The performance-cruiser category is one of the holy grails for yacht designers - get it right and the market is lucrative. KEVIN GREEN predicts a bright future for one such yacht, the racy Salona 35.

Getting it right is often measured by success on the club race scene despite the fact these boats should also be able to house the family comfortably for the summer holiday. Having just spent an afternoon on the first Salona 35 to arrive in Australia, I feel this is one particular boat that really does understand both sides of the performance-cruiser equation.

Salona has had representation in Australia for a few years - including Phil King’s 44 that made the podium in last year’s Sydney Hobart — but sales have been limited, so the new 2012 distributorship now run by Sydney-based US Yachts is a very positive move for the Croatian builder.

Following on from the launch of the 38, itself a worthy successor to the award-winning 37, the 2012 Salona 35 comes from pedigreed stock. An evolution of the Salona 34 that continues to do well on the European club race circuit, the 35 sports a more spacious cockpit, reworked hull and most importantly a tantalising price tag.

To compete with the large production yacht producers of France and Germany, Salona Yachts was formed in 2002 to produce niche-market boats. These craft have a little more time spent on them, which is viable in an economy where labour is cheaper than in Western Europe. This result is a model list that incorporates quality.
components? Harken, Spinlock — and optimised race options for its IBC (infused basalt carbon) premium models.

**POSITIVE IMPRESSIONS**

First impressions and aesthetics are important for most of us sailors and the Salona should definitely garner interest if you see her at the Sydney boat show later this year. Unquestionably built to rate well on IRC (a sister ship in Europe has a TCC of 1.001), the tall-sided hull has 6:1 mainsheet blocks give excellent purchase and the Harken track setup is fairly traditional — no ratchets. The two-cabin layout and saloon steering system.

The Nexus NX2 instrumentation (above) is factory fitted. Meanwhile, stop the main hatch are Nexus NX2 instruments, the first I’ve seen factory fitted. Also fitted was the company’s NX2 Autopilot system on an impressively strong HP-40 linear drive attached to the top of the rudder stock, which has an easily-accessible emergency steering system.

**FIRST IMPRESSIONS AND AESTHETICS ARE IMPORTANT FOR MOST OF US SAILORS AND THE SALONA SHOULD DEFINITELY GARNER INTEREST IF YOU SEE HER AT THE SYDNEY BOAT SHOW LATER THIS YEAR**

**SALON WITH A TWIST**

The two-cabin layout and saloon setup is fairly traditional — no bad thing in my book as it's well proven — with galley and navigation station aft along with the bathroom, while the lounge dinette lies forward. Importer Matt Hayes at US Yachts chose a light wood interior for this first stock boat and it combines stylishly with the white GRP mouldings. The wood is blonde teak and nicely brightens the area, although the small portlights limit protection but everything else looked sturdy enough to cope with wet kites. On the subject of wet gear, the surprisingly spacious starboard bathroom has an open wet locker aft. The bathroom with manual head is nicely moulded too, although the small portlights limit ventilation here and throughout the hull. Tacticians will appreciate the full-sized navigation station that faces forward in front of the bathroom, with enough bulkhead space for several screens (in addition to the Garmin 720 plotter on our review yacht).

Lifting the companionway steps on the hatches reveals the 29hp Yanmar. A clean and simple approach overall is demonstrated by an easy-to-manoeuvre foredeck (above left). The 700W Quick windlass (top right) is hidden inside the rote locker. The boat you want is now easier to find

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The Nexus NX2 instrumentation (above) is factory fitted.

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tank — so remember to empty it in race mode to take weight out of the bow.

**RACE-READY DECKS**
Returning topside the GRP decks are clear as the shrouds are inboard — with tie rods going into the stainless steel grid — and my only gripe was a lack of strong nonslip surfaces. Long genoa car tracks abutting the cabin top are welcome and should allow the slot between sails to be closed, though I’m not sure about the setup for barber haulers.

Moving forward is safely done thanks to sturdy handrails. Large cleats are all-round and a vertical 700W Quick windless located in the deep chain locker along with a stainless steel roller track for the rode should mean no dramas. The pulpit is laid out to allow a carbon fibre bow sprit to fly an asymmetric spinaker and the Harken below-deck headsail reefing roller is another quality touch.

**PERFORMANCE RIG**
The test boat came with a Sparcraft tapered mast located well aft in the hull, allowing for a large fore triangle to fly both non-overlapping headsails (favoured for IRC rating) and the 140 per cent genoa for cruising. Sweepback rod rigging and an adjustable backstay complete an effective performance rig; with quality Rutgerson sliders for smooth mainsail hoists. Our boat came with high modulus material Dacron sails (a tighter weave to reduce stretch and a more durable version of Dacron) that are also practical in cruise mode. In race mode the boat can be easily set-up for both symmetrical or asymmetric spinakers, but a yacht this size and hull shape usually benefits from poled-out spinakers to sail deeper (rather than wider and faster).

**OPTIMISED HULL**
Hull builds can either be standard handlaid GRP or 220kg lighter infused epoxy/vinylester for the performance IBC model. The J&J design house has penned performance cruisers for Beneteau, Elan, and Grand Soleil so has plenty of runs on the board. But Salona owners, the AD car component company, engaged English design wizard Jason Ker to optimise the lead T-keel on its performance models, like the one we looked at. As the laws of gravity tell us, the lower the weight the more the...
leverage, so Ker’s 2.15m T-keel is intended to allow the Salona to carry her 69m² sail area for longer and this was definitely noticeable on Sydney Harbour when the southerly gusts came down on us.

Overall, underwater hull sections are fairly classic IRC/ORC fodder with a flat aft section for downwind and acceleration, but with enough rocker for those start-line dial-ups. Also commendable is the structural setup; the inner hull liner is reinforced with carbon fibre and all main bulkheads are bonded to the hull with laminate and structural adhesives, while deck fittings are backed with alloy plates.

ON THE WATER
Motoring out of the US Yachts base at Darling Harbour the twin-blade folding propeller pushed us to 7.5kts as the revs maxed out at 4000, with no vibration and little noise coming from the transmission or engine. Climbing on top of the cabin I unzipped the sail bag and jumped back down into the cockpit to hoist the mainsail without any dramas, thanks to the quality Rutgerson sliders smoothly taking the sail up the Harken mast track.

The composite wheels felt pleasant and gave direct feel from the large spade rudder through the cable linkage. Also to hand at the starboard binnacle was the headsailouthaul, allowing me to easily fly the large 140 per cent genoa and then bring it in tight against the inboard rod shrouds as I hardened on the blustery southerly. The hull stood up well to the gusts, without any trimming required on the main or track, but as the angle of heel increased my feet sought some grip and none was found, so I’d add a couple of teak chocks near each helm.

Sitting outboard comfortably on the teak slats I could just see the foresail telltales as the boat naturally wanted to climb higher, with negligible pressure on the wheel indicating a pleasingly balanced rig and of course reminding me that the deep spade rudder was also doing its job. Looking towards the companionway I noted 6.6kts boat speed on the Nexus NX2s, the analogue gauge reading 30 degrees with the true wind at 13kts.

The Salona confirmed she had a slippery hull reaching 7.8kts as the wind gusted between 14 and 16kts, which exceeded her polars and a good omen for those aspiring club racers. With my confidence gaining I then threw the Salona into a series of tight gybes bringing little complaint and noting good acceleration (and minimum wash) as the 10m hull spun around. My only wish was that it was a night when some twilight racing was on so we could join in. But my host for the afternoon, Matt Hayes, assured me he planned to race the boat around the local circuit, so watch out for her distinctly striped white hull as it overtakes you.

It’s easy to see why Salonas have won European and US awards, and more importantly have accolades on the racetracks over there. It’s because these boats are built from the keel up to be performance yachts rather than hotted-up cruisers, and that tantalising base price shouldn’t alarm the bank manager unduly either.

### Liquidation

**Facts & figures**

**SAiL TEST**

**SALONA 35**

**PRICE AS TESTED**

$279,174

**PRICED FROM**

$233,000

**GENERAL**

**MATERIAL** GRP

**TYPE** Keelboat

**LENGTH** 10.4m (overall); 9.35m (waterline)

**BEAM** 3.36m

**DRAFT** 1.75m; 1.5m (shallow); 2.15m (racing)

**WEIGHT** 5300kg (5080kg for infused)

**CAPACITIES**

**CABINS** 2

**FUEL** 90lt

**WATER** 200lt

**HOLDING TANK** 42lt

**ENGINE**

**MAKE/MODEL** Yanmar 3YM20C saildrive

**RATED HP** 21; 29 (optional)

**SAILS**

**SAIL AREA** 69.5m² (total); 37.5m² (genoa); 32m² (mainsail)

**SUPPLIED BY**

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**LAYOUT**