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With its bold, muscular looks, Hanse's new 455 is proving to be one of the big winners of 2015. We sent Sam Jefferson to find out why

Über modern



To write that 45ft (13.7m) is the new 35ft (10.6m) is, on the face of it, patent nonsense. But when it comes to yachts there is at least an element of truth lurking within this gobbledigook. A few years ago, a 35-footer was about the standard size for a cruising yacht – the happy medium that many of us aspired to.

Times have changed, however, and I would venture to suggest that nowadays that measure of the average-sized yacht we aspire to own is closer to 45ft.

Which brings us rather neatly to the new Hanse 455 – launched towards the end of last year by the German boatbuilder with the aim of cornering this lucrative sector of the market. On recent evidence

you'd have to say it has done just that, with sales of the yacht in the UK in 2015 well into double figures.

So what's the secret of this success? Well, step aboard the Hanse and the first thing that pretty much slaps you around the face is this yacht's modernity. The design house of Judel/Vrolijk has been inextricably linked to Hanse for years and has never been shy of a spot of modernity. Even



so, the new 455 comes as a surprise: with her plumb bow, vertical transom and hard, angular coachroof, this yacht comes from a school of naval architecture that is almost brutalist. This is a yacht where the designer has defiantly raised a Teutonic middle digit at the accepted rules of aesthetics and pulled off an unlikely triumph.

With the exception of the soft turn of her bilge, there's barely a

curve on show and if you marry that with the relatively high topsides and huge rectangular portlight amidships, you would think that this vessel would have all the beauty and elegance of a Sherman tank.

The weird thing is that somehow it all works: the 455 looks aggressive, all right, but there's also an unmistakeable stylishness about her. I was left reflecting that if you

are going to buy a new yacht, it might as well look new and the 455 certainly does. Brand, spanking new.

Yet in one way, the 455 is evolutionary rather than revolutionary, as she is the natural development of the Hanse 445. She therefore shares a good many of her predecessor's attributes: plenty of beam carried well aft, masses of volume and Hanse's trademark

self-tacking headsail set-up married to a tall, powerful rig. Yet this is no simple repackaging job, for the 455 is a redesign from the keel upwards. She's a fraction longer, a tad heavier and her sail plan has also been tweaked, with greater area added to the jib and removed from the main. Despite these changes, she shares her predecessor's reputation for excellent build quality combined with a decent turn of speed.

Options abound

Despite the fact that Hanse is unashamedly mass-produced, the company prides itself on having developed what it terms 'mass customisation' which may sound a little sinister, but basically means that each yacht is custom-made to the

Stepping aboard there's no question that the first thing that hits you is the acre of space available. In an era of fat-bottomed yachts this is nothing new, but it still has the capacity to surprise. The reconfiguration of the cockpit compared to the old 445 means there is even more room, with the benches moved back to give yet more space.

Despite this, the presence of a sturdy cockpit table with ample handholds prevents the area feeling too wide open. Locker space is adequate rather than immense, but the addition of a pair of helmsman's seats with a clever deck shower/sink compartment to port and the gas locker to starboard adds stowage absent on the 445 while there is a huge locker behind the anchor locker which could happily

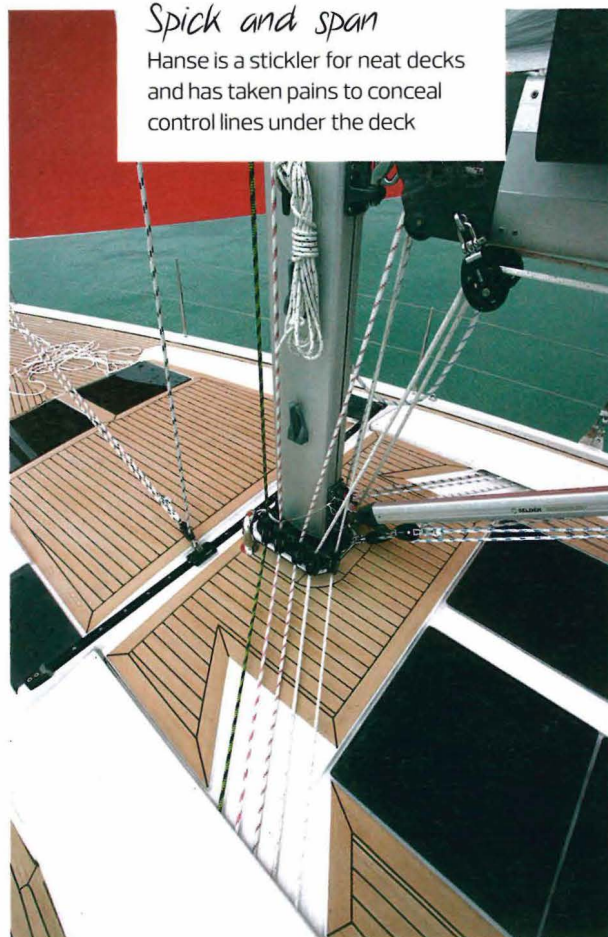
'There is a huge locker abaft the anchor locker which could happily swallow up whole dinghies if required'

order of a client and there is a plethora of options to choose from. There are four cabin layouts on offer and an endless choice of trim and upholstery. Below the waterline you also have a choice of the standard T-shaped foil, with a depth of 2.5m (8ft 3in), or you can have an L-shaped keel of the same depth or a shallower version which reduces the draft to 1.82m (6ft).

swallow up whole dinghies if required. The bathing platform is huge and slips down on its hydraulic strut with a pleasing hiss and conspicuous lack of effort. There is also a liferaft locker tucked in cunningly, which provides a clever solution to an old problem. With the platform raised, you are enclosed within the cockpit and feel very secure.

Spick and span

Hanse is a stickler for neat decks and has taken pains to conceal control lines under the deck



PHOTOS: JOE MCCARTHY

One factor that makes the hard lines of the 455 look more purposeful than clunky is the low, uncluttered coachroof with the halyards run beneath the deck. This area is also awash with flush hatches and the overall impression is sleek and ultra modern. In addition to giving the decks a delightfully clean, uncluttered feel this also ensures that sight lines forward are excellent. The side decks are also wide with a nicely moulded solid toe rail. The lack of jib cars makes for what amounts to a wide avenue for you to stroll along without stubbing your toe.

Hanse has long championed a running rigging set up which leads all important lines via channels set into the coachroof and cockpit mouldings which re-emerge through clutches set within reach of the helmsman. The lines are then tidied away into rope bins situated outboard of the wheels. Combine that with a self-tacking jib and Lewmar electric winches and you have a great recipe for singlehanded.

You can trim the mainsheet, kicker, headsail, you name it, without

Straight lines

1

Other than the bilge, the 455 is composed of bold, straight lines with just a hint of reverse sheer

Beam aft

2

Carrying so much beam aft creates volume below and helps the boat dig in upwind



leaving the helming position. It really is incredibly easy and my only criticism of the system, garnered from a transatlantic crossing I did on a Hanse 461 with the same set up, is that the rope bins can end up in a horrible spaghetti-like tangle of ropes without careful management.

Light airs

The only thing that remained was to take the Hanse out for a spin and we were unfortunate to find fickle airs with the wind peaking at around 10 knots. Nevertheless, this was a good opportunity to test her cruising chute and, despite the modest conditions, the yacht was eager to show herself off.

Hanse has long had a reputation for providing a big, powerful rig and the 455 is no exception. Most of the work is done by her huge main and if you were to reef her down you would almost have the third reef in before

you started to ponder taking in a roll or two of her 95 per cent blade jib. For all that, she is well-balanced and poised. There is a good reason for this. Unlike most yachts fitted with a self-tacker, the Hanse has been designed specifically to carry this type of headsail so her mast position – stepped further aft than the norm – is optimised for this purpose.

And it shows in her handling. Upwind the big mainsail/small headsail combo works an absolute treat and that deep keel and deep, high-aspect rudder ensure she tracks well, with around 40 degrees proving to be the optimum angle off the wind to keep her moving in the light airs. Beating into the breeze also demonstrated just how simple life was with the self-tacker and we rolled through the tacks with minimal fuss or effort. The big rig also proved a powerful performer on a beam reach and it was only as

we sailed deeper that the massive main started to blanket the headsail.

Hanse has, however, countered that problem by providing a cruising chute which is cut almost like a Code Zero and in the light airs worked well enough in anything up to a close reach, providing the added muscle required to keep her moving.

To Hanse's credit, this sail was simple to handle and set up and would allow many cruising sailors to get over their phobia of putting up the kite. Our main had slab reefing, which is the standard set-up and, although there was no reason to throw in a reef, I imagine that this might involve a bit of rope-juggling as you eventually run out of winches for ropes. It's no big deal as the clutches are easily to hand, but it does involve a modicum of pre-planning. So in a way what you gain in the simplicity and cleverness of the system compared with the

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sailingtoday.co.uk

SAM'S VERDICT

The last yacht I tested was the somewhat retro Rustler 37 and the Hanse 455 is a kind of antithesis of that boat. Yet it's a case of horses for courses with these things and, if you want a modern yacht, you might as well make sure it's thoroughly modern. The 455 most certainly is.

Not only that, but she performs well, is extremely docile and simple to handle with that self-tacking jib, and boasts what must be the lightest, airiest and roomiest accommodation in her class. I also like the fact that Hanse is always looking to innovate and is not afraid to try new ideas. That said, I think its system of running all lines and clutches back to the helmsman is not only one of the yacht's great strengths, it is also its weakness. For, in simplifying things and giving the 455 those lovely, uncluttered decks you do end up with the risk of a snarl-up.

Ultimately, though, there is a good reason this yacht is selling well and that is because it has to be one of the leaders in its class for comfort, ease of handling and versatility.

PERFORMANCE: ★★★★★

COMFORT: ★★★★★

BLUEWATER: ★★★★★

THE SPEC

PRICE AS TESTED: £200,000
BASE PRICE: £151,000 (ex-VAT)

Length overall: 45ft 7in (14.0m)

Length waterline: 40ft (12.2m)

Beam: 14ft 4in (4.4m)

Draft: 7ft 4in (2.2m), standard,
5ft 8in, shallow draft

Displacement: 25,570lb,
(11,600kg)

Ballast: 7,716 lb (3,500kg)

Ballast ratio: 31.8 per cent

Engine: Volvo Penta, 53hp

Fuel: 220lt (48.4gal)

Water: 450lt (99.0gal)

Sail Area

Main: 635sqft (59m²)

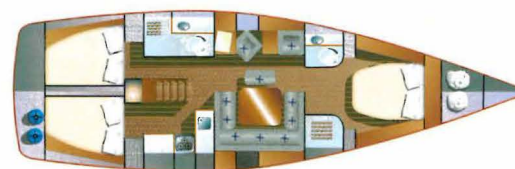
Jib: 476sqft (44m²)

PERFORMANCE

Disp/LOA: 178

Sail area/disp: 20.4

AVS: 155°



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touch of a button



Weight



Speed

For a fuller explanation of stability and
performance figures see sailingtoday.co.uk

IF THE HANSE 455 ISN'T RIGHT FOR YOU...



DUFOUR 45 GRAND LARGE

PRICE: £165,000 (EXC VAT)

Dufour is another brand with a notably progressive ethos – its 450 is also strikingly modern and shares a similarly voluminous hull. Perhaps the most striking thing of all about the 450, however, is that she boasts a wine cellar and shoe cuddies in her bilge.

dufour-yachts.com

craftinsure quote: £637.78



BENETEAU OCEANIS 45

PRICE: (BASIC) £154,000 (EXC VAT)

Another smart offering from the masters of mass production. The Oceanis features that distinctive 'spoiler' arrangement over the cockpit for the mainsheet which, like it or loathe it, is certainly practical. The 45 is getting on a bit now but in 2012 she was elected European Sailboat of the Year in the family cruiser category.

beneteau.co.uk

craftinsure quote: £590.13



BAVARIA CRUISER 46

PRICE: £150,000 (EXC VAT)

Hanse's big German rivals from the Black Forest have developed the cruiser 46, a vessel which also provides light, spacious accommodation, a huge cockpit and easily handled set-up. Meanwhile, her twin rudder promises excellent control even in boisterous conditions.

clippermarine.co.uk

craftinsure quote: £572.80

Lighting

Huge portlights and numerous flush hatches make the saloon among the brightest you'll find

1



Finishing touches

Four carpets, three floorings, four joinery and 30 upholstery choices offer nearly 1,500 options

2

standard set up, you also lose, and it boils down to personal preference.

Under power she was utterly predictable and extremely well-behaved. The 53hp Volvo Penta had more than enough grunt to shove her along with minimum fuss and very little racket to boot. There are bow-thrusters, which I am sure would be a boon in a strong crosswind, particularly when you take into account those high topsides, but in the light airs we encountered they were not even vaguely necessary.

Airy and light

Head below down very thoughtfully angled companionway steps, and the über-modern theme continues. There is no compromise here – you'll either like it or you won't. The ambience put me in mind of an extremely plush hotel room and the huge U-shaped seating area around the saloon table with its great mounds of soft furnishings just begged to be jumped on. I resisted, for fear that the representative from Hanse who was helping me to test the boat might think I was a little bit strange.

Yet the most striking feature was the staggering amount of light that

Hanse has managed to flood through the yacht. A pair of huge skylights in the main saloon would suffice for most, but then there are also the massive rectangular portlights set amidships and clever positioning of mirrors doubles the light, which simply pours in and shows off those clean, modern furnishings to perfection. I can honestly say I have never been aboard a yacht this light.

It also feels absurdly roomy down here and that theme continues when you head forward into the master cabin, which is positively palatial. You could fit two doubles into this space, which is fortunate, because that is one of the configurations



available. An unusual feature is the separate shower room, which is situated to starboard with the heads to port. This is a nice touch and frees up the heads. Again, two skylights provide huge amounts of light. Inevitably the two aft cabins are less regal. Nevertheless, they were still far roomier and lighter than the average.

The galley is set to starboard and comes with a number of optional finishes, but the main factor is that it is very sensibly laid out with plenty of places to brace yourself against and everything nicely to hand. Plus, without wishing to sound high maintenance, I always like to have both an upright and a chest fridge just for ultimate convenience. Hanse has obliged. ✨