

BOAT REPORT

KING FROM THE EAST



NEPTUNE 365

The quest for higher speeds has produced a new generation of trawler yachts which have full planing ability, without sacrificing spacious accommodation. We found Neptune's latest at Hythe Marina Village.

THE term, trawler yacht has been used to describe a wide range of differing craft over the past two decades. Buying such a boat in the 1970s would probably have meant owning a full displacement craft with a boxy, seamanlike superstructure — with the emphasis on accommodation at the expense of speed. The hull would typically be round bilged or hard chine in form, with a deep keel running the full length. Small single or twin diesel installations would give economical cruising at speeds of around 8 knots, depending on the boat's size.

Some ranges have latterly evolved below the waterline to incorporate flatter sections aft, and larger engine options, so that higher speeds up to a maximum of around 15 knots can be obtained, albeit at the expense of significantly increased fuel consumption. The absence of chine flats and spray rails usually makes for a wet ride and yet, by retaining the keel, such craft maintain good handling characteristics throughout the speed range. We first got our hands on one of the Taiwanese-built Neptune Trawler Yachts back in 1987, and as our test revealed (MBM June 88), the Classic 42 fell into this particular latter category. Powered by twin Cummins 210hp diesels, she managed a fraction over 15 knots at full power, with consumption equating to 0.83mpg. At the other end of the spectrum, a full displacement cruising speed of 6.5 knots gave over 6mpg. Our trial in Force 7 conditions left us impressed with the general competence of the boat both in quality, build, and design.

Now, a third generation of trawler yachts are emerging, primarily from Taiwan. These have full planing capabilities, and their superstructures, though retaining the character of their class, have been subtly altered to present a sleeker appearance. Amongst the latest arrivals are the Performance Trawler range from Neptune Yachts, which currently runs from 36ft-60ft (11.0-18.0m). The smallest model is the first into the UK, and we took the opportunity of visiting the boat and its distributor at their new Hythe Marina Village base.

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Design

Neptune's Performance Trawlers have been three years in the making, and Californian designer John Norek has taken this opportunity to create a new look from stem to stern. The hull is hard chine in form, with a variable deadrise of 18° amidships, to 10° at the transom. In contrast to the Classic range, the 365 features a chine flat, and large single spray rail either side to give added lift and deflect spray. A shallow keel develops near the bow, and finishes just forward of the propellers. Twin shafts are supported on P-brackets, with rudders located immediately aft of the three-bladed propellers.

Above the waterline, the bow is flared, enabling wide decks to be carried well forward. Exhaust boxes extend aft to blend with the GRP bathing platform, and provide a location for additional fendering. This feature also complements the topsides immediately above, which increase in height at this point to accommodate a full-width aft cabin. The gunwale forward of this area flows in an attractive reverse sheer to the bow (accentuated by a knuckle at deck level), creating deep bulwarks for added security.

Styling overall is generally neat, with flush engine air intakes complete with grilles in the hull colour (white) keeping the overall clean look of the topsides.

Exterior

Our first impression on approaching the 365 was that we had mistakenly gone to a larger boat of the same type. This Neptune, in common with models in the Classic range that we have viewed, gives the impression of being much bigger than her 36ft 6in (11.1m) length. This is accentuated by the heavily-built bulwarks and deck hardware.

Boarding, despite the boat's size, is relatively easy. A gate is built into the teak-capped rail, just forward of the aft-cabin where the gunwale is at its lowest. Wide, solid teak-laid decks run forward of this point, which are further complemented by the deep bulwark, and rails securely mounted on stainless steel stanchions. In addition, stainless steel rails are located on the forward cabin coachroof. Drains are sensibly provided on the forward decks, covered by flush-mounted stainless steel gratings.

A platform runs from inboard, to a short distance forward of the bow. This houses a

Above left: teak, teak and more teak from sole to ceiling. The saloon has plenty of space for the owner to install extra loose furniture if required. Above: instrumentation is fitted in an overhead console, which leaves the area forward of the helm free for chartwork and the installation of electronics. Above right: the master cabin's en-suite toilet compartment includes a mini-bath. Right: the U-shaped galley, a good layout for catering whilst underway.



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plough anchor, which comes with 40m of chain as standard, stowed in a forepeak locker immediately below. Also standard are a Seawolf electric windlass, and a sturdy bollard, both being installed atop the inboard end of the platform. GRP lockers either side provide handy stowage for fenders and warps, and give a neat finish to this area. Deck hardware comprises stainless steel cleats and closed fairleads either side forward and 'midships, with bollards aft.

The aft deck is reached via three wide steps, with the deck rail outboard, and a stainless steel rail inboard for security. This whole area is also teak-laid as standard, and is well sheltered, with a GRP dodger, and a GRP canopy overhead. The latter is mounted on stainless steel tubes (which also make good handholds), and connected to the arch mast forward. Aside from the shelter that this canopy provides (and sunbathing facilities atop its railed platform), it also sports two handrails running the length of the aft deck from its undersurface.

A central break in the transom dodger gives access to the bathing platform. This was protected by a chain on the test boat, but subsequent models will feature a full rail gate as standard. A ladder with good handrails and teak treads leads down to the GRP bathing platform, which features inset teak gratings. A further section of the ladder folds down for recovering swimmers.

Moving forward again, three steps with good handrails form a centrally-located access from the aft deck to the flybridge. Once again, space and shelter are to the fore — the deep coaming and windshield provided particularly good protection during our test. Seating is available for eight people on lateral benches either side, with a single helm seat centrally-positioned at the business end of things. The benches have removable cushions, and hinge to reveal stowage.

The upper steering position features a good array of instrumentation, right down to repeat indicators for the Bennett Trim Tabs. The whole panel is sensibly covered with a transparent shield to keep rain and spray at bay.

At the aft end of the flybridge, a large GRP radar mast, complete with two deck lights, is hinged immediately above the point where it meets the aft deck canopy. Of particular note, the hinge is two-way, allowing the mast to be folded forwards across the flybridge, or back across the canopy.

Accommodation

Entry to the saloon is gained through sliding doors which lie amidships, port and starboard. The first impression is one of light and space, largely due to the fact that the saloon has windows which run virtually the whole length of each side. An L-shaped settee is aft and to port, facing a narrow dining table which can

also act as an infill for the settee, to convert it to an occasional double berth. This table will seat four people for dinner, but may be somewhat cramped even with that number. However, the saloon is large enough to allow an owner to install more furniture if required.

Curtains, pelmet lighting and four large overhead lights are standard, as are fly screens for all the windows. These latter items are provided for windows and port lights throughout the boat.

The saloon sole is magnificently constructed in laid teak, and looks so good that it could put any prospective owner into a quandry. Should it be left uncovered for all to admire, or should carpets be fitted to protect the teak and thus hide it from view.

Forward to starboard, and adjacent to one of the doors, is the steering position. Visibility from this is excellent, as is the equipment fitted on the overhead panel. It consists of full engine instrumentation, trim tab indicators, plus fuel and freshwater contents gauges. These latter are Tank Tender gauges, working on the vacuum principle. They are the most accurate and are far from cheap. However, surprisingly, no log is fitted.

The fact that the instruments, and indeed the switches, are installed overhead, leaves the position on the steering console in front of the helmsman clear for chart work and for the fitting of electronic nav aids. This is a most important point, and we have criticised the absence of such space on many other craft. Twin lever controls and the trim tab switches are also mounted on the console.

The lower part of the console houses the circuit breakers as well as the battery voltage indicators and control switches behind a transparent door, allowing for easy monitoring and ready access. Also mounted close to the floor is the manual bilge pump.

On the lower level, to port, is the open plan galley, which is spacious and light. It is equipped with a double stainless steel sink, a four-burner gas cooker and a good-size oven. An almost domestic-sized fridge freezer is installed. The ample storage space will satisfy even the most ambitious cook and allow for sufficient provisions to be carried from the home port, even for an extended cruise. Space is also provided for a microwave oven.

Across the passage and to starboard is the toilet/shower compartment that is accessible from the saloon and the forward cabin. Of good proportions, this has an electric toilet as standard and the usual shower and wash facilities. The toilet can be discharged directly into the sea or into a 35 gal holding tank for pumping out at a later stage. The change-over valve is fitted on the front of the vanity unit, within comfortable reach of the toilet.

The bow cabin is laid out with two single, overlapping vee berths and has full headroom. Opening portlights allow ventilation and

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Engines: Twin Cummins 6BTA 5.9M diesels, 250hp at 2600rpm, 5900cc, 6 cyl.

Conditions: Wind light airs, sea calm. **Load:** Fuel 100%, water 100%, crew 3.

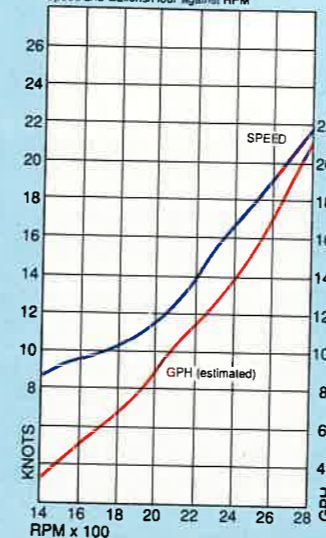
Sound levels (dB(A))									
rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	saloon	aft cab	aft dk	flybdg
1400	8.6	3.5	18.2	2.49	675	77	87	87	74
1600	9.7	5.2	23.6	1.87	467	81	88	87	77
1800	10.2	6.9	31.3	1.48	370	81	89	88	78
2000	11.9	9.0	41.0	1.32	530	83	91	88	78
2200	13.9	11.5	52.4	1.21	302	84	93	91	78
2400	16.9	13.8	62.8	1.22	305	83	92	93	79
2600	19.1	17.2	78.4	1.11	277	84	93	93	81
2800	21.5	21.0	94.6	1.02	255	85	93	93	83

LOA	36ft 5in (11.1m)	Fuel	2 x 125 gal (1137lt)
LWL	31ft 10in (9.7m)	Water	100 gal (455lt)
Beam	12ft 6in (3.8m)	Price ex VAT	with twin Cummins £106,000
Displacement	9.0 tons		

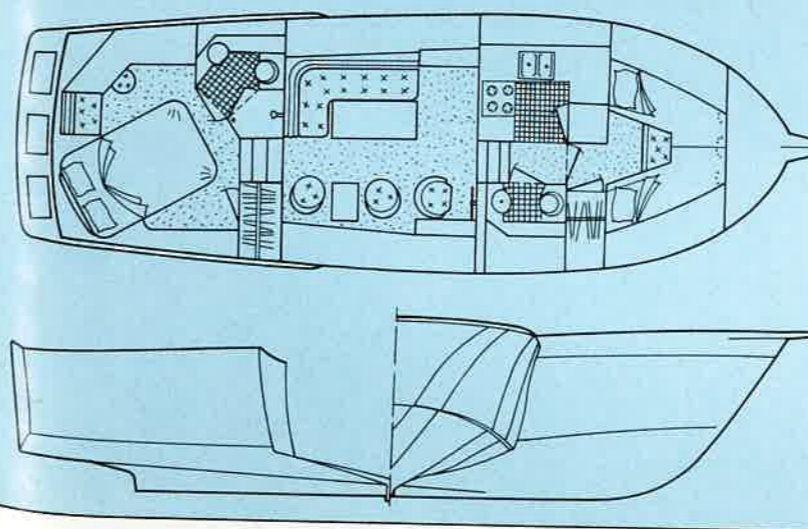
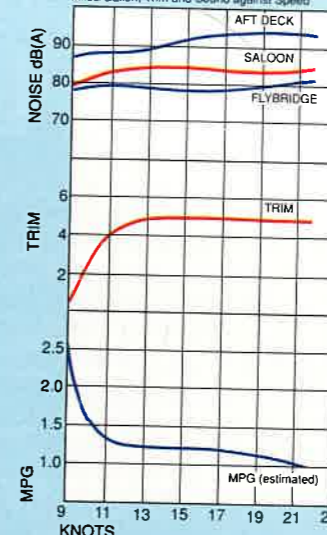
Distributor:

The Trawler Yacht Centre, 26 Shamrock Way,
Hythe Marine Village, Hythe, Southampton, Hants
Tel: 0703 207143

Speed and Gallons/Hour against RPM



Miles/Gallon, Trim and Sound against Speed



provide ample light, which is further augmented by an overhead hatch. For nighttime, two ceiling lights and two bedside lights are fitted. It has a hanging wardrobe and ample storage. More importantly perhaps, such storage is easily accessible.

Moving aft through the saloon, one reaches the owner's cabin, and this is truly impressive for a boat of this size. Facing the wide entrance, is a queen-size double bed, with lots of space around it. Styled almost like a domestic bedroom, drawer units run along the whole length on each side, ending in bedside tables which are larger than the average shoreside equivalent. The hanging wardrobe, against the forward bulkhead to starboard, must be one of the largest we have seen.

The cabin is very light, having opening portlights along the full length on each side, with two opening hatches in the transom. These hatches are large enough to serve as escape hatches as well. Ceiling lights and bedside lamps are sufficient in number to give very good artificial lighting when needed.

Beyond the opposite bulkhead is the en-suite bathroom. And that is just what it is, as in addition to the usual shower it actually has a two-third size bath. Again, a fully electric toilet and ample storage for toiletries as well as for towels is provided.

Engine compartment

Entry to this area is gained either through a hatch under the stairs to the owner's cabin, or by lifting one of the panels in the sole of the saloon. The first of these options we would counsel against, as the hatch is very small, and once inside one would have to clamber over the batteries, with, additionally, hot engines on either side. In contrast, lifting one panel in the saloon gives immediate access to the sea cocks, the raw water filters, Racor fuel filters and the header tanks of the engines. All these can be reached without actually entering the engine compartment.

However, once inside there is ample space between the engines to get to the GRP battery box at the aft end between the engines, so that topping up the batteries is easy.

The propulsion plant for the boat as tested consisted of two Cummins 6BTA 5.9M, six-cylinder diesel engines which produce 250hp each at 1800rpm. Although we have no experience of this particular model, we have tested the smaller 210hp B series unit and were generally impressed not only with the performance, but also with the general standard of engineering.

Copper piping is fitted throughout for the fuel supply from the two tanks, which hold 250 gal (1137lt) in total. Easily reached valves in this piping allow the fuel to be diverted, so that either engine can draw fuel from either tank, both engines can draw from one tank, or a tank can be isolated completely. Copper piping

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◀ from the tanks is also run for a generator, should an owner decide to fit one.

A 70A battery charger is part of the standard equipment, as is a ring main to take a shore supply to sockets in the boat. So numerous are these sockets that, after seeing four in the saloon, four in the galley and four in the aft cabin, we gave up counting.

Hot water for the domestic supply on board is obtained from a calorifier in the engine room, which also has an AC immersion heater. The freshwater is supplied from a single tank holding 100 gal (455lt).

In addition to the single manual bilge pump already mentioned, two electric pumps service the engine room, with a third installed in the keel, which acts as a sump for the rest of the boat. Whilst on safety aspects, an automatic Firemaster halon extinguisher is standard.

The whole compartment is soundproofed effectively by acoustic tiles, which are also used around the fuel and water tanks to prevent drumming

Handling

The very task of getting the boat out of the marina and through a lock into the Solent proved to be a test of slow handling characteristics. Quick and accurate rudder response is required when conning a boat slowly in confined areas, and the Neptune 365 offered this with a silky, smooth helm. Throttle and gear control were just as good, allowing fast and fine settings.

Once on the open water, the craft proved that she could acquit herself equally well. Rudder response was positive and immediate, and the hull shape allowed us to steer a straight course with a minimum of effort.

The response of the engines to throttle commands was almost instantaneous. This also is important, because when the going gets rough, constant adjustments are usually needed to cope with changing sea states. The Neptune would perform well in this respect.

Unfortunately, from a test point of view, the waters were absolutely calm. All we could do was to stir up the water with the wash from the camera boat, also a Neptune. Although this did not create too much disturbance, it appeared to indicate that our boat would give a sea kindly ride in more difficult conditions.

At full power, the 365 showed a top speed of 21.5 knots, a creditable performance for a boat of this weight and configuration, especially as she was carrying full fuel and water loads—around 3,000lb (1365kg). Although our fuel meter was unavailable on the day of the test, estimates suggest a fuel consumption at this speed of 21gph, equating to 1.02mpg and a range of 255nm. Running the engines at 2200rpm gave just under 14 knots, 1.22 mpg and a range of 300nm, while dropping below planing speeds at 9 knots and 1400rpm more than doubled this to 675nm.

Incidentally, the eagle-eyed will have noted that the engines are shown as over-revving by 200rpm in the tables. This was a pre-delivery fault with the tachometers, and we had conducted our tests prior to full commissioning being completed by Cummins.

Sound levels were found to be low on the flybridge, but noticeably high in the aft cabin and on the aft deck, both places registering 93 dB(A) at full power, with levels not really decreasing significantly until below planing speed. However, since our tests, Neptune have already drawn up plans to improve future models. Aquadrive couplings will be fitted as standard, and the exhaust system will be extensively modified to cure the problem.

Conclusion

If a good combination of comfort and speed are your prerogative, then the Neptune 365 is certainly worth a close look. Whilst the boat has a chunky appearance, there will be none who can criticise the general safety of the deck layout, especially with the multitude of handrails provided throughout. The large superstructure gives spacious accommodation on a craft which looks every bit her 36ft length. With no shortage of solid teak throughout, crafted in the way that we have come to expect of competent Taiwanese yards, and a good inventory, comfort is there to be enjoyed.

As for being a Performance Trawler, the figures more than substantiate Neptune's claims for the craft. There are plenty that prefer to have a 'proper keel' under their feet and will accept speed penalties for the benefit. The 365 goes some way to curing that compromise, without undue penalty in other areas. Overall, the Neptune offers a lot of boat for its length and £106,000 ex VAT price tag. In these days of rocketing marina charges, neither consideration will go unnoticed by potential buyers.

