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'A deck saloon that pushes all boundaries'

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FIRST TEST

MOODY 41DS

Adopting a fresh approach to deck-saloon design, the Moody 41DS is an exceptionally roomy cruiser that pushes a lot of boundaries

Words and pictures **David Harding**

SPECIFICATIONS

MODEL Moody 41DS

PRICE FROM £382,358 ex VAT

DESIGNER Dixon Yacht Design/ Hanse Design Team

BUILDER Hanse Yachts

LOGBOOK

TESTED BY David Harding

WHERE Central Solent

WHEN August 2020

WIND 15-20 knots

SEASTATE Slight

Few 40-footers offer as many separate spaces for socialising on deck

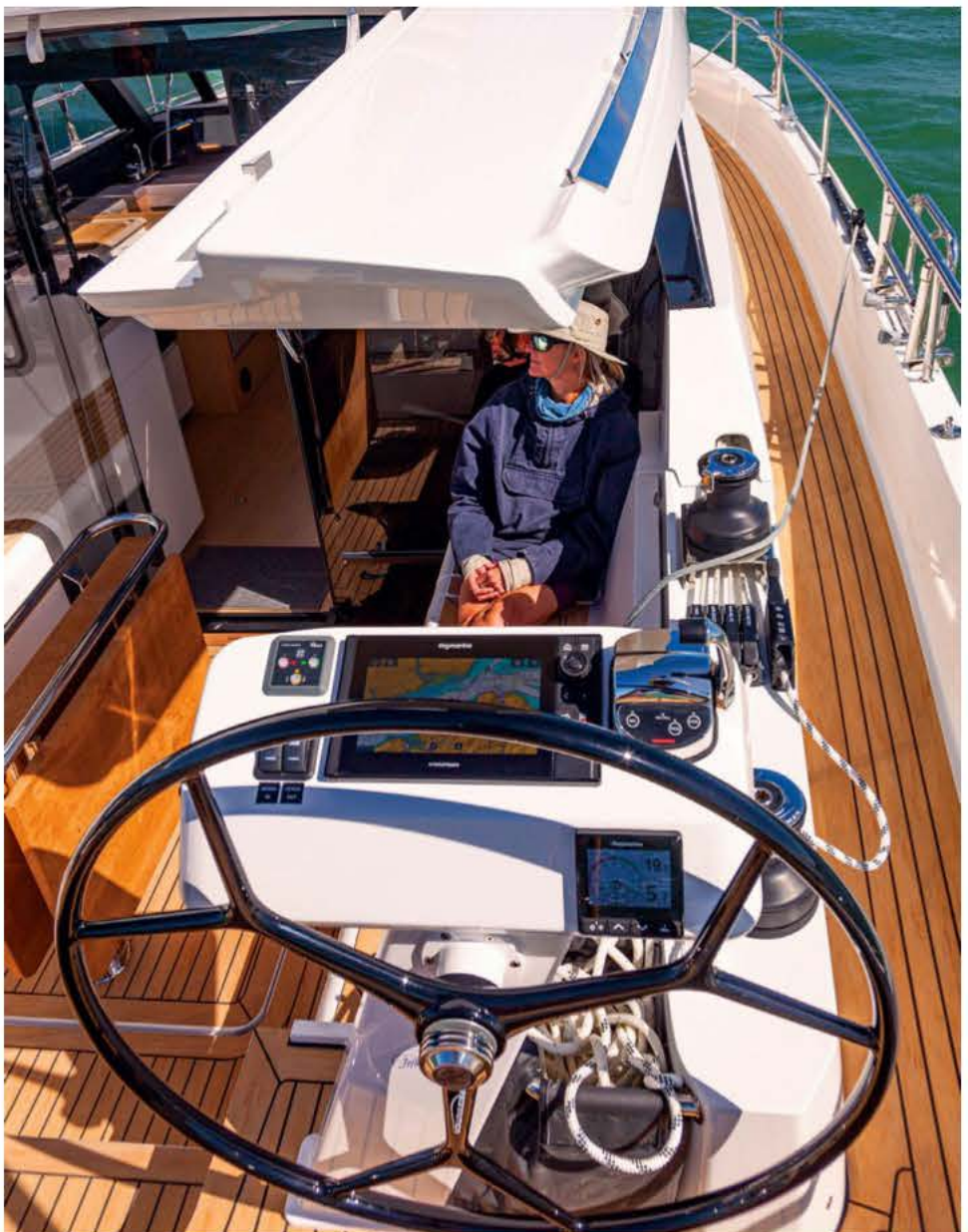
Enthusiasts of deck saloons often reckon there's something missing if a boat doesn't have one. After all, especially in higher latitudes, why wouldn't you want to able to sit inside and see out? Whether you're enjoying the view of the anchorage or scanning the horizon on passage, you stay warm and dry and within easy reach of the cockpit – which is still there for when you want to be outside. What's not to like?

Pursuing this logic has led to the launch of many a deck-saloon yacht over the years, but none quite like the Moody 41DS. This new Moody has taken the 'one-level living' approach found on multihulls and motorboats and applied it to a 12m (40ft) monohull. You walk straight into the deck saloon from the cockpit with no steps or companionway to negotiate. From inside, thanks to the full standing headroom and large window area, you have an uninterrupted view so you can cook, sit at the chart table or just relax while staying in touch with the outside world.

It's the same concept as on the Moody 45DS, which we tested in 2008, but most 40-something-foot deck-saloon cruisers (and even those substantially longer) have the deck saloon at a lower level than the cockpit.

ACRES OF SPACE

In addition to being one of the few single-hulled sailing yachts in her size range to adopt the one-level approach, the new Moody draws attention to herself in a number of ways. She offers a vast amount of space for a start. Bill Dixon's team drew a boat with plumb ends, high freeboard, full forward sections, near-vertical topsides, a broad stern incorporating a soft chine, and the beam carried well forward, creating an enormous volume for the interior designers in Germany to play with. They used it to create a seriously comfortable interior for a couple with an occasional guest or second couple. No attempt was made to squeeze in extra berths or cabins, so the Moody boasts living space and stowage on a scale that few boats of this length can match. Another notable feature is the way she not only brings the outside in but also brings the inside out.



PERFORMANCE FIGURES

POINT OF SAIL	AWA*	AWS**	SPEED
Close hauled	40°	20-23 knots	6.4-6.6 knots
Fetch	60°	16-20 knots	6.8-7.3 knots
Beam reach	90°	13-15 knots	7.7-8.2 knots
Broad reach	120°	10-13 knots	7.1-7.5 knots
Run	180°	8-12 knots	5.6-6.4 knots

APPARENT WIND ANGLE **APPARENT WIND SPEED

For example, a hard top extends aft from the deck saloon over the cockpit to a point just forward of the twin raised helm stations, the centre canvas section sliding away so you can sit under cover or in the sun as you choose. If you want to be completely in the open, go to the bow, where you have a seating-cum-lounging area creating a sort of forward cockpit. Or move all the way aft and lower the hinge-down bathing platform. Few 40-footers offer as many separate spaces for socialising on deck.

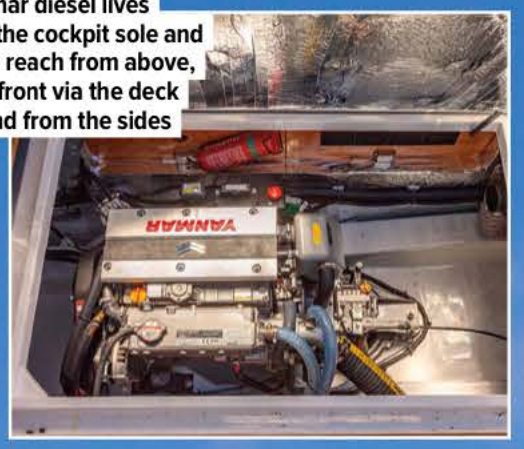
Apart from the broad flat stem with its hard corners, there's little to strike you as out of the ordinary in the context of the modern high-volume cruising yacht when you meet the Moody for the first time. The full bow sections will more than accommodate the slight loss of buoyancy from the bow thruster in its tunnel and support the weight of the optional 100m of stainless steel anchor chain, not to mention a full water tank under the berth in the owner's cabin. Helped by the broad stem, a deep forefoot allows the bow thruster to be mounted well forward for maximum effect.

ABOVE: The hard-top has an opening centre section and extends seamlessly from the deck saloon to just forward of the wheels

LEFT: The aft seats will comfortably accommodate two. Sail controls are led to clutches and winches within easy reach of the helm stations

Lifting up the sole by the galley reveals a utility-cum-stowage area, here accommodating a washing machine and second fridge

View aft from the forecabin, showing the en-suite heads and the steps up to the deck saloon



The Yanmar diesel lives beneath the cockpit sole and is easy to reach from above, from the front via the deck saloon and from the sides

A large locker in the bow provides ample stowage as well as access to the bow thruster and chain windlass

Liferaft stowage is beneath the helm seats in a space enclosed by the hinge-down bathing platform

Slab reefing is standard, but most owners will opt for the easy-to-handle in-mast furling

The high bulwarks allow for a catamaran-style seating area in the bow

She not only brings the outside in but also brings the inside out

Staying below the waterline and moving aft, we find an L-shaped iron fin keel of moderate proportions giving a draught of 2.14m (7ft). That's unless you pay extra, as had the owners of *Aurelia*, our test boat, for the 1.85m/6ft 1in alternative. Propulsion is via a saildrive some way forward of a single deep rudder.

FORM FOLLOWING FUNCTION

Back above the water, fold-down boarding steps neatly incorporated into the stainless tubular guardrails help you scale the topsides. Ascent accomplished, you find sunken side decks protected by high bulwarks and extending all the way to the bow – again, just as on the 45.

Overhead is a deck-stepped, double-spreader, high-fractional rig. It supports a self-tacking jib and a mainsail that, though slab-reefing as standard, is almost invariably going to be of the push-button in-mast persuasion as on our test boat.

Moving towards the stern you find twin wheels with seats right aft, above the forward lower section of the cockpit. From here you can stand and see over the top of the deck saloon – though you will still have a blind spot ahead of the bow unless you're well over 6ft tall – or, as is suggested, sit down and look through it. Structural advances have allowed so much more glass (toughened of course) and less pillar than would have been possible only a few years ago, so seeing through from the helm is easy enough most of the time. The potential problem is reflection, especially if you're on the starboard side and facing the double layer of reflections from the open door slid across inside the aft end.

Having to think about these things is an inevitable consequence of one-level living, because the deck saloon is all above deck whereas the Moody's established rivals have theirs at a lower level. On the Sirius 40DS, for example, it's more than 2ft lower and designed to keep your eye-level the same whether you're sitting in the cockpit, sitting inside or standing inside. Those on the Nordship 40DS and Wauquiez Pilot Saloon 42 are lower again, giving you a good view to either side from within but less of a view forward and little if any aft.

As good a view as you will get from an inside chart table, here incorporating the optional third helm station

Along the port side of the deck saloon, the galley includes a double sink, a three-burner hob, a fridge with access from the front and top, and a large port opening to the cockpit

Choosing a second heads to port saves having to share the owner's en-suite

The owner's cabin in the bow offers a semi-island berth, generous stowage and plenty of light

In the guest cabin you have a choice: twins berths, a double, or twins that convert to a double

There's little to interrupt your view from the deck saloon, which houses the galley and a large lounging area, as well as the chart table

MECHANICAL ADVANTAGE

Decisions made about what works best for visibility, it's time to harness the power of the bow thruster and 57hp of Yanmar diesel to get under way. This presented few challenges on the day of our test, even if windage would be a consideration in a breeze. In open water the Yanmar pushed us along quietly and smoothly, 1,500rpm giving 6.3 knots and 2,100rpm giving 7 knots. Hinging up the cockpit sole reveals the engine compartment with its smooth, wipe-clean mouldings and a good amount of space for access.

Setting sail is straightforward. A Seldén Furlex 304 is standard for the self-tacker, as is the pair of electric Lewmar 45 primary winches. You can use the port one to furl or reef the jib if you need to.

Sails unfurled and a few tweaks made, we settled down to beat into a breeze that ranged between 12 and 22 knots. At its upper end it was as much as the boat wanted under full main and jib, but the flat water presented de-powering options that wouldn't have been on offer in a seaway and we were perfectly comfortable most of the time. This is a boat that

A genoa or off-wind sail can be flown from an extra furler in front of the self-tacking jib

RIGHT: The optional third helm station at the chart table means you can keep watch from inside

BELOW: Full hull sections and firm bilges generate internal space as well as form stability. Performance is good for a boat of this nature

definitely likes to be sailed 'full and by' in the old parlance: sailing deep enough to keep the log reading in the mid-6s felt best for VMG and gave us a tacking angle of within 85° on the compass. Matching the polars might have been easier with a folding prop instead of the fixed three-blader.

For a boat of this nature it was a creditable performance, even allowing for the near-ideal conditions. Elvstrom's FCL laminate upgrades from the standard Dacron sails are undoubtedly worth having, not least because the greater stability of the fabric allows the mainsail to carry a greater roach. We also had the optional outer forestay and a genoa on an electric Furlex 304. Given the Moody's high windage, substantial wetted area and modest spread of sail with the self-tacker, extra canvas would be useful in under 10 knots or so.

Since we were enjoying fresh conditions, we waited to unfurl the genoa until the wind was approaching the beam, and then surged along with the log nudging over 8 knots at times. In terms of general obedience, the Moody was not found wanting. The rudder is big enough to maintain grip beyond normal angles of heel for a boat like this, unlike on some earlier Moodys that I have known to spin round and face whence they came with little provocation.

SEEING THE SAILS

Helming positions are comfortable from windward or leeward, giving good sight of the jib's luff, and the feel through the Jefa steering is positive. Our test boat had the optional Carbonautica composite wheels as a well-worth-having upgrade from stainless steel.

Given the nature of the boat, it would be churlish to moan too much about particular aspects of the performance and handling. Nonetheless, as she's designed to – and does – sail, a few observations are worth making.

Visibility of the headsails when you're furling or unfurling them from the cockpit isn't great. It's is a function of having a full-height deck saloon and a hard top: you can't have it all.

Colour-coding the lines, led aft through tunnels to the clutches and winches forward of the helm stations each side, would make life easier. On our test boat they were all white with variations of black and grey fleck.

As for sail trim, a self-tacking jib will always twist open too far when the sheet is eased. Similarly, a mainsheet taken to a fixed point close below the boom will also lose its downward component – and there's no traveller. Sail-trimmers will need no further explanation.

Still in the cockpit, perhaps my biggest grouse is the all-too-common absence of stowage for small items – binoculars, phones, drinks and so on that you want to be able to grab without having to dive into one of the cavernous lockers either side beneath the cockpit seats (and you have to be careful not to trap any lines near the hinges when you close the heavy lids again). These lockers contain the two diesel tanks and leave copious amounts of space for everything else, while the liferaft lives just above the static waterline in the stern, below the helm seats, and would be easy to slide into the water with the bathing platform lowered. A hatch in the stern gives access to

We unfurled the genoa with the wind on the beam and surged along at 8 knots

the inside of the transom and is often awash, so you would want to be sure that it seals as it should.

Moving forward, the recessed side decks are easy to negotiate but there's nothing to stop green water running all the way aft. On the leeward side it should flow straight out through the stern. From the weather deck, it seems likely that some of it will end up in the cockpit. Drains here should get rid of it, though its arrival might come as a surprise.

INSIDE SPACE

In the deck saloon we find the galley along the port side, a chart table forward to port (with the optional third helm station on our test boat) and a large seating area around the table to starboard. Spend another £2,500 or so and you can lower the table at the push of a button to create an extra double berth or large lounging area.

Mahogany joinery is standard, the golden oak on *Aurelia* being among the options. A standard feature is the 'cellar': lifting the sole in the galley reveals steps down to a utility area complete with space for a washing machine and a second fridge as well as stowage and access to some of the electrical systems.

On the whole, access to the essential systems seems good throughout the boat, partly because of the very welcome lack of cramming. Interior mouldings are used sparingly and much of the interior is formed by the joinery, allowing access to the outer hull.

Going forward from the deck saloon and dropping down a level, you find the main electrical panel to starboard by the steps, protected by a hinged door.

Straight ahead in the bow is the master cabin, complete with semi-island berth, stacks of stowage and hanging space, an abundance of natural light, more than generous headroom and, of course, a spacious en-suite heads and shower.

As standard, this heads is shared (via an extra door) with the guest cabin to starboard. I suspect most owners will choose the additional heads and shower to port in a space otherwise used for walk-in stowage.

The guest cabin can have a double berth, twins, or twins with an infill for a double conversion.

As the images we have featured show, the styling of the boat is modern without being garish and the detailing and quality of finish are hard to fault.

MOODY 41DS

THE TEST VERDICT

There's no doubt that the Moody 41DS does exactly what she was designed to do. She offers a vast amount of accommodation, together with the sort of inside/outside living space never before seen on a boat of this size.

The full-height, walk-in deck saloon has its pros and cons. Dixon and Moody made a bold move adopting this approach on a 40-footer but, by choosing not to follow the path trodden by most boats of similar size, they have created something strikingly different. If you don't like it, there are alternatives. If you do like it, you will probably love it.

If the concept suits you, you're unlikely to be disappointed by other aspects of the design. Handling under both power and sail is straightforward on the whole and the ergonomics work well. Quality of construction, finish and attention to detail all seem up to the mark too.

WOULD SHE SUIT YOU AND YOUR CREW?

This is not a purist's boat – and she's not meant to be. She's a boat for people who, whatever their boating background, are likely to want to spend extended periods aboard, most probably in port or at anchor much of the time. Nonetheless, while she might not conform with every blue-water sailor's idea of what a long-distance cruiser should be, there's no reason why she shouldn't cross oceans. I even had a call from a well-known racing sailor looking for a different sort of boat.

At the other end of the spectrum, I would not be surprised if she attracted newcomers to sailing who like the idea of a boat with a conservatory and fail to understand why all boats don't come with one. She might also find favour among people who would otherwise be homing in on – or perhaps moving away from – owning a catamaran or motor boat, not wanting the beam of one or the running costs of the other. With so much to offer, I suspect this new Moody is likely to find wide appeal.

PROS

- Spacious layout below decks
- Appealing inside/outside living areas
- Obedient and predictable handling

CONS

- Restricted visibility when furling/unfurling headsails
- Limited scope for sail-trimming
- Control lines need colour-coding

FACTS AND FIGURES

PRICE as tested £454,608 ex VAT

LOA 11.99m (39ft 4in)

LWL 11.52m (37ft 6in)

BEAM 4.20m (13ft 9in)

DRAUGHT standard fin 2.14m (7ft 0in) shallow fin 1.85m (6ft 1in)

DISPLACEMENT 11,200kg (24,692lb)

BALLAST 3,130kg (6,900lb)

BALLAST RATIO 28%

DISPLACEMENT / LENGTH 209

SAIL AREA 84.0m2 (904ft2)

SA/D RATIO 17.02

DIESEL 210L (46gal)

WATER 400L (88gal)

ENGINE 57hp

TRANSMISSION Saildrive

RCD CATEGORY A

DESIGNER Dixon Yacht Design/Hanse Design Team

BUILDER Hanse Group

UK AGENT Inspiration Marine

TEL 023 8045 7008

WEBSITE www.inspirationmarine.co.uk