



New Sail



Home away from home

Moody's Decksaloon 45 offers a whole new lifestyle for those willing to cast loose their land-locked ways.



Way back in 2008 I happened to read a serious review of the Bill Dixon-designed Moody Decksaloon 45 from the Hanse Group. I was particularly struck by the aesthetics of this new yacht that was breaking such fresh ground and had to pause for a moment while my brain processed the images. Was this extraordinary hybrid between a yacht and a power cruiser a work of genius or an ugly duckling?

It did not take long before the synapses snapped into action and semaphored an

unambiguous message to the cortex: "That's wicked!" As it turned out, it was a sentiment I shared with the magazine reviewer.

Being able to see the yacht in all its glory a few months later at the Sydney International Boat Show simply confirmed my early inclinations.

So I can hardly claim that I came to this boat test with an entirely open mind; I was, however, very keen to see whether the boat's performance matched its clever design and strangely compelling good looks.

By Crosbie Lorimer



There seems something slightly wrong about getting the chance to take a brand new boat for a sail when the owner hasn't even been given the keys, but that's what we did on a Friday afternoon and, with a rapidly building nor'easter on Sydney's Pittwater, it was evident we weren't going out for a quite potter, either.

Even before we'd reached *4 Ever Dreaming*, Windcraft's Sales Director, Bob Vinks was already suggesting photo angles that would show off the Moody to her best advantage; he seemed a little concerned that her backside was not her best view.

He need not have worried though, because designer Bill Dixon has done a far better job at disguising the boat's high topsides than just about any other designer of yachts of her size, as our approach from astern confirmed. Better still, Dixon has recognised that you will not always be

able to board the boat from the swim platform and has provided a fold-out step in the bulwarks either side of the cockpit; full marks!

WELCOMING

Nautical terms such as 'cockpit' and 'cabin' seem somehow less applicable as you board this boat. Rather, words associated with domestic scenes come more readily to mind – such as 'terrace', 'kitchen', 'sliding doors' and 'lounge' – more aptly describe a very clever arrangement of indoor and outdoor spaces that have been linked quite seamlessly. There's even a 'pergola' of sorts over the cockpit and you half expect to see a pair of contemporary planter pots either side of a doormat bidding "Welcome" at the sliding front doors.

"It was a brilliant arrangement when we went cruising with the family," said Windcraft CEO, Peter Hrones. "While we were out in the cockpit, the kids could be doing their thing in the cabin, where they could still see what was going on and we could see them and chat to them, too."

The cockpit is comfortable and well-protected, with a large double-leaf table that would easily seat six. The cockpit lockers are absolutely cavernous and the garage in the stern is capable of taking a 2.4m rigid inflatable dinghy.

The Decksaloon's engine room is spacious, with ample working area all around the engine itself and a Panda genset mounted separately to port, all accessible from below the cabin floor.

Above: The sense of a spacious and airy saloon is enhanced by retaining the cockpit and cabin on the same level.

Below: The navigation desk, set at the front of the saloon, doubles as an inside steering position with good all-round vision.





The apartment-style lounge/cabin arrangement of the Decksaloon is versatile and smart, while the double-fold table leaves ample space when not in dining use. The generous navigation desk doubles as a helm position, with throttles and an autopilot lying inconspicuously to hand, allowing inside steering with excellent all-round vision when the weather forces you indoors. A slightly higher back to the seat would not really compromise views through the cabin.

Fridges seem to be everywhere – even a proper fridge in the end of the cockpit table – and there’s room for a drawer-style dishwasher, too. Air conditioning is also a practical proposition when you have sealed glass doors to the cockpit.

LOWER LOBBY

Heading down the companionway stairs at the forward end of the cabin into the ‘lower lobby’ reveals three cabins with the heads to starboard.

The owner’s suite is impressive. A large island double bed is illuminated from above by a full-length skylight in the cabin – you could even keep an eye on the sail trim from your bed. A neat full-height ensuite shower and toilet is equally well lit and there’s a feature described rather extravagantly in the brochure as a ‘private office’.

Under sail, the Decksaloon’s performance is remarkably good

The pull-out stool and ‘desk’ could, indeed, take a laptop, but could equally well serve as a make-up area if a mirror was integrated into the adjoining cupboard. One suspects, however, that anyone planning to have family or guests aboard regularly would be more likely to forego this whole feature in favour of a shower in the shared heads.

With all that space in the saloon and the owner’s suite, there is, inevitably, something of a balancing act to be achieved. The portside



Above: The raised steering position offers views forward over the cabin top when standing or through and around the cabin when seated.

Left: The ample garage space and swim platform work well and the design also avoids the bulky appearance of the stern found in many modern yachts of this size.



The full-length skylight in the owner's cabin provides ample light and a remarkable view of the sails and sky.

cabin is a light and quite generous space, but the starboard cabin seems a little overpowered by the intrusion of the corner of the saloon area overhead. There are, however, differing berth arrangements available and the photos in the brochure of the transverse double berths in this cabin seemed to illustrate better use of the space, to my mind.

Enough of the domestic scene, time to see how the 45DS fares out on the water.

The first test was a tricky exercise to get out of the berth with moorings close by, and it was carried off consummately with the assistance of bow and stern thrusters. Vision from the cockpit for such manoeuvres is remarkably good considering you have half an apartment between you and the bow. That said, a second pair of eyes

outboard adds confidence on these occasions, as Bob suggested.

Electronic throttles at both helms have some very minor lag, but we pushed along nicely under the 78kW Volvo, aided by a strong and direct response at the wheel from the rack and pinion Jefa steering system. A single screw and twin rudder combination usually widens the turning radius of a yacht due to the absence of propwash over the blades, but we accomplished a very tidy circle in little more than the boat's length at near enough to 6 knots. Pleasingly, engine noise inside the cabin was very limited, even at high revs (the sliding doors seem to create a remarkably tight and almost soundproof seal).

As we met some meaty gusts off Taylor's Point, the Windcraft crew of Bob and Greg swung into action – or rather, they leant forward from their seats – to unfurl the sails using the electronic winches just forward of the helm positions.

Under sail, the Decksaloon's performance is remarkably good (a sail-area-to-displacement ratio of 20 would be a respectable number, even for a cruiser racer; hence, perhaps, why some owners have successfully raced their 45DSs at Geelong and Hamilton Island Race Weeks). Indeed, with high topsides the boat is a natural sailor; we already had five degrees of heel before we'd even unfurled the sails as we headed down Pittwater in a pumping 20-knot (37km/h) nor'easter.

Like many yachts of the current generation with wide aft sections and chines in the hull, she heels rapidly at the first sign of breeze – I was even caught slightly off guard at the wheel as we were hit by a heavy gust – and then the chine digs in and the boat holds a consistent and very reassuring line. Better still, she does not round up heavily in major gusts, a situation we tested several times as breezes hit 25 knots (46km/h), with the twin rudders giving plenty of bite and the helm simply asking questions of the mainsail trimmer.

ZERO STABILITY

Indeed, for those who really want to take this boat to its limits, quite remarkably it has zero stability at 180 degrees of heel – yes, that is a *good* thing. Essentially it means that the boat will not remain capsized when laid flat on its ear; the aft buoyancy pushes the bow down and turns the boat upright immediately.

Apparently, too, in less dramatic mode the boat holds some slight bow-down trim when unloaded as an allowance for owners to fill the massive aft cockpit lockers with every conceivable toy, which most will doubtless do if the average yachtie's garage or shed at home is anything to go by.

The yacht's polar diagram that indicates likely speed in any given combination of wind speed and sailing angle suggests, not surprisingly, that the most fun will be had off the wind (up to 10.2 knots (19km/h) boatspeed in 20 knots of wind at 130 degrees). Peter Hrones confirms that the boat happily sailed downwind offshore in a recent passage sail at a steady 11-plus knots (20km/h) under autopilot for several hours.

Even with little more than a third of the mainsail out of the mast and the full jib unfurled in 20-25 knots, we were still making 6 knots (11km/h) upwind and, as the photos show, the 45DS turns on a powerful and impressive show when you crack sheets with full sail in that much breeze.

Vision from the two wheels when under sail is surprisingly good, with options that range from looking over the cabin top (better still if you are over six feet/183cm), through the cabin or by sitting in the neat guardrail 'hook' and looking down the side decks. The instruments set in the aft end of the cabin top in front of the wheels are a clever touch and on our boat, a rotating NavPod on the aft end of the cockpit table provided enough information and a big enough display to keep a supertanker pilot happy.

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Above: The high topsides and bulwarks ensure the foredeck stays mostly dry even in chop.

Left: The twin rudders and light hull chine at the stern ensure that the Decksaloon drives straight and true even in a good breeze.



The varying options for shade and shelter in the cockpit add versatility when berthed or at sea.

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Walking forward on this boat when under sail feels safe and comfortable, with high bulwarks to one side and continuous handholds on the cabin top on the other. Interestingly, the high topsides and tall bulwarks mean that the foredeck tends to stay dry, even in a good blow. It's also a bonus if you want to simply lay the Code 0 or gennaker on the side deck when it's lowered – there's no chance of it being washed overboard.

As with much of the Hanse output, everything on deck is all about clean lines and minimal clutter. There's the same tidy headsail furler design at the bow as for the Hanse 545 and the anchor locker reveals a clever fulcrum flip-over system that allows the pick to be easily manoeuvred into place for lowering, even by the most muscularly-challenged.

Options for mainsail configurations centre around the standard hoist and lazyjack system or in-mast furling by Selden. On this particular day, the advantages of quick pushbutton reefing made achieving the right balance of headsail and reefed mainsail very easy in more than 20 knots (37km/h).

HOMELY

The broad appeal and versatility of this yacht is already evident from the sales of the Decksaloon in Australia. As we returned to the marina, we got chatting to Gunther and Erika in the next berth. They had recently sold their house and decided to live and cruise on their newly-acquired



The Windcraft team hands over Akaroa, a Hanse 400, to its happy new owners.

Decksaloon called *Cool Change* and the boat was already looking very much like a home.


Meantime, Denis Macdonald, who skippered the Farr 40 *One Step Ahead* for several years, has taken one step back and adopted a more leisurely mode, choosing a Decksaloon and kitting it out with gear for all climates, as he plans to circumnavigate Australia over several months; a veritable Winnebago on water.

Windcraft clearly has a keen interest in happy customers, because it has extended the basic package for the Decksaloon to include several items not incorporated in the European offer. Better still, you don't just get handed the keys and waved off; as we returned to the berth, the full team was busily preparing for the delightful 'launch' ceremony for James and Tracey Smail, handing over their brand new Hanse 400 *Akaroa* (see photo, lower left).

As we left the Windcraft offices and headed for home, my wife Dale, who helps with my boat test photography, asked me what sounded like a leading question.

"If you had the money, which of the last few boats we've tested would you buy?"

I didn't need to guess where her preferences lay – the question was clearly a ringing endorsement of our afternoon on the water.

But with a price tag of \$900,000 for the package that we sailed, it may take a little while before I can present her with the answer ... 

SPECIFICATIONS: MOODY 45 DECKSALOON

LOA:	13.72
Beam (max):	4.57m
Draught:	1.99m
Displacement:	14 tonnes
Total sail area:	98sqm
Mast height above waterline:	21.748m
Cabins:	3
Berths:	6
Engine:	Volvo D3-110 78kW/106hp
Water:	800lt
Fuel:	600lt
Price (standard sailaway):	\$799,000 (incl GST)
Price includes: Stern thruster, sails, extra fridge, auto pilot, electric throttles, teak decks and folding prop.	

Importer: Windcraft P/L. For more information, go to: www.windcraft.com.au, tel (02) 9979 1709.