

BOAT TEST  
**Fjord 40 Open**



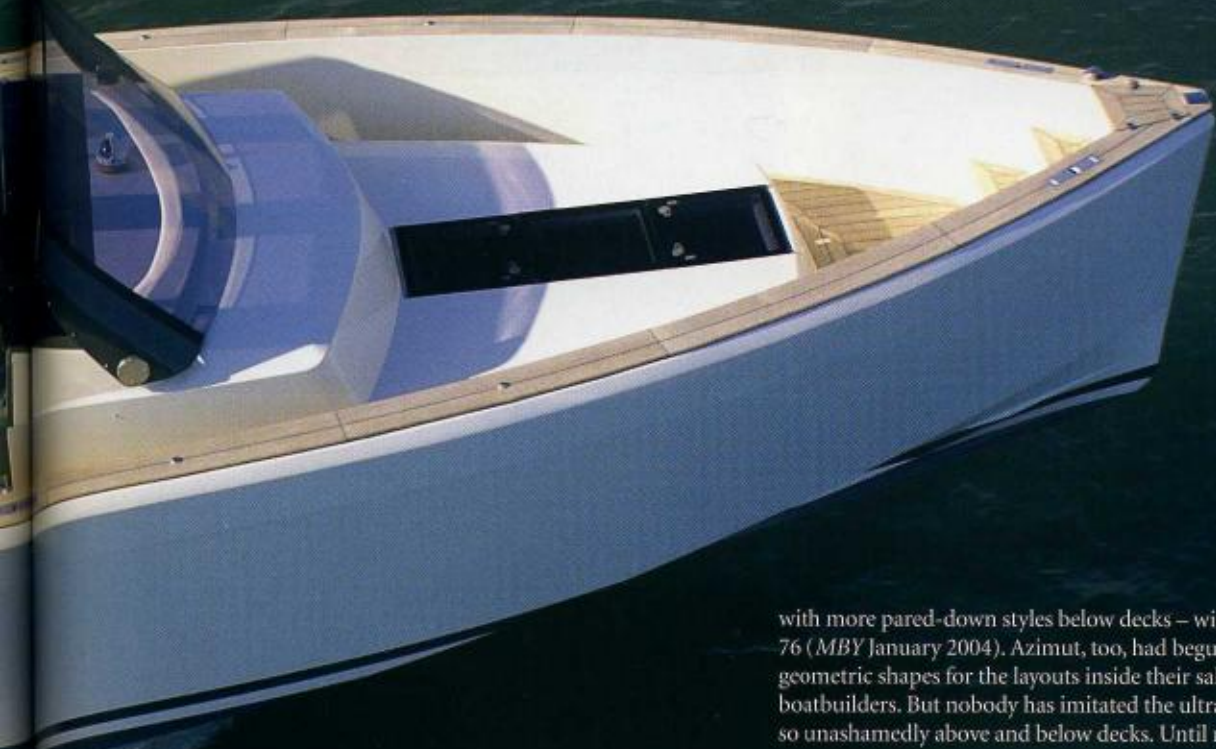


# King for a day

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The supercool Fjord 40 Open maybe an extravagant vehicle to get you to Studland Bay for lunch, but rarely has dayboating reached such exalted heights. Climb aboard, turn on, and

SHOW OFF Text: David Marsh Photos: Lester McCarthy & Sue Sieger



with more pared-down styles below decks – witness the Kaitos 76 (*MBY* January 2004). Azimut, too, had begun to use simpler geometric shapes for the layouts inside their saloons, as had other boatbuilders. But nobody has imitated the ultra-clean Wally look so unashamedly above and below decks. Until now.

## Style for style's sake?

Without doubt, the new Fjord 40 is not so much a nod as a full curtsy to Luca and the purity of the Wally concept. Even the distinctive vertical bow has been faithfully reproduced. The important question is: does it work, or has the relentless pursuit of simplicity impaired the Fjord 40's functioning? Surprisingly, the answer is that far from creating compromises, this purity actually improves the 40's lot.

The last time I was on a boat with such reassuringly high bulwarks, it was a 65ft-long, Category A, ocean-going behemoth. In practice, simple geometric shapes such as rectangular settees tend to provide more useful seating and usable space than their curved counterparts. Likewise, dashboards comprising simple flat panels invariably work better than those with great swooping curves.

Fjord refuse to have anything disturbing the clear run of teak capping on their bulwarks, so they use snap-in fender eyes and

**W**ho do you think is today's most influential powerboat designer? My money is on somebody who isn't even a designer. In a few years' time, I reckon the man we will recognise as having had the most profound effect on our powerboats is the heir to a Milanese lighting fortune, Luca

Bassani. He's already achieved this in the sailing world where the simple, pared-down but breathtaking shapes of his giant Wally yachts have brought about a paradigm shift in sailing boat design.

Fortunately for us, Luca decided to stray into powerboats, and the Wally Power 118 was born (*MBY* December 2003). This was followed by the 45ft (13.7m) Wally Tender, and others. Luca has used various designers for his boats (including, Fjord tell us, one of the Fjord 40's designers, Patrick Banfield) but the different designs clearly carry Luca's DNA – they are all instantly recognisable as Wallys.

So far, in the motor boat world, the Wally influence has been less obvious. It's true that boat designers had started to dabble

*When we were tied up alongside everybody who passed us stopped and gaped. Lester and I felt like the coolest dudes on the planet*



**+ We like**

Finding that such radical styling doesn't impact on the 40's good, practical functionality.

**- We don't like**

Very visible flexing of the fixed bimini in choppy conditions.

Fjord are raising the coachroof on production boats, so headroom above the bed will improve considerably.

*Has the relentless pursuit of simplicity impaired the boat's functionality? Far from it: instead of compromises, this actually improves the 40's lot*

large pop-up cleats. You could argue that these are unnecessarily fiddly, but in practice they only took a few extra seconds to use, and the upside is that there's nothing to snag clothing or lifejacket webbing when they're not in use. Our particular 40 Open test boat was Fjord's prototype and was far from perfect – production models are due a whole raft of major and minor changes. However, none of these had anything to do with the 40's style – they were detail design and finishing issues. All told, the 40's radical stylistics work well on the practical front.

**The big issue**

With its pure, strong style grabbing all your attention, it would be easy to miss the other big issue: let's not forget that this is a 39ft 4in-long (11.99m) sportsboat with no below-decks galley. The updated 40 Open will have a second small cabin tucked under the helm area, but the forward berth will remain just that: a fixed berth, not a convertible dinette. This sportscruiser has 'dayboat' written all over it. And it sure is big and expensive for a dayboat.

Still, isn't this exactly how most sportscruisers, small and large, open or hardtop, are used in practice? It's not uncommon to find 70ft sportscruisers traded in with the plastic shrinkwrap still clinging to their galley appliances. If you really do need a bigger galley, or the protection of a hardtop for the temperate climes of the UK, the impending Fjord 40 Cruiser can oblige, but there's no way it will capture the true wind-in-the-hair feeling of the Open. Nor will you get the effortless boat handling that only a walkaround can provide. This is a significant bonus that's easily overlooked. With its Joystick-controlled IPS500 diesels, deep

bulwarks and clear walkaround decks, I found this 40-footer w easier and safer to handle single handed than any of the 30ft stern-drive boats I've driven.

**Driving the Fjord 40 Open**

Driving the 40 is a hoot. As expected, the IPS and Joystick provide an almost comical degree of control around the marina. Out on the water, we achieved 38.7 knots, even with the 370hp IPS500 diesels. With the 435hp IPS600s, which are no heavier than the IPS500s, you should get the 42 knots that this sporty boat clears long for, based on our 38.7 knots.

Overall, the 40's dynamics were fine. With the boat trimming a marginally higher-than-average 7.0° as it climbed rapidly onto the plane, shorties like me could lose the horizon for a few seconds. However, this minor impediment disappears if you use the Auto-trim system on Volvo's trim tabs. Once in its strict the 40 trims lower than average – between 3.0 and 4.5° bow up where the visibility is exceptionally good. During our first two days, the IPS drives were on their middle setting, and this produced beautifully balanced but gentle turns. However, we suggested that Fjord try the sportier setting, which allows the IPS drives to turn more acutely. This is how they were set during our third test run, and the 40 felt even better – still well balanced, even during full-lock flat-out turns, but noticeably sportier when pushed.

We had everything during our three test runs from a flat calm to a Force 5 with metre-high waves. Although it has very fine sections right at the bow, these normally don't do much because the hull naturally rides with its forward end well out of the water. The upshot is that, driving through a chop, the hull takes the brunt of the impact right under the helmsman's feet where the flatter hull sections can produce a harsh wallop. The ride could be softened by using the trim tabs, even downwind, but there is a limit to how smooth a ride you can expect from a 40-knot boat.





Roomy cabin and heads provide surprisingly good stowage for what is essentially a big dayboat and weekender.



Fresh air galley is good for snacks and light meals.



Fjord intend to improve the fit and finish of production boats considerably.



Simple dash works well, but there's nowhere for odds and ends.







Deck stowage is surprisingly good: under seats, in bulwarks, in moulded locker in front of forward seats, and in the secondary tank area forward of the engine room.

*Free-flowing walkaround decks make single-handed manoeuvring a doddle. If friends do come along, there's plenty of seating in the cockpit*

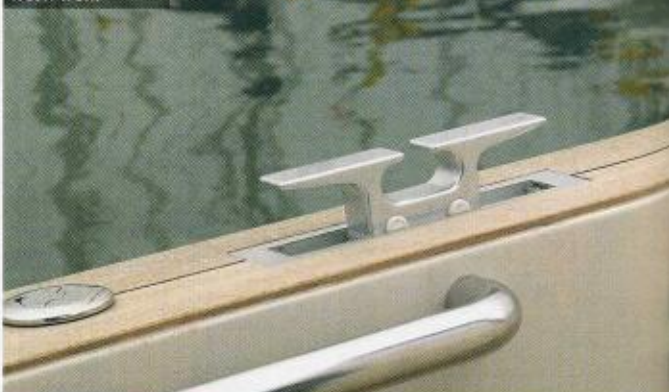
that is, at 13ft 1in (3.99m), over half a metre wider than a Windy Bora 40. It's not bad for what it is, but expect the ride from the heavier cruiser version to be smoother.

#### Above & below decks

Fjord have so many worthwhile changes planned that you need to view our particular 40 Open as a pre-production craft. For instance, the forward deck and coachroof is being raised to provide far more headroom over the double berth in the main cabin, along with a second cabin under the helm area. The cockpit seating, table and hatch arrangement is being completely overhauled to simplify engine room access and make the seating more usable. These are the two major improvements on a list that runs to 39 changes. Most of these comprise improvements to the options list (adding aircon and a passerelle), along with detail refinements (for example, a less tinted windscreen and improved companionway door drainage). Fjord's 40 Open is far from badly thought out at the moment – I didn't come across a litany of unacceptable faults – it's just not as fully developed as it will be eventually.

We will have to judge the fit and finish, and the engineering and construction, once production models hit the water. Our joinery was fine, as was the epoxy composite sandwich hull. As Fjord freely admit though, there are several other areas that they intend to improve significantly. As it stands, the biggest surprise now (even with the decks as they are) is the amount of room down below. The cabin and the heads both feel roomy, and the amount of useful stowage here would put the forecabins of most 45ft sports cruisers in the shade. Headroom here is 6ft 2in (1.88m) with the double berth adding two inches to that. Two people can shuffle around down here without a struggle. As a glamorous weekendender for a couple, it has a lot to offer.

The large, sturdy pop-up cleats work well.



The fixed bimini flexed very visibly in choppy conditions. Hopefully that will be fixed on production boats.





Datafile **Fjord 40 Open****Verdict**

What makes a great boat? Surely it's something that appeals in large dollops to the head as well as the heart, with no real conflict between the two. And despite its radical styling, I'd say that's exactly what the Fjord 40 Open does. As it is, our pre-production boat was far from fully developed, but Fjord openly acknowledge this. All credit that they are engaged in a significant rehash, which involves all sorts of major and minor improvements to the design detail and to the finishing. But even as it stands, at the end of the two days of testing Lester and I were in complete agreement: this is a boat we would both dearly like to own and run for ourselves.

The accommodation was far roomier than we'd been expecting considering the modest size of the coachroof above, and yet it'll get roomier still courtesy of the new raised deck and coachroof. The fact that the Fjord 40 has no lower galley or dinette sits very happily with our credit-card-and-toothbrush cruising philosophy – why cook on board when the world is bursting with fabulous pubs and restaurants? Then, when we're doing our Johnny-no-mates boating, the combination of immensely deep bulwarks, incredible IPS Joystick manoeuvrability and a free-flowing walkaround deck are a godsend, making single-handed manoeuvring a doddle. If friends do happen along, there's plenty of seating in the cockpit, and there's deck space to spare to make sure they don't keep bumping into each other. It struck us that here was a boat designed with real-world day-to-day sportscruising in mind, a design that had ditched some of the usual stereotypical thinking.

Confession time now: a large part of the 40's appeal was that every time we went on board, Lester and I felt like the coolest dudes on the planet. When we were tied up alongside, everybody who passed us stopped and gaped. And without fail, when we waved at passing boats, every single soul waved back – sailboaters, motorboaters, dinghy sailors and harbourmasters. We felt like celebrities. For that, we probably have to thank a man called Luca Bassani. **MBY**

**Thumbs up or thumbs down?****THUMBS UP**

- Radical and practical
- Open or Cruiser versions
- Possible 35-knot cruise
- Walkaround decks a joy
- Abundant cockpit stowage
- Surprisingly roomy below decks

- Single-handed handling
- Instant celebrity status

**THUMBS DOWN**

- Capable of bumpy ride
- Dash (nowhere for oddments)
- Visible flexing of bimini

**Like the Fjord 40's style but don't want an open boat?**

This Cruiser version of the Fjord 40 is due in the UK in March. Final tweaks are still being made to the design but the single level saloon/wheelhouse with its big windows and additional accommodation should be well suited to UK climates.

**Data**

<b>Overall length</b>	39ft 4in (11.99m)
<b>Hull length</b>	37ft 2in (11.33m) ex platform (MBY estimate)
<b>Beam</b>	13ft 1in (3.99m)
<b>Displacement</b>	7.7 tonnes light, 8.8 tonnes loaded (loaded = light + 100% fuel & water)
<b>Draught</b>	3ft 4in (1.02m) MBY estimate
<b>Air draught</b>	9ft 8in (2.95m) MBY estimate
<b>Fuel capacity</b>	220 imp gal (1,000 litres)
<b>Water capacity</b>	66 imp gal (300 litres)

**Test Engines**

Twin Volvo IPS500, 370hp @ 3,500rpm, 6-cylinder 5.5-litre diesels

RPM	2,100	2,300	2,500	2,700	2,900	3,100	3,300	3,550
<b>SPEED</b>	18.0	21.5	24.9	28.1	31.1	33.8	36.2	38.7
<b>TRIM</b>	6.0°	7.0°	5.5°	4.5°	4.0°	3.5°	3.0°	3.0°
<b>GPH</b>	8.8	10.8	13.2	16.1	19.1	22.9	27.5	33.0
<b>MPG</b>	2.05	1.99	1.89	1.75	1.63	1.48	1.32	1.17
<b>RANGE</b>	360	350	332	307	287	260	232	206

Speed in knots. GPH & MPG figures use imperial gallons. Range in nautical miles and allows for 20% reserve. Calculated figures based on standard (idealised) engine propeller demand data, your figures may vary considerably, especially as demand data is for conventional props, not IPS props.

70% fuel, 35% water, 3 crew, no stores. 18°C air temp, 15°C water temp, 1,028mb pressure. Calm, Force 1 for speed trials

<b>Slow cruising</b>	24.9 knots, 332 miles @ 2,500rpm
<b>Fast cruising</b>	33.8 knots, 260 miles @ 3,100rpm
<b>Flat out</b>	38.7 knots, 206 miles @ 3,500rpm

<b>SOUND LEVELS dB(A)</b>	Saloon	Cockpit	Helm
<b>Slow cruising @ 24.9 knots</b>	78	77	77
<b>Fast cruising @ 33.8 knots</b>	82	83	81
<b>Flat out @ 38.7 knots</b>	84	85	82

<b>Price from</b>	£253,993 inc UK VAT (twin 320hp IPS400)
	£261,610 inc UK VAT (twin 370hp IPS500)
	£285,191 inc UK VAT (twin 435hp IPS600)
	Excluding delivery, commissioning & IPS Joystick

**Designers** Allseas Design & Design Unlimited, 2006

**RCD category** B (for 12 people)

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**Fjord 40 Open layout**