



# New England Sleigh Ride

WE RAN THIS BEAUTY  
HARD, FROM PORTLAND  
TO ROCKLAND, MAINE,  
AND SHE NEVER  
FALTERED.

TEXT BY CAPT. BILL PIKE  
PHOTOS BY BILLY BLACK

The old Custom House Wharf in Portland, Maine, had a raw, commercial-seafaring quality to it that morning. The buildings on either side were ancient, clapboard-sided, and scruffy. The wind whooping off Casco Bay was salty and brisk, especially for mid-August. And the passers-by were locals, not tourists.

"Better get a big breakfast," I told PMY senior editor Jason Wood as we entered the Porthole Restaurant. "Lunch is a long way off, buddy. Gonna be one rough ride headin' up to Rockland."

We ordered eggs Benedict with lobster, as I recall. And while downloading this delightful repast, we reviewed the day's duties. First, we had to safely deliver a brand-new Sabre 48 Salon Express from her temporary lodgings nearby to a berth at the Maine Boats, Homes & Harbors Show in Rockland, some 75 NM north. And just as important, we had to collect test data along the way.

This last deal was gonna be challenging, most likely. The weather report featured foggy rain, 20 to 25 knots of wind, and four- to six-footers coming out of the east. There were a couple of nice little islands in the Rockland area, however, and we figured at least one of them would offer enough protected, semi-smooth, radar-gun-friendly water to get the job done.

Sabre marketing v.p. Bentley Collins was already onboard the 48 when Wood and I showed up with our sea bags and test equipment. An Australian by birth, French Canadian by happenstance, and American by choice, Collins shot a weather eye aloft and observed with a grin, "Perfect day for a real test, eh boys?"

The sheer size and musculature of the 48 proved as invigorating as Collins' up-and-at-'em attitude. Her

The 48's layout celebrates indoors elegance and comfort as well as outdoor enjoyment. The cockpit and saloon can be quickly

integrated by simply swinging open bi-fold doors and lowering an adjoining window.





**Top:** The aft portside settee slides open to reveal a utility room. **Above:** Shoji screen doors and elegant inlays decorate the master.



superstructure, topped off with a beefy but stylish sedan-type hardtop, was fully integrated into her rail-encompassed weather deck. Indeed, I detected nary a seam or joint that might work open or give underway and invite water intrusion. Her bow was gracefully elevated and flared, a design feature that promised a relatively dry ride. And the three windshield panels just beyond her helm station were large, robustly ensconced in thick fiberglass mullions, and accoutered with big, businesslike wiper blades.

Of course, most boat deliveries are time-sensitive. So with a nod to

the necessity of making a mile, I jumped aboard, went forward, and fired up the 48's powerplant, a matched set of 550-mhp Cummins MerCruiser QSC8.3-550 diesels with Zeus 3800 pod drives. By the time I'd finished making sure both the SmartCraft Digital Throttle & Shift (DTS) binnacle control and the Cummins MerCruiser joystick were working smartly, Collins and Wood were poised to cast off. "Let 'er go," I yelled and poured on the coal.

Casco Bay was freakin' outrageous when we got there. And when I set a northerly course for our destination, with the rollers hammering the starboard bow like blazes, it became even more so. I continued to gently accelerate though, and soon we were sporting along at roughly 20 knots (according to one of the two Garmin GPSMap 7215 screens on the dash) with the promontories of the Pine Tree State to port and the gray vastness of the Atlantic to starboard.

What a ride! The little world around our 48 was purest mayhem, no doubt about it. But tracking stayed straight, despite our more-or-less sideways orientation to the craziness. Moreover, visibility from the Stidd helm seat I sat cross-legged in was excellent, even when I occasionally pulled back on the sticks to raise the boat's nose and soften an especially menacing impact. And the vessel's agility—her rapid response to even slight movements of the steering wheel—made driving a pleasure.

Sabre's head designer Kevin Burns was at the bottom of all this performance, apparently. In order to maximize onboard interior space, Collins said, Burns had decided to put the 48's propulsion machinery as far aft as possible, a move that meant her mains were close-coupled to their respective drives and not extensively jackshafted. Several prospective customers had been leery of this approach, Collins noted, fearing it might put the longitudinal center of gravity too far aft, thereby causing overly high running attitudes, visibility issues coming out of the hole, and lackluster performance.

"But Kevin worked a bit of magic with this boat," affirmed Collins. "He used wedges in her tunnels to give a slight down-angle to the Zeus units, a new, proprietary buttock-line arrangement, and some clever swim-platform hydrodynamics, all to keep the running attitudes at approximately three degrees throughout the planing range."



## The Basics



**Standard equipment:** SmartCraft DTS electronic controls w/ Cummins MerCruiser Diesel joystick; Kahlenberg air horn; Stazo custom steering wheel; Stidd helm-seat (w/ UltraLeather upholstery); Ritchie compass; Isotherm refrigerator; Seaward Gourmet two-burner cooktop; Tecma Eco MSD (master head); ITT Jabsco Quiet Flush

MSD (guest head); St. Maarten reading lights; 11.5kW Onan genset; 2/ Group 31 AGM batteries (engine start); 3/4D AGM batteries (house); 1/Group 27 AGM battery (genset); 20-amp. Xantrex Trucharge 2-battery charger; 30-gal. Raritan water heater

**Optional power:** none

**Optional equipment on test boat:**

OceanLED under-water lights; dealer-installed Garmin electronics package; entertainment package; Webasto electric sunroof; Freedom SW/3000 inverter; Glendinning CableMaster; dark-blue hull color; Freedom Dinghy Lift; teak decking in cockpit and swim platform

**Base price:** \$920,000

**Above:** Besides the basics, the galley has a wineglass cabinet with beveled-glass doors.



We leapt a particularly deep chasm, and I wondered aloud whether credit for the stout New England sleigh ride we were enjoying might also go to construction methods and materials. “Oh my yes,” replied Collins. “All the major parts are made of resin-infused biaxial E-glass with one type of coring material or another. We even co-infuse the stringers and the hull simultaneously. That’s why we’re seeing all this rigidity and resistance to twist.”

Life’s funny sometimes. Back in Portland, Wood and I’d been worried about the roughness of the ride we’d experience traveling up the coast. But when we finally arrived in Rockland that afternoon, our concerns had nicely transitioned into confidence. And as we collected test data in the lee of a rocky shore, confidence transitioned into enthusiasm—for a rousing top speed of 34 mph, church-mouse sound levels, and a set of superb running attitudes. Who knew that our impending boat-show docking would be the real hell-raiser of the day?

“Change of plans,” yelled Collins from the bow. “Just spin ’er about in here and put ’er over there behind that red sailboat.”

I looked around. Things were slightly more complicated than Collins was indicating. First off, our arrival at the show had been late. So I’d been constrained to box the 48 into a tiny spot, one literally surrounded

by spectacular (and spectacularly expensive) vessels, all tied up at this point and all overrun with potential witnesses. And the room I needed to “spin ’er around,” as Collins breezily put it, did not seem to be there, and neither did the room I needed to squeeze the 48 in behind the museum-quality sloop.

Zeus to the rescue, I gotta say!

With an assist from our Cummins MerCruiser joystick and a raft of directives from Collins like “Go ahead three inches. *Stop!*” I was able to safely rotate the 48 and sidle her into the appropriate berth, with her bow overhanging the sloop’s transom by three feet.

Who-ee!

Immediately afterwards, Collins gave a brief tour of the 48’s bright, Epifanes-varnished, two-stateroom-two-head interior. It’s a grand place and Collins was obviously excited showing it off. So as luck would have it, I think he totally missed the several sighs of relief I breathed during the proceedings. And gratefully, Wood seemed to miss ’em too. PMY

■ **SABRE YACHTS**

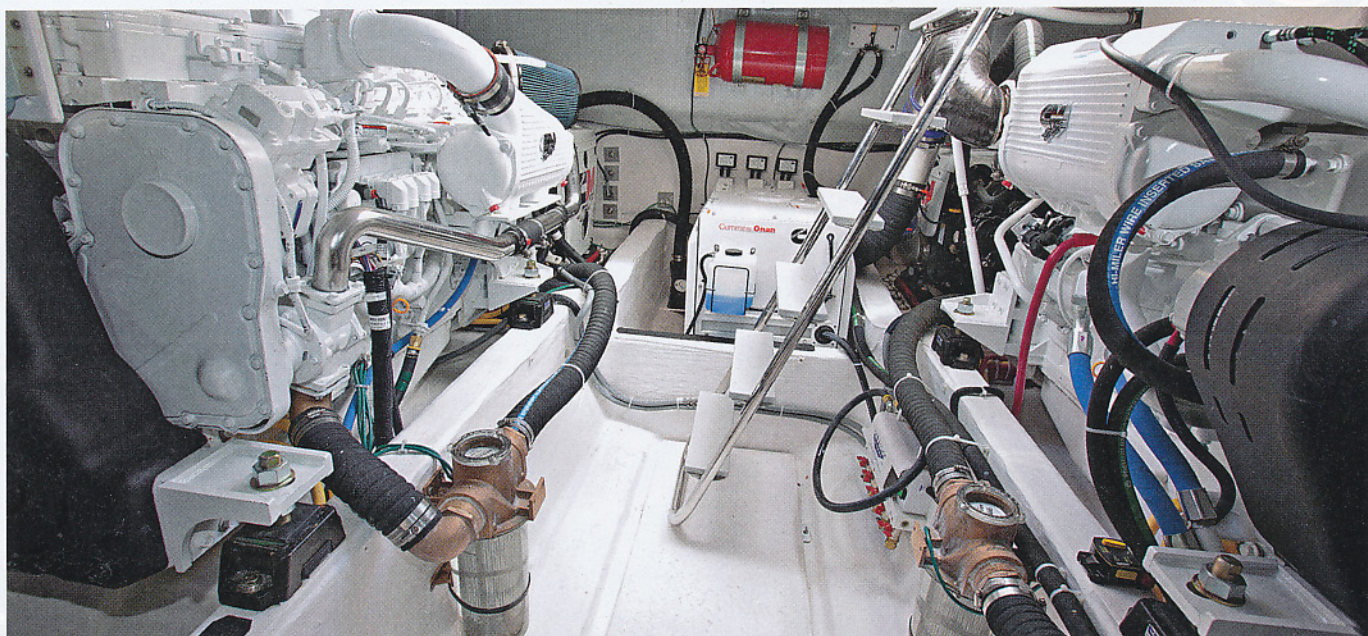
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**Top:** Don't let the dulcet conditions shown here fool you. The 48's a two-fisted sea-chomper, with a resin-infused hull and deck.





**PMY's Numbers | Sabre 48 Salon Express**

rpm	mph	knots	gph	mpg	nmpg	range	nm range	db	angle
1000	8.9	7.7	4.1	2.17	1.89	977	849	64	0.5
1250	10.2	8.8	7.9	1.28	1.12	578	503	65	2.0
1500	12.0	10.4	13.3	0.90	0.78	406	353	67	3.0
1750	15.3	13.3	22.1	0.69	0.60	312	271	72	3.5
2000	20.2	17.5	28.3	0.71	0.62	320	279	72	3.5
2250	25.1	21.8	34.1	0.74	0.64	331	288	74	3.0
2500	28.6	24.9	42.4	0.67	0.59	304	264	75	3.0
2900	34.0	29.5	59.5	0.57	0.50	257	223	76	2.0

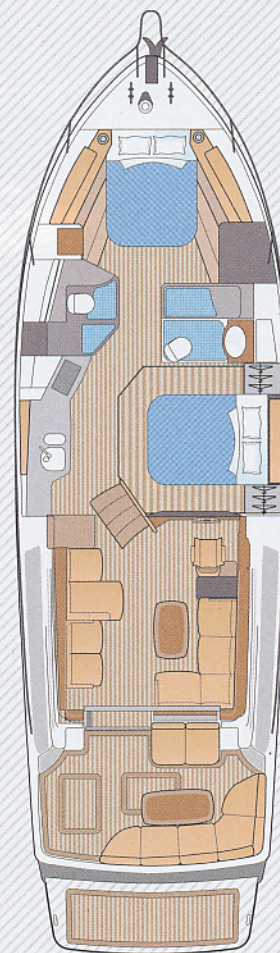
**vitals**

**Propulsion:** 2/550-mhp Cummins MerCruiser Diesel QSC8.3-550s; Zeus 3800 pods w/ 1.79:1 ratio; M7 propsets  
**LOA x Beam:** 47'6" x 15'4"  
**Draft:** 3'9"

**Weight (dry):** 34,700 lbs.  
**Fuel:** 500 gal.  
**Water:** 160 gal.  
**Std. power:** 2/550-mhp Cummins MerCruiser Diesel QSC8.3-550s  
**Cabins:** 1 master, 1 guest

**Price as tested:** \$1,205,000  
**Conditions:** **air temperature:** 69°F; **humidity:** 70%; **seas:** 6-8'; **load:** 380 gal. fuel, 150 gal. water, 3 persons, 800 lbs. gear. **Speeds** are two-way aver-

ages measured w/ Stalker radar gun. **GPH** taken via SmartCraft display. **Range** is 90% of advertised fuel capacity. Decibels measured at helm on A scale. 65 dB-A is the level of normal conversation.



**Above:** Positioning the engines and drives well aft provides lots of space for a utility room.

Illustration by Steve Karp