

PUMULA

An aluminium cutter designed for global cruising, *Pumula* is a yachtsman's yacht with a sparkling performance and seamanlike accommodation with an unusual design touch. David Glenn sailed her off Palm Beach in Florida

Wide, clean, teak-laid decks with no margin boards around deck hatches and other openings. Spars are by Rondal



Pumula is an impressive-looking yacht, which sailed well during her high-latitude cruise last summer. Her fixed biminis came in very useful in colder climates, as did the short pole for tender launching and retrieval

“ I was immediately taken with the yacht’s distinctive sheer, relatively low freeboard, clean decks and good looks ”

It’s blowing 55 knots, there are 7m seas rearing up over the stern and the yacht has just touched 19 knots on a sustained surf. No, this isn’t an IMOCA 60 or Class 40 charging across the Atlantic, but 120 tons of superyacht under plain sail revelling in some boisterous conditions en route from the Canaries to the Caribbean – and, I should add, some months before my considerably less lively sail off Florida.

Large sailing yachts have become increasingly more rewarding in terms of performance in recent years and the 122ft/37m *Pumula* is no exception, although one of the permanent crew admits to the beautiful blue cutter being ‘a bit of a handful’ in those conditions. Which yacht wouldn’t be?

Hand steering *Pumula* during this lively crossing was very much on the lips of the crew when we met them on a recent press visit and, as avid sailors, the glint in their eyes said it all!

A proper yacht

I first came across *Pumula* in Antigua in February shortly after the transatlantic delivery described above by her Dutch skipper Michael van Bregt. I was immediately taken with the yacht’s distinctive sheer, relatively low freeboard, clean decks and good looks and I could see why she’s referred to in her publicity material as a ‘proper yacht’.

I wasn’t to know that two months later I’d be sailing her off Palm Beach, Florida in 16 knots of balmy south-easterly where, once again, she demonstrated that she’s a yachtman’s yacht, fun to sail, rewarding on the helm and at times in need of an experienced hand to rein her in.

Designed for a yachtman who knew exactly what he was looking for when he commissioned Royal Huisman to build the yacht to a design by Dykstra Naval Architects, *Pumula*’s exciting performance might seem at odds with the Zulu meaning of her name: peace and rest. However, at

the end of a day’s sailing there is indeed plenty of opportunity for ‘*pumula*’ in the yacht’s intimate accommodation into which interior designers Rhoades Young have worked some unusual furniture detailing and pleasing timber finishes.

Although *Pumula* measures 122ft/37m, she is not a cavernous yacht. In fact, her long overhangs mean her waterline length is just 90ft/27.5m. Her lines reveal a quite shallow canoe body and by today’s standards her freeboard is low for her length. While this does wonders for her looks, once you’re down in the bilge of the yacht there’s not much space in places like the engine room.

“The bottom of the boat is right there,” said engineer Marcus Nasholm pointing to the aluminium hull skin just inches below the engine room sole plates. As we clambered around, bent double on hands and knees it was clear that it would require a certain amount of suppleness to tend the main engine, twin generators, watermaker and other systems contained in this space.

Dykstra and Huisman have done wonders planning and building this compartment, but the lack of space is the price you pay for sailing performance, good looks and keeping control of overall length.

Moreover, considerable space is taken up by the casing for the lifting keel, which although an intrusion in the accommodation, is barely noticed thanks to some clever general arrangement planning. The fully ballasted lifting keel, the shape of which can be seen in the drawing on page 28, can be raised from 16ft 4in/5m to 9ft 8in/3m, an extremely useful feature when cruising. Two rams, set inside the keel structure itself, extend to lower the keel into the desired position. The fin, with its reasonable chord length, is designed to provide added lift upwind.

Pumula’s owners wanted an easily managed vessel able to sail well on all points and capable of being handled by a small crew. This appears to have been achieved with the proviso that the owners



PHOTOS: ROYAL HUISMAN/C SILKEN



Above: *Pumula's* main saloon is equipped with a beautiful dining table. Far left: alfresco dining under the main cockpit bimini. Left: engine and sail controls. A screen emerges next to the grab handle

become part of the crew, which, I understand, they certainly do. In an ideal world perhaps another pair of hands would be useful, but as Michael van Bregt explained, multi-tasking is a prerequisite for anyone working on this yacht.

A clean and classic look

To maintain a clean and classic look the superbly laid teak decks are uninterrupted by margin boards around hatches and other openings. The vast, open areas of teak deck, particularly the side decks, were a joy when moving around under sail.

Up forward the anchor is kept off the deck and neatly out of the way, stowed in a hull pocket to port. Key features on deck are a teak-skinned main house just forward of the working cockpit and another smaller version aft serving the owners' impressive suite. There's also a useful, separate crew companionway forward.

There's a neat custom-built side boarding ladder which stows flush into the starboard topsides and, though the task of setting up the stanchions and rails for the steps looked complex, the crew have got this operation down to about ten minutes from fully stowed.

In the interests of simplicity and maintaining those classic looks, a single wheel is provided with control, monitoring and sailing instrument screens mounted either side. At the press of a button the screens retract into the timberwork so they remain hidden from view when the yacht is not under way.

This arrangement is neat and looks great, but one issue I had when sailing was that, with the single wheel, I could not get far enough out-board to view the headsail telltales, something I would have thought essential in a lively sailing yacht like this. To get the best out of her it's not enough to rely solely on sailing instruments.

I discussed this with Michael van Bregt who made the point that the more you sail the yacht, the more you get used to knowing when she is trimmed properly without viewing the telltales. But he was also interested in our suggestion that the spreader-mounted security cameras could be trained on the headsail luff telltales and the picture brought up on the aforementioned screens! Much is made of the fact that the sightlines over the top of the saloon deckhouse allow the entire length of the yacht forward to be viewed and this is indeed the case, but it's not enough to see the telltales. 

PHOTOS: ROYAL HUISMAN/C SILKEN



Above: looking down into *Pumula*'s superb owners' suite from the aft companionway. Far left: Charlotte van Bregt in the well-lit galley. Left: Rhoades Young designed this hand-stitched leather bunkside table to look like traditional luggage

Proof of how easily *Pumula* could be prepared for sea quickly became evident once we'd arrived at her berth in the mightily impressive Rybovich superyacht service and refit facility on the shores of Lake Worth Lagoon, West Palm Beach.

The berth was tight, but helped by her 55kW Hunderstedt bow thruster and 37kW stern thruster, the yacht came off the dock sideways and we threaded our way out of the marina, past the late Steve's Jobs's extraordinary Feadship *Venus* – yes, elements of it do resemble a giant iPhone – and into the lagoon which opened out into the Atlantic.

Pumula has a towering 157ft/48m Rondal carbon rig which appears even taller with her 13ft/4m hinged burgee staff (see box, page 28) which in terms of looks tops the yacht off nicely.

Quickly under sail

The North main was unfurled from its Rondal boom using a handheld remote control and within a few minutes we were under sail. Likewise the headsail was deployed in moments thanks to the Rondal furler. The only captive winches on this cutter are for the main halyard and main-sheet. Lewmar drum winches, of which the primaries are back-winding models, control the Yankee and staysail, meaning sheets are exposed

on deck. This isn't a criticism, but the crew need to be aware of the dangers of long lengths of flailing sheets leading down the deck.

During our day sail off Florida there were a number of remarks about reefing issues in big following seas. On the Atlantic crossing the main was indeed reefed, but there was considerable concern over reducing the sail further because of the need to round up into the wind and sea to allow the furling boom to work. The conditions at the time would have made this nigh on impossible.

As it was, the crew coped with the sail they had, but how would they reduce sail further in those conditions? Mike Koppstein, Huisman's hugely experienced US-based sales director, said that one technique is to set a staysail, sheet it in hard so that it effectively backwinds the main thus depowering it sufficiently to reef. Combined with some alteration of course into the wind this can work, according to Koppstein.

Our day out was less extreme and the sailing most enjoyable. The yacht's steering system uses a direct rod and bevel box system linked to an arm on the quadrant. What this and the deep, balanced rudder provide is excellent feel for the helmsman. *Pumula* proved to be an easy yacht to sail upwind, responsive to the smallest movement on the wheel and once she was in the groove needed little attention. 

PHOTOS: TEAM PUMULA



DG/YWPIX



Above: at anchor in the ice during last year's maiden cruise. Far left: the author enjoying the sail in Florida. Left: evidence of how far north *Pumula* reached last summer

Downwind I found her a little less easy to settle down, more care was needed to maintain directional stability and I wasn't surprised to hear that the autopilot simply couldn't cope in the heavy downwind conditions experienced during the Atlantic crossing.

Nonetheless, this is a great yacht to sail, very rewarding for anyone who gets a buzz from a responsive, slippery yacht and, with practice, she will surely deliver the goods on the racecourse and on passage, although Michael van Bregt said interest in competition was limited. In fact, the asymmetric was due to be discarded for passagemaking and cruising because *Pumula* could maintain perfectly adequate average speeds under plain sail. There's a hydraulically furling tack point right on the bow for a large, light-wind code sail, but conditions on the day didn't suit this.

It was refreshing to step below and find a yacht with intimate spaces rather than large, wide open cabins, which so often typify the modern superyacht. Apart from anything else, this seamanlike design makes moving around below in a seaway a safer prospect than aboard many yachts we've seen.

Combine this intimacy with the timber finishes, upholstery choices

and unusual touches provided by interior designers Rhoades Young and you have an interesting, comfortable and user-friendly living space.

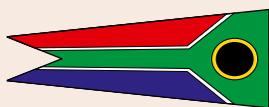
There's sleeping accommodation right forward for four crew in relatively spacious and smart quarters, a large galley on the port side, opposite which is a small crew mess.

The galley, with a spectacular, highly polished, pewter-topped counter/bar can be separated from a lower saloon seating area (see accommodation drawing, page 28) by a roll-down screen. There's a versatile double cabin to port, which can be used by either crew or guests for whom, with the lower saloon also at their disposal, the area becomes their personal suite. Remember, with the crew companionway there's no need to keep this as a thoroughfare.

Accommodation highlight

Steps lead up and aft to the deck saloon which enjoys excellent all rounds views from the beautiful timber dining table. Steps aft take guests down to two mirror-image twin guest cabins. The owners' suite can be accessed via the centreline passageway or from the deck through the aft companionway dedicated to this cabin.





Flying the flag

There's something satisfying about seeing a yacht flying a burgee. The one flying from

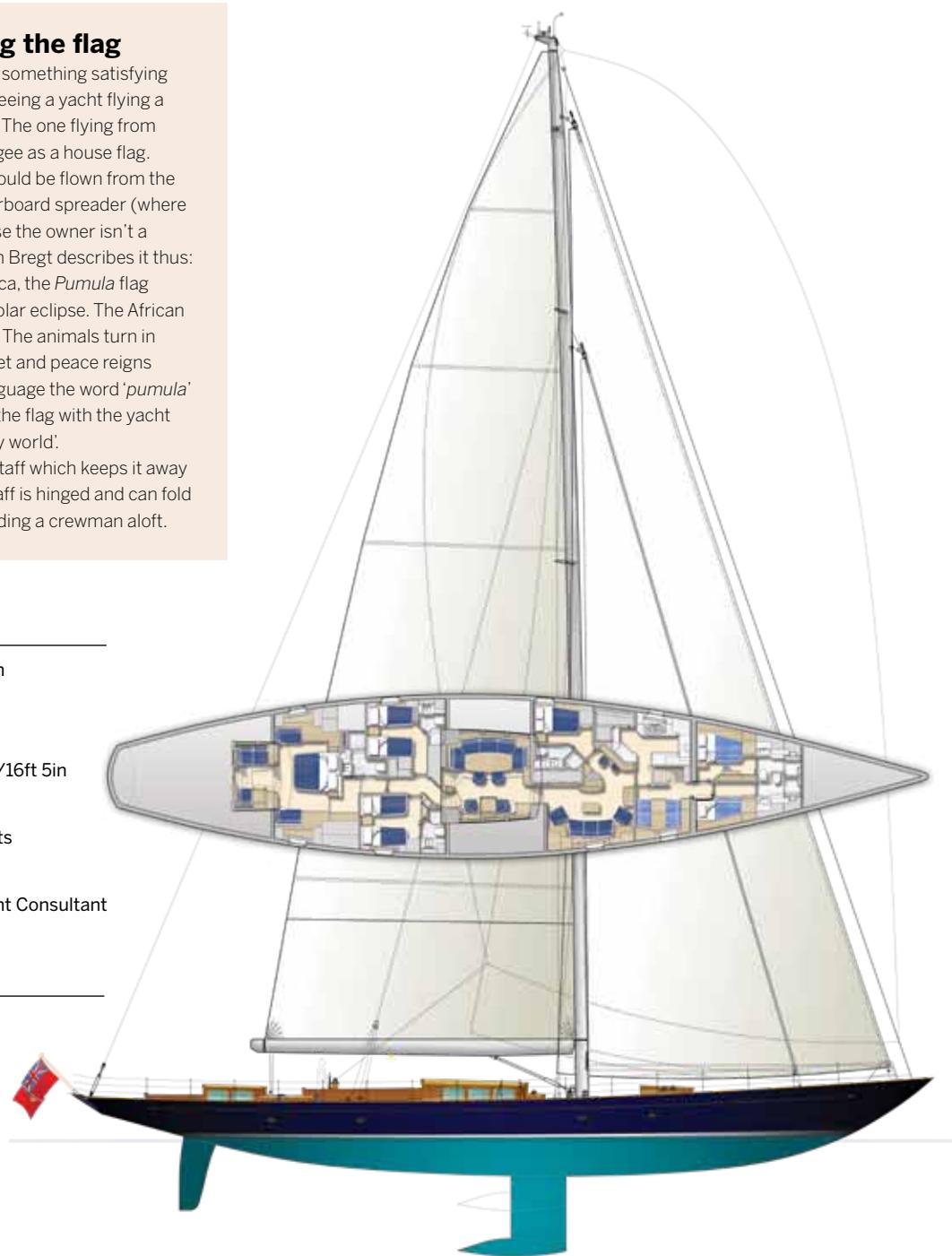
Pumula's masthead isn't so much a burgee as a house flag. I've always understood that a burgee should be flown from the masthead and a house flag from the starboard spreader (where one can also fly a burgee), but in this case the owner isn't a yacht club member. Captain Michael van Bregt describes it thus:

'Inspired by the colours of South Africa, the *Pumula* flag carries an abstract depiction of a total solar eclipse. The African heat is cooled by the shading of the sun. The animals turn in confusedly for the night and all goes quiet and peace reigns across the earth and sea. In the Zulu language the word '*pumula*' means peace and rest, hence marrying the flag with the yacht and its place of quiet escape from a busy world.'

The flag is set on a 4m/13ft carbon staff which keeps it away from masthead instrumentation. The staff is hinged and can fold down if required. This would require sending a crewman aloft.

Dimensions

LOA	37.33m	122ft 6in
LWL	27.47m	90ft 2in
Beam	7.48m	24ft 6in
Draught	3.00m/5.00m	9ft 10in/16ft 5in
Displacement	120 tonnes	
Designed by	Dykstra Naval Architects	
Interior	Rhoades Young	
Project management	Jens Cornelsen Yacht Consultant	
Built by	Royal Huisman	
Year of delivery	2012	



In fact, the owners' cabin with its centreline double bunk (equipped with substantial lee cloth fittings) is the highlight of the accommodation in my view. Occupants of the large double face aft and can look through the deckhouse seating area straight out of the private companionway and surrounding ports.

The full-width cabin has a lot of sole space, the interior seats either side of the deckhouse – traditionally they would be referred to as off watch seats – are cleverly designed and the whole area has an exceptional feeling of space, light and comfort.

Throughout the accommodation Rhoades Young have used an interesting mix of timbers, bleached oak for the joiner work and a darker oak sole. Wax-based finishing has brought out the grain and the knots (something normally avoided in yacht finishes) and while the close juxtaposition of the two sometimes jarred for me, the overall effect is pleasing. It makes a brand new yacht feel instantly mature.

Leather-served grab handles and unusual saddle-stitched leather bedside cabinets made to look like luggage all add to the interest.

Reflected light from the white-painted cabin bulkheads, passageway

bulkheads and the deckhead itself ensure that natural light is used to good effect, although I wondered if some of the deckhead detail could have been picked out in waxed natural timber just to break up the expanse of white.

Aiming for Cape Horn

We were lucky to catch *Pumula* at a standstill. Ever since her launch in the Netherlands in 2012 she has been on the move, from a maiden voyage to Norway, including the Loftoten Islands and subsequent visits to Svalbard, Bear Island and a point at more than 80°N before heading south for her transatlantic. A winter in the Caribbean was followed by her haul-out in Palm Beach before she was heading north for a summer in New England.

This winter she will start heading south, continuing to South America, the Chilean Channels and Cape Horn before sailing into the Pacific to continue her long, but relaxed circumnavigation.

I have to say I can't think of many yachts aboard which I would prefer to be to complete such a trip.

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