

OCEAN GOING

Concern

LOA: 81'6"
BEAM: 21'5"
DRAFT: 5'0"
DISPL.: 197,800 lb. (full)
FUEL: 3,000 gal.
WATER: 400 gal.
TEST POWER: 2/1,550-hp MAN V12-1550 diesels
OPTIONAL POWER: 2/1,000-hp MAN V8-1000 diesels; 2/1,200-hp MAN V8-1200 diesels
TRANSMISSIONS: ZF 2050A, 2.467:1 gear ratio
PROPELLERS: ZF Faster 4-blade Nibral
GENERATORS: 2/32-kW Onans
BASE PRICE: Upon request
PRICE AS TESTED: Upon request

The FLEMING 78 is designed and built for serious cruisers who know what they want and what they'll need on their next voyage.
BY GEORGE SASS SR.



Captivated by the sexy graphics and digital readouts displayed on two 15-inch Böning monitors, I watched and listened as Duncan Cowie of Fleming Yachts began his prestart procedure. The new owner and his captain stood nearby, taking notes. Starting up this all-new Fleming 78, hull number 02, and getting her ready for a sea trial was not much different than conducting a preflight check on a commercial airliner.

Cowie's aeronautical engineering background undoubtedly contributed to the level of technology incorporated in Fleming's new flagship model. There were six technicians onboard for this sea trial, which was part of the commissioning process by Fleming's dealer, Hovey Yachts of Newport Beach, California. Chuck Hovey and his team were in the final stages of setting up, testing, evaluating, and calibrating the Fleming's advanced systems, complete with an array of electronics fit for a commercial cruise ship. These guys were like kids in a candy store, scurrying around flipping switches, checking monitors, zooming and panning cameras, chasing down false alarms, measuring and recording data—all eager to demonstrate the amazing capabilities of this modern, high-tech yacht.

But beyond the glitter of her onboard gear, much of it requested by the owner, the Fleming 78 shines as a seaworthy, luxurious motoryacht that reflects the philosophy of the company's founder, Tony Fleming. "Our goal was to create a refined and dependable cruising yacht capable of taking her crew in comfort and safety wherever they might wish to go," Fleming said. Although his original molds were for a 55-foot yacht, the first Flemings were 50 feet. A 53-footer followed, but soon the company settled on what has become a legend in its own time—the ever-popular Fleming 55. In the year 2000, the first Fleming 75 was launched, followed in 2005 by the 65. In 2011 the Fleming 75 was re-launched as the 78, and an all-new Fleming 58 made its debut this year. I had the pleasure of sea trialing 78-01 as well as 78-02 this past year.

All Fleming models share Tony Fleming's basic design parameters starting with a semi-displacement hull, a fine entry, hard-chined aft sections, and twin diesel engines that combine to allow speeds in the upper teens. Fleming, who has cruised his own 65 to some of the world's most remote destinations, including the Galápagos Islands, as well as spots in Iceland, and Alaska, firmly believes in the redundancy and maneuverability of twin engines. For added safety and directional stability, a full-length keel extends below the rudders and running gear. Dedicated pilothouses allow life onboard to proceed as normal while the captain attends to the business of running the ship. And these sleek yachts are not only attractive; their low profile contributes to their sta-



The galley (left) offers an U-shaped layout for underway meal prep.

The saloon has seating galore and a dining area forward, opposite the galley. We can certainly see ourselves settling into the amidships master (below).



bility at sea thanks to their lower center of gravity and reduced windage.

Flemings, and only Flemings, are built at the highly respected Tung Hwa yard in Taiwan. Hulls are hand-laid solid fiberglass and reinforced using a matrix of frames and full-length, box-section stringers. To resist water intrusion and prevent blistering, a vinylester resin is used below the waterline. To eliminate fabric print-through and create a flawless finish, it is also used on the rest of the hull. The superstructure and decks are cored with a synthetic material, which will not rot if water somehow enters. The core reduces weight and helps to lower the ship's overall center of gravity, enhancing stability.

A stainless steel shoe protects the full-length keel. In the event of a grounding or impact, the danger of water intrusion is minimized because the keel, filled with a closed-cell core material, is sealed off from the hull. To further prevent water intrusion, Flemings feature a two-point deck-to-hull joint, one point being at deck level and the other at the top of the bulwark.

The crew at Tung Hwa, which includes Adi Shard, Tony Fleming's

nephew, has gone to great lengths to make the 78 run smoothly and quietly. Standard is AquaDrive's anti-vibration system, which uses thrust-bearing brackets to transfer shaft thrust to the ship's stringers rather than the engine itself. In addition, the 78's extra-thick bulkheads and extensive use of sound-deadening material throughout help to keep sound at a bare minimum.

Like all Flemings built for the U.S., the 78 is NMMA Certified, meaning that it complies with the standards of the American Boat and Yacht Council (ABYC). Since Fleming sells many of its yachts to European customers, all Flemings are also built to achieve the IMO CE Category "A-Ocean" rating, the most stringent rating for pleasure boats. Although not all Flemings built for the U.S. are CE certified—a designation that would require different electrical systems—owners can take comfort knowing their Flemings otherwise meet the standards of this rigid certification process.

Hull number 02 features the standard package of 1,550-horsepower MAN V12 engines and a bulbous bow optimized for higher speeds.



Cowie points out that these bows are in essence “attached” to the hull and are not part of the actual hull mold, making it possible for a later refit should a new owner want a different optimum speed range. The bow attachment could also act as a sacrificial appendage in an accidental collision; prudent considering the top speed of 78-02 is 22 knots.

The 78 is a large yacht displacing 80 tons, and her ample size provides luxurious accommodations for owners and guests as well as offering separate crew’s quarters. The master stateroom is amidships and takes advantage of the vessel’s full beam. Forward, the standard layout features a guest stateroom with a queen-sized island berth and en suite head and shower. A second guest stateroom with a queen-sized berth and en suite head and shower is to port. The crew’s quarters, which features a separate entrance from the aft deck, sleeps two and has ample room for a desk, microwave, refrigerator, TV, and a head with shower.

The capacious main saloon features a dedicated dining area adjacent to the gourmet-equipped galley. The pilothouse is separate from the main living area, a feature that speaks to the serious voyager. Twin Stidd helm chairs, generous chart workspace and space for today’s advanced electronics will satisfy the most demanding captain and navigator. A dayhead, a settee with a dining table, and a drop-down pilot berth allow the on-watch crew to tend to business.

The dual-level flying bridge provides a helm area elevated for good forward vision, with a forward-facing double seat on each side of the helm chair. Four steps down is the lower bridge area complete with wet bar, BBQ grille, refrigerator, ice maker, freezer, dining table, and settee. Owners can choose the configuration to fit their cruising style. Farther aft is the boat deck where a 16-foot tender can be stowed and launched via a hydraulic davit. An aft control station takes the drama out of backing into a slip.

Below, a protected lower-deck area with dining table and settee is an ideal place for guests to gather and enjoy an outdoor meal. Wide, walkaround decks are a Fleming signature, as are multiple opening gates to both port and starboard that allow easy boarding from docks of different levels. Teak decks are standard.

A close inspection of the 78’s standup engine room and her separate machinery space shows a level of attention to systems engineering and organization that separate the Fleming brand from many competitors. Critical components like fuel and oil filters, pumps, through-hulls, gauges, valves, and emergency switches are well marked and accessible.

Fleming’s 78-02 has the most comprehensive ship’s monitoring and alarm system Fleming has installed to date. The German-made Böning system monitors the vessel’s fuel, water, and waste tankage, electrical circuitry, engine and generator status, bilge pumps, door and hatch



Extended cruising is much more pleasant with this kind of engine room.

status, and 13 different security cameras. Controlled by a total of five 15-inch touchscreen monitors—two in the pilothouse and one each in the upper helm, crew’s quarters and owner’s stateroom—this particular installation utilizes nearly 150 sensors that are measuring and monitoring virtually every essential data point on the yacht. The system eliminates dozens of circuit breakers that normally crowd electrical-distribution panels. Separately, a remote fuel-filter-vacuum monitor displays a digital readout of the filter’s status and warns of increasing vacuum—an indicator of a clogged filter and problematic fuel.

For the ultimate in stabilization, 78-02 features ABT’s TRAC-Star “Stabilization At Rest” system. While anchored, the ship’s 16-square-foot stabilizer fins are powered by the generator-driven hydraulic pump, and they actively “swim” back and forth to keep the ship stable. They proved their effectiveness in an ocean swell during our at-rest test. While running, the yacht was hardly affected by the gentle six-foot ocean swell. To minimize user error, the ABT system senses shaft rotation and automatically switches the fins from “Center” to “Active.”

Cowie pointed out a number of other advanced systems, including the yacht’s own sewage-treatment plant, a custom mast that lowers hydraulically to reduce air draft, heated windshields, an ultrasonic anti-fouling system, powered hatches for easier access to the lazarette and bustle, and a CCTV system that features full pan/tilt/zoom cameras for coverage of the exterior and interior machinery spaces.

While Cowie and the techs were busy explaining to the owner and his captain how best to use all this technology, I temporarily tuned out the tech talk and instead looked out at the Pacific Ocean and the California coastline. After all, being out here was the ultimate reason for being on the ultimate cruising yacht. □

Fleming Yachts, 949-645-1024; www.flemingyachts.com

RPM	KNOTS	GPH	RANGE	dB(A)
600	5.3	3	4,770	58
800	7.5	6	3,375	58
1000	9.2	12	2,070	58
1250	11.2	28	1,080	59
1500	12.5	48	703	61
1750	14.3	72	536	61
2000	17.9	106	456	62
2250	22.0	160	371	65

TEST CONDITIONS: Air temperature: 80°F; humidity: 64%; seas: flat; winds: light; load: 800 gal. fuel, 350 gal. water, 9 persons onboard, unrecorded amount of gear. Speeds are two-way averages measured with GPS. GPH taken from Böning display. Range is based on 90% of advertised fuel capacity. Sound levels measured at the helm. 65 dB(A) is the level of normal conversation.

NOTEWORTHY OPTIONS:

Upgrade to ABT TRAC-Star at-rest stabilizer system (price upon request); sewage-treatment system (approximately \$50,000).



Give the Gift

Plan your own passage. While the cruising capabilities of the Fleming 78 are hard to beat, any boat can cruise—be it a daytrip around the bay, an overnight, or a long weekend. Set an itinerary, invite along family and friends, and, most importantly, follow through and do it. The whole crew will be glad they did, and so will you.

The pilothouse (below) is raised for good sightlines. All vessel systems are within easy reach. Two accommodations options are shown above.



Better Boat: Building on Customer Knowledge

While some builders might discourage requests for big-time levels of customization, Fleming Yachts seems to appreciate them. “The majority of our owners are extremely experienced, and they know what works and what doesn’t work,” says Duncan Cowie of Fleming Yachts. “In the case of 78-02, the owner encouraged us to go the extra mile with systems and electron-

ics, and as a result, we built the most technologically advanced Fleming ever. With 78-01, the owner was focused on maximizing fuel economy and minimizing engine noise. The owner of 78-03 wanted a more standard yacht and an expeditious delivery to make his prescheduled Mediterranean cruise. Hopefully, we were able to meet these different expectations.”