walk-out bumkin, the initial impression is of a big, beamy craft and, with a 3,500kg (7,720lb) long ballast keel, it's a stable one, too. There's plenty of space in the cockpit, and wide side decks mean that getting forward is easy. When you get right forward, the foredeck is an uncluttered area due to the incorporation of a walk-out, laminated mahogany bowsprit. This spar not only offers an anchor point for the outer stay and the furling genoa of the cutter rig, but its inner end acts as a mounting for the 1,200-watt Lofrans electric windlass.

In the centre of the foredeck is what appears to be the hatch opening through to the fore cabin, but is, in fact, the opening to a spacious locker – big enough to store the staysail with room for numerous sheets, gloves and whatever else a foredeck hand could desire. Ventilation for the cabin,

and the rest of the boat, is via hinged aluminium-and-Perspex hatches – slightly out of place amid the bronze and brightwork. The only other obviously modern touch is the Selden aluminium mast and boom, though wooden spars are an option.

Below decks

Back aft the companionway between the saloon and cockpit is wide, secure and open, with deep steps, making access extremely easy. Below, the impression is of warmth and practicality: teak, coated with International varnish is used throughout, with teak-faced ply for the bulkheads. The cored sandwich construction of the coachroof means there are no deck beams in this area, which adds to an uncluttered feel, and marginally extends an already impressive amount of standing headroom. Lighting in the saloon is provided by eight,

ENAVIGO 33

What the designer says

"I'd love to say that I was drawing crayon pictures of channel cutters in my crib, but I have to admit that my background is pretty diverse, with a strong interest in engineering and art. I didn't become interested in boats until the late 1980s, when I decided that I wanted to learn how to sail. Not having a great deal of money, I got hold of the plans for a little Phil Bolger design, and built that in order to have something to learn in. After building a few more boats, I found that I was really more interested in designing, so I enrolled with Westlawn for a full course in marine design. Soon after completing the course in 1997 I started the stock plans business, called Northwest Marine Designs, that is still up and running today. I get enough custom work to keep things interesting, but, having started as one myself, my heart has always been with the self-builder.

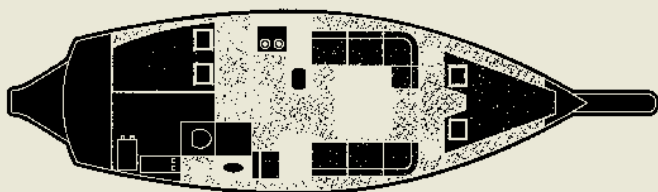
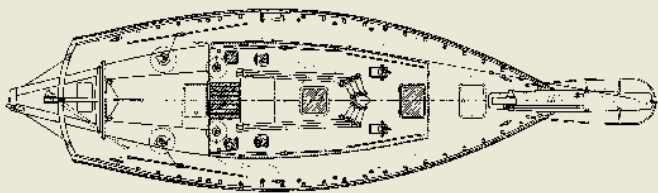
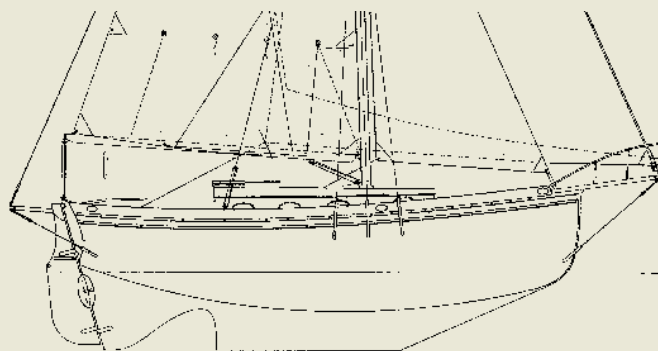
"I originally produced what has become the Enavigo 33 as a self-build project, named the North Light; all of my designs prior to this were very modern in appearance and approach. The original client for the North Light had a bent towards traditional styling, but at no point was any effort or request made to copy an existing type. However, as the preliminary design progressed and features were added, the design kept drifting towards the classic. The final form of the boat – sheerline, house profile, snub bow, etc – was really more a matter of function than anything else.

"As a whole, I think this is the most beautiful boat I've ever produced. The balance between proven, traditional features and modern ideas came together in a way that I think surprised myself and the client. The boat is a great example of what can happen when a good client pushes a designer into areas he might not otherwise go.

"Discovering that she had too much weather helm came as a bit of a surprise: the geometric lead is a full 17 per cent, which is what you'd expect for this type, but she clearly needs more. With this in mind, we've taken out a bit of mast rake, extended the genoa tack and put a bit of balance area in the rudder. All of this has helped but I suspect that it's simply necessary to carry out some more of the same.

"I was really impressed with what Enavigo have accomplished with the boat, and overall I couldn't ask for a better representation of my work." *Tony Gondola*

"This is the most beautiful boat I've ever produced"

**Enavigo 33**

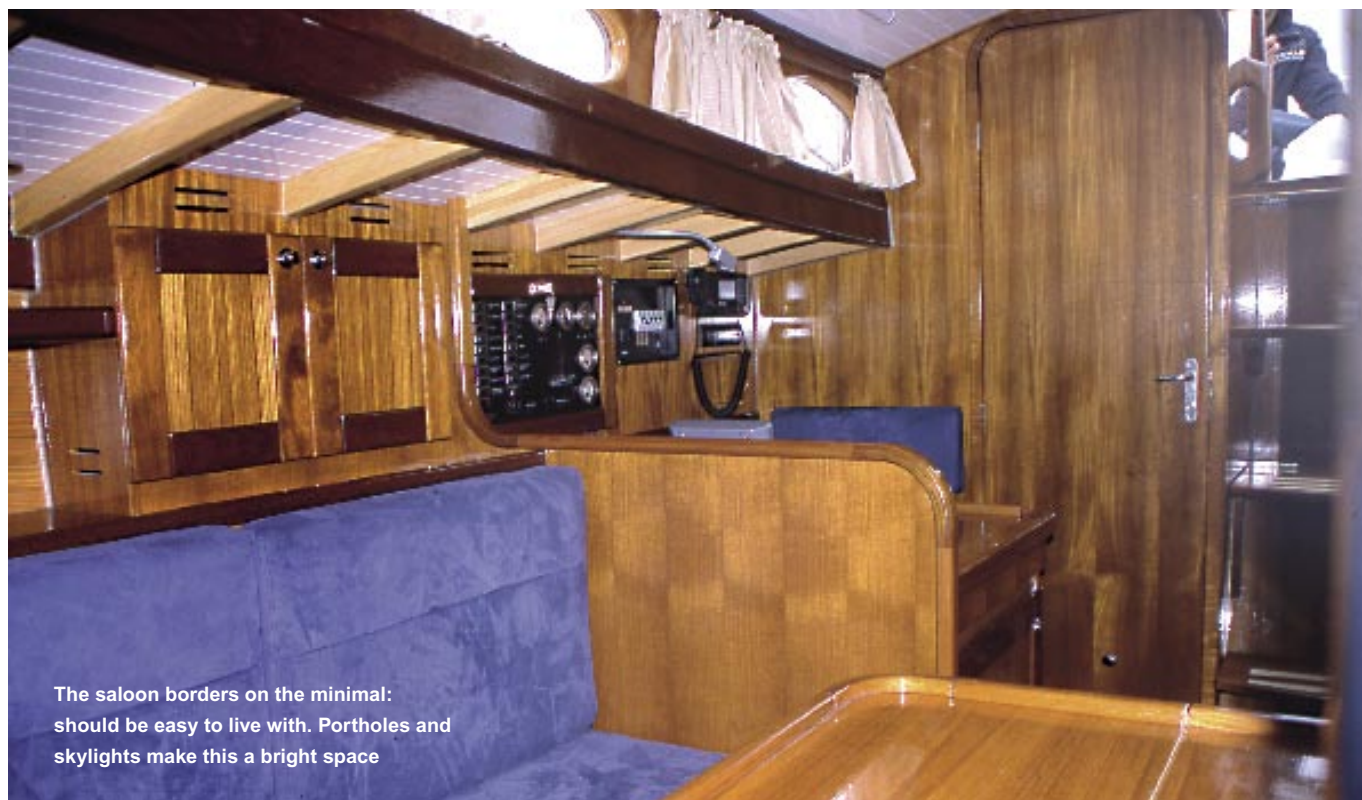
LOS: 12.9m (42ft 4in)
LOA: 10m (32ft 10in)
LWL: 9m (29ft 6in)
Beam: 3.5m (11ft 6in)
Draught: 1.5m (5ft)
Disp: 8.2 tons
Ballast: 3 tons
Sail area: 92.5m² (996sqft)
Power: 39hp (29kW)
Water: 700L
Fuel: 220L



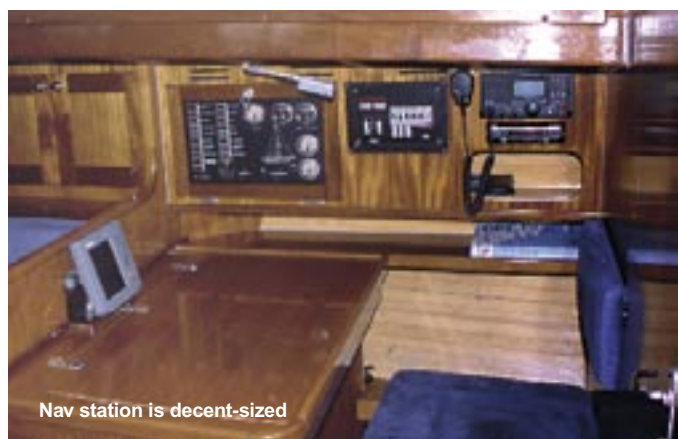
The large cockpit was a favourite feature

multiple-LED fittings, augmented by two slim strip-lights above the table. The galley, to port, is a comfortable workspace, where a gimballed stainless-steel stove and 1½-bowl stainless sink, set amid white hardwearing surfaces, give a modern easy-clean feel, and a cavernous fridge takes care of the necessities. To starboard is a decent sized nav station, where everything, including switch gear, fuses, charts and plotter, falls easily to hand and is clearly labelled.

Behind the nav station is a door leading to the heads. This room, again, is spacious with standing headroom except over the loo itself. This impressive ceiling height is a blessing when using the showerhead, which recoils to double as the sink spigot. Drainage for the shower is through a teak grating in the floor. Going further aft, through a hatch at the rear of the heads compartment, is a large space giving access



The saloon borders on the minimal: should be easy to live with. Portholes and skylights make this a bright space



Nav station is decent-sized



Note the wide steps

to the back of the engine, and this generous room is the location of other ancillaries, such as fuel tank, engine control cables and the three 100Ah batteries. On the starboard side of the boat, mirroring the heads, is the aft cabin. At around 4ft 6in (1.4m) wide at its forward end and tapering to less than 2ft (60cm) at its foot, this bunk, though 6ft 6in (2m) long, would be a little small for two adults, though very generous for one and ample for two kids. Again, standing headroom and plenty of stowage make this berth comfortable in use. Going forward past the two settee berths in the saloon there is the forward vee-berth. This is the largest and most comfortable cabin aboard. Again, there's plenty of LED lighting, dark teak and over 6ft 4in (1.9m) headroom at its aft end. A small fill-in piece converts the matted area to a full triangle across the beam of the boat.

On deck

With conditions a little dull and windless for photography, we headed out from Kornati Marina to get a feel for the boat. Motoring off the berth it was pleasing to find that, uncharacteristically for a heavy long-keeler, *Slavonka* is quite manoeuvrable. She's not as responsive, particularly while sternboarding, as modern yachts; but, nonetheless, she's a doddle to handle under her 39hp Yanmar engine. As no photography was taking place, the boat was filled with five big lads: two CB journo's; Vedran, our guide to Croatia and Enavigo's marketing director; Mladen, our local skipper and, biggest of all, Dalibor, three times Croatian heavyweight kickboxing champion, presidential body guard and, latterly, video photographer. It was testament to the boat's saloon and cockpit layout that we never felt over-crowded.

Under sail

With all lines leading back to the cockpit and the mainsail residing within lazy jacks and a zip-up bag, raising sail is a relaxed affair. All that needs to be done forward is to attach the main halyard to the head of the sail and hank on the staysail if it is to be used. Once in clear water it was just a question of releasing a snatchblock, hauling up the main, making off, and unfurling the genoa. The yacht sailed quite happily under genoa and main alone, but the staysail halyard is also run back to the cockpit, so we made use of the extra canvas. Tacking with the staysail set involves partially furling the genoa in order for it to clear the inner stay, and, as there are running backstays to remember, too, it's a slightly more complicated procedure. The inner stay, though, is attached via an easy releasing arrangement, so, in light winds, if sailing

CONSTRUCTION

View from inside the boatshed

The Enavigo boatshed is a new, purpose-built structure, *writes Steffan Meyric Hughes*. Large, airy, bright, fully enclosed, humidity- and temperature-controlled, and with a sliding crane for turning hulls, this is a facility that would have many British boatbuilders burning with envy. It is suitable for the construction of craft up to 62ft (19m) long, and could be extended easily should the need arise: no page-3 pin-ups here (at least not on our visit).

Company owner Tomislav Matasic shows us row upon row of neatly ordered parts, tidy stacks of wood and metal pieces. Enavigo makes its own brass fittings: each stanchion used to secure the long mahogany bulwarks is slightly different to the others, to follow perfectly the curve of the hull. It's the sort of pernickety attention to detail you might expect from a company that also makes parts for printing machines. Another example of this strict regulation is in the application of a 1mm layer of 150gsm glass roving to every outside natural wood component, before epoxy impregnation: not only is the humidity in the shed checked and recorded four times daily, the moisture in the wood goes through the same controls to ensure lasting bonding stability.

Upstairs in the spotlessly clean office, we sit down and look at slides of possible future projects. Mr Matasic is a firm believer in wood, not just for its aesthetic value, but for its characteristics of

longevity, flexibility – and, not least, strength. More specifically, Mr Matasic believes that the strip/WEST construction will outlast and outperform other methods, and present no more maintenance to the owner throughout its lifetime than any other material. According to Enavigo, wood has the best strength/weight ratio of any standard boatbuilding material, as well as the highest resistance to the so-called 'stress of materials', the reduction of its structural integrity after repeated stresses, the sort of stresses caused by flexing in a seaway. Tests, which have put various materials through a cycle of compression one million times over 30 hours, have shown the following results: GRP kept 22 per cent of its original strength; aluminium kept 37 per cent of its original strength; laminated wood with epoxy resin kept 64 per cent of its original strength.

For Enavigo, wood's other qualities – better thermal and acoustic characteristics, breathability to counteract condensation and improved aesthetic appeal over metal or GRP – run a poor second, although you'd be hard pressed to believe it from the large, lavish photos in the office of *Slavonka* under sail. Enavigo is now looking at designs of 14-15 metre racers, which would be built in wood, a material, according to Mr Matasic, which could hold its own against modern sandwich construction in terms of performance.

“Mr Matasic is a firm believer in wood”



Mr Matasic shows off one of the boat's floors



The Enavigo boatshed is well equipped

short-handed or with inexperienced crew, this can be hooked out of the way.

With sails set and time to kill, the first thing that came to notice was a large amount of weather helm. The company has identified this and is introducing some modifications to reduce the effects. We tried various sail configurations with the aim of moving the centre of pressure forward, but with only modest success. Once you get used to the weather helm, the boat is straightforward to sail, and has a kindly motion, barging aside waves and healing progressively in the gusts. With the December light fading fast, our first day's sail came to an end, and we returned to our hotel. The boat's homely feel meant that a night on board would have been more to our liking, but, then again, no one volunteered to share a berth with Dalibor the kick-boxer either.

The next morning brought sunshine and good prospects for photography and filming. Heading south into the breeze with just two of us aboard, we found some sea room and hoisted full sail. Further to the south, clouds were building and the winter sunlight bounced warmly between sea and clouds, lighting up the boat as we tacked and gybed for the photographers. The gentle run back to the marina, with green islands to port and Croatia's rocky mainland to starboard, was the most pleasant sail of the trip.

Following a comfortable night on the boat by a complement now numbering four – the President was in need of Dalibor's protection – the next day served up a different set of conditions. The wind was still southerly but the air was colder, with a grey sky and winds increased from 18 knots as we set out to gusts well into the 30s later

on. With single-reefed main and staysail alone we topped 7 knots on a broad reach and in the short, steep seas that predominate in this area, the boat's motion was still steady. It was here that the block on the kicking strap disintegrated during a controlled gybe – in honesty, we should have released it before starting the manoeuvre.

On the fast run back to the marina, we reflected on the impressions the Enavigo 33 had made on us. The lasting and overriding feeling is of an endearing craft from a company obviously dedicated to building to a very high standard, and it's a boat that goes a long way to living up to its price tag. The blend of work - boat charm and Mediterranean chic is extremely pleasing to the eye as well as comfortable and practical in use, and it's a boat that the Croatians' pride should encompass with ease.