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A SMILE AT ENTRY LEVEL

Small she may be, but **Sam Jefferson** discovered that Hanse's all new entry-level cruiser offered plenty of thrills for sailing novices and experts alike

It has been said in the case of the big yacht manufacturers, that many of their entry-level yachts are not really built with profit in mind. The argument goes that such boats at the bottom of their ranges are loss leaders with their aim being to attract new customers to the brand who will later trade up.

This sounds very cunning, but it is a plan that relies on turning out a yacht that encourages brand loyalty by not being unremittingly awful.

I can confirm that, with the new Hanse 315, the mighty German masters of mass production have certainly succeeded. It may have helped that we took her sailing on a sparkling, blustery day, but the little yacht ensured that I returned to the marina with a smile on my face.

The yacht is the successor to the old Hanse 325, and while both vessels

are designed by Judel/Vrolijk, this is far more than a simple 'refreshing' of the old design; there are a number of fundamental changes that mark this out as an all-new yacht.

Despite her size, the little 315 manages to look positively aggressive. Her plumb bow, vertical transom and total absence of sheer mean that there is nothing cute about this mini cruiser. Yet Judel/Vrolijk have a good eye for turning out a handsome vessel, and while all those hard angles could end up being a bit much, the pleasing curve of her bilge and absence of chines ensure she is easy on the eye.

One clever touch that has further improved her looks is the introduction of a sharp-angled 'knuckle' just below the toe rail which serves to create the illusion of a lower freeboard. This is important,



ALL PHOTOS: IDE MCCARTHY

● **ABOVE**
The 'knuckle' on the outside of the toerail creates the illusion of a lower freeboard, sweetening the boat's lines

because minus the bow roller, the 315 actually measures in at a little over 29ft, so it would be easy for her to end up looking foreshortened.

Two-up

In the cockpit the first thing you notice is the twin wheels. These are an optional extra, with a tiller coming as standard, and make the 315 the smallest production yacht with twin wheels. The weird thing is that they don't look at all out of place. The old 325 had a single – rather oversized – wheel and in all honesty that looked far more outlandish. The increase in space to move around in that this configuration affords is also a very marked improvement on her predecessor.

The cockpit is sensibly laid out, with the mainsheet clipped to a



PLUMB BOW, VERTICAL TRANSOM AND TOTAL ABSENCE OF SHEER MEAN THAT THERE IS NOTHING CUTE ABOUT THIS MINI CRUISER

deck. Flush hatches are standard and add to the smart, modern look, while Hanse's trademark self-tacking jib keeps things as simple as possible. I was also impressed by the siting of the anchor roller, which extended well outboard and minimised the risk of the anchor chipping the gelcoat on that rather exposed plumb bow.

Step below decks and you find yourself in a bright saloon with impressive headroom for such a small yacht. Unlike some other competitors who have produced a stripped-out base model with the addition of many 'bolt-on' extras, the 315 fit out is less Spartan, despite her über-modern design.

There is room for a small chart table to port and aft of this is a huge heads compartment which compares favourably with many much larger yachts. The galley is a simple L-shaped affair to starboard. Aft of this is the main cabin, with a generous double berth running athwartships.

Up forward is another berth – ostensibly a double, but this is a much smaller space and would be ideal for children or one adult. To this end, it features a selection of clever infills which open up more space depending on what's required.

Minimum fuss

On the day of my test sail, the breeze was blowing a good 20kt and this freshened as the day progressed. This, I thought, would be a good →

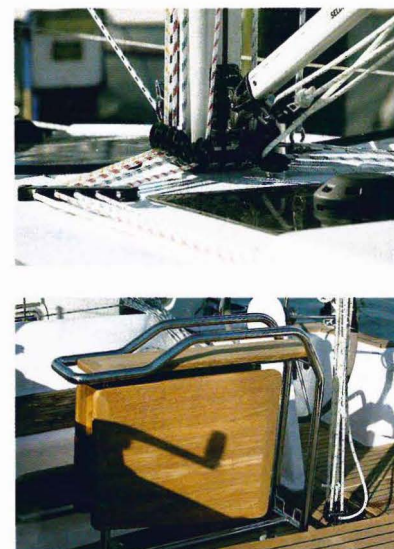


● **LEFT**
She is billed as the world's smallest dual wheel cruiser and they don't look at all out of place, although a tiller version is also available

padeye just abaft the cockpit table and well-sited for the helmsman. The stern was rather open on the yacht I tested, but there is a more family-friendly option of a bathing platform which flips up to enclose you. Storage was good, and my

only real complaint was that the shape of the moulding around the forward end of the cockpit benches was angled slightly and prevented really comfortable lounging.

Further forward, the most notable feature was the clean, uncluttered



● **LEFT**
The interior is functional but well-laid out with a small galley and berths for four people

● **ABOVE**
There is a good-sized folding cockpit table, and note the sheeting point for the main just behind it.

SAM'S VERDICT

Entry-level cruisers are never going to be luxurious affairs, but the 315 was light and comfortable with good headroom. She looks very smart, but what impressed me most was the performance in testing conditions. This is no floating caravan and while she is not designed to win races, she is well set up for novice sailors, providing a good level of performance for extremely simple handling.

PERFORMANCE: ★★★★★

ACCOMMODATION: ★★★★★

LOOKS: ★★★★★

THE SPEC

LOA: 31ft 6in (9.6m)

LWL: 28ft 5in (8.7m)

Beam: 11ft (3.4m)

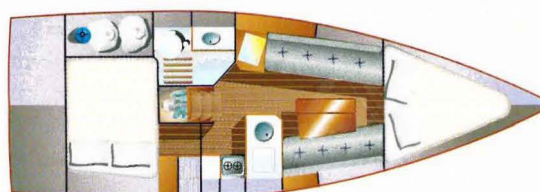
Draught: 6ft 1in (1.9m) standard; 4ft 5in (1.4m) optional shallow keel

Builder: hanseyachts.com

Contact: Inspiration Marine, inspirationmarine.co.uk

Price: From £53,000 ex-VAT

As tested: £79,000 ex-VAT



opportunity to expose the weaknesses of the modern production cruiser.

We headed out under full sail with the tester fairly confident the little yacht would be overwhelmed and end up performing a series of ungainly pirouettes upwind. She didn't and while all the larger yachts out that day were reefed down, the little Hanse powered along with minimum fuss, soaking up the Solent chop with ease.

We were definitely overpressed, but she dealt with it superbly. She must be supremely well balanced, because even in the big gusts she barely griped, even though she was well over on her ear. The helm remained light and the boat a pleasure to sail.

At times we hit 7kt-plus with ease. The Hanse representative onboard stated that the company had approached the design of this yacht with strong performance in mind and it really shows. The boat is a good half tonne lighter than the 325, and boasts a more powerful sail area. She is also surprisingly stiff with the deeper 1.85m keel. Sail handling was also an absolute doddle, with the self-tacking jib meaning that you could tack or gybe with the minimum amount of fuss or stress. ✦