



#### SPECIFICATIONS

MAKE Salona

MODEL 46

PRICE FROM  
£248,000 ex VAT

DESIGNER  
J&J/Salona

BUILDER  
Salona Yachts

## FIRST TEST SALONA 46

*As a sporty mid-40, the Salona 46 faces stiff competition but also looks tough, competitively priced and well equipped to make her mark*

Words and Pictures David Harding

**P**erformance cruisers around the 45ft (14m) mark are not exactly thin on the ground. At least half a dozen well-established yards in Europe alone are producing sporty 40-somethings, all looking to offer a subtly different blend of qualities.

For anyone seeking a boat in this broad category, the Salona 46 might not be the first that springs to mind, perhaps because the Salona name is less well-known – in western Europe at least – than some of

the others. It's becoming better known, however. This Croatian yard has now been building boats for two decades and has enjoyed a more consistent and high-profile presence in the UK in recent years. And then there's the price of the new 46: starting at around £248,000 before VAT, it looks rather attractive.

#### MORE FOR YOUR MONEY?

When you see a boat costing less than you might expect, you're naturally going to wonder what's missing. But look at the specification of the Salona and, among other things, you see that





### PERFORMANCE FIGURES

POINT OF SAIL	AWA*	AWS**	SPEED
Close-hauled	37°	18-20 knots	6.9-7.2 knots
Fetch	60°	17-19 knots	8.3-8.5 knots
Beam reach	90°	13-15 knots	8.6-8.8 knots
Broad reach	120°	11-13 knots	8.1-8.3 knots
Run	180°	7-9 knots	6.3-6.6 knots

\*APPARENT WIND ANGLE \*\*APPARENT WIND SPEED



### LOGBOOK

#### TESTED BY

David Harding

#### LOCATION

Central Solent

#### WHEN

October 2021

#### CONDITIONS

NW F4-5

she's built with vacuum-infused laminates, vinylester resins, clear gel coat below the waterline and a stainless steel frame bonded to the inside of the hull to distribute the loads from the keel, mast and rigging. None of that suggests penny-pinching when it comes to the structure.

What's more, we know that Croatia has a long tradition of boatbuilding and has produced some pretty impressive boats of all sizes. We also know that the designers of the Salona 46, J&J (based just along the coast in Slovenia) are more than capable of designing slippery, well-mannered boats when they're given the freedom to do so. In any event, a quick glance at the lines and statistics gives you no reason to believe that the 46 is going to be left behind on the performance front. She's as up-to-the-minute as you could wish for when it comes to go-fast features – and styling too – from the deep, T-bull keel to the short ends, high-fractional rig with minimal-overlap headsail, twin wheels and large, low-level ports in the hull.

The principal reasons for the Salona's notably low price are that she's the product of a team known for designing 'production-friendly' boats that are slick to build, and then built in a country where labour rates are among the lowest in Europe.

To a potential purchaser, everything might now be starting to add up. If you like what you see on paper, you might next be tempted to have a look at the 46 in the flesh. You would be unlikely to be disappointed if you did. Nicely finished inside and out (bar a few areas on our test boat that needed tidying up), she undoubtedly epitomises the performance cruiser of the early 2020s. That said, despite her modern styling she's by no means extreme and doesn't slavishly

follow fashion. It might be a surprise to some that she doesn't sport twin rudders or incorporate chines in the stern. At the other end, the stem is a few degrees off vertical. She's modern for sure, yet in a way that means she will probably look less dated than trendier boats in a few years' time.

Those who have had reason to observe Salona for a while will recognise that this reflects a consistent approach. My first introduction to the company was in 2004, two years after its inception, when I sailed the 45 in Trieste and Split. Back then the 45, also designed by J&J, was just what the 46 is now.

Over the following years I have sailed many other Salonas. The most recent, in 2019, was the 380, designed by Maurizio Cossutti, but for the latest model the yard decided to go back to J&J.

### PUTTING ON A SHOW

The first 46 to arrive in the UK made it just in time for the Southampton Boat Show. I had a look at her there and then went for a spin in the Solent a few weeks later.

Spending time aboard and seeing the boat from different angles provided an opportunity to note features that hadn't drawn attention to themselves before, such as the shape of the stem. It's narrow at



Wide side decks and coamings keep the cockpit to a sensible width



The German-style mainsheet runs aft beneath the deck



A comfortable perch on the deck by the helm station



A broad stem creates space for the headsail's furling drum to be mounted below the deck



A diverter roller keeps the chain away from the furling drum in the anchor locker



Choose between hydraulic and cascade tensioning for the backstay

The hull has short overhangs for a long waterline, but the slightly raked stem gives looks that should last

RIGHT: An uncluttered deck layout, with clear side decks and the under-deck furling drum allowing a low foot for the headsail



The main heads and shower compartment serves both aft cabins



The galley is secure and well equipped, with plenty of drawers, light and ventilation



The master cabin in the three-cabin layout, complete with en-suite heads and hullside windows



A functional layout below decks strikes a good balance between seagoing practicality and in-harbour comfort

the waterline but wide enough at deck level to allow the furling drum to be mounted below the deck. An under-deck drum is found most commonly when a forestay is well abaft the stemhead on boats with a pronounced rake to the stem. Moving it aft reduces the J measurement, so this approach only works with non-overlapping headsails if the boat is light enough for an adequate sail area/displacement ratio to be maintained and if the foretriangle doesn't become too skinny.

Given her sail area/displacement ratio (20.9 with the 100% foretriangle) and other factors including the narrow waterline beam, the Salona should power up rapidly in anything more than a zephyr. The under-deck drum allows a low headsail foot for increased efficiency as well as giving a clean appearance and easier access to the anchor roller.

As with many performance cruisers, sails are not supplied as standard. Our test boat had a mainsail and 105% headsail in tri-radial Dacron from One Sails' loft in Split. The mainsail was well matched to the keel-stepped Seldén mast despite the lack of tension on the D1s. Bend was induced by the hydraulic tensioner (or twin cascades if you prefer) on the Dyneema backstay. Naturally a folding prop is fitted – a two-blader as standard or an optional three-blader as on our test boat.

The Salona is ballasted by a keel with a steel shaft and lead bulb giving a draught of 2.44m (8ft) unless you choose the shallow or deep alternatives (2.1m/6ft

11in or 2.61m/8ft 7in). Cast all in iron, the former is bound to compromise performance.

Deeper keels often weigh less, providing a lower centre of gravity for a greater righting moment as well as reducing the boat's overall weight. In this case the deep fin weighs slightly more than the standard, so its CG is substantially lower. If you also chose the carbon mast, rod rigging, flush seacocks and lightweight interior with foam-cored bulkheads,

you would have a pretty potent rocket-ship on your hands.

Even in standard form the Salona doesn't hang around. In a breeze of 12-16 knots, we clocked just over 7 knots upwind. The combination of a shifty offshore breeze and instruments that needed calibrating made it hard to gauge our angles with any precision, but a combination of interpolation and compass

headings suggested a true wind angle of 36-37°.

Response from the reasonably high-g geared Jefa steering (less than 1.5 turns from lock to lock) was crisp, while the deep rudder made the boat tolerant when provoked. If we tried bearing away from hard on the wind with the sheets pinned in, for example, the blade only lost grip as the gunwale approached the water. Our reprimand was a gentle rounding-up; not the instantly-head-to-the-wind reaction you sometimes experience. When you have deep draught and a balanced hull form, a single deep rudder will often provide ample grip and give feedback through the wheel that twin blades seldom do.

With a powerful rig and a deep keel, the 46 delivered a good turn of speed on the wind

## She's as up-to-the-minute as you could wish for when it comes to go-fast features

## CONTROL CENTRE

Twin wheels are a different matter, and probably considered the only practical solution on a boat of this size and nature. And while it can feel like a long way down to the leeward gunwale when you're helming from the high side of a broad-sterned 46-footer, at least the Salona is less broad in the stern than some. To help you stay on the high side – where the perch on the deck is pretty comfortable – foot-braces hinge up from the cockpit sole.

Forward of the wheels, the cockpit is far more sensibly designed than many. Wide side decks and comfortable coamings keep it to a practical width, unlike the open dance floors one sees all too often. A removable table, with folding leaves and a stainless frame, acts as a central hand-hold or foot-brace.

The choice and position of the hardware strikes a good balance between what's needed for short-handed cruising and fully crewed racing. Lewmar 45 self-tailers handle the German-style mainsheet, which is led aft each side beneath the deck. A full-width traveller is recessed into the cockpit sole between the winches and the helm stations.

Further forward on the coamings is a pair of Lewmar 50s for the headsail. Another pair of 45s is on the coachroof, the port one for the main halyard on our test boat being an electric upgrade at a cost of around £4,200.

Moving forward again we find two central hatches between the companionway and the mast. The moulding in the centre here is smooth. Elsewhere the deck and coachroof are finished in a non-slip pattern that's on the gentle side underfoot. Perhaps it's grippier if you have boots with soles that are still supple.

At least the non-slip won't be too harsh on your clothing as you slide across the deck and coachroof



**ABOVE LEFT:** Auxiliary power is provided by a Yanmar 4JH57 common-rail diesel. There's also an electric option by Oceanvolt

**ABOVE:** Weight has been kept low so the boat responds well in light airs

**BELOW:** Twin wheels are necessary on a wide stern, but the single rudder is responsive with plenty of grip

during tacks. Racing crews will also appreciate the fact that the substantial wooden toerail is lower and flatter abaft the chainplates for more comfortable hiking.

At the bow, the toerail ends level with the aft end of the anchor locker. Immediately abaft this, and separated from it by a watertight bulkhead (there's one in the stern too) is a deck locker big enough to swallow plenty of warps and fenders and a downwind sail or two. The locker is sacrificed if you choose the four-cabin layout with two cabins in the bow instead of the master cabin.

Beneath the locker our test boat had a retractable bow-thruster, accounting for around £6,500 of the £80,000-worth of extras that brought it up to a pretty decent cruising spec.

The standard 57hp Yanmar gave us nearly 9 knots at full chat (2,300rpm) and 6.7 knots at a comfortable 1,600 rpm. If you prefer the idea of electric

propulsion, you can have a system developed by Oceanvolt in Finland that also offers the option of hydro-generation under sail.

## BELOW DECKS

Heading down the hatch as the boat made upwind suggested that Salona has thought about life at sea below decks as well as above. The companionway steps have bevelled edges for secure footing, though they might benefit from a little more non-slip.

Handholds are good. You find a tubular rail each side below the windows and one overhead too. I once asked a well-known interior designer why he hadn't incorporated an overhead rail in a boat I was involved with. His reply was, 'It's not a bus!'. To many of us, overhead rails still have their place.

As on deck, Salona has avoided wide open spaces so you can move around securely when the boat's heeled. It's good to see that these practical features have not meant sacrificing the general appeal of the interior: they're unlikely to put people off who judge it solely by what it offers within the confines of a marina.

It's a light and airy layout, finished as standard in light European oak or in other timbers for an extra cost. Salona can incorporate a degree of customisation; one benefit of being a relatively small yard, and something many don't offer.

The joinery is neatly finished and reassuringly substantial. No internal mouldings are used below deck level except in the heads, giving easier access to the inside of the hull and allowing bulkheads to be bonded directly to the hull too. Moulded headliners are used, however, so the bulkheads are slotted into them.

Lifting the sole boards in the saloon reveals the steel frame, through the central part of which the keel is bolted with its ten M30 bolts. Moulded reinforcement runs from the frame up the topsides to the chainplates. Both the general layout and the detailing look well thought out, even if purists might bemoan the fact that the chart table is on the small side and mounted at the aft end of the starboard saloon berth. Apparently a larger one will be offered. A few decades ago, this would have been the chart table of a 25-footer. Twin double aft cabins come as standard, with space down the centreline between them if you chose to have a generator room.



## PROS

Fast and forgiving under sail  
Easy to manage short-handed  
Light, airy and practical below decks

## CONS

Small chart table  
Non-slip finish on deck could be better  
Moulded headliners restrict access to underside of deck

## FACTS AND FIGURES

**PRICE AS TESTED**  
£297,500 ex VAT

**LOA** 13.50m (44ft 4in)

**LWL** 12.23m (40ft 1in)

**BEAM** 4.20m (13ft 9in)

**DRAUGHT** Standard fin 2.44m (8ft 0in)

**DISPLACEMENT**  
9,800kg (21,605lb)

**BALLAST**  
2,887kg (6,365lb)

**BALLAST RATIO** 29.5%

**DISPLACEMENT / LENGTH** 150

**SAIL AREA** 84.0m<sup>2</sup> (904ft<sup>2</sup>)

**SA/D RATIO** 20.90

**DIESEL** 210l (46gal)

**WATER** 200l (44gal)

**ENGINE** 57hp

**TRANSMISSION**  
Saildrive

**RCD** category A

**DESIGNER** J&J/  
Salona Yachts

**BUILDER**  
Salona Yachts

**UK AGENT**  
Salona Yachts UK

**TEL** 07570 612405 /  
07980 859857

**WEBSITE** www.  
salonayachtsuk.com

# SALONA 46

## THE TEST VERDICT

Although Salona is still a relatively young company, it's encouraging to see that it has remained true to the principles it started with 20 years ago: of producing unfussy boats that are fast, well mannered, forgiving, easy to handle and, it seems, solidly built. They're wholesome boats; modern and stylish, yet confident enough in what they offer to have no need to pander to the demands of fashion unless the fashion is born of something that's of practical value.

Our test boat was an early example and one or two areas could have done with some tidying up. These were relatively minor and did little to detract from the overall impression of a nicely finished boat. The price precludes a lovingly hand-crafted interior of the sort offered by some Scandinavian yards, even given the labour rates in Croatia, but it's to the credit of both builder and designer that the Salona doesn't look like a product of slick production engineering.

## WOULD SHE SUIT YOU AND YOUR CREW?

If you're looking for a performance cruiser of this size and general type, there's a good chance the Salona will stack up pretty well. Looking at her tells you what to expect: her performance is entirely consistent with her appearance. If you like what you see, you will probably like the boat.

I see no reason why she shouldn't be competitive on the race course if pointed in the right direction, but there's a much bigger market for fast cruisers than for race boats.

This is a boat that's responsive and rewarding to sail while not punishing lapses of concentration. You could tune her up to full-on racing spec, or down for easy cruising. Go green and silent with electric power if you like. Whichever way you go, you will have plenty of options and a good deal of boat for your money.

The Salona will probably look less dated than trendier boats in a few years' time

