

Tried & tested

MBM's tough taskmasters put some clever new boating kit through its paces. The result? You can buy with confidence

Docking made easy

Wireless remote control function for your boat

If you're anything like me, your early boating experience may well have been standing on the shore with a little electronic box in your hand manoeuvring a 1:40 scale model boat around your local lake.

A good few years later and I'm doing exactly the same thing, except this time the boat is a 1:1 scale model of a 42ft Sealine, and the device is a Yacht Controller.

The **Yacht Controller** effectively turns your boat into a very large remote controlled vessel. OK, it's not designed so that you can terrorize sailors from the anonymity of the shore, but it does offer a whole host of practical uses.

At first I was a bit sceptical about how useful it would be. Having driven boats for a number of years, I've always managed to get by using the helm position to manoeuvre the boat wherever I wanted. However, once you have tried a device like this you'll want to get one fitted.

For anyone short on crew or single-handed, the Yacht Controller is like having another person on board. By allowing you to operate the engines, in both forward and reverse (and the bow and stern thrusters if you have them fitted) you are free to leave the helm and take an active role in getting the boat safely tied up, anchored or attached to a buoy.

The Sealine, like many flybridge boats, has poor visibility over the



Easy does it: bringing the Sealine F42 alongside using the Yacht Controller gives you freedom of the flybridge

Neale demonstrates how the Yacht Controller is easy to use

stern if you are driving from the upper helm. Often you have to leave the wheel and throttles when in tight spaces to make sure you have clearance before turning, and sometimes those split seconds away from the wheel can mean the difference between a coming together, and a perfectly executed manoeuvre. With the Yacht Controller, you can get yourself in whatever position gives you the best all round vision. Or simply move around the flybridge taking in all angles, and you can get in and out of the tightest of gaps without ever leaving the controls, because you take the wireless controls with you.

For mooring stern-to you can stand on the bathing platform, manoeuvre into your berth, step off and tie the boat up all single handedly. The boat can then be kept perfectly in position while you tend to the ropes.

Picking up a buoy or anchoring are another couple of areas where the Yacht Controller is very beneficial. Standing on the foredeck you can motor up to a buoy pick it up and tie it off completely on your own.

The one thing that surprised me was how intuitive the unit was to use. I thought it would feel alien to drive a boat from somewhere other than the helm using a little box, but it doesn't. Just five minutes of playing with it and it felt like the most natural thing in the world.

There is just one condition, though. If using the Yacht Controller while facing aft, it can be confusing knowing which switch does what. The answer, simply enough, is to turn the control unit around, and once again it becomes instinctive.

To operate the system you turn on a switch at the helm, activate the remote unit and away you go. The system has some built-in safety features – the boat's helm will always override the Yacht Controller, and an alarm will sound if communications are lost between the control unit and the boat's helm, for example. The unit does timeout after a while and when this happens an alarm sounds and the activation button needs pressing again to regain control. You also need to be careful, especially if you're not on the boat, that the boat's thrusters do not timeout, as this can also happen.

The unit has an operational range of around 50m and the control unit is waterproof, as far as rain and splashes are concerned, but it's not likely to survive a full dunking.

The Yacht Controller can be fitted easily to any boat with electronic throttle controls. **Neale**



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