



SUPER SALONA

PHOTOS KEVIN GREEN; SALONA YACHTS

The performance-cruiser category is one of the holy grails for yacht designers - get it right and the market is lucrative. **KEVIN GREEN** predicts a bright future for one such yacht, the racy Salona 35

Getting it right is often measured by success on the club race scene despite the fact these boats should also be able to house the family comfortably for the summer holiday. Having just spent an afternoon on the first Salona 35 to arrive in Australia, I feel this is one particular boat that really does understand both sides of the

performance-cruiser equation.

Salona has had representation in Australia for a few years — including Phil King's 44 that made the podium in last year's Sydney Hobart — but sales have been limited, so the new 2012 distributorship now run by Sydney-based US Yachts is a very positive move for the Croatian builder. Following on from the launch of the 38, itself a worthy successor to the award-winning 37, the 2012 Salona 35 comes from pedigreed stock. An evolution of the Salona

34 that continues to do well on the European club race circuit, the 35 sports a more spacious cockpit, reworked hull and most importantly a tantalising price tag.

To compete with the large production yacht producers of France and Germany, Salona Yachts was formed in 2002 to produce niche-market boats. These craft have a little more time spent on them, which is viable in an economy where labour is cheaper than in Western Europe. The result is a model list that incorporates quality



With its twin carbon-fibre wheels the cockpit looks like it errs more on the racer side of the ledger than the cruiser side.



components? Harken, Sparcraft, Spinlock — and optimised race options for its IBC (infused basalt carbon) premium models.

POSITIVE IMPRESSIONS

First impressions and aesthetics are important for most of us sailors and the Salona should definitely garner interest if you see her at the Sydney boat show later this year. Unquestionably built to rate well on IRC (a sister ship in Europe has a TCC of 1.001), the tall-sided hull has minimum flares all-round with just enough rake and shear to make her easy on the eye, while the wedge-shaped waterline and flattened-out stern section is intended to ensure she goes upwind and downwind nimbly.

Carrying the beam aft to give enough buoyancy to hold the Salona's centralised rig — stepped near the keel — puts the centre of effort nicely where it's most effective. Also, using the full beam at the transom gives the cockpit plenty of room and this is cleverly enhanced by the use of modest diameter (32in) twin wheels rotating through moulded slots in the gunwales, also ensuring easy boarding and access to the

swimladder when in cruise mode. The transom bulkhead is removable and has 8mm inlaid teak, as has the side benches, and there's also a removable teak cockpit table.

Ahead of the moulded GRP binnacles, the mainsheet is easily to hand but with enough room for a dedicated trimmer to work. The 6:1 mainsheet blocks give excellent purchase and the Harken track controls are there as well. Towards the front of the cockpit sit a set of oversize Harken winches, H46 for primaries and a H44 on the cabin top for halyards, which will comfortably give heavy-duty control when the wind picks up; while twin banks of spinlock jammers neatly manage all Dyneema lines as they emerge from the deck guttering. Incidentally, these GRP coverings are strongly laid-up and didn't creak or flex under foot as I doused the mainsail.

Weather protection should also be good for crew thanks to a moulded track for the removable sprayhood, which, along with deep coamings, make this a nicely sheltered cockpit when offshore. Sensibly, avoiding the fashion for saloon-style doors, conventional washboards seal off the interior effectively and sturdy



The Nexus NX2 instrumentation (above) is factory fitted.

grabrails either side are handy for tether attachments.

Meanwhile, atop the main hatch are Nexus NX2 instruments, the first I've seen factory fitted. Also fitted was the company's NX2 Autopilot system on an impressively strong HP-40 linear drive attached to the top of the rudder stock, which has an easily-accessible emergency steering system.

SALOON WITH A TWIST

The two-cabin layout and saloon setup is fairly traditional — no bad thing in my book as it's

FIRST IMPRESSIONS AND AESTHETICS ARE IMPORTANT FOR MOST OF US SAILORS AND THE SALONA SHOULD DEFINITELY GARNER INTEREST IF YOU SEE HER AT THE SYDNEY BOAT SHOW LATER THIS YEAR

well proven — with galley and navigation station aft along with the bathroom, while the lounge dinette lies forward. Importer Matt Hayes at US Yachts chose a light wood interior for this first stock boat and it combines stylishly with the white GRP mouldings. The wood is blonde teak and nicely brightens the area, while the carbon fibre steps give a (weight saving) high-tech contrast to the smoothly finished mahogany fiddles and satin-varnished joinery. Quality touches include solid mahogany for door frames, strongly made cupboards and drawers, plus plenty of practicalities. These include sturdy handrails and a durable slatted floor made of teak and holly.

The saloon oozed warmth rather than CNC-manufactured convenience. A good illustration of this quality being the dinette

table, which is integrated with the compression post and strongly braced in consequence. In race mode the suede coverings on the soft furnishings would require protection but everything else looked sturdy enough to cope with wet kites. On the subject of wet gear, the surprisingly spacious starboard bathroom has an open wet locker aft. The bathroom with manual head is nicely moulded too, although the small portlights limit ventilation here and throughout the hull. Tacticians will appreciate the full-sized navigation station that faces forward in front of the bathroom, with enough bulkhead space for several screens (in addition to the Garmin 720 plotter on our review yacht).

Lifting the companionway steps on gas struts reveals the 29hp Yanmar. The three-cylinder engine sits high

A clean and simple approach overall is demonstrated by an easy-to-manoeuvre foredeck (above left). The 700W Quick windless (top right) is hidden inside the rode locker.

on its saildrive foot revealing most of the essential service points — impeller, water, oil — and shrouded with dense sound proofing, with rear access from the aft cabin as well. Attached to the engine is an 80amp alternator that should keep the 100amp/h house battery and starter battery charged nicely.

Portside, the L-shape galley uses the confined space well to include a twin-burner LPG stove/oven under a thick composite work surface — though its lid was fiddly to open — and the top-opening fridge at 40lt should carry enough victuals for the designated eight race crew.

Accommodation is yet another functional part of the Salona 35, comprising a forward double V-berth and an aft double. The bow cabin is fairly unadorned but nothing is lacking — side shelves, two sets of wardrobes, and designers J&J have even managed to fit in a seat. Natural light is adequate with a large top hatch and portlights, while LED spotlights take care of reading for the night owls. Under the twin foam mattress is the 200lt water



tank — so remember to empty it in race mode to take weight out of the bow.

RACE-READY DECKS

Returning topside the GRP decks are clear as the shrouds are inboard — with tie rods going into the stainless steel grid — and my only gripe was a lack of strong nonslip surfaces. Long genoa car tracks abutting the cabin top are welcome and should allow the slot between sails to be closed, though I'm not sure about the setup for barber haulers.

Moving forward is safely done thanks to sturdy handrails. Large cleats are all-round and a vertical 700W Quick windless located in the deep chain locker along with a stainless steel roller track for the rode should mean no dramas. The pulpit is laid out to allow a carbon fibre bowsprit to fly an asymmetric spinnaker and the Harken below-deck headsail reefing roller is another quality touch.

PERFORMANCE RIG

The test boat came with a Sparcraft tapered mast located well aft in the hull, allowing for a large fore triangle to fly both non-overlapping headsails (favoured for IRC rating) and the 140 per cent genoa for cruising. Sweptback rod rigging and an adjustable backstay complete an effective performance rig; with quality Rutgerson sliders for smooth mainsail hoists. Our boat came with high modulus material Dacron sails (a tighter weave to reduce stretch and a more durable version of Dacron) that are also practical in cruise mode. In race mode the boat can be easily set-up for both symmetrical or asymmetric spinnakers, but a yacht this size and hull shape usually benefits from poled-out spinnakers to sail deeper (rather than wider and faster).

OPTIMISED HULL

Hull builds can either be standard handlaid GRP or 220kg lighter infused epoxy/vinylester for the performance IBC model. The J&J design house has penned performance cruisers for Beneteau, Elan, and Grand Soleil so has plenty of runs on the board. But Salona owners, the AD car component company, engaged English design wizard Jason Ker to optimise the lead T-keel on its performance models, like the one we looked at. As the laws of gravity tell us, the lower the weight the more the



The saloon (top) is traditional and doesn't push the design envelope — we liked this approach. Both cabins (above and inset right) are comfortable and well lit — there is even a seat in the vee-berth. The head/shower combo presents easy mouldings (bottom right) and should be a doddle to keep sparkling.



[HIGHS]

- › Practical overall design with many options
- › Functional ergonomics throughout
- › Versatile and sufficiently powerful sailplan

[LOWS]

- › Foot support at helms
- › Cooker work-surface attachment

THE TWO-CABIN LAYOUT AND SALOON SETUP IS FAIRLY TRADITIONAL — NO BAD THING IN MY BOOK AS IT'S WELL PROVEN — WITH GALLEY AND NAVIGATION STATION AFT ALONG WITH THE BATHROOM, WHILE THE LOUNGE DINETTE LIES FORWARD





[tradeboat SAYS...]

The Salona comes with Eastern European quality sensibly packaged for comfortable cruising and club racing. Thanks to our strong dollar and economic construction the boat lacks very little despite the sharp pricing so is a worthy competitor to the likes of the First 35 and the Dehler 35.

leverage, so Ker's 2.15m T-keel is intended to allow the Salona to carry her 69m² sail area for longer and this was definitely noticeable on Sydney Harbour when the southerly gusts came down on us.

Overall, underwater hull sections are fairly classic IRC/ORC fodder with a flat aft section for downwind and acceleration, but with enough rocker for those start-line dial-ups. Also commendable is the structural setup; the inner hull liner is reinforced with carbon fibre and all main bulkheads are bonded to the hull with laminate and structural adhesives, while deck fittings are backed with alloy plates.

ON THE WATER

Motoring out of the US Yachts base at Darling Harbour the twin-blade folding propeller pushed us to 7.5kts as the revs maxed out at 4000, with no vibration and little noise coming from the transmission or engine. Climbing on top of the cabin I unzipped the sail bag and jumped back down into the cockpit to hoist the mainsail without any dramas, thanks to the quality Rutgerson sliders smoothly taking the sail up the Harken mast track.

The composite wheels felt pleasant and gave direct feel from the large spade rudder through the cable linkage. Also to hand at the starboard binnacle was the headsail outhaul, allowing me to easily fly the large 140 per cent genoa and then bring it in tight against the

inboard rod shrouds as I hardened on the blustery southerly. The hull stood up well to the gusts, without any trimming required on the main or track, but as the angle of heel increased my feet sought some grip and none was found, so I'd add a couple of teak chocks near each helm.

Sitting outboard comfortably on the teak slats I could just see the foresail telltales as the boat naturally wanted to climb higher, with negligible pressure on the wheel indicating a pleasingly balanced rig and of course reminding me that the deep spade rudder was also doing its job. Looking towards the companionway I noted 6.6kts boat speed on the Nexus NX2s, the analogue gauge reading 30 degrees with the true wind at 13kts.

The Salona confirmed she had a slippery hull reaching 7.8kts as the wind gusted between 14 and 16kts, which exceeded her polars and a good omen for those aspiring club racers. With my confidence gaining I then threw the Salona into a series of tight gybes bringing little complaint and noting good acceleration (and minimum wash) as the 10m hull spun around. My only wish was that it was a night when some twilight racing was on so we could join in. But my host for the afternoon, Matt Hayes, assured me he planned to race the boat around the local circuit, so watch out for her distinctly striped white hull as it

Facts & figures

SALONA 35

PRICE AS TESTED

\$279,174

PRICED FROM

\$233,000

GENERAL

MATERIAL GRP

TYPE Keelboat

LENGTH 10.4m (overall); 9.35m (waterline)

BEAM 3.36m

DRAFT 1.75m; 1.5m (shallow); 2.15m (racing)

WEIGHT 5300kg (5080kg for infused)

CAPACITIES

CABINS 2

FUEL 90lt

WATER 200lt

HOLDING TANK 42lt

ENGINE

MAKE/MODEL Yanmar 3YM20C

saildrive

RATED HP 21; 29 (optional)

SAILS

SAIL AREA 69.5m² (total); 37.5m² (genoa); 32m² (mainsail)

SUPPLIED BY

US Yachts,
Sydney By Sail, Festival Pontoon,
Darling Harbour, NSW
Phone: +61 (0) 2 9281 4422
Fax: +61 (0) 2 9280 1119
Website: www.salonayachts.com

LAYOUT



Test day weather information supplied by



overtakes you.

It's easy to see why Salonas have won European and US awards, and more importantly have accolades on the racetracks over there. It's because these boats are built from the keel up to be performance yachts rather than hotted-up cruisers, and that tantalising base price shouldn't alarm the bank manager unduly either. 🚩