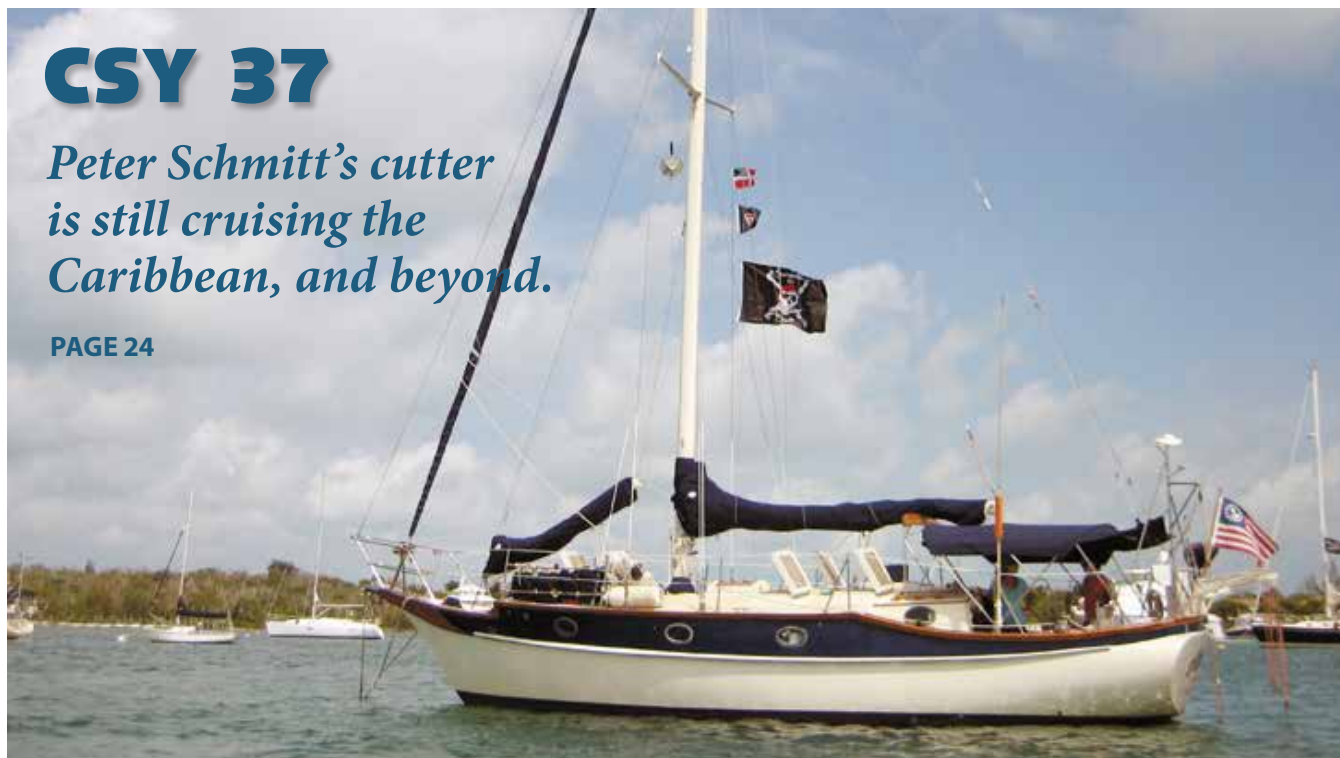


Practical SailorTM

CSY 37

Peter Schmitt's cutter is still cruising the Caribbean, and beyond.

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The flush deck on Caribbean Sailing Yacht's 37 increased interior volume. Round ports and trailboards add to the traditional styling.

Peter Schmitt's cutter tackled bareboating with a dose of tough love.

Designed by Peter Schmitt, the CSY 37 is the mid-sized boat in the CSY line. Eighty-seven of these raised-deck cutters were built, primarily for the Caribbean bareboat charter trade.

Schmitt has combined some features most often found in "traditional" boats—the oval stem, raised deck, and semi-clipper bow—with a relatively modern underbody featuring a fairly long fin keel and a skeg-mounted rudder. On paper, the boat looks pretty good. In person, she is rather tubby and high-sided, but that tubbiness means added buoyancy—not such a bad thing to have in a blow.

The CSY 37 most closely resembles the Ericson Cruising 36. The styling of both these boats can best be described as "ersatz traditional."

Even with the tall rig and deeper keel options, the CSY 37 is no performance cruiser. In our owner surveys, the people most satisfied with the boat's performance had tall rigs, but even they agreed that this was an "all-out cruising boat." Unfortunately, with her huge cockpit,

she is not an ideal sea boat. Rather, she is a boat designed for a specific purpose, bareboat chartering, a purpose which she serves admirably. To expand her appeal to the general sailing public would be difficult, as CSY discovered. The company went under in 1981, a tough period for many builders.

Most CSY 37s went into charter service, usually on lease-back arrangements. The boats have to be strong and reliable—a week out of service for repairs means lost revenue to the charter operator. That the boats can stand up to this constant use and abuse is a credit to both designer and builder.

DECK LAYOUT

With her raised deck amidships, the CSY 37 has an amazing amount of deck space, giving the on-deck impression of a small ship. There is plenty of space on deck to carry a rigid dinghy. Schmitt's own CSY 37 carried a beautiful little dory with a varnished transom as a tender; she fit quite neatly on the starboard side and

served as a catchall for fenders and lines.

Deck space is important in boats used extensively in the charter trade. Lounging on deck is the primary charter boat activity. In this category, the CSY 37 gets five stars.

Anchor handling is fairly easy with the stub bowsprit. There is, however, only a single bow cleat. This is a *Practical Sailor* pet peeve, for it greatly complicates anchoring with two anchors, a common practice for cruising boats. The original "anchoring package" included a good length of stainless-steel chain, if you encounter this ditch it quick; use galvanized instead.

The boat came with a rugged horizontal electric windlass from the Ideal windlass company. Many of these are still in service and worth repairing, but a more practical option may be to replace it with a manual windlass or a newer model (see *PS* October 2008 online).

Heavy travelers for both the main and the staysail are located on the main deck. Athwartships control lines should

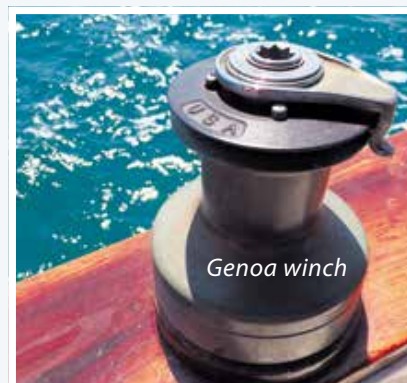
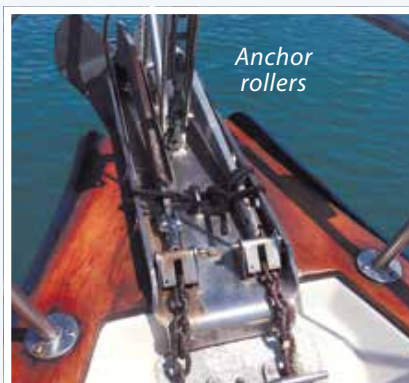
Photos by Peter Hibbard

PROS

- Flush deck makes passage fore and aft easy; opens up stowage space
- Cutter rig simplifies balance
- Heavy-duty twin bow rollers
- Lots of bronze
- Heavy-duty deck hardware
- Low-maintenance FRP hatches
- Beefy construction

CONS

- Teak toerail requires regular attention
- Sluggish sailing performance



really be used with these to get optimum performance from the sails—essential on a boat that must be tweaked to get a reasonable level of performance on the wind.

The cockpit is huge—undesirable for an offshore boat but good for the charter trade. The large cockpit lockers are well divided and are partitioned from the engine space under the cockpit.

The starboard cockpit locker contains the best battery box installation we have seen on a stock boat of this era.

The port locker contains the optional 110-VAC refrigeration compressor. Unfortunately, its wiring is exposed to the weather when the locker lid is opened. The sound-insulated engine room hatch occupies much of the cockpit sole.

There are four large cockpit scuppers, which are imperative to have with the huge cockpit. The companionway sill should be higher if the boat is to be used offshore. Some owners have commented that water backs up through these

scuppers, a problem easily remedied by swapping the hoses, so the port scuppers drain to starboard, and vice versa. A fiberglass seahood, protecting the forward end of the companionway slide, is standard equipment.

INTERIOR

Two interior arrangements are available, a two-stateroom, two-head plan, and a single-stateroom, single-head plan. The two-stateroom plan is used primarily in the charter trade. It is really too much interior to try to cram in a 29-foot waterline and designer Schmitt was not particularly proud of it.

The single-stateroom layout is also unconventional. It gives over the forward 40 percent of the interior space to a large cabin with built-in double berth and a huge head compartment in the forepeak. The problem with this arrangement is that should you have guests aboard, they must troop through the owner's cabin in order to use the head.

The space given over to the head in the single-stateroom model is almost exactly the same space occupied by the forward cabin in the two-stateroom model. With a single-stateroom layout, interior space might have been better utilized with a “conventional” layout of sleeping quarters forward with the head and hanging lockers dividing the forward cabin from the main cabin. That said, there is some practical aspect to allocating the least comfortable part of the boat to the toilet and shower, which see infrequent use.

The interior volume of the CSY 37 is huge, thanks to the raised deck. There are many well-thought-out interior details, too many to catalog here. The ice box, for example, is divided into two compartments with separate opening traps. The icebox has a minimum of 4 inches of urethane foam insulation, probably more than any other stock boat on the market of this era.

There are, however, lapses in this good design. Galley countertops in our test



Much of Caribbean Sailing Yachts' (CSY) marketing claims centered around the interior, which was a step above other production boats of its era. The photos above show the Plan B layout, with one stateroom and a U-shaped galley. Plan A had a second stateroom aft. Locating the head forward opened up space in the main saloon (above). The U-shaped galley is close to the companionway, allowing plenty of airflow. The oversized forward head allowed such luxuries as a sink with a counter and full-sized medicine cabinet.

boat were covered with a slate-like laminate, difficult to clean and too bumpy for a good work surface. Head counters and some shelves were covered with marble-grained plastic, looking more like a slice out of a multicolored bowling ball than real marble.

The mixture of excellent design details, strange lapses in taste, and irregular execution is difficult to evaluate reasonably. It was pleasing to see, that after years of using teak-grained, mica-covered bulkheads, CSY switched to real oak-faced bulkheads.

As could be expected of a boat designed for the Caribbean charter trade, ventilation of the interior is excellent. There are six opening hatches or skylights in addition to the companionway. Some dorade boxes, however, might be welcome in steamy climates with frequent rain. One could spend a great deal of time analyzing the interior details, primarily because a lot of thought has gone into them. Both of the interior

layouts are unusual, and each will have adherents and detractors.

CONSTRUCTION

There are really only two words to describe the construction of the CSY 37: "massive overkill." This is a mixed blessing. It means you have a strong, heavy hull. It often also means that you end up with a boat that is under canvassed in light air. Very often, such an approach means a boat that has a fairly low ballast-to-displacement ratio.

Forty percent of the CSY 37's advertised displacement is in the ballast keel. With a 29-foot waterline, the displacement of about 20,000 pounds is average by traditional standards, heavy by modern standards.

The hull is an extraordinarily heavy, solid-glass layup, as is the deck—almost never seen today. No core materials are used anywhere. Without coring such as balsa or Airex, a glass hull can sweat in a cold climate and be excessively warm

in a hot, humid climate.

The hull-to-deck joint is simple and effective. The hull and deck flanges, which overlap to form a molded rail, are bedded in 3M 5200 and through bolted with stainless-steel machine screws on 4-inch centers. The ubiquitous 3M 5200 is a tenacious adhesive sealant, and hull-deck leaks do not seem to be an issue with this boat.

Keel construction is unusual. The cast-lead keel is glassed into the hollow keel molding, any voids being filled with fiberglass slurry. This is then glassed over to form a double bottom and to keep the ballast in place. This ballast arrangement is identical in both the shoal and deep-draft versions. The deep-draft boat, however, has a 16-inch deep keel extension filled with about 600 pounds of cast concrete. A few CSY 37s have undergone a do-it-yourself "keel-ectomy" in which this extension is cut off. The shoal draft boat with less lateral plane will, of course, make more leeway.

USED BOAT REVIEW: CSY 37

The hull is molded in two pieces, then joined in the middle with heavy overlapping layers of mat and roving. This allows some flexibility in hull design, making possible such features as a molded-in rubbing strake and a stern with substantial tumble home.

Installation of hardware is excellent. This is one of the few production boats from this era we have ever seen with through-bolted bronze seacocks. Backing plates are used on deck hardware such as cleats and winches.

The rudder stock is a solid 2-inch round bronze bar. The cast-bronze rudder heel fitting would look more at home on a 60-foot boat than on a 37-footer. The rudder straps are also bronze, rendering the boat immune from the problems with encapsulated 304 stainless steel found in some rudders of this era.

The bow fitting is a massive stainless steel weldment, incorporating an anchor roller, a welded chock, and the headstay chainplate. The edges of the bow chock are not rounded, and could easily chafe an unprotected anchor rode. This bow fitting could double as an effective battering ram. We suspect that the dock boys in the West Indies were pretty wary every time an inexperienced charterer brought one of the CSY charter boats into the slip.

The chainplates are heavy stainless-steel flat bars with load-distributing welded webs through-bolted to the hull. The hull layup is further reinforced in the way of the chainplates, an almost extraneous precaution, given the extreme heaviness of the regular hull layup.

Interior bulkheads are heavy waterproof plywood, attached to the hull with solid and neatly made fillets. Airex pads along the outboard edges of the bulkheads distribute the bulkhead stresses on the inside of the hull, preventing hard spots.

Cabin sole supports are clear fir. The teak-faced cabin sole is screwed to these bearers, with only limited access openings to the bilge. *Practical Sailor* would prefer that most of the cabin sole be removable, providing access to the bilge spaces in an emergency. CSY appeared to be counting on the massiveness of the hull construction



There are six large opening hatches on deck, making for excellent ventilation.

to prevent holing. This conceit could backfire. Remember the *Titanic*?

Hatches are molded fiberglass with translucent panels. They have good gasketing and good hold-downs, but a short person will have trouble reaching overhead to open the hatches due to the tremendous headroom.

The boat's exterior finish is of good stock boat quality. Joinerwork is clean with the exception of an awkward transition from the caprail on top of the raised deck to the sheer-level railcap in the foredeck well.

The molded fiberglass trailboards are shielded below the bow by a somewhat awkward molded glass panel. This became standard after a number of CSY boats lost their trailboards in heavy seas.

HANDLING UNDER POWER

With such high topsides, the Perkins 4-108 is the smallest engine we would want in the boat. As it is, handling at slow speeds in a crosswind can be tricky. A great deal of practice is required to handle such a high-sided

boat under power in a breeze.

The turning radius of the CSY 37 is substantially larger than with a shorter-keeled boat. With her heavy displacement, acceleration is not exactly neck snapping. She should have enough power to get out of tight spots, however.

Handling in reverse is tricky. The boat does not go where you aim it until you learn to use a combination of rudder and bursts of throttle.

Engine access through the large cockpit hatch is good, but the heavy hatch should have a more positive means of holding it in the upright position. If it fell on your head, you'd remember it, if you were lucky enough to then remember anything.

To those who have been spoiled by the handling under power of some modern boats, the CSY 37 may be a disappointment.

HANDLING UNDER SAIL

The CSY 37 was available in two keel configurations, and with two rigs. The four possible combinations offer very

Heavy-duty Hull Gets High Praise

With more than three decades of hard use behind it—first in the charter trade and later in private ownership—the CSY 37 has very few secrets. All its warts are well exposed; as are its strengths. About two-dozen current and former owners responded to our survey, and we saw many consistencies in their comments. Most owners praised the boat's rugged construction and stability and lamented its upwind performance. On the whole, the boat delivered what they expected of a cruising boat: namely a boat that would get them (and a fair amount of gear and provisions) safely and comfortably to their destination. Nearly all of the respondents had the owners version or "B" layout, and praised its livability. The following summaries and comments are representative of the majority of responses we collected.

PERFORMANCE

Very few owners gave the boat better than fair performance. Most were critical of the boat's windward ability, giving it a two on a scale of one to five, with 5 being the best. As one owner summed it up, "The boat needs wind of high velocity—15 knots or greater—to perform."

Comments on the boat's ability to balance were mixed, with the average rating being three on a five-point scale. One owner gave it excellent marks, saying it balances well "with the exception of heavy seas." Another said he had been "unable to reduce the weather helm."

Owners unanimously agreed that the boat was a bear to back down under power. Most owners commented that the Perkins 4-108 provided adequate power for the 20,000-pound hull, although one owner pointed out that it struggled when powering against 20 knots of wind, something that could be said of many boats of this proportion.

Three-bladed props are the norm, and several owners had invested in larger diameter props, with 16- to 18-inch being recommended diameters, with the pitch ranging from 10 to 12 inches. The most satisfied owner in our survey reported having an 18-inch by 12-inch prop.

One owner summed up the assessment of performance



In light air downwind, motorsailing is the usual method of getting from Point A to Point B on a CSY 37.

under power: "It has a poor turning radius . . . I believe the production prop (16" x 10") caused it to be underpropped. I now have a 16 inch by x 12 inch prop."

VALUE

Nearly all the owners in our survey said they felt like they got a good deal on the boat, even though it was considered expensive at the time it was introduced. They praised the interior woodwork. A few reported gelcoat spider cracking. Although these boats were built before the gelcoat blister "pox" reached epidemic proportions in the 1980s, minor blister issues have been reported in CSY boats. However, none of the owners reported them in their particular boat (it was not clear how many had been previously treated). How much value there is in a CSY 37 will vary from boat to boat. The hulls themselves seem to be structurally sound, so the condition of the onboard systems and overall maintenance will be the factors that separate a good deal from a great one.

different performance characteristics.

Most boats were delivered with the standard short rig. In areas of normally heavy air, such as the West Indies in winter, the normal rig is adequate. In light air with the short rig, the boat is a slug. The engine will come in handy under these circumstances.

Performance is greatly enhanced by the tall rig, which is about 8 feet taller

than the standard rig and incorporates two sets of spreaders.

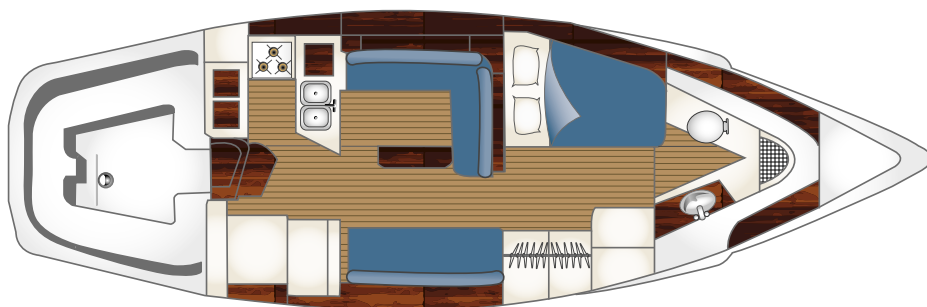
With the chainplates set at the outboard edge of the hull, the sheeting base is excessively wide. Sheeting a genoa in tight enough to go to windward effectively is difficult.

To avoid the necessity for running backstays, the intermediate and after lower shrouds are attached to the deck

several feet aft of the mast and the upper shrouds. Unfortunately, when broad reaching, the boom and main fetch up on these shrouds far too soon. This is ironic in a boat whose best point of sail is off the wind.

Our test boat had the tall rig and the shoal-draft keel. This is not the combination we would choose to own. Performance with the tall rig is greatly en-

Illustrations by Regina Gallant



The CSY 37's Plan B arrangement (above right) allocates a big chunk of the forepeak to the head and shower. The versatile cutter rig (above) makes the boat easier to balance. Its performance numbers (right) put it squarely on the slow, comfortable end of the scale.

CSY 37 IN CONTEXT

	CSY 37	ISLAND PACKET 37	TAYANA 37	ERICSON 36C
LOA	37' 3"	38' 7"	36' 9"	36'
LWL	29' 2"	31'	31' 10"	30'
BEAM	12'	12' 2"	11' 7"	12'
DRAFT	5' 3"	4' 6"	5' 8"	5' 4"
DISPLACEMENT	22,000 lbs.	18,500 lbs.	24,000 lbs.	17,200 lbs.
BALLAST	8,500 lbs.	8,200 lbs.	7,340 lbs.	5,800 lbs.
SAIL AREA (SA)**	610 ft. ²	18.37 ft. ²	846 ft. ²	557 ft. ²
ENGINE	50 hp.	50 hp.	30 hp.	32 hp.
WATER	120 gal.	90 gal.	110 gal.	50 gal.
FUEL	50 gal.	50 gal.	90 gal.	65 gal.
SA/D	12.4	15.3	16.34	13.4
D/L	395	277.2	332.2	284.4
PRICE *	\$58,000	\$150,000	\$73,000	\$55,000

* Average used price (varies greatly)

**Sail area calculated 100 percent foretriangle

hanced. However, the higher sail plan does make the boat more tender, and with the cut-down keel, combines to produce a boat that makes excessive leeway when heeled more than about 20 degrees. We would prefer to combine the tall rig with the deep keel.


Our test boat was overpowered with full main, staysail, and large yankee by gusts of a little over 15 knots over the deck, sailing hard on the wind. She also made substantial leeway. With a reef in, the helm eased, the boat stood up, and leeway was less.

Off the wind, the CSY 37 comes into her own. She is stable, and visions of long tradewind passages instantly come to mind. Under those conditions, she would shine if you had plenty of chafe protection on those aft-leading shrouds.

Halyard winches are mounted on the keel-stepped, painted aluminum mast. The boom does not overhang the cockpit, and has a well-made boom gal-lows, which provides a good handhold on deck as well as an excellent place to store the boom when at rest, or when sailing under the storm jib alone in heavy weather.

CONCLUSIONS

CSY was an unusual company, and the CSY 37 is certainly an unconventional boat. The boat is strongly built—overly built, in fact. The price may seem high, until you consider that this is a well-equipped 20,000-pound boat. Hot and cold pressure water, Edson pedestal steering, and gimballed propane stove were all standard, for example.

CSY boats were probably the strongest production boats ever marketed. They may be ungainly, and not the hottest performers under sail, but they are tough. That's an important consideration if you're trying to get the most for your money. 

Editor's note: This review is an updated and expanded version of one first published in 1998.

RESOURCES

CSY OWNERS ASSOCIATION,
www.csyowners.com

CSY SAILBOATS BLOG,
www.csysailboats.blogspot.com