

BOAT REPORT

WHATEVER THE WEATHER

NIMBUS 29 COUPE



We have long said that many Scandinavian craft are well suited for UK waters because of their practical arrangement for all weathers. But this accolade is particularly appropriate for the latest addition to the Nimbus range.



YOU can always rely on Nimbus to come up with something different. This Swedish company has never let convention restrict its new models, or the whims of fashion and style change existing ones if they are good.

But this is not to say that their boats are different just for the sake of it. Every development is made with the intention of producing sensible practical craft, whether aimed at the modest cruising family of Northern Europe, or the sunseeker in the Med. The aft-cabin, centre-cockpit 26 and 3000/3003 series have stood the test of a thousand owners and more than a dozen years' use round the coasts of Norway, Sweden and the UK. For practical live-aboard comfort they have yet to meet their match.

The newer models, aimed at higher speeds and sunnier climes, still retain that characteristic Nimbus feel, with features and layouts that don't just look good in the brochure.

The 29 Coupé once again defies the journalist's need to put it into a category or class. The enclosed wheelhouse makes it ideal for our northern climes, yet the huge opening hatches overhead quickly let in sun and air. The practical powering arrangement, with single diesel and bow-thruster as standard, make it ideal for river use, yet it has a handy cockpit which even sports a pair of deep-sea fishing rod holders, pointing at another purpose offshore. The hull and engine cope happily with slow speed operations, yet you've got over 30 knot performance available. ▶

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approach to practical boating. For some reason though, the table does not drop down as standard, so the dinette cannot be used even as an occasional double berth, but this would be easy to remedy.

Two hatches are found in the wheelhouse sole. One gives access to the top of the fuel tank, and we were pleased to see a guard round the tank sender unit to protect this from heavy feet. The second gives access to a fair-size locker, with room for covers, a

Left: the aft-facing settee can be converted to give a twin navigator's seat when cruising, but the table does not convert to a dinette. From below clockwise: the port-side quarter berth; the helm; Volvo AD41DP under the cockpit sole; and the forward dining area/large double.

lifteraft, or a rolled-up dinghy.

Ahead and to starboard is the helm position. This is well laid out, with a comfortable seat, and an attractive mahogany-rimmed wheel. A comprehensive switch panel is sited ahead of the wheel to the left, and includes fuses for all the ship's circuits. Engine instruments are located centrally, somewhat obscured by the wheel, while to the right is a panel for trim tabs and power-trim controls. The single-lever engine control is well placed by your right hand, and we were most impressed to find the bow-thruster control mounted in the throttle head. In doing this Nimbus have given the helmsman one-hand control for both main engine and bow-thruster: clever, but simple and effective in use.

Ahead of the dashboard is a shallow

tray with a Perspex lid, suitable for taking a folded chart, while ahead again is a panel with cut-outs for log, echo-sounder and tank gauges. The main compass is suspended from the overhead. The curved screen is cleared by two sensible-sized pantograph wipers, with demister vents on the inside.

The passengers to port have a deep glovebox in front of them, a large tray for loose items, and a well-placed grabrail to hang on to.

Further grab-handles are strategically placed as you negotiate the three steps down to the forward cabin. On your right you find a compact but adequate toilet compartment. This contains a WC, sink, shower, shelf, and locker under the sink. The bottom of this locker lifts up to allow access to skin-fittings and valves. Headroom is



Design

The hull form is again a hard one to define. Basically medium-vee, it has an 18° deadrise amidships, 15° at the stern. The keel section is heavily radiused, with concave panels running out to the chine. Two spray rails run 80% and 60% of the hull length respectively, and a third starts off at the bow, then runs out at the transom to form what can only be described as the boat's first chine. A second chine runs 6in outboard of this, while further up the topsides is a third spray-deflecting knuckle.

The effect of this is a hull that is easily-driven and quick to plane, although the compromise means it is not the ultimate design for high-speed, head-sea conditions.

Accommodation

Stepping into the wheelhouse, your first impression is how open it is. Large windows all around, curved forward screens that allow just the thinnest of pillars, and huge opening glass hatches overhead combine to make this a bright and welcoming space. If you want to let in the air, the single patio door slides back and holds open with a neat catch, while the overhead hatches either just lift up for ventilation or slide right back for the complete open-air feeling. We were not so impressed with the side windows, which hinge outwards with a less than satisfactory catch, but this is a small point in an otherwise good arrangement.

To your right as you walk in is a

compact galley, with a two-burner gas hob and oven, and stainless steel sink, both with lifting lids. Beneath them are several drawers and a locker, with further drawers behind you, one with cut-outs for mugs and plates. To the left of the galley, under the helm seat, are two more small drawers, plus a larger one which pulls out to reveal a top-loading fridge. This is a clever arrangement, which makes best use of the space, though the catches holding the drawer closed are hard on the nails.

Opposite the galley is a table, with two settees facing each other. The forward one hinges over and lifts, to face the windscreen, making an excellent two-person seat for when you are underway. A simple and neat arrangement, this typifies the Nimbus

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5ft 9in. A fixed window provides light, and an opening portlight allows ventilation. A holding tank system is fitted, with a manual pump located under the forward berth.

Out in the cabin, to port, is a double quarter-berth, running under the wheelhouse, with sitting headroom over its forward end. A hatch over its foot gives access to a space that contains the diesel-fired central heating unit, plus the batteries in a secure GRP box with a screw-down lid.

The forward part of the cabin contains a U-shaped settee and table, with room for six people to sit around. Dropping the table converts the settee to a double berth. Small lockers under the side cushions give some stowage, while the forward one provides access to the bow-thruster unit. There is also a hanging locker and foot locker to port, with a bottle stowage and drinks locker to starboard.

We were surprised to see no way of dividing off any of the berths. We would have expected either curtains round the head of the quarter berth or across the centre of the cabin, and a door or curtains between wheelhouse and cabin, but again, these would not be difficult to provide.

Engines

Power for the Coupé comes from outdrive options, either single 200hp diesel, as fitted to our test boat, single 270hp petrol, or twin 130hp diesels.

The engines are mounted under the cockpit sole, with access gained by lifting two large hatches on gas struts.

The single-engined version has more than enough space to work around the motor, and to reach all its parts for servicing or repair. In fact fore-and-aft boards are fitted either side, to allow the space outboard to be used for stowage.

The engineering is excellent, with cable trays for the wires, a large fuel filter/water separator mounted on the forward bulkhead, and the fuel run in reinforced rubber hose, though we thought the latter somewhat exposed where it ran to the engine. We also could not understand why the alternator take-off wire was so exposed and vulnerable.

Bilge-pumping consists of an automatic electric unit under the front of the engine, easily accessible and with wire-reinforced outlet hose. This is backed up by a manual pump mounted in the cockpit side, with strum boxes in the engine compartment and main bilge, linked by a change-over valve. Fire extinguishing is provided by a halon cylinder remotely mounted and operated from the helm position. Sound-proofing consists of foil-faced foam on the underside of the hatches, and the forward bulkhead.

A hatch in the starboard side of the engineroom bulkhead provides access to a compartment which contains the freshwater pump, calorifier, and a neat space heater which also provides hot air for the windscreen demisters. Both these latter items run from the cooling circuit of the engine.

Exterior

The cockpit is a tidy size: 4ft x 8ft. There are no fixed seats, but you can easily bring out a couple of folding chairs if you want to take the air or make use of the fishing facilities. The sole is teak-laid, giving an attractive finish, effective non-slip, and a cool surface if we should get a repeat of last year's summer. A walk-through transom door leads to a good-size bathing platform. A good point here is the 6in-high sill that reduces the risk of waves breaking into the cockpit. Lockers under teak gratings will take a stern anchor or bait. Four fender hoops are mounted on the stern rail. Two small cave lockers in the forward bulkhead will take mooring lines.

The coaming is high, which is good for security. A teak corner step helps you up, but the coaming itself is narrow if you are standing here waiting for the boat to come alongside. The side decks are also fairly narrow, and the handrail along the cabin side comes just at hip height, tending to push you off. A better alternative would be a rail on the cabin top, but the sliding hatches restrict the options here. You would also benefit from a handhold at the forward end of the cabin top as you walk towards the bow.

The moulded non-slip of the side-decks continues over the forward coachroof, making this a safe place to walk. Guardrails 18in high run from amidships to the bow, with the pulpit split to allow you to handle the anchor. This stows in a roller, set in a short

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Emrhy's Barrell

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Loa	29ft 10in (9.20m)
Hull length	28ft 3in (8.70m)
Beam	8ft 9in (3.00m)
Draught	2ft 9in (0.84m)
Displacement	3.25 tons
Fuel	77gal (350lt)
Water	33gal (150lt)
Price: with Volvo AD41DP inc bowthruster	£61,766 ex VAT
Builder:	Nimbus Boats, Box 5152, S-421 05 Vastra Prolunda, Sweden. Tel: 031 29 46 98.
Supplier:	Offshore Powerboats, Lymington Yacht Haven, Lymington, Hampshire. Tel: 0590 677955.

Above and above right: a versatile combination — 200 diesel horsepower through a paddlewheel-less Duoprop leg, and a bowthruster as standard.

stem platform. A small deck locker would take ropes or a moderate amount of anchor chain.

At the aft end of the cabin top, a low goalpost mast takes aerials, radar and the steaming light. The mast hinges back, reducing the air draught from 12ft 0in to 8ft 1in, which will prove helpful on restricted rivers.

Handling and performance

There is no need to tell you what the weather was like in February. We chose a lull in the gales, but still encountered a nasty short chop. With

its medium-vee hull, the Coupé had to be reined back in the head seas, but still punched along at 20 knots. Downwind you could give it its head, and we recorded a maximum of 30 knots, which we later improved to 31 knots in sheltered water. The boat is sensitive to its trim tabs. These, and the power trim, need to be used judiciously until they are mastered if you want a steady ride.

At marina speeds, the combination of outdrive and bow-thruster meant you could put the 29 just where you wanted it, and the absence of top-hamper left us with no problems even in the gusty weather.

With its spritely turn of speed coming from just a single 200hp diesel, the Coupé was always going to be economical, and the figures prove it. Figures of 3.3mpg at 31 knots, improving to 4.0mpg at 20 knots, will

not make much of a dent in the wallet, and the 77gal tank converts these to ranges of 250 and 300 miles respectively. Noise levels in the wheelhouse were excellent, with a maximum of 80dB(A), 76 at cruising speed. Out in the cockpit things were louder, at 86 and 85dB(A) respectively, but still not over-obtrusive.

Conclusion

The Coupé is a versatile boat. Its layout offers a lot of potential uses, both inland or at sea, while the single diesel makes it an economical craft, even at speed. Nimbus go to great pains to build quality into their boats, and this is reflected in the price you have to pay, but there are a steady number of owners prepared to accept this, leading to a healthy secondhand market and good resale prices. ■

