

IN THE DARK ABOUT NAV LIGHTS? HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

# SOUNDINGS®

REAL BOATS, REAL BOATERS

## Taking Flight

Viking's New Center Console Series Gets Underway



Valhalla V-37

**PLUS:**  
ALBEMARLE 31  
PRESTIGE 42



## OLD SALT

INSIDE THE WORKSHOP OF  
A NAUTICAL ARTISAN

LOA: 40'6"  
Beam: 11'7"  
Draft (engines up): 2'3"  
Fuel: 557 gals.  
Power: (4) 400-hp  
Mercury Verados  
Price: \$570,000



Viking Yachts bets big  
with the launch of Valhalla  
Boatworks and a new trio  
of offshore center consoles

By Gary Reich

# HIGH ROLLERS



LOA : 32'10"  
 Beam: 9'9"  
 Draft (engines up): 2'1"  
 Fuel: 327 gals.  
 Power: (2) 400-hp Mercury Verados  
 Price: \$315,000



LOA : 36'9"  
 Beam: 10'  
 Draft (engines up): 2'2"  
 Fuel: 470 gals.  
 Power: (3) 300-hp Yamaha F300s  
 Price: \$390,000

**A**bsecon Inlet in Atlantic City, New Jersey, is a place of penetrating contrasts. On one side of the inlet, gamblers press their luck inside shimmering, glass-sheathed high-rises that reflect down onto the blue-green water. Just across the inlet, to the north, pastel green grasses pulse in the breeze atop pearly white sand dunes, casting their own natural brush-strokes across the top of the water.

The reflection that Sean Healey and I were casting onto the inlet waters was wholly unnatural, but just as beautiful and impressive. We were cruising out of a no-wake zone in a dark blue Valhalla Boatworks V-41, the flagship in a new fleet of offshore center-console boats that has been in the works for nearly two decades at parent company Viking Yachts. "Hang on," Healey says with a grin as he lights the afterburners on the quadruple rack of 400-hp Mercury Verado 4-stroke outboards. The thrust puts us on top almost instantly and firmly plants us against our seats. Not long after, we're blasting past the casinos at 64 knots.

While that acceleration and speed are thrilling, it's what Healey does next that causes my jaw to drop. As we're running the inlet, he slows the boat and then abruptly puts the 41-footer into a 35-knot, hard-over turn. The twin-stepped hull corners as if it's glued to the water, never losing grip. It was one among many commendable qualities I'd discover in the new Valhalla boats that day.

That sure-footed V-41, along with the V-33 and V-37, are in many ways the brainchild of brothers Justin and Sean Healey. Their father, Pat Healey, is Viking Yachts president and CEO, and their grandfather, Bill Healey, co-founded Viking in 1964. Now in their 20s, the Healey brothers earned their chops on the Viking Yachts production line, finding themselves upside down in bilges, covered in sweat and resin, and with their hair powdered orange with teak sawdust. "There are no free rides in this company," Pat says.

"Sean and Justin worked all areas of the production line, just like I did."

Fishing is a passion the brothers share. A beat-up 13-foot Boston Whaler provided them with their first taste of fishing freedom in the coastal waters around Ocean City, New Jersey, around age 12. Other fishing boats joined the Healey family through the years, including a couple of Wahoos, a Regulator, a Jupiter and a Contender. Today, Sean and Justin are spirited anglers, participating competitively in local New Jersey fluke tournaments and in offshore billfish tournaments up and down the East Coast. These experiences helped them develop the Valhalla Boatworks brand. The idea started when Sean and Justin were young, and it's been percolating ever since.

"Valhalla Boatworks isn't something we decided to do on a whim," Sean says. "Don Gemmell, a member of our design team, and my dad started thinking about these boats 17 years ago. They drew up some designs and put a business plan together."

The economic downturn of 2008 forced the project to the back burner. Then, in 2016, Viking Yachts purchased the Ocean Yachts facility near the Mullica River in Egg Harbor City, New Jersey, and tooled up the line to build the Viking 37 Billfish. Sean and Justin pressed their father with the idea of building the center console boats, too. By 2017, the brothers had convinced him to move forward with Valhalla Boatworks, which was at the front of his mind a year later. "I was at the Miami boat show in 2018, and I saw Michael Peters of Michael Peters Yacht Design walking down the dock," Pat

*Clockwise from left: The Valhalla V-33; Justin, Pat and Sean Healey; the V-37 shows off its stepped hull.*



Healey recalls. “I asked him, ‘What’s your workload look like?’” Peters, who had designed the running surfaces on Viking’s motoryachts, told Healey he was between projects. “How’d you like to design three center-console boats with me?”

The Healeys wanted the Valhalla models to run on stepped hulls. “That’s where we see the future of center console boats heading, and Michael Peters’ Stepped-V Ventilated Tunnel is a perfect match for these new boats,” Pat Healey says.

The design utilizes two deep steps and a tunnel that funnels fast-moving water toward the transom, acting almost like a keel. Peters designed the running surfaces for the Valhalla line while Viking’s engineering and design team drew the lines for the rest of each boat. “There were lots of late nights and weekends getting the plant set up, doing design work, and just making it all fit and work,” Justin says, “but it’s all been highly rewarding.”

Valhalla Boatworks is doing all of the hull, structural grid, machinery, deck and final assembly tasks at the Mullica facility, while leveraging Viking Yachts’ vertical integration and economy of scale by producing other components at the New Gretna plant. All three Valhallas are built using resin infusion and composite construction with a structural grid to reinforce the whole package. Each boat has dedicated mounts and engineered reinforcements for Seakeeper gyros. Not a splinter of wood is in the hulls; even decorative parts are crafted without using wood. For example, Valhalla’s signature teak toe rails are hand-painted in the mold. It’s composite but it looks

like varnished teak, and it’s maintenance-free.

It’s easy to see the Viking DNA built into the Valhallas. There’s substantial bow flare along with transom livewells, Release helm seats and steering pods. At the bow of each boat are twin parallel cleats—something you’ll also find on many of the Viking sportfish yachts rolling out of the New Gretna factory. There’s also a no-nonsense utility about these boats that should appeal to hard-core anglers. Valhalla models focus on being the perfect fishing machine. That’s not to say anglers can’t bring the family along in comfort, but all the things a fishing boat should be were considered first in the design.

“Every boat has a port-side diver door, transom livewell, flip-down transom seats and self-draining fish lockers in the cockpit and forward,” Justin Healey says. “The two larger boats have an aft-facing bench seat behind the helm seating, while the V-33 has a tackle unit with slide-out cooler below that can be used as a seat.”

Under each boat’s low-slung console is a compartment with an electric head, a sink with a shower wand/freshwater mixer, rod stowage and an electrical control panel. Access is through a pivoting door on heavy-duty hinges that open tight against the console, versus swinging outward. And forward of each boat’s console is a two-person lounge. The larger two boats have forward-facing chaise-style lounges in the bow, while the V-33’s bow is more open.

The fit and finish on all three Valhalla models is exemplary. I poked around under deck hatch-eyes, peeked inside lockers, scrutinized the deck



*Clockwise from left: The new boats debut in Atlantic City; the trio offshore; Release Marine helm pod*



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hardware and wiring runs, and looked for errors in execution. I couldn’t find any. Pipework welds were perfect, the diamond-point upholstery looked finely tailored, and every component seemed to be in the right place. “My brother and I have been fishing our whole lives, and we spent a lot of time relating our experiences on other boats to make sure we got these boats right,” Sean Healey says. “Many, many hours and lots of discussions went into every element of all three boats.”

I ran all three Valhalla boats in Absecon Inlet and out in the Atlantic Ocean. The confused inlet chop and a significant groundswell in the ocean proved an excellent test bed. I pressed each boat through the 2- to 3-foot rollers at the inlet’s mouth and launched them all from the wave-tipped swell in the ocean. The result was the same every time: The boats landed from atop the swells with a smooth, pillow-like cushiness, and cut through the choppy, confused seas effortlessly.

With three 300-hp Yamaha F300s, the V-37 tops out at 55 knots, and the fuel efficiency curve peaks around 42 knots, according to Valhalla. The V-41, which has the quad 400-hp Mercury Verados, blasts up to 64 knots and cruises at around 45 knots, the builder says; the V-33, with a pair of 400-hp Mercury Verados, tops out at 56 knots and cruises at 39 knots.



Justin Healey says orders for more than 70 of the Valhallas were on the books before the boats were shown at the Newport, Annapolis and Fort Lauderdale boat shows this past fall. Considering the build quality, features, performance and customer service that parent company Viking Yachts provides, it’s safe to say the Healey brothers nailed it, right out of the gate. **S**