

BOAT REPORT Cornish Diva 36 • retro-style wheelhouse cruiser • built in the UK • two berths • twin 200hp diesel engines as standard • 20 knots • from £200,925

Cornish Diva 36

She looks like a gentleman's motoryacht and sounds like a presumptuous lady. Can any modern-day boat be so genteel? And where does all this leave the practicalities of cruising? **REPORT BY MARK TURLEY**



It was at the 2004 London Boat Show that we first clapped eyes on the Cornish Diva, and this handsome retro-style 36-footer turned a great many heads even before it was fully honed and sea-trialled.

The Select Yacht Group in Cornwall are perhaps better known by the yachting fraternity, as they build the highly successful Hunter range of sailboats and the traditionally styled Cornish Crabbers. But they are no strangers to motorboats, producing the much admired Landau 20 and 29.

However, even with plenty of experience on hand, turning out something as bold and different as this — ostensibly a 21st Century gentleman's motoryacht — is quite an undertaking. It certainly looks good on a stand, but would it impress quite so much in the water?

We were invited down for a spin out of the Fal Estuary, to find out whether the boat's prima donna name and looks would be belied by some solid performance.

DESIGN & BUILD

Although the Diva has retro-influenced good looks in common with the Landau 29, and a comparable interior layout, that is where the sisterly similarity ends.

Instead of a tri-hydril hull, it has a semi-displacement form, complete with a hefty depth of keel. Steep underwater sections end at a chine, above which some bold sculpting manages to marry simple curves with harder lines to give a very striking, clean sheer. This is topped off by a nicely proportioned coachroof and wheelhouse, giving the boat a lean look.

The modest top hamper is matched by a

minimal beam; most boats of this size would carry at least a foot more than the Diva's 10ft. Whilst this contributes to its pleasing proportions, it obviously compromises the overall volume that the designer, Nic Bailey, has had to play with. So too does the inboard engine installation.

As a result, the sleeping accommodation below decks is limited, comprising a single mattress area in the bow, immediately ahead of a small dinette. Amidships, benefiting from a little more beam, there's a useful curved galley opposite a quite spacious toilet/shower compartment.

But it is outside that the designer has really rung the changes, by juxtaposing the hard lines of the topsides aft with a quartet of curves: the wheelhouse extension, the cockpit's facing bench settees, the teak-straked

below The wheelhouse is small but beautifully formed, the galley offers a sensible mix of facilities and stowage, and the WC has a separate shower tray.



below There's a permanent mattress area, with sitting headroom, forward of a comfortable arc of dinette, but dedicated clothes stowage is in short supply.



bathing platform and the transom itself.

Double doors make the necessary break in the coaming here, and the central walkway passes through more double doors into the small wheelhouse.

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Distinctive looks and pleasing proportions but limited cabin room.

ACCOMMODATION

The wheelhouse is rather smaller in size than the boat's exterior lines suggest.

It is dedicated to helming rather than entertaining, although, with the skipper's raised seat duplicated on the other side of the companionway, it is a good spot to perch with a cup of coffee and watch the world go by when alongside as there is excellent visibility right around.

Engine instrumentation and controls are conveniently placed, and the squab-style seat is comfortable to wedge yourself into. There is plenty of room to install some extra electronics, and to stow things away.

A gentle run of steps leads down to the main cabin, where a sweep of Corian worksurface to port defines the galley. This offers a sensible mix of stowage and facilities, the latter comprising a two-burner electric hob and microwave oven, a single sink and a built-in top-loading fridge.

Opposite, the generous toilet compartment comes complete with an offset shower tray, although this is rather small and it might have been better simply to scallop the whole floorpan and drop in a teak grating instead.

The vanity top is again finished in Corian, and has been sensibly finished with a decent fiddle to hold washbags in place. There's plenty of lined cupboard space, and the electric toilet is plumbed into a holding tank as standard.

The forward part of the cabin is taken up by a comfortable semicircular dinette with a raised sleeping area beyond it. The dinette table swings clear to help you gain access to a mattress, although it is still a clamber over the seating.

The mattress area has plenty of sitting headroom, and cave locker stowage outboard of it, but it is barely long enough for anyone over 6ft tall. The void beneath, accessed via a largish hatch, is largely given over to tank space and the chain locker, along with ancillaries such as the bow-thruster. Some neater dividing up of the space could produce

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Nice finish, but space is short for anything beyond weekendng.
some useful extra storage, with the only obvious clothes storage being a hanging locker.

EXTERIOR

Although the deep, uncluttered bathing platform and solid double doors in the transom are an open invitation to board the boat at the stern, the Diva's freeboard is such that it's no bother to hop on and off via the teak-laid side decks.

It helps that there are plenty of guardrails and handholds in the vicinity, not least the grabrail that runs right around the wheelhouse and its overhang.

The side decks themselves, at a decent 8in (20cm) wide, are nicely tucked within the foot-guiding confines of proper gunwales, finished with hefty teak capping.

Pop-up cleats amidships take care of springs, augmenting fore and aft cleats of a suitable size. Right forward, the standard electric windlass is hidden beneath a foredeck hatch in which there's also room for warps.

Back aft, a double hatch accessed on the

teak-clad bathing platform gives access to the steering gear and a number of seacocks. Deep, easy to negotiate steps lead up to the side decks, and there's a slight step up as you go through the double doors to cockpit level, although this feels very much like one integrated space.

The inward facing settees should provide enough seating for most occasions, but the transom can also be filled in to create a full wraparound dinette arrangement, complete with a table. Refreshments can be dispensed thanks to the top-loading fridge and wet-bar which flank the wheelhouse doors.

Some equipment can be stowed within the sizeable seat lockers, although it is questionable whether you will be able to squeeze fenders in as well. The voids beneath the forward ends of the seating are part and parcel of the engine compartments.

The wheelhouse overhang does a good job of protecting the forward part of the cockpit (which is self-draining) and what might otherwise be a vulnerable doorway. It can be supplemented by a canopy to fully enclose the cockpit.

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Unusual but practical. Some more stowage would not go amiss.

below The fit-out is to a high standard, including top-class joinery and modern entertainments.





above Engine access is via separate hatches in the cockpit and wheelhouse. **above** Both the bathing platform and bow have teak decking and large hatches.

ENGINE OPTIONS & ACCESS

Our test boat was fitted with a pair of 240hp Yanmar diesels, but it has become apparent that the hull does not require this amount of power to bring it up to its design speed of around 20 knots. Accordingly they have been downrated to 210hp, and future boats will be offered as standard with a pair of 200hp units.

The rakishness of the design and the height of the sole mean the engines are tucked up pretty tightly beneath the forward portions of the cockpit settees and the after corners of the wheelhouse, in separate compartments, which necessitates several different approaches to access.

You can get at the rear of either unit via hinged hatches in the cockpit seat tops. For the most part this works well, with fuel filters and raw-water strainers handy on the aft bulkhead and reasonable access around the engine. However, the hatches themselves really need the support of gas struts, as they are pretty hefty and could

cause a nasty injury if they fall.

For full access to the front of the compartments, the wheelhouse seat modules are removable, although you can inspect some items, including the dipsticks, via small, easier-to-remove top hatches.

A number of other hatches in the sole here hide the batteries and other service items.

PERFORMANCE & HANDLING

Shovelling in horsepower willy-nilly is not a maxum for good naval architecture. What is needed, especially with a semi-displacement hull, which can turn twitchy if pushed too hard, is to match the power to the hull's requirements.

When sea trials proved that this hull's 20-knot design speed could be achieved by utilising less power than was first supposed, the builders decided to reduce the power on

tap rather than try to drive any more speed out of the boat. That was the right decision, in keeping with the rather stately demeanour of the Cornish Diva.

Even with its engines downrated to 210hp, it runs comfortably, if quite wetly, at anything between 15 and 20 knots, so you still get a useful turn of speed without the hull or the crew feeling overburdened.

The boat nipped and tucked smartly over the untidy seas we encountered as the Fal flows into the English Channel, only slightly unsettled by a following sea when we turned to run back in. The keeled hull takes just a few moments to find a line and steady its course.

Under these conditions it kicked up a fair amount of spray, and the single wiper in the middle of the curved screen was kept well employed. Demisters, fitted as standard, kept the inside of the screen commendably clear.

The Diva responds readily to the helm and turns easily, while keeping on a particularly even keel. Overall the handling is steady and driving is a relaxing experience, the only slight

downside being that you can't have more than two people congregating in the wheelhouse.

At low speed the hull tracks tidily. With the engines quite wide apart, the boat's windage pretty low and a bow-thruster fitted, it is eminently manoeuvrable in the confines of a marina.

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The hull handles nicely, although it can prove quite wet.

SPECIFICATION & VALUE

The builders have taken care to get the Diva to a true motor-away specification for its £200,000 price tag. For that outlay it comes as a pretty complete package, with central heating, a bow-thruster, all teak decking, a full entertainment centre and a measure of electronics, including an autopilot and VHF.

All most buyers will need to add is a plotter/radar and perhaps a generator, bearing in mind that the galley is all-electric.

The fit-out and workmanship is to a good standard, being solid and smartly executed in an attractive combination of materials, all very promising for the first boat of its type.

For your money you are getting a boat which stands out from the crowd, although there's no getting around the fact that certain areas are compromised in terms of space.

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For the money, it's high in spec but short on accommodation.

Verdict

This is a tricky boat to assess because, as a niche model, it invites highly subjective opinions.

Its distinctive, almost superior styling and alternative cockpit layout will doubtless win many admirers. This is a head-turning little motoryacht.

On the other hand, £200,000 gives you plenty of options in the market, and what you don't get for your money here is much dedicated sleeping space — certainly less than most buyers would look for on a 36-footer. And whilst it handles well, it's not quite as quick as those rakish looks suggest.

For a couple who expect to do their cruising in considerable comfort and style, leaving just enough space to entertain at the cocktail hour, it fits the bill admirably. Others may find its talents a little too restrictive.

MBM RATING 7/10
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Cornish Diva 36 technical data

specifications

BUILD	glass-reinforced plastic
RCD	design category B
LENGTH OVERALL	36ft 5in (11.10m)
HULL LENGTH	35ft 9in (10.90m)
BEAM	10ft 2in (3.10m)
DRAUGHT	3ft 2in (0.95m)
DISPLACEMENT	6.0 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	220gal (1000lt)
WATER CAPACITY	66gal (300lt)

key dimensions

WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	8in (20cm)
HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 1in (1.86m)
FORWARD BERTH	6ft 1in x 4ft 2in

performance

engines twin Yanmar 4LHA-STP diesels						
configuration 4cyl, 3.5lt, 210hp at 3100rpm						
conditions wind southerly Force 3, sea slight						
load fuel 100%, water 100%, crew 2						
rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	noise
1600	9.0	2.8	13	3.21	563	75
2000	10.8	5.5	25	1.96	345	77
2500	14.6	8.8	40	1.65	290	79
2800	17.4	12.8	58	1.36	239	81
3100	19.7	17.6	80	1.12	197	83

Range figures above are in miles, with 20% margin. Noise figures are in dB(A), recorded in the wheelhouse.

prices

STANDARD BOAT	inc VAT
with twin 200hp Yanmar diesels	£200,925
LAUNCHING & COMMISSIONING	on application
ANTIFOULING	standard
TEAK DECKING	standard
GENERATOR	£5,170
HEATING	standard
VHF RADIO	standard
BOW-THRUSTER	standard
BOAT AS TESTED	£200,925



ENQUIRIES Select Yacht Group, Rock, Wadebridge, Cornwall PL27 6NT. Tel: 01208 862666. www.selectyachts.co.uk

the rivals



SOLENT SPEAR

from £205,037

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HARDY COMMANDER 32

from £162,400

Cutting a fine figure, much like the Diva, but with more wheelhouse than cockpit space and the bonus of separate sleeping quarters. Tel: 01692 408700. www.hardy-marine.co.uk



HALVORSEN 32 GOURMET CRUISER

from £176,250

A useful-sized cockpit, a comfortable wheelhouse and a separate cabin, all wrapped up in purposeful looks. Tel: 01243 513678. www.boatdealer.co.uk



The curves of the wheelhouse extension, cockpit seating and transom give this boat uncommonly attractive lines.