



CRÈME FRESH

It's been voted European Powerboat of the Year 2011, but is this French concept craft all its cracked up to be?
DAVID LOCKWOOD reports



Non Compliant. No Children. Or, albeit wishful thinking, No Charge. Sorry, no chance. NC is the acronym for New Concept, something the French aren't averse to exploring, what with their avant-garde take on life and their unrelenting sense of adventure on the high seas. In fact, such was the extent of creative design on French boatbuilding giant Jeanneau's so-called NC 11 sports cruiser that a gaggle of colleagues on the continent anointed it their European Boat of the Year 2011.

Of course, Europe and Australia are poles apart. So how does this boat stack-up Down Under? That's what we sought to answer as we sallied forth on Sydney Harbour, picked our way through the interior, and eventually put the sporty conveyance through its paces.

The first surprise came from the numerical part of the model designation. Presumably, the 11 hints at the boat's length, which actually measures 10.85m overall, with the hull spanning 10.55m sans bowsprit. The boarding platform is part of the integral deck moulding and counts in the latter measurement. So let's put the apparent stretch



Ooh la la! It's cool cruising all the way in Jeanneau's ultra-modern NC 11, where the skipper (top) steps down from a high perch and starts cooking at the covered galley for impatient tummy-rumbling guests.

down to enthusiasm.

Yet in many ways Jeanneau has achieved something metaphysical with its NC 11: the boat feels much bigger. The reason is transparent — loads more glass than you would otherwise find in a sports cruiser of this size. Rather than pepper the hull with puny portlights, Jeanneau runs long glass panes from its forepeak to amidships cabin. While the black gelcoat panels in between make the portlights look

even bigger, the result is a veritable light show below decks compared with your pokey sports cruiser of yore.

Then come the upper living areas traced by more glass, quad-fold glass saloon doors that can be shifted and stacked from one side to the other, a large see-through sunroof (auto activation on the demonstrator as an option), and a glass side-door flanking the portside helm station, with opening



Clever design touches include convertible saloon seating (above). Wide doors (below) connect saloon and cockpit, where an inviting transom lounge awaits (bottom). Back inside is a hatched storage well (bottom right) in the sole, those sliding drawers are just right for fruit and veg.



window opposite.

The effect is almost biblical. Let there be light and, behold, there was the NC 11.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Of course, first impressions count for a lot in the sports cruiser market. That's why this demonstrator, now in Tasmania, solicited so much attention when it debuted at the Sydney International Boat Show. Its pewter-coloured hull, broken by the aforesaid tinted glass and black gelcoat eyes, has a nice, clean look. Add some teak accents on deck and you have an eye-catching sports cruiser, whose hardtop also suggests utility.

Indeed, the NC 11 is more than just a show pony. The design elements extend to some clever convertible seating arrangements, through an enlarged saloon thanks to the asymmetrical layout, down to twin cabins and a head with a good splash of nautical style. Then comes the ride from modest twin 200hp diesel engines with sterndrives linked to a joystick docking device. Plenty of bang.

THE PRICE IS RIGHT

Needless to say, Jeanneau is one smart boatbuilder. It knows that first impressions count. It knows how to put just the right amount of design in a boat, while retaining production efficiencies. It builds boats fast and makes a franc. It isn't in debt and, in fact, the present rash of new models reflects savvy investing, when others are trading water or worse.

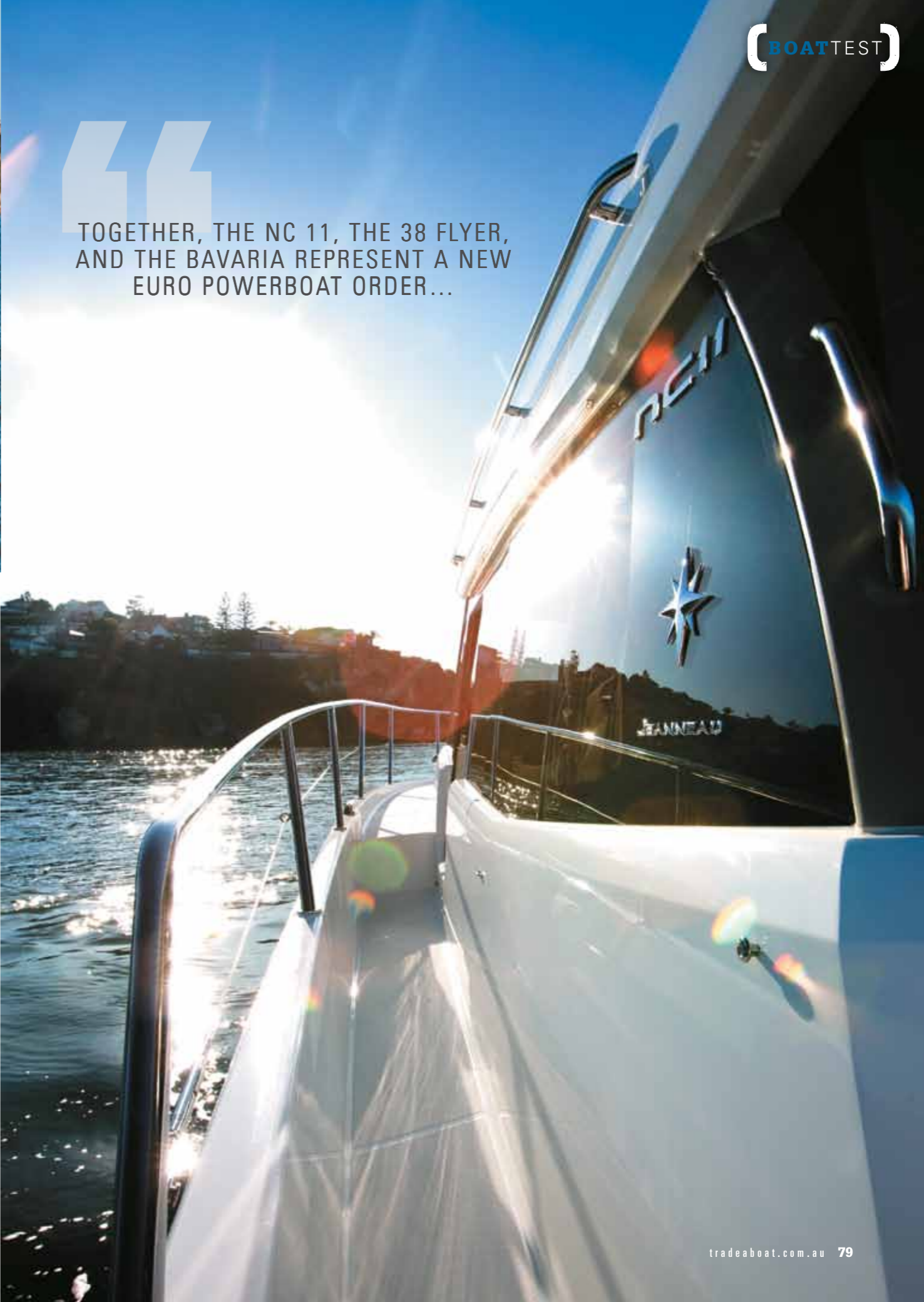
A collaboration between French Jeanneau, Italian designer Vittorio Garroni, and JF de Premorel Concept, the NC 11 attempts to break new ground. That's another smart move in today's pared back boat market, where would-be buyers need compelling reasons to upgrade and/or start anew.

To this end, the blurb talks about a virtual floating apartment. I don't quite see the connection,





“ TOGETHER, THE NC 11, THE 38 FLYER, AND THE BAVARIA REPRESENT A NEW EURO POWERBOAT ORDER...”



but do note voluminous indoor-outdoor living areas for a 35-foot sports cruiser and plenty of headroom throughout the two-cabin accommodation. Ergonomically, the boat is hard to fault, though it must be said it has a more assembled/robotic feel to its fitout than other, shall we say, handbuilt craft.

Fact is, Jeanneau builds boats with terrific economies of scale, uses automated assembly lines and CNC routers where possible, and employs more than 2500 people to help assemble some 4000 power and sail craft selling through more than 400 outlets worldwide.

It's for this reason that the NC 11 comes keenly priced at around \$375,000 with twin diesel engines and a boatload of goodies. The Bavaria 34 soft top with twin petrol engines was selling for about \$300,000, for example. Yet the closest competition may well come from sister brand Beneteau. (Read comments in tradeboat SAYS...).

Do consider, however, that the \$375,000 includes a factory rebate for orders pre-October 31. Additionally, should you choose a bowthruster in lieu of the joystick, you'll save a further \$13,000 off the price. This would be our choice — and that of Sydney Jeanneau dealer Matt Willet — since a

twin sterndrive and bowthruster package lets you park with aplomb in any case. And the joystick docking device was a tad clunky, I must say.

While talking frank, and dollars, a generator and air-con add \$19,500. You would have to seriously think about these things in tropical climes. Yet for most of Australia, the saving is more heart warming. And, due to all the hatches, fresh air come gratis. Tug on the uggis in winter instead.

FACTORY ROLLED

The hull layup is GRP and, but for the odd squeak of furniture, it feels solid underfoot. There's a bit less 'glass in the moulded decks, however, and I found some flexing around the stanchions for the bowrail that had already led to gaping around the sealant.

Another other sign of a mass-produced boat is the joinery. While we commend the use of eco-friendly reconstituted Alpi timber in teak-veneer trim, it's got a CNC router feel in its application. Below the floor, the ply skeleton used for non-structural storage dividers isn't end-sealed in many parts. Together, it all feels rather factory rolled.

Such things are a result of parent company Beneteau

The asymmetrical deck means the portside walkaround (opposite) is wider and deeper than the starboard side. Saloon doors (above) stack left or right.

Group's aggressive price-point boatbuilding. I've even heard it said that the French giant can make boats for 30 per cent less than other global yards. And let's be fair: you get an awful lot of boat for \$375,000. Besides, there's nothing wrong with getting more bums on seats before buyers move up to their ultimate boat. The NC 11 pitches to a transient part of the market.

CONVERTIBLE COCKPIT

The innovation begins as you set foot aboard. The integrated boarding platform swoops around a moulded transom lounge that includes a handy fender/line storage locker. The entire unit is mounted on tracks so you can relocate it farther outboard for a bigger (teak-topped as standard) cockpit or back inboard for a more intimate lunch setting.

Add an aftermarket Euro awning, pulling back from the moulded hardtop to a pair of poles plonked into deck-mounted rodholders, and you'll get shade, too. With a loose teak table, lunch can be served forthwith outdoors.

Elsewhere I found the showerpower connection, manual bilge pump, LPG gas-bottle locker — gas galley appliances are standard — although we'd add a barbecue, too. The boat comes with a hot/cold deck shower courtesy of 240V and heat exchanger.

Meanwhile, engine access is back under the floor via a hatch before the lounge base. There's a divided storage for watersports gear, your deflated rollup tender, fishing gear and so on. As touched on, there was plenty of unsealed ply edging and, I must say, very tight access to the bilge pump in the event of failure, replacement, or servicing. Float switches stick after time.

While the twin 200hp Volvo Penta D3 diesel engines are snug, their fuel filters, strainers and coolant bottles are relatively easy to access. In keeping with European standards, essential plumbing and wiring was labelled. There is also a nice, big gutter back up top, before the saloon doors, to help stop slop coming inside as per CE requirements.

The asymmetrical deck means the portside walkaround is wider and deeper than the starboard side. Yet the latter is still a perfectly acceptable route to reach the bow, where there's a supplied windlass with remote, good non-



A neat innovation on the Jeanneau NC 11 are the long glass window panes within black gelcoat panels in the hull (opposite), that run from the main forepeak cabin (top) to the amidships guest cabin (above left) and opposing head (above right), bathing these rooms in natural light.

[HIGHS]

- › Genuine innovation
- › Class-leading amount of glass
- › Walkaround decks and decent cockpit
- › Generous accommodation plan with great headroom
- › Very good performance and ease of docking with joystick or thruster
- › Big-brand backing with local dealer network

[LOWS]

- › Robotic feel to the finish and unsealed marine ply dividers under floor
- › Clunky gear shifting even after soft movements with joystick device
- › Too much flex on deck below bowrail stanchions
- › Tricky access to bilge pump



ELECTRONIC ENGINE MONITORING, SHIFTS AND THROTTLES ADD TO THE HIGH-TECH DRIVING EXPERIENCE ON THE NC 11...

skid and toerails, and enough room to unfurl a towel or two. A sunpad is optional.

The split bowrail with pulpit seat is handy for doing a cocktail or offloading crew to a jetty. But the mouldings around the stanchions need beefing up, with too much flex for my liking, and we'd like to see a salt or fresh water flush for washing the anchor as standard. As it is, a bucket and lanyard is needed; de rigour for yachts but not in keeping with the boat's inferred style.

One neat option is a stern-reel and pick that'd be great for off-the-beach anchoring. Another is a bow ladder for getting ashore when nose in.

SALOON TRICKS

Things become even more creative in the saloon, where the seating performs at your behest. The U-shaped lounge for six to starboard converts to a spare double berth. Its rear backrest flops

forward to create an aft-facing lounge before the cockpit and vistas out yonder. (You can see the seating being converted in various ways in our exclusive video of the NC 11 at www.tradeaboat.com.au) There are also two moveable pouffes.

But the top trick is when the forward section of the U-shaped lounge flips over to create a forward-facing bench seat before the windscreen. This derailed my concern about the lone, albeit elevated portside helm seat. We're just not fans of boats in which the skipper is cast adrift. But with the aforesaid flip lounge, three people can comfortably sit in a line facing the unbroken front windscreen pane and enjoy cruising together.

The lack of mullions (and a supplied demister) enhances the skipper's view, though I gained added insurance by standing up and poking my head through the hardtop during tight turns and, later, while inching about the

marina during a single-handed berth and tie-up exercise. The view back through the four saloon doors reveals the boarding platform, while the helm glass door allows you to poke your head outside and look down the starboard flank.

The sunroof and sliding saloon doors adds to the sense of space, attracting plenty of natural light on the teak-look joinery. Just as importantly, storage comes in spades: or via a bookshelf, various holds, cabinetry and, best of all, a big hold under the galley floor that even includes a series of pull-out shelves. Bravo! Or should that be: voila!

Fortunately for the gourmand, the galley takes centre stage to port in the saloon. There's a good old gas two-burner stove and oven (delete for microwave option), bench-height 42lt fridge with freezer tray, and 250lt of water for a weekend. The holding tank of 80lt will go that distance, too.

The pop-up TV is behind the

AT MORE THAN 300NM AT 24KTS, LEAVING 10 PER CENT OF THE 700LT IN RESERVE, CRUISING RANGE IS A HIGHLIGHT



splashback so you can't do both at once. Oh, well, at least the glass and bottle racks are nearby. Crack a bottle of Burgundy and crank-up the onboard sound system while waiting for dinner.

ACCOMMODATION PLANS

Impressively, the NC 11 has two decent cabins and a nicely styled head. Guests and kids won't be disappointed in the starboard cabin with adult-length — quite huge actually — single beds that, with infill, convert into a romping double. There's enough headroom before the beds to dress, a hanging locker, opening portlight and reading light.

Owners will warm to the forepeak cabin with island bed, double-sized hanging locker, big fixed portlights and escape hatch, drawer, mirror and reading light. The head to port in between these cabins has an electric Jabsco loo, square porcelain sink and separate shower. We also welcome the opening portlight for ventilation.

Sunroof open, it's time to go cruising.

PERFORMANCE & HANDLING

Volvo Penta's D3-200 is an interesting engine. The in-line five-cylinder diesel donk hails from the auto world. It weighs just 353kg, uses a compact 2.4lt block, and features common rail injection for precise fuel burn and eco cred'



Cockpit lounge and sole tilt back, revealing the step-down engine bay housing two perky Volvo Penta electronic turbo-diesels, ideal for that quick getaway (top).

(prepared for Tier 3 emission in Europe in 2012).

Best of all, the diesel engine isn't doughy and develops its impressive torque using a variable geometry turbocharger. The Swedish engine manufacturer says this bit of gear creates the effect of supercharging from very low revs up to maximum RPM. We felt that was the case, with the NC 11 jumping out of the blocks like, well, Jane Avril.

Lenco trim tabs were fitted — most boatbuilders steer away from Volvo Penta's questionable

QL tabs these days — along with a Raymarine C90 and ST70. The low-glare and loaded dash panels look pretty sporty, while the array of analogue gauges adds to the action.

Eventually, I slipped the boat back into its pen, tied it up solo, and virtually put it to bed on my own. We were smitten and, upon shutting the engines down, it dawned on me that the NC part of NC 11 may well stand for nice to command.

Facts & figures

JEANNEAU NC 11

AT THE HELM

Electronic engine monitoring, shifts and throttles add to the high-tech driving experience on the NC 11 and, with the doors closed, the boat's pretty quiet, too. There was the odd bang on the chines, a few squeaks and rattles consistent with mass-produced boats with attached liners and timber furniture, but the motion remained pleasant enough. At more than 300nm at 24kts, leaving 10 per cent of the 700lt in reserve, cruising range is a highlight. Top speed was nudging 34kts, impressive from the twin 200s. Moreover, owners will relate to the per-hour consumption of 45lt in total at that smooth cruise speed. That's less than half a 40-footer with flying bridge drinks.

PRICE AS TESTED

\$375,207 w/ twin Volvo Penta D3-200, joystick and options below, inc. \$17,500 factory rebate for orders pre-October 31

OPTIONS FITTED

Trim level Premiere with Volvo Penta joystick control, electric toilet, electric sliding roof, carpet in saloon, rear cockpit sofa covers, storage system in bilge, double berth conversion in saloon, three-sided external covers for wheelhouse, Raymarine electronics pack including autopilot, LCD TV/DVD/MP3 in saloon, 4kW scanner for radar, and more

PRICED FROM

\$349,000 w/ twin Volvo Penta D3-200

GENERAL

MATERIAL: Solid moulded fibreglass hull and deck
TYPE: Hard-chine monohull
LENGTH OVERALL: 10.85m
HULL LENGTH (ISO): 10.55m
BEAM: 3.73m
DRAFT: 0.9m
WEIGHT: 5600kg

CAPACITIES

BERTHS: 4 (+ 2 on convertible dinette in saloon)
FUEL: 700lt
WATER: 250lt
HOLDING TANK: 80lt

LAYOUT



ENGINE

MAKE/MODEL: 2 x Volvo Penta D3-200
TYPE: Common rail electronic inline five-cylinder turbo-diesel
RATED HP: 200 at 4000rpm (max)
DISPLACEMENT: 2.4lt
WEIGHT: Approx 353kg
GEARBOXES (MAKE/RATIO): Volvo Penta SX/DPS
PROPS: Duoprops

SUPPLIED BY

Matthew Willett Marine,
Shop 4, 83 Parriwi Road,
Mosman, NSW, 2088
Phone: (02) 9960 1112; Matthew Willett on 0488 821 112
Email: boats@mwmmaine.com.au
Websites: www.mwmarine.com.au;
www.jeanneauaustralia.com

tradeboat SAYS...

You can't have everything, as in keen price and custom build, yet Jeanneau has done a great job of bundling its NC 11 new-concept cruiser with a boatload of style and utility. We love the convertible seating, the walkaround asymmetrical decks, and abundant light below decks. And we like the look. Handling is pretty good, too. But the finish in parts is a little too reflective of a mass-produced boat. Remove the raw-timber edging, we reckon.

Price is keen at \$375,000 and, ironically, the biggest competition also comes from the parent company. The Beneteau 38 Flyer Grand Turismo tested a few days later cost less than \$400,000 with generator and air-con, twin 300hp D4 engines, joystick, and a metre more hull length. Together, the NC 11, the 38 Flyer, and the Bavaria represent a new Euro powerboat order where prices and production times have been slashed in an effort to build more affordable boats and grab a bigger slice of the pleasureboating pie. And, ultimately, it's good news for buyers.

