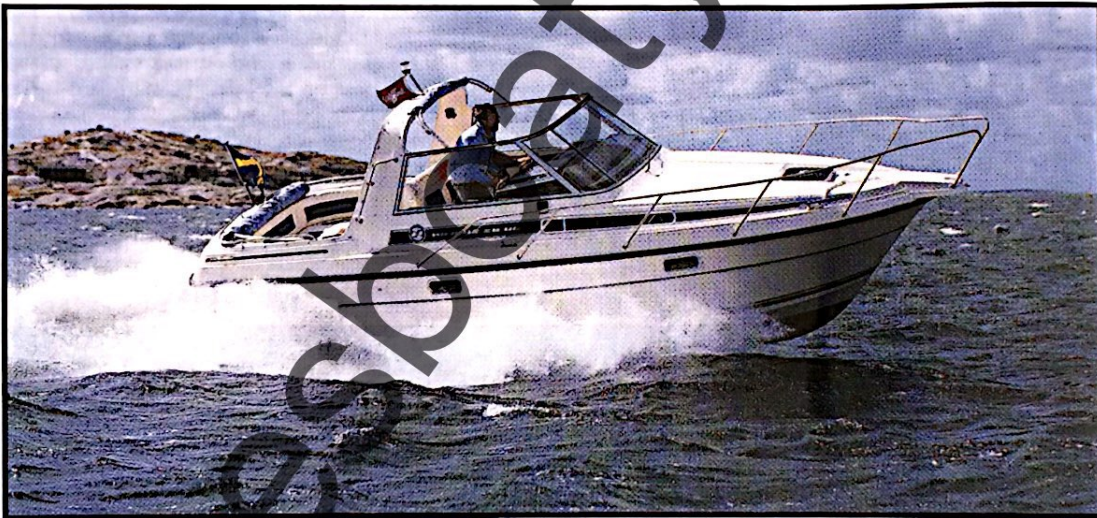


Motor & Yachting Boat

Short report

Nimbus 28DC



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Short report

Nimbus 28DC

A double first for Motor Boat & Yachting — we travel to Sweden to test the new Nimbus day cruiser fitted with Volvo's new 200hp 41 series diesel

THERE'S no doubt that one of the major talking points at the Southampton Boat Show will be Volvo's new range of petrol and diesel engines. We covered the launch of these in last month's Technical Talk, but this month we had the opportunity to put one of the key models in the package, the new direct injection TAMD41, through a more extended test during a day we spent in Sweden aboard the latest design from Nimbus.

We have tested several of the Nimbus range over the last few years, and have praised their no-nonsense, no-gimmicks approach to producing high-quality, practical family cruisers. Now the company have announced a new line of boats with the accent on sportier appearance and performance to complement their existing models. The new vessels feature larger cockpits, less cabin space and higher speeds, with modern stripes and styling to appeal to the younger buyer. The first of the fleet, the 21 Day Cruiser, appeared last year, but the subject of this month's test, the 28DC, is new for 1986.

For all that it is trying to break away from the previous stolid Nimbus image, the first impression of the 28 is of a fairly chunky boat. To a great extent this is inevitable if you are to get standing headroom and four berths in a boat whose hull measures only just over 26ft, and Nimbus have resisted the temptation to go for long overhangs and a sharply raked bow as being too wasteful of boat space. In

fact the styling soon grows on you — clever use of stripes disguises the cabin windows and breaks up the height of the topsides, and under way this is indeed a purposeful but pretty boat.

Accommodation down below comprises four berths in two cabins. The forward-vee berth converts to a double by dropping the table while the double under the cockpit is divided from the main cabin by a zip-up canvas door. A clever feature here is the second sliding perspex door in the aft cabin which allows the occupants to get out into the cockpit without passing through the main saloon, though we feel some sort of curtain over this door should be provided to give privacy to people inside, especially at night with the light on.

The galley is sited to port in the main cabin and comprises a stainless steel sink, fridge and two-burner cooker. On the Swedish test boat this latter was run on methylated spirits, but models for the English market will have a gas cooker. Storage space in the galley is not extensive, with a locker under the worktop and shelf and cave locker outboard, but behind you to starboard there is a cocktail cabinet with drawers underneath it. A cover fits over the galley unit extending the work surface area when you are preparing food.

Headroom at the aft of the cabin is 6ft 3in (1.90m) but this reduces to 5ft (1.52m) as you move forward to the settee area. The table

here is big enough for six people to sit round at a pinch. Lockers under the settees will take clothing and bedding, though the starboard one loses some space to the pump-out for the toilet holding tank.

The toilet itself is in a compartment at the aft end of the cabin to starboard. The interior here is a one-piece glassfibre moulding, giving an attractive, easy-to-clean finish and allowing a shower to be fitted. Ample storage space is provided by a shelf outboard and a locker under the sink, all with attractive perspex doors, and a lift-up perspex bottom to the locker gives good access to the WC inlet skin fitting. Light comes from a fixed window that extends forward to the main cabin, but there is a gap where it passes the bulkhead that we feel should be sealed for privacy and hygiene. Ventilation was from louvres at the aft end of the window covered with a mosquito screen — an important item in Swedish waters.

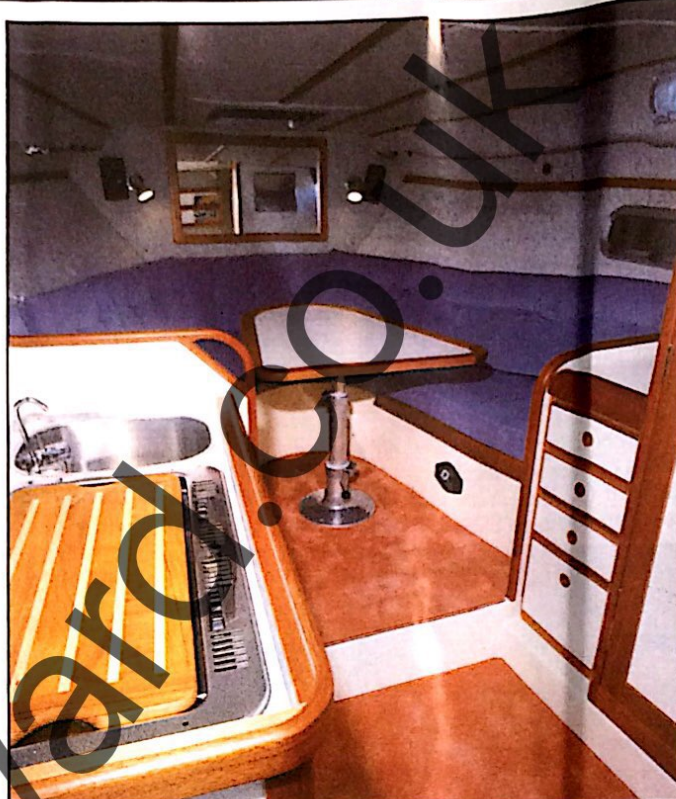
As we have already described, the 28's second cabin is situated under the helm position, with access from the cabin or the cockpit. Despite its location there is no feeling of claustrophobia here, thanks to the large double berth, and the good sitting headroom over it. Two cavernous lockers run aft under the cockpit, giving storage space for clothing, bedding and more besides, while just outside the cabin is a small hanging locker to port.

Past this locker is the hinged access door to the self-draining cockpit, the main daytime living area on the boat. To starboard is the raised helm position, with a 2-3 person seat that slides fore-and-aft and also hinges forward to give better access to the cabin below. The steering position is good, allowing you to sit sheltered by the screen or stand up and look over it, with the controls and wheel easily reached at all times. Instruments and dials are well sited and easy to read, in





Left: in its home waters — the 28 makes light of choppy seas near Gothenburg. Above: room for a party in the cockpit. Right: looking forward in the main cabin.



two panels forward of the helm.

Storage space is more than adequate, with a cave locker forward of the navigator, good deep trays in the dashboard port and starboard and five strategically-placed holders for glasses. A tray with a perspex cover takes folded charts, though our observant photographer pointed out that rain or spray falling on this would collect in the tray, and a seal or drain should be fitted.

The excellent storage space continues in the main part of the cockpit, with good deep lockers under the U-shaped seating for fenders and warps. The table for a fresco eating slides away neatly under the rear seat, which can then be hinged forward to give a full-width cushioned sunbathing area.

The whole of the cockpit can be quickly enclosed by a two-part cover to give a snug dry living area with full standing headroom. The forward part runs from the windscreen back to the goalpost mast and can be used on its own for driving in wet conditions, while the aft section rolls up and folds back neatly along the top of the aft cockpit seat back.

A good feature we liked in the cockpit was the abundance of well-placed grabrails, one each for the driver and navigator, one along the back of the helm seat for passengers wishing to stand up while the boat is under way, and the continuous guard rail round the coaming. These rails continue along the side of the goalpost mast to help you when going forward along the side-decks, which are made further secure by a good rough moulded non-slip, and further 18in (0.45m) high rails along the gunwale.

The pulpit is solidly fastened and split to allow access along the stem platform when moored by the bow, but we would have liked to see a chain fitted across the gap for greater safety when anchoring. A fair-sized locker takes care of warps and the odd fender, but Swedish style the anchor itself on the test boat was stowed in one of two deep lockers moulded into the bathing platform aft. Obviously this arrangement could be varied for UK owners.

The engine compartment on the 28 is under the cockpit, reached by lifting a large hatch in the cockpit sole supported by a gas strut, and giving good access to all service points, though a second hatch aft has to be opened to get at the turbocharger and steering. All the engineering work is excellent, neatly installed and well thought-out, and promising good reliability through the life the boat. Two bilge pumps are fitted, one electric and one manual, the latter with a wander hose allowing you to get at all the compartments in the boat. Firefighting equipment is limited to one large portable extinguisher by the helm. There was no automatic unit in the engine compartment of the diesel-powered boat we were on, but this could easily be rectified as an extra.

The electrical wiring is good, with colour-coded cables clipped neatly out of the way. Four batteries are fitted, in two banks with a split charging system, and these are located under the bottom of the port cockpit locker. Putting them here makes access for maintenance a bit involved, and in fact to get at the aft one you would have to move all the others, not a good arrangement.

So how did the 28 handle and perform? Well, the day of our visit to Gothenburg provided waves aplenty for the test. First thing in the morning the weather looked

pretty unpromising, with grey skies, and a northwesterly 5-6 whipping up the seas. Everyone at the marina was suggesting that it would be a good day for seeing the sights of the city, but we were determined to get out and put the boat through its paces. The trip we planned was 20 miles up the coast to Marstrand, the Swedish equivalent of Cowes, for lunch, then back in the afternoon.

As is so often the case, fortune favoured the brave, and by the time we cleared the harbour mouth the sun had broken through, staying with us throughout the day. The wind never left us, however, and in fact increased on occasions, providing a varied mix of conditions as we dodged between the islands of this beautiful archipelago. The first stretch was across open water, with short steep seas right on the nose. Once we had mastered the trim tabs and worked out the best speed, the Nimbus put its head down and plugged away at 15-20 knots, easily keeping on the plane, and giving us a surprisingly comfortable ride. There was only the occasional crash from below, and the odd faceful of spray as the wind whipped an extra large wave across the foredeck.

A change of course brought the wind and waves round towards the port beam and allowed us to pick up speed. We now found that the strong wind was requiring a continuous application of port helm to keep us on course, and this was causing the boat to lean into the wind. Application of the trim tabs straightened things up but they were powerful and quick-acting, requiring caution and practice in their use. It was at this point that we deduced that the Nimbus did not have power steering. Apparently the new engine had been fitted in a rush the day before, and this was its first trial run, with no power steering fitted. The omission made for some

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Nimbus 28 DC

continued

fairly heavy work at the wheel, especially on tight turns, and power steering will be installed as standard on all future boats.

We were now going behind the shelter of the islands, with the Nimbus in its element, cantering along at a remarkable 30 knots plus without a care in the world. Almost too soon we spied the fort on the hillside behind our goal, and had to slow down to negotiate the narrow channels behind the rocks that marked the entrance to Marstrand.

An hour and a half later, after a delicious lunch of beer and locally caught crayfish, we cast off for the return journey. Despite the glorious sunshine the wind had been blowing

steadily and hard and on the sections exposed to the open sea the waves were marching in in lines. Initially we were taking these on the quarter, with the Nimbus handling well at 20 knots or so, though in the absence of power steering the helmsman had to keep both hands on the wheel, leaving him nothing to hang on with.

For the last leg we were running straight downwind, and the heavier-handed members of our crew were playing at boy racers. They would claim that they were only trying to see just how the boat would handle; but whatever the reason, we were overtaking the waves at 25 knots plus, leaping over the tops, surfing down the front and almost burying the nose in the back of the next one. But remarkably the Nimbus has enough flare and buoyancy in the bow to cope with even these conditions, and while the crew braced themselves for the nosedive, the 28 just came up smiling. All in all an exhilarating but reassuring run, and one that showed us that this was a boat that would take more normal conditions in its stride.

We had mixed feelings about the performance. The power was certainly there, as evidenced by the 32-knot top speed. Fuel economy is also impressive — the new 200hp direct injection engine uses only about 10 per cent more diesel than its 165hp predecessor, while turning out 20 per cent more power. This gave us the excellent fuel consumption figures of 3.1mpg at 32 knots, improving still further to 4.5mpg at 24 knots.

What we were disappointed with was the acceleration. Even with the Duoprop out-drives the Nimbus felt slow off the mark, a feeling that was backed up by our test figures of 16.8 seconds for the 0–20 knot time with three crew on board and 75 per cent full tanks. As you opened the throttle the engines seemed to hang for perceptible moments at 2000rpm till the power came in with a rush and you were away. We understand that the new engine has a turbo boost bypass valve which limits boost pressure at lower revs in

order to reduce smoking at low speed, and we wonder whether this has had any effect on acceleration. Otherwise the test engine may just have been overpropped.

While we were over in Sweden we took the opportunity of visiting the Nimbus factory to see just how these boats are put together. Production efficiency is the key to the company's philosophy and considerable time and money are put into the pre-production design of each boat. Two million kroner was the figure quoted for tooling-up for the 28DC, roughly £200,000, and as we walked round the assembly plant we could see where the money had gone. The hulls are hand laid-up throughout, with considerable use of woven rovings in the laminate, and PVC foam sandwich in the bottom, topsides and deck. This is followed by a tailor-made inner moulding that fits perfectly into the hull, being bonded there with polyester paste. This inner moulding gives stiffness and provides the conduits for wiring and joinery, while at the same time forming the base for all the joinery and engineroom modules.

The furniture is made up millimetre-perfect in jigs 500 miles away in Denmark, and most of it comes pre-assembled with all components fitted. It was quite uncanny to look at a galley unit sitting in its cardboard packing case complete with fridge, cooker and sink all installed. The yard in Sweden has a set of identical jigs, which ensures accuracy of installation at the first pass, with no need to waste time filing off corners.

More complex modules such as the engine compartment come flat-packed, being assembled off the job in further metal jigs before being craned into the hull to mate with the engine. It is the cost of all these jigs and tools that run up the Skr 2 million pre-production bill, but the benefit comes in speed and accuracy of construction, allowing 42 operators to turn out one 28 per day together with a similar number of 21s, 26s and 3000s. The largest 4000 model is completely built in Denmark.

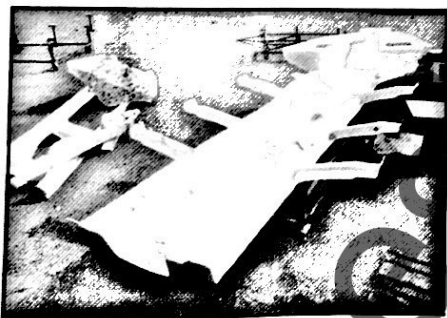
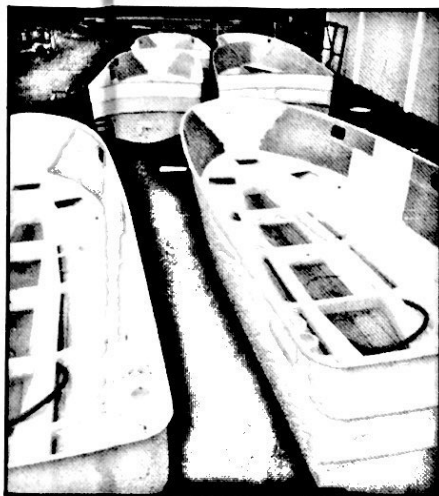
You might be forgiven for thinking that this production line efficiency compromises quality and finish. It doesn't. The standard of joinery is equal to that found on any other boat in its class; as for reliability, *Motor Boat & Yachting* ran a Nimbus 3000 for a season and the only problems we encountered were a blocked fuel filter and two leaking taps, later traced to a faulty batch. Our day with the 28DC left us similarly impressed, and this boat should be a worthy addition to the Nimbus family. Unfortunately the price had not been decided while we were carrying out our test, but it will have been fixed by the time of the boat's appearance at Southampton. □

Price: on application.

Dimensions:

L.o.a.	28ft 8in (8.75m)
Hull length	26ft 2in (8.00m)
Beam	9ft 10in (3.00m)
Draught	2ft 9in (0.85m)
Displacement	3 tons

Enquiries: Offshore Powerboats, Lymington Yacht Haven, Lymington, Hants. Tel: 0590 77955.



Below: modular construction is used, the furniture being made up off the job, then fitted. Left: inner mouldings. Top: hulls with inner mouldings wait outside the shed.

