

WORDS Jack Haines

ABSOLUTE 48 COUPE

It's been some time since Absolute was in the sportscruiser game but the 48 Coupe marks the start of a new era for the Italian marque. We take it out on the water to see how it stacks up

Cannes saw Absolute launch two brand new models and though one was a 60ft flybridge and the other this 50ft sportscruiser they both share similar design language and a mission to be released from the shackles of what we consider to be traditional cockpit design. This means that the customer effectively starts with a blank canvas on the aft deck where Absolute will either supply modular and very attractive furniture all of its own or fit some supplied by a manufacturer of the client's choosing.

The other key feature is how open the cockpit feels thanks to the glazed transom, which does a fine job of creating the feel of a waterside terrace, with unbroken views across the water. A vast storage void, accessed via three individual hatches in the transom, provides ample space to stow watersports kit as close to the waterline as it's possible to be. At anchor, the hi-lo platform becomes the perfect waterside play area, with the "terrace" above where those not in the water can relax and spectate. The layout possibilities of the modular furniture appear almost endless as each squab can be turned into an armchair or, by taking the arms off their bases, pushed

together to create a sun pad. It's possible to create a dinette in whichever orientation you choose, be that in the traditional position with a bench running across the transom or why not turn the benches 90 degrees and treat everyone around the table to a view out over the water? It's a feast of modularity that offers impressive flexibility for a sub-50ft production boat.

The other side of the coin with this design is that there isn't a huge amount of privacy in this open cockpit if you're moored stern-to in a marina, so it might have been an idea to create more of a socialising space on the foredeck. Out on the water, however, the main deck arrangement really shines and the seamless link between cockpit and saloon helps to create a single-level living area with an aft positioned galley that is perfectly placed to serve the deck spaces and the interior.

It may come as a surprise that there is no sunroof on this boat but there is a good reason for that. Instead of a sliding roof

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The brilliant modular cockpit can be arranged in a variety of different configurations



QUICK SPIN



Two fridge/freezer units are located opposite the galley to free up room in the galley itself for storage space



The vast bow windows pump natural light into the master



The interior blends practicality with a palpable sense of quality

Absolute has fitted a run of flexible monocrystalline silicon solar panels within a glazing strip in the wheelhouse roof which, with a 2kW power output, can run all of the boat's ancillary systems without the need to fire up the generator. Additionally, the 48 comes as standard with sliding windows in the saloon so, unless it's a very hot day, the idea is to drop them down, open the side door at the helm and the cockpit doors and allow the breeze to naturally cool the main deck so even the air-con can remain dormant. Absolute trumpets this as a sustainability measure, which is a little rich given there is a pair of 5.5-litre 6-cylinder diesel engines beneath the aft deck, but the lack of machinery hum will be a major bonus when relaxing with the boat at anchor.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

The smaller an Absolute model is the more it highlights the yard's skill at creating and using interior space. Despite having three good cabins and two bathrooms inside a sub-50ft shell, none of them feel compromised and the layout with the master suite forward leaves space for a double VIP amidships that feels more like a scaled down master than a guest cabin. Absolute has even found space for a walk-in wardrobe cleverly disguised in a spot against the engineroom bulkhead. The third cabin is understandably small but still has twin beds rather than bunks.

There's intelligent design throughout the accommodation, from the angled bed in the master suite that makes the most of the available floor space and delivers incredible views out of the vast hull windows to the utilisation of sliding pocket doors to avoid precious space being gobbled up when doors are opened.

ERGONOMICS

The relationship between wheel, throttles and joystick is spot on



SIDE DOOR

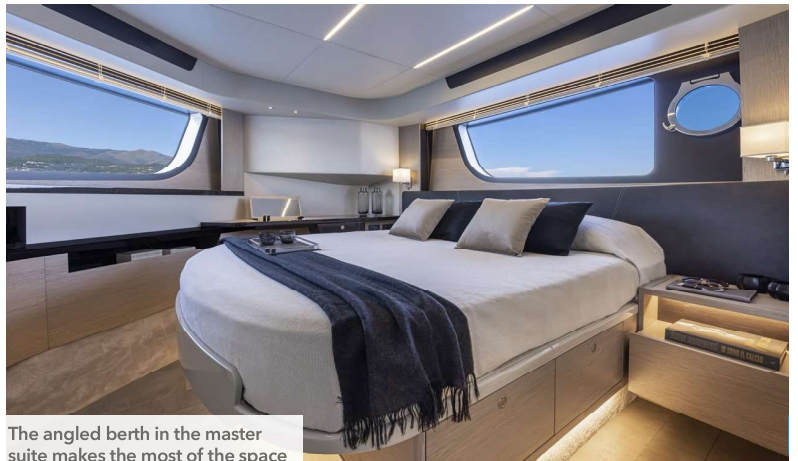
The tall side door is a real boon when coming into a berth

In recent years, Absolute's focus has been its Flybridge and Navetta ranges but it has a good reputation when it comes to building sportscruisers too. These were sportscruisers in the traditional sense with swooping lines and rakish profiles, powered by twin or triple IPS pods for top speeds in the mid to late 30s. This 48 kicks off an all-new range of sportscruisers, catering for a market whose desires have changed considerably since Absolute was last building boats of this style. Like most sectors, volume is king and performance takes a back seat, so the 48 Coupe is available with just one IPS engine option, the twin 480hp IPS650 units, good for a top speed just shy of 30 knots and a comfortable cruising speed of 22 knots. It is not a particularly exciting boat to drive but it is refined and easy to handle, settling into a 20-knot canter almost automatically. Once on the plane, 20 knots is the most efficient cruising speed, too, with a range just short of 200 miles with 20% in reserve. The steering is light but not ponderous at speed, and despite auto-trim trying to keep it on the straight and narrow, the boat heels obediently when you dial in some lock and turns back on itself more tidily than more docile IPS installations will allow.

I noticed at displacement speeds that the slab-sided hull sent flecks of spray on to the windscreen, even in calm test conditions, so slow cruising in bigger seas may get a bit splashy, but once on the plane the hull romped along gamely and landed softly. The design of the helm maintains Absolute's position as one of the best in the business when it comes to the driving environment, even if the geometry between the seat and the footrest isn't as sweet as it could be.



ABOVE LEFT: The two bathrooms on board are beautifully fitted out and both have spacious separate shower cubicles ABOVE RIGHT: The double VIP feels like a mini master cabin and has a bureau and small walk-in wardrobe



The angled berth in the master suite makes the most of the space

This is the first production boat I have driven which had both Volvo Penta's Assisted Docking and Raymarine's DockSense installed. They are impressive systems independently but combined they genuinely take the sting out of berthing, which is important on a boat of this size and style that is likely to be owner run. DockSense works like a car's radar parking system with cameras mounted on both sides and the stern to build a picture of objects around you with audible warnings if you're getting too close.

Volvo's system takes the IPS joystick and adds a bow thruster so you have even greater control of the boat and perfect sideways movement without the bow chasing the stern. It also

compensates automatically for wind and tide so if you let go of the joystick, the pods and thrusters begin working together instantaneously to hold the boat in position, giving the skipper a moment or two to gather their thoughts in tricky berthing situations without the worry of the boat drifting.

These systems are options and quite expensive ones at that, but they fit neatly into the ethos of the 48 Coupe. This is a boat that is wonderfully easy to live with, both on the water and at rest and, as usual with Absolute, it feels as if it has been designed by people who actually go boating and know what customers are looking for. Absolute is back in the sportscruiser game and not a moment too soon. **CONTACT** www.absoluteyachts.com

SPECIFICATION

- LOA 48ft 11in (14,9m)
- Beam 14ft 10in (4.52m)
- Draught 3ft 8in (1.17m)
- Displacement 21.2 tonnes
- Fuel capacity 1,600 litres
- Water capacity 530 litres
- RCD B for 14 people
- Designer Absolute Yachts
- Price from €770,000 ex VAT
- Price as tested €1.09m ex VAT



PERFORMANCE

TEST ENGINES Volvo Penta IPS650. Twin 480hp @ 3,700rpm. 6-cylinder, 5.5-litre diesels.

	ECO				FAST			MAX
RPM	1,200	1,600	2,000	2,400	2,800	3,200	3,400	3,800
Knots	6.0	7.6	9.1	10.6	14.8	20.0	22.5	28.5
Litres per hour	12	23	43	72	100	132	150	190
Litres per mile	2.00	3.03	4.73	6.79	6.76	6.60	6.67	6.67
Range (NM)	640	423	271	188	189	194	192	192
Noise dB(A)	60	62	64	66	68	70	71	75

Calculated figures based on real-time readings, yours may vary. Figures allow for 20% reserve. 42% fuel, 64% water, 5 crew + safety stores. 28° air temperature, F1 and calm for sea trial.