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LONG-RANGE, REIMAGINED

OUTER REEF'S NEWEST 700 CLASSIC SERIES MOTORYACHT
IS A CUSTOMIZED TAKE ON A PROVEN PERFORMER.

story ANDREW PARKINSON





Every time I take the helm on a sea trial, my mind goes into overdrive. It's not so much the geeking out over helm gadgetry before me; rather, it's about the waypoints in the distance. My mind wanders to all the faraway places I could see myself cruising.

If points were awarded for far-out daydreams, then Outer Reef's latest 700 Classic Series motoryacht, *Rhapsody*, would be a high scorer. With my hand on her throttle, I felt like the Starbucks barista had slipped a little extra octane into my "tall Pike" that morning.

I first saw *Rhapsody* while she was sitting pretty at the end of a T-dock at Seattle's Elliott Bay Marina. Walking up to her was a bit like meeting an old friend for lunch. The 700 model has been in production for nearly a decade and remains one of Outer Reef's most popular offerings. What's different about *Rhapsody*, however, is the level of customization, in part to accommodate the owner's growing family, and in part to fulfill his desire to go farther. The last 700 went on her own bottom to Chile. The owner of *Rhapsody* intends to cruise extensively in Alaska.

The first change that *Rhapsody*'s owner made was to the living spaces. Any good long-range cruiser has a bounty of spots for family and guests to spread out, and *Rhapsody*'s 18-foot, 6-inch beam allows for room to breathe. This owner forwent the standard athwartships double berth in favor of two twin berths, with the option to slide them together to make a queen-size berth when needed. He also wanted a centerline

master stateroom instead of the standard athwartships layout, a change that involved resituating the head and doing away with one of the boat's three engine room access points—a growing trend among Outer Reef owners who prefer the centerline arrangement. With a king-size walkaround bed, a walk-in closet, an ensuite head and enlarged portlights, the full-beam master stateroom underscores the owner's intention to carve out his own peaceful oasis for extended cruising.

The owner also made a change in the VIP stateroom, which has a feature that makes it easier to get sheets and a bedspread off and on. An Outer Reef customization allows the berth to slide forward, giving better access to the mattress for housekeeping.

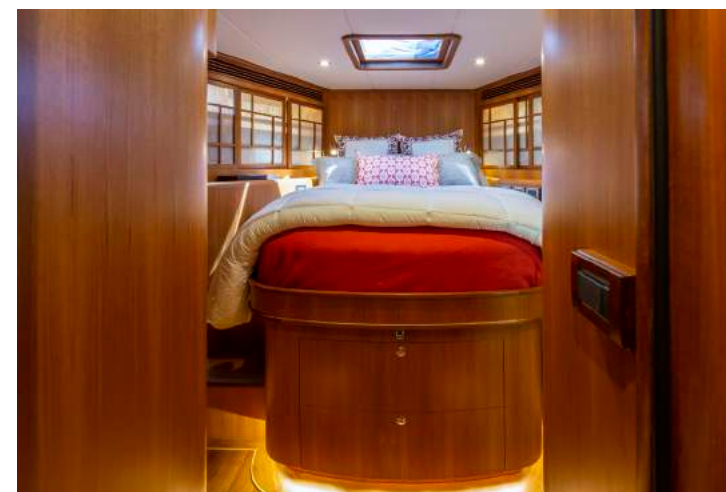
According to Kevin Blake, Northwest sales consultant and company captain, a high percentage of Outer Reef clients are owner-operators who view the crew quarters more as a fourth stateroom aft. This attitude is reflected in the fit and finish aboard *Rhapsody*, whose crew space rivals that of guest staterooms on larger yachts. With the owner's long-range cruising aspirations, the space may also help attract a hired captain for legs of the journey.

In terms of other possible customizations, Blake says the list is endless.

"I don't think we've even scratched the surface," he says. "More and more customizations are being requested with each new build, and our answer usually is yes. As long as it can be done within the confines of the boat's hull, generally we can



Clockwise from top left: The open galley and salon are among several social spaces aboard *Rhapsody* where guests and family can spread out and relax; The owner opted for a centerline arrangement in the master stateroom; The open concept layout allows sightlines that stretch from the aft deck all the way forward to the pilothouse (note the custom overhead wood handrail with recessed lights); The engine room offers important accessibility; The VIP stateroom forward has a customized linen-changing system; With comfortable seating, the beamy flybridge is another ideal entertaining space. And you can't beat the view.



Photos by Bill King



Foredeck seating (left) is built into the Portuguese bridge, which is one of many safety features aboard the 700. Owner-operators will likely view the crew area aft (bottom left) more as a fourth guest suite, as the space rivals living accommodations found on much larger vessels.



do it. In fact, that's really the fun part of the design process... working with the owner, getting the boat just right for them and how they plan to use their boat."

Rhapsody has a main deck with a traditional interior and contemporary accents, including a custom handcrafted overhead wood handrail with recessed lights in the ceiling. The open concept layout, a hallmark of the Outer Reef line, allows for sightlines that stretch all the way forward to the pilothouse from the covered aft deck. For night runs, or anytime the skipper prefers privacy, an electric partition rises from abaft the pilothouse settee to separate the lower helm from the open galley and salon.

Creature comforts aside, the Classic Series is known for performance. Cruising aboard *Rhapsody* around 10 knots in Puget Sound, it was hard to tell we were in a 3-foot chop, whether broadside- or head-to, thanks in part to the owner's decision to go with larger, 7½-foot ABT-Trac fin stabilizers. *Rhapsody* has extensive redundancy features, including an additional set of batteries for a second inverter, just to be safe. The owner also opted for a larger 2,350-gallon fuel tank because he wanted more range.

When you put "owner-operator" and "long-range" in the same sentence, the layout of the engine room is key. Aboard *Rhapsody*, everything that might ever need to be serviced has a hatch and a lighted compartment with easy access. Even the cleats have interior access panels for repairs. The engine room provides well-lighted, walkaround access to each engine, the generators and the electrical systems. Even with a workbench in the after area of the boat, there's still plenty of room to stow tools and create a separate workspace within the engine room.

"We also consider resale during the build process," Blake says. "In this instance, the owner opted to forgo the second washer/dryer unit in the aft area in favor of more storage, but Jeff [Druek, CEO of Outer Reef Yachts] knew the owner would want to sell the boat eventually and that having the space plumbed for a washer/dryer would be advantageous to the owner in terms of resale value, so they pre-plumbed the space."

Safety, reliability and comfort at sea are essential qualities for any boat intended to cross oceans. The 700 Classic Series meets those requirements and more. I can easily see the owner and his family enjoying *Rhapsody* in the waters of Alaska.

Perhaps he'll decide to keep on going. I hear Fiji's nice this time of year. ❁

OUTER REEF 700 CLASSIC SERIES RHAPSODY

LOA 71ft. 6in. **Beam** 18ft. 6in. **Draft** 5ft. **Displacement** 139,000 lbs. (dry) **Construction** fiberglass
Engines (standard) 2 x 500-hp John Deere 6090 **Engines** (optional) 2 x 750-hp John Deere 6090; Caterpillars for 1,000 hp and up
Speed (max./cruise) 13 knots/8 knots **Fuel** 2,350 gal. **Water** 400 gal. (optional 2,000-2,600 gal.) **Info** outerreefyachts.com