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SETTING *the* MOOD

*With its spacious floor plan, contemporary looks and smart accommodations, the **MOODY DS54** is a decidedly new take on a legendary brand.*

BY HERB MCCORMICK

Once upon a time, Moody Yachts was a very English company building boats in Great Britain (for nearly 200 years) that exemplified what we'd expect from a longtime British boatyard. In other words, their vessels were stout and robust, quite seaworthy and somewhat conservative, with straightforward interior layouts and accouterments. They weren't necessarily flashy, but they certainly got the job done.

Those days are long over.

Now, Moodys are built in Germany by Hanse Yachts, which took over the brand a decade ago and has become one of the world's most prodigious, prolific and sophisticated production boatbuilders. And nowhere is this change more evident than with a model introduced to the United States last fall, the Moody DS54, the initials standing for "deck saloon."

Interestingly, the hull of the Moody, with modifications, is the same one employed in a pair of larger Hanse offerings, the 575 and the 588, and was designed by the German naval architecture office Judel/Vrolijk, which is best known for high-performance raceboats, including America's Cup winners. The interior was then fashioned by veteran Moody designer Bill Dixon of Dixon Yacht Design, making the DS54 a collaboration, of sorts.

Even so, this is definitely not your grandpa's Moody.

That's evident from the boat's powerful lines, with a straight stem forward, a long waterline and commanding topsides, dotted with six windows in the hull to each side. The pilothouse is relatively low and sleek, with an eyebrow overhanging the forward window. Teak decks are standard; the foredeck is low and flush (there are fitted cushions that make a cozy daybed), and leads to a solent setup with twin Furlex furlers on the bow. The double-spreader Seldén rig incorporates a self-tending staysail. There's a substantial bulwark topped by a stainless-steel handrail, both of which make wandering up the side decks a safe and comfortable experience. All in all, it's a quite handsome and imposing profile.

One of the signature features of the design is the spacious cockpit with a pair of long settees sandwiching a large, foldable table, all of which can be closed off in inclement weather with an overhead retractable soft Sunbrella Bimini; it can also be rolled back when the sun shines. There are twin wheels, each fronted by a set of large pods with engine and (bow and stern) thruster controls, sailing instruments, chart plotters and so on. Large and comfortable helmsmen's seats are situated all the way aft. All sailing controls and running rigging



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER



Much like a contemporary catamaran, the cockpit and the main saloon on the Moody DS54 are on the same level and accessed through sliding glass doors.

are led aft to port and starboard Lewmar winches just forward of the Jefa Steering pedestals. The transom folds down hydraulically to create a substantial swim/boarding platform. To top it off, there's even a nifty retractable passerelle for Med mooring.

The cockpit and the main saloon are each situated on the same level and accessed through sliding glass doors, much like on a catamaran. There are several different accommodations plans from which to choose, including either a galley up in the saloon or one down a set of five stairs, out of the way of the central living space (our test boat included the latter). Either way, there's a generous U-shaped settee to port with an adjacent dining table, and a spacious navigation station to starboard with all the tools (including autopilot controls) necessary to make it a tidy indoor steering station. The owners suite is forward; a double cabin is aft. There's also a guest cabin in the middle of the boat (or two cabins if you opt for the galley-up arrangement).

Construction is top-notch, with a fiberglass layup that employs isophthalic gelcoat and vinyl ester resin with a balsa-core sandwich above the waterline. The keel is iron and is available in a shoal or deep-draft configuration.

A state-of-the-art CZone digital switching and monitoring system is the hub of the electrical system, instruments, gauges and so forth.

The DS54 impressed our Boat of the Year judging team. Said judge Ed Sherman: "This is part of that new genre of deck-saloon models where they've actually decided, 'OK, we want people in the main saloon to be able to look out the windows and see the world around them versus looking through a skylight when you're buried deep down in the bowels of the boat.' That layout always annoyed me. It seemed totally illogical. But Moody has figured it out. It's a nice all-round view up there."

"I think it was the first of



THE COOK'S NOOK

The Moody DS54 is available with either a galley up, in the main saloon, or one down, out of the way of the central living area (above). This arrangement gives the cook more space to work with, and also opens up the floor plan in the main saloon.

many times we heard the word *lifestyle* during our dockside inspections," said judge Bill Bolin. "The company is very strong on the notion that this is a boat that caters to those who want to entertain on the boat, that are going to spend a lot of time in the cockpit, which they maximized. And with the deck saloon on the same level, you have a giant living space for playing, or entertaining, or whatever you want to do there. They did that very well."

"There's a good trend of opening up these side decks on new boats, and on the Moody, that was just exemplary," said judge Tim Murphy. "Because it was a deck saloon, there was a rail inboard that was just beautiful, that took you up to the mast. You couldn't ask for better, smoother handholds, with no edges. And then outboard you've got this true rail that goes all the way around the boat. There's no other boat we've seen that has such secure side decks."

Unfortunately, we tested the boat on a light-air day with the wind never touching more than 5 knots. Even so, the DS54's performance was pretty stellar, making over 3 knots in little more breeze than that. I'd love to sail this boat in a bit of a blow. I'm generally not a fan of in-mast mainsails, but the one on the Moody, set on a Seldén spar, sported vertical battens and was a good-looking sail. I also like the solent rig, which is a very versatile option for long-range cruising, providing easily managed sails no matter the conditions, light or heavy.

All in all, for a boat with a price tag north of a million bucks, you'd certainly expect a first-class yacht that is a cut above your average cruiser. Moody has delivered on that promise, honoring an old name with a fresh new design that will take its owners far and wide in ample style.

Herb McCormick is executive editor of Cruising World.

SPECIFICATIONS

MOODY DS54

LENGTH OVERALL

56'1" (17.1 m)

WATERLINE LENGTH

51'1" (15.55 m)

BEAM

17' (5.19 m)

DRAFT

8'5"/7'4" (2.56/2.22 m)

SAIL AREA (100%)

1,739 sq. ft. (160.5 sq. m)

BALLAST

15,300 lb. (6,940 kg)

DISPLACEMENT

53,550 lb. (24,290 kg)

BALLAST/DISPLACEMENT

0.28

DISPLACEMENT/LENGTH

179

SAIL AREA/DISPLACEMENT

15.0

WATER

214 gal. (810 l)

FUEL

138 gal. (522 l)

MAST HEIGHT

83' (25.3 m)

ENGINE

Volvo D3-150

DESIGNER

Dixon Yacht Design, Judel/Vrolijk

PRICE

\$1,100,000

Moody Yachts

978-239-6598

yachts.group/moody.gb

SEA TRIAL

WIND SPEED

3 to 4 knots

SEA STATE

Calm

SAILING

Closehauled: 3.5 knots

Reaching: 2.7 knots

MOTORIZING

Cruise (1,750 rpm) 7.5 knots

Fast (2,000 rpm) 8.4 knots

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