

WEEKEND WARRIOR

The PTS26 motor launch, built in Holland but inspired by Swede CG Pettersson, is so popular that it's changing the market

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It's often been said that boats are like people; seldom if ever are they compared to talking bears. But this one, a shiny new PTS26 belonging to British designer Andrew Winch, is named after Baloo from the *Jungle Book*. The bear – at least the Disney version – is like the charming, naughty uncle who teaches you to steal apples and fight, so you might expect a vessel named after him to be similarly overpowering and rough around the edges. Thankfully, the PTS26 – even with the over specc'd 190bhp diesel this one has – is nothing like the singing bear and more like Bagheera, the reliable, well-mannered black panther: dad. But that name is already taken by the owner's other boat – an 18ft Tofinou daysailer that comes out to sail in company on test day. And what a day that was, with just enough wind for *Baloo* to send spray flying, and for Andrew's brother-in-law David to fill the sails on *Bagheera*. The warm, unbroken sun made it feel like the last summer's day of 2020, stolen from autumn's grasp.

First impression of the boat quayside are very favourable indeed. The PTS 26 is 24-carat elegant, and



*Inset: An original
Pettersson launch shows
the lineage clearly*



PETTERSSON MOTOR BOAT

unusual in the sense that it's not aping the Riva look, which in turn aped the American runabout look of the first half of the 20th century. The runabout appeal is beyond question, as history has proved, and has accordingly been much imitated – done to death, some might say. But here is a completely different shape: gone is the swoopy tumblehome, straight sheer, raked bow and stained mahogany. In their place is a nearly plumb bow, a modest transom, dark blue painted (GRP) hull and, joy of joys, a stepped sheerline with little portholes in the bow sections. If Riva evokes thoughts of Brigitte Bardot and Italian playboys, then this is the boat from the war film that approaches the boarding ladder of a destroyer under way, carrying a uniformed senior officer standing up straight as a flagstaff, one hand on the windshield.

In practical terms, the Riva comparison doesn't stack up: a deep-vee, planing, twin-engined, open boat is very different from a semi-displacement, single-engined cabin fast cruiser like this. But owners choose boats like this as much for style as practicality, and in style terms, the likes of CG Pettersson and Riva (and let's not forget Alan Burnard too) are bearers of a very rare distinction: these are the few designers who have managed to create craft that are practical but, without sacrificing any clarity of purpose in their appearance, so instantly recognisable that they can only be described as icons.

ON BOARD

First impressions on board are of space, space and more space. You could probably go out as a group of ten on this, certainly on inland waters, and this has been the principal aspect of the PTS26's success. It's a simple boat: the huge self-draining cockpit is home to U-shaped seating and a central table that rises up from the sole and, if clothed in cushions, becomes either a lounging area – or, with canopy, a large double outdoor berth. Aft of it is a generously sized mahogany swim platform.

Forward of it, and with no step to trip over, are the helm's and passenger seats, on swivelling pedestals. Two footsteps take you down to the small, functional cabin. The look down here is clean: white two-pack paint and honest, high-quality plywood with exposed edges.

You get a heads with sit-down shower, a small galley, and a vee-berth, leaving the cockpit lockers free for external stowage. Andrew has no intention of sleeping on *Baloo*, but it's a reasonable proposition, with the

potential of two more in that palatial cockpit. The boat was, in fact, conceived as a weekender.

Soon we are underway, and leaving Northney Marina is a very relaxed affair on a calm day – although *Baloo* has a bowthruster for those days when the wind is blowing you on. Thanks to the full-length cockpit lockers, stowing the fenders and warps is a doddle. The whole departure could not have been easier.

AT SPEED

Once underway in the harbour at the eight-knot speed limit, we head for lunch in Itchenor, opening the throttle for some high-speed runs out in the Solent. The feeling at slow speeds is much as you'd expect. At higher speed, the boat quickly settles onto a gentle plane, in the manner you'd expect from her hull type, being a semi-displacement boat with a rounded hull. We fall somewhat short of the boat's expected top speed of 22 knots, but these are just teething issues: it is, in fact, the first time Andrew has given it the beans, and he lets me do the same, accelerating to the top whack of (on the day) about 18 knots and throwing the boat into full-lock turns to make runs past the stationary camera RIB.

All the qualities of the semi-displacement type come through: the easy visibility, with the boat almost flat on the (semi) plane; the better fuel economy; the increased torque – the 190hp diesel is turning a big propeller, which provides plenty of torque to keep the whole party going as the boat works her way through the small waves; and the amazing, nearly totally flat, cornering. This is a supremely unimposing boat to handle, even at full capacity, and with the additional canopy in place, we enjoy a completely dry ride. "Hold on – wash coming" I mutter to Andrew, as we head full-bore for the wake of the chase boat, but the PTS26 just rides gently through. That raised foredeck is not just a pretty face, or additional accommodation: combined with the full transom stern, it gives plenty of buoyancy at the ends to reduce pitching motion. It's only afterwards, looking at the dramatic photos of splashing water, that we realise there was a bit of chop out there that day.

The driving position offers almost uninhibited view all around, and, as Andrew notes, takes on a very different feel with canopy up or down. The ride in the stern seating area is similarly relaxed, and close to the water. That the PTS26 is such a capable seaboat comes

Below left to right: Simple galley in high-spec plywood; Esthetic decking and deck shower; Much detailing, including the companionway step, is in mahogany





Above clockwise from top left: Teatime, showing the huge cockpit; At speed with canopy up; Console with joystick bowthruster; Electric windlass and anchor - most PTS 26s don't have anchors
Main: Owner at the helm - note davits



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as something of a surprise, given that most of them are used on rivers and lakes – in fact, most tie up to withies in their native Holland, so Andrew had to specify the anchor. Although the PTS is a capable sea boat, there is one niggle: the (quite narrow) side decks are hard to access from the cockpit, other than by stepping on the soft settee. As Andrew points out, one generally goes up on deck in calm waters, when approaching the dock – and the anchor is deployed electrically by a push-button windlass controlled from the helm, making visits to the foredeck unnecessary at sea. If we weren't doing a photo shoot, we could have left the bow line on its cleat, led back to the cockpit, eliminating the issue. These are semi-bespoke boats (see right), so if you need a step-down from side deck to cockpit, the builders will give you one – although doing without is how you get that enormous living space.

“The boat has been a hugely successful venture for us” says UK broker Gillian Nahum of Henley Sales and Charter. “It met a need in the market for a well-built, stylish, weekender, with the classic look but in GRP. Everyone on the Thames wants a heads and the ability to seat 10 people.” It's a tall order, but get it right, and the boat that does it becomes that incredibly rare thing: the overnight spirit-of-tradition success story. In fact, Gillian has sold no fewer than a dozen in just three years, with three more in the pipeline, including a 31 for the Caribbean. There is no other model of boat that Gillian has sold more of. “It's well built, too, which is great for the broker as well as the owner, as we don't have to deal with problems!” she adds.

For British buyers, the boat is available from £79,700, although the semi-bespoke nature and options list mean that a realistic price for a new PTS26 will be more like £100,000 or less for a river spec model with a 65bhp diesel; electric and hybrid are also available. Those after a seagoing trim will generally choose the 140bhp or more diesel and will pay more like £135,000. There are mass-produced cuddy cruisers out there for less, and similar boats in timber for more, but at this price point, there's probably nothing quite like it.

For more on the PTS26, 22 and 31, see statementmarine.nl or British agent Henley Sales and Charter, hscboats.co.uk

**PETTERSSON
26
DESIGNED
Vripak, 2008**

**BUILDER
Statement
Marine**

**LOA
26ft 4in (8m)**

**LWL
23ft 10in
(7.3m)**

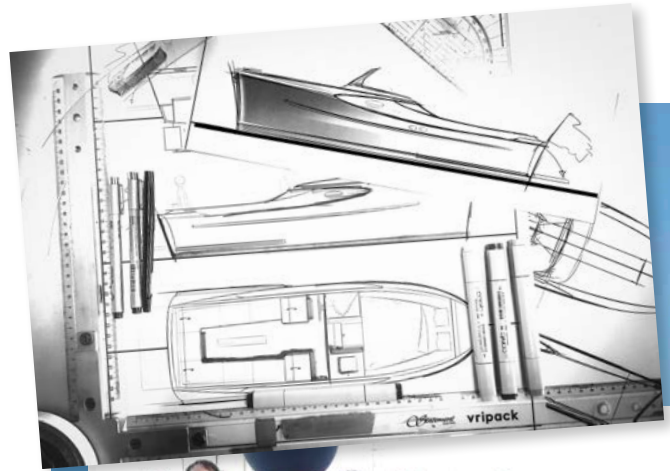
**BEAM
8ft 6in (2.6m)**

**DRAFT
2ft 6in
(0.8m)**

**AIR DRAUGHT
5ft 10in
(1.8m)**

**DISP
c2.6 tonnes**

**PROPULSION
190bhp diesel**



The team at
Statement Marine



*Below: Baloo
(motor) and
Bagheera (sail) in
company*



How to build a PTS26

Two Dutchmen, Harm van Tienen and Jaap van de Rest, founded Statement Marine in 2007. At the time, Jaap had a steel back-decker and Harm had a wooden Pettersson smuggler launch called Jolle, dating from the 1930s, when engines lacked power, and boats that wanted to go fast had to be thin – in Jolle’s case, a mere, canoe-like 6ft (1.8m) over 23ft 7in (7.2m) length. A beautiful thing, but clearly impractical. The two men approached the big Vripack design studio and asked for a boat in the Pettersson style – and it had to tick three boxes: be good for weekend use, easy to maintain, and, refreshingly, not too expensive.

The semi-planing (AKA semi-displacement) hull form was ideal for the purpose, not only for the advantages outlined in the main body of this article, but because it provides more bite in the water, leading to good low-speed manoeuvrability, essential on the Dutch inland waterways, where the speed limit is 9mph, and where many PTS26 owners keep and use their boats. It also allows speed up to 23 knots, with the bigger engine, for cruising on the Rhine and North Sea. As for quality, “We build the entire boat ourselves” Harm says. “The factory

is just 20km from our office in Schagen. In the past, we tried stainless steel from Asia for fittings, and though it was labelled 360-grade, it still rusted. Now we make everything or source it very locally.”

The hull is in 11mm-thick hand laid GRP. “The keel is massive” says Harm. The drive shaft goes through the keel, which is then filled with GRP and sand. The idea behind this is that the boat should be able to take a pretty serious knock without the all-important driveshaft being damaged or bent out of alignment. The underside of the boat is epoxied to prevent osmosis, and the decks are Esteck, a synthesised, laid teak deck alternative that is laser-cut at the factory and supplied ready to glue on by the builder. It is part of the low maintenance requirement set by Harm and Jaap: “It will last about 40 years without colour fade” says Harm.

Since starting build, the company has got it down to a fine art, with a 4-6 week build time. Twelve years on from the first boat, they are already approaching their 100th, with over 90 now built, and they have no wish to build more than 15 a year. The current range also includes a 31; and a 22 is now in the works.

