

Bonito 22

PAYNE: This is a boat that seems to be somewhat mixed in character. Undoubtedly the design is a "miniature yacht" rather than a "big sailing skiff", and yet the stability characteristics did not give the same feeling as the other miniature yachts, the Compass Careel and the Boomaroo.

The Bonito is particularly handsome in appearance. The design is one of the best for interior space, and so can offer a separate toilet compartment.

The hull form produces very good steering behaviour, and, especially at the larger angles of heel, the Bonito was the nicest-steering boat of all. The hull form is no doubt responsible. It is very much the yacht type, with a subtly-rounded bow, a stern which is moderately veed, and also a small external fin. The contrast between the steering of the Bonito and of some of the boats with wide flat sterns was quite electrifying. A pity they all couldn't be like the Bonito.

The Bonito's simple rig suited the "little-cruiser" style of the boat. However, the stability behaviour did not. I am not saying that stability was deficient. Indeed it may well have been greater at large angles of heel than some of the other boats we sampled, and certainly the "wipe-out" relief of extreme heel by turning into the wind was a nice gradual and re-assuring procedure. Nevertheless, I would say that a little more stability would suit the image of the boat. The example we sailed was pretty well stripped out, with none of the usual accumulation of cruising gear, and that extra weight would certainly have helped the boat if it had been on board. Just the same, I would guess that another 100 kilos of ballast would make a good boat a lot better.



WEBSTER: As a trailer-sailer, the Bonito 22 is a better trailer yacht — that's another way of saying that the combination of a deeply protruding keel and a 1.66 tonne road weight, it's a bit beyond the average sedan.

The keel arrangement is, of course, one of the Bonito's design characteristics. However, the manufacturers and/or their local agents have not made a great deal of progress with the trailer and it required a fully submersed launch to get the boat rolling.

Rigging the Bonito 22 was quite slow compared to the other seven yachts engaged in the Rally, taking nearly 20 minutes for one man to prepare ready to bend on sail cloth.

There was no significant reason for the time lag, but the Bonito was more like a conventionally rigged yacht than a T.S., with rigging screws, etc. all requiring a requisite amount of time to assemble and tension.

From a family cruising viewpoint, the Bonito presents a happier picture. It enjoys an original cabin layout, with a galley arrangement that is arguable the best of the lot. It doesn't fold out or stow away. It is fixed, athwartships, with plenty of work space to prepare meals, a decent sink, a non-gimballed stove and provision for an Esky under.

The cabin layout is quite efficient. A good meals area is provided (for four adults) around a dinette hinged off the centreboard case. The toilet is in its own separate little room in the forepeak, but the headroom is so low it could be difficult for large persons to use. The berthing arrangements are most unusual. Quarter berths lie to both port and starboard. Two berths are provided as pilot berths amidships, the port side berth easily enlarged to a full size double berth between the centreboard trunk and the topsides. It's not bad. The double is good, albeit with zilch privacy from the rest of the cabin.

Access to the cabin is only fair. The mainsheet sits astride the companionway, no pop-top is fitted, but the hatch slides well back against the mast step. The outboard is permanently mounted in its own well inboard, there is no need to remove the rudder, and the boarding ladder is standard equipment.

DAVIDSON: The Bonito's best feature was its helm balance. Under pressure, with the gunwhale in the water, the helm was still easy and controlled the boat. There was no tendency to round up. The boat is a bit tender and heels quite suddenly — you need to play the mainsheet like a musical instrument to have a comfortable ride upwind in a breeze. We were slightly over-canvassed on the test, but this is not unusual when, in a day's sailing, the wind picks up in the afternoon. One major gripe I have concerns the outboard well. While tacking through a gust I lost my footing and got tangled up in it — an exercise that could have been very painful. The mainsheet traveller controls need to be of heavier rope to make it easier to spill air in the gusts.

In terms of finish, the Bonito was a treat. There's no doubt the New Zealanders know how to present a boat to the buying public. The quality of the mouldings, trim work, detail were all excellent. Like the Sonata, the Bonito offers "big" boat appointments, and is the only trailer sailer I've ever seen with a permanent chart table and drawers fitted. Like other Kiwi import the Farr, you can only buy the Bonito as a completed package.

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