

Astondoa AS46



Sleek for a flybridge cruiser, this boat comes from a range that extends up to superyacht scale. Does that pedigree shine through?

REPORT BY MARK TURLEY & CARL RICHARDSON

highlights

THREE SPACIOUS CABINS



Accommodation for six people comes by way of a forward master suite plus midships cabins with good-sized twin berths.

ENGINEROOM ACCESS

There is plenty of room right around the engines for routine servicing, even though the fuel and water tanks are located outboard.



LARGE LAZARET



The space under the cockpit will swallow lots of deck equipment and furniture. This is also the main access route to the engine room.

Until recent years, it was easy for UK buyers to assume that the Spanish did not go in for leisure boating very much — as unlikely as that might seem given the extent and the climate of their coastline.

Now, the lack of presence has changed in no uncertain terms, with just about every major British boat show seeing another interesting Hispanic range coming to the fore. At Southampton in September, it was the Alicante-based yard of Astondoa.

But that is not to say that they are newcomers to boatbuilding. Astondoa have a full line-up that runs from 39ft to close on 100ft.

Their three-cabin AS46 looks likely to be a popular choice for UK waters, so we grabbed the first opportunity for a test after its boat show debut.

DESIGN & LAYOUT

For a flybridge boat, the AS46 is a sleek affair, partly due to the fact that the flybridge itself does not extend too far forward. But that, of course, means there is less room up top than might otherwise be the case: just a helm console and a sizeable dinette, but no dedicated sunpad or wet-bar.

Visually, the boat's lines are further stretched by the combination of nicely styled windows (the forward windscreen is a single piece) and clean, unfussy curves that culminate in a deep, full-width bathing platform set between raked topside returns.

The hull shape is a medium-vee. The



accommodation

The proportions of the interior layout work well for a crew of up to six people.

The smartly turned-out saloon offers comfortable facing seating, with leather upholstery as an option, and impressive headroom of 6ft 4in (1.93m).

This is maintained throughout most of the boat, with all three cabins being of a good size with an adequate amount of stowage, as long as you include the lockers beneath the berths.

The galley, at the same level as the helm station but tucked behind a smart sweep of cocktail cabinet, is an all-electric affair complete with a two-burner hob and a combi-microwave. Strangely, however, the boat does not come with a generator as standard, although there is plenty of room for one in the lazaret.

To help with ventilation, there are electric side windows here, and across the way.

The fixed double helm seat is styled to make it less intrusive, but that means a low back and reduced lateral support at the sides.

The detail in the joinery suggests a boatyard that is used to building bigger boats, which of course it is.



saloon There is space for free-standing furniture to be deployed around the table. Adjacent to the sliding door from the cockpit, a sideboard tidies away a host of goodies, including a built-in television and sound system as standard.



master suite The central berth is a good size, at 4ft 8in (1.42m) wide, and set at ordinary 'domestic' height, making it easy to get into.



galley Although not large, the galley is well designed, not least the curved bar facing the saloon. However, it is in need of a drawer or two, and a place to stow basic victuals such as tea and coffee.



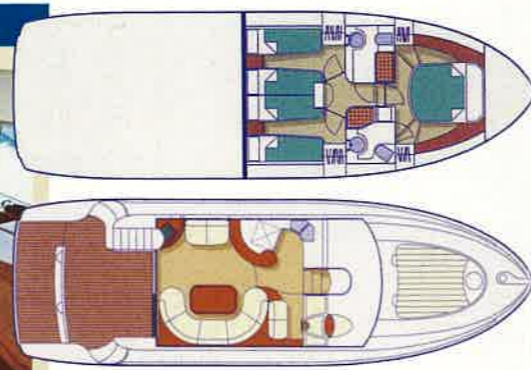
guest cabins Both midships cabins are similar in size, and offer good sitting headroom over their twin 2ft 2in-wide berths.



interior helm Smartly finished, the helm console is simply laid-out with instrumentation readily viewed. But the compass appears to have been surface-mounted as a bit of an afterthought.



toilet compartments Both WCs boast an opulent fit-out and a separate shower cubicle.



powertrain being a conventional shaft-drive arrangement, tunnels are incorporated to ease the shaft angle. Three sets of sprayrails run over the forebody, the inner ones fading before the tunnels.

Above the waterline, the cockpit and bathing platform make for a huge run-through of outside space, especially as the former has been left clear of fixed seating; the cavernous, lined lazaret enables any loose furniture to be stowed easily.

With three cabins provided down below, the interior layout has the galley up at saloon level, right opposite the interior helm and forward of an expanse of seating which includes a C-shaped dining area.

The forward owner's suite has a large double berth, and both midships cabins have good-sized twin berths. Two handsomely styled toilet compartments each have a separate shower cubicle.

POWER OPTIONS

The price list shows a good array of twin diesel engine options in the 400-500hp powerband, with Caterpillar, Volvo Penta and Yanmar all making a showing.

The most potent choice is 500hp Yanmars, whereas our test boat was fitted with 480hp Volvo TAMD75s.

Installations at the lower end of the line-up should give speeds in the order of 27 knots flat out, and hence a service speed of around 23-24 knots. Add a further 3-4 knots with the more potent ones.

PERFORMANCE & HANDLING

We started our test day on the flybridge, which proved a questionable decision given the biting December wind and the low-slung design that makes you feel a little too open to the elements up top.

On the other hand, the central positioning of the steering wheel and throttles makes for a social set-up, allowing the skipper to be flanked by several companions. The view forward is panoramic, of course; aft it is also good, between the perspex wind deflector and the radar mast, but not quite down to the bathing platform.

The TAMD75s give the AS46 an impressive feeling of power, and this is backed up by sportsboat-like figures of 0-20 knots in under 9sec, pushing on to a good fast cruising speed of 25 knots in another 3sec.

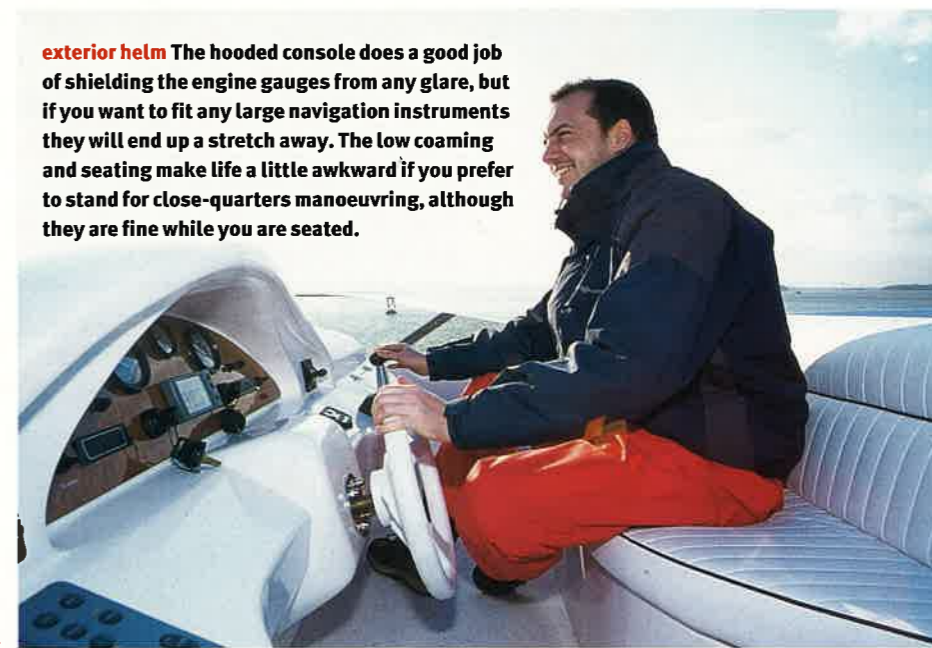
Moving through the rev range more gradually, there is a definite surge around 2000rpm, rushing you past the 20-knot mark and on to a maximum of near 30 knots.

If we had a gripe on performance, it would be that, for all the engines' responsiveness, the steering felt a little too lifeless. The boat's posture remained good, but turns felt as if they could be sharper.

Moving out into open seas building up to a useful chop, the boat responded well to a little trim, which lifted the bows and nullified the small amount of spray that was making its way aboard.

In head seas the ride was dry and smooth. In beam seas it was secure. In a following sea it just allowed us to go faster for less rpm. ▶▶

exterior helm The hooded console does a good job of shielding the engine gauges from any glare, but if you want to fit any large navigation instruments they will end up a stretch away. The low coaming and seating make life a little awkward if you prefer to stand for close-quarters manoeuvring, although they are fine while you are seated.



decks



stairwells The steps up to the flybridge and side decks have wide, safe treads, finished in teak.

Hopping on and off the boat at the transom is easy, and the bathing platform is almost 4ft (1.22m) deep, enough to house a mini-RIB.

Thick teak decking extends from here through the cockpit, where an understairs cupboard houses the battery switches and fuel shut-offs.

The 10in (25cm) wide side decks are bordered by a good depth of toerail. We were pleased to find that the accompanying guardrail reaches right back as far as the break of the cockpit, although the opportunity to provide a handrail along the sculpted moulding above the windows has been missed.



flybridge The generous seating can be converted into a sunpad. Lockers beneath the seat bases make for plenty of stowage.



mooring Cleats on the quarters are hidden inboard, so that the warp has to be pushed through a pipe-type fairlead. This could do with more rounding off to prevent chafe.



anchor locker This is thoughtfully fitted with a basket that will take several mid-size fenders.

Things can often appear different once you move to an interior helm, and the acoustics can become a little more telling, but that was not the case here. Going down below was akin to relaxing. Noise levels were most civilised and the ride still felt soft and assured, regardless of the sea's direction.

The helm position itself did throw up a couple of issues, of an annoying rather than insurmountable nature.

Firstly, surely auto-park windscreen wipers should be expected on a boat of this size? Secondly, the heavily tinted windscreen,

which might have its benefits in the boat's home waters of the Mediterranean, does rather inhibit the view forward on a grey day.

On the positive side, the side screens allow an excellent view aft, all the way to the port quarter.

While heading back to port, we eased off on the silky EDC throttle controls to a tickover speed of 5.3 knots at 600rpm. Happy to fall in and out of gear, the Astondoa seemed well at ease within the confines of the marina, even without using the optional bow-thruster.



engineroom

Major engine work would involve hiking up the saloon sole, and require some awkward disassembly of furniture.

But day-to-day access could not be easier, as long as the lazaret is not full to overflowing: it is a matter of dropping down through the latter's gas strut-supported hatch, and easing in via the 'open' bulkhead between the adjacent compartments.

There is plenty of space to get right around the engines (even though the



test data

rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	trim	noise
1200	10.1	5.7	26	1.77	484	—	73
1500	12.2	9.8	44	1.24	338	2.5	74
1800	16.4	15.0	68	1.09	298	3.5	77
2000	18.8	19.4	88	0.97	265	4.5	77
2200	21.9	25.0	114	0.88	239	5.5	78
2500	26.4	36.1	164	0.73	200	5.5	82
2700	29.1	42.6	194	0.68	186	5.0	84

range in miles, allows 20% margin.

noise in dB(A), in saloon with door closed.

conditions wind northeasterly Force 4, sea moderate.

load fuel 25%, water 50%, crew 3.

above Everyday checks such as engine oil and fuel filters are easy to make.

fuel and water tanks are set outboard) and gain access to the filters, top-up points, pumps and belts.

The primary fuel filters are towards the rear bulkhead, unnecessarily tight to the shafts perhaps, while the raw-water strainers are easy to get at towards the front of the compartment. Batteries are ranged across the aft bulkhead, and simple to check over.

Practically every surface is covered with egg-box foam insulation.

conclusions

LAYOUT

All three cabins are a good size, as is the saloon. The only shortcoming is a galley which suffers from having limited storage due to being at saloon level. Outside, the boat feels roomy, although having no fixed seating in the cockpit will not suit everyone.

BUILD

Overall build quality is most adequate, and the sculpted woodwork is quite eyecatching, although some out-of-sight areas are more basically finished. Our main criticism of the standard specification would be the lack of a generator to serve the all-electric galley.

PERFORMANCE

Good straight line performance and acceleration, and a comfortable ride, are let down slightly by stodgy steering at speed, and not particularly cosy helm positions.

MBM's verdict

Many of the detail criticisms we have made of the Astondoa AS46 could be levelled at practically any flybridge boat that is built in south-European climes. They centre on the two helm positions, which have a certain amount of form over function, most evident in the flybridge area with its lowish coamings.

However, the boat offers three comfortable cabins, good decks and practical engineering, all packaged in a handsome fit-out.

specifications

BUILD	glass reinforced plastic
RCD	design category B
LENGTH OVERALL	45ft 7in (13.90m)
HULL LENGTH	42ft 10in (13.08m)
BEAM	14ft 1in (4.30m)
DRAUGHT	2ft 6in (0.77m)
DISPLACEMENT	13 tonnes approximately
FUEL CAPACITY	330gal (1500lt)
WATER CAPACITY	103gal (470lt)
ENGINES	twin Volvo Penta TAMD75EDCs 6cyl, 7.28lt, diesels 480hp at 2600rpm
BUILDERS	Astilleros Astondoa SA, Muelle de Pontiente s/n, 03130 Santa Pola, Alicante, Spain. Tel: +34 965 413 702. www.astondoaasa.com
SUPPLIERS	Poole Aquatic, Salters Marina, 40 Salters Way, Lilliput, Poole, Dorset BH14 8JR. Tel: 01202 701707. www.pooleaquatic@btconnect.com
PRICE	from £344,022 inc VAT

the rivals



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