

Dancing quickly and quietly through the swell in a fading afternoon westerly off the California coast, the Mason 54's easy motion defied its 40,000-pound displacement, full keel, and cruising lines. A well-defined cruiser, she performed more like a go-fast, accelerating in the puffs and responding smartly with subtle sail trim. An unexpected treat for this traditionalist, the sea trial of the new Mason was a real eye-opener.

The boat was well driven with main and small genoa on a Harken furler. She moved at 6.5 knots to weather with 12 knots apparent and above 7 knots on a beam reach in the same light air. Performance like that can't be faulted.

Powered by a 85-horsepower Perkins diesel, the boat turns on a dime and will move at 8 knots at 2,400 rpm. 2,000 rpm seemed better, though, pushing her at about 6.5 knots in quiet water.

From the drawing board of designer Al Mason, the hull lines are basically those of the Mason 53, a proven family cruiser stretched slightly, while the interior and deck configurations were redesigned by a talented young Californian, Jeff Leishman.

A solid hand-lay-up built to Lloyd's 100A1 specs, the hull is beefy. Stiffness is developed with eight full-length stringers and a plethora of transverse members. Balsa-cored glass decks are graced with neatly installed teak decking bent to the sheer and finished with custom-design quality.

The aft-cockpit seat has a convenient cutout, allowing quick installation of an emergency tiller.

Instruments, running-light switches, and engine controls are all nicely in reach of the helmsman, whose perch could be aft of the wheel or to the side, with comfort and visibility either way.

There are a lot of fine touches topside. Stanchion bases are carefully



Paul Kennedy

mortised into the deck so that a tasteful angle to the hull is maintained. There's a clever setup to release and stow the inner forestay, permitting easy tacking and no genoa hang-ups.

Security for sailhandlers is provided by mast pulpits arched for back comfort. Amply sized self-tailing Lewmar winches abound, although a small winch could be mounted to ease traveler-trim effort.

The cutter rig is tall and hefty. Fore-spar's "Furlaway" electric main furler is optional, but skeptics beware—this system permits simple trimming on all angles of sail with the flip of a switch. The main is easily furled inside the spar in a few seconds.

Below, vibration and noise from the engine and generator are nominal, despite their location beneath the main cabin sole. All through-hulls are neatly labeled, and the wiring and plumbing are first-rate. Custom breaker panel, automatic locker lighting, and three separate DC systems are but a few more of the special treats.

The main cabin is large, a veritable entertainment center seating a dozen people on two settees. A few grabrails

or overhead centerline handholds would make it easier for the crew to move fore or aft at sea. Future vessels will have the appropriate handholds.

Priced at about \$470,000, the Mason 54 is a quality package, impressive from every perspective including performance. Sailing it away with all its standard gear and equipment would be a pleasure.—Doug Templin

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LOA	53'6"
LWL	39'9"
Beam	14'10"
Draft (deep keel)	6'8"
(shoal keel)	5'9"
Displacement	40,600 lbs
Ballast	13,400 lbs
Sail area	1,350 sq ft

