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When I first laid eyes on the Absolute Navetta 73 at the Cannes Yachting Festival, one would think I was seeing her just the way any builder would want its boat to be seen: best foot forward for the show and all that. But in all honesty, my first view of the boat was at a sea trial before the show even opened for the day. I was there to test the Absolute 58 Fly, and as I was waiting for that sea trial to begin, I had a chance to watch the Navetta 73 in action. Leaving a crowded festival dock is always a bit exciting—such activity can't happen at most U.S. boat shows. As the Absolute team scurried about to prepare the 58 Fly to depart, I rested my gaze on the Navetta 73 as her crew freed the surly bonds of her lines and she gently pulled away under the watchful eye of her skipper, his hand resting lightly on the Volvo Penta IPS joystick.

Later, out on the bay, I thoroughly enjoyed the ride on the 58 Fly, but my eye was drawn to the Navetta as we circled and gamboled about her, like a puppy playing around a well-trained Labrador. The Navetta's stately mien stemmed from her vertical pilothouse windows and substantial brow, her LOA and obvious hull volume, but also her flybridge, which seemed to overhang beyond her cockpit. She was built for more than just long-distance passages, and we watched as she sliced through the chop on plane at what seemed to be near 20 knots.

The Absolute Navetta 73 is heralded as the builder's new flagship, and it's not hard to see why. The Navetta 73 has a legit big-boat feel, from the fine interior finish to the layout, and the way its 1,000-horsepower Volvo Penta IPS 1350s purr. It seemed a bit unexpected to me that the company bestowed such an honorific on this model, particularly since the Navetta line felt like, if it was not a secondary, then a smaller part of the builder's business. After all, Absolute only introduced the Navetta 58 at the 2014 Cannes Yachting Festival and debuted the Navetta 52 the following year.

THE NEXT MORNING, I joined a large complement, including some dealers, a few representatives from the boating press, a couple of Volvo Penta executives, the requisite Absolute Yachts marketing personnel, and even a possible buyer.

Before we left the dock, I recall thinking that the flybridge had clinched the Navetta 73 as a large yacht. Not one that merely had pretensions to the label, mind you, but one that actually acceded to the mantle on her own merits. My reasoning was just this simple: No matter how much room there is on the rest of the boat, the amount of deck space on the flybridge makes it "large." There are no fewer than four discrete seating areas—including the helm with companion lounge forward; a large settee with dining table, loose chairs and an al fresco galley beneath a sunroof-equipped hardtop; a lounging space with a sofa and a couple of easy chairs; and a pair of sunloungers all the way aft.

When I spoke to Cesare Mastroianni, president of Absolute of Americas, Inc., a U.S. corporation wholly owned by Absolute Yachts to administer its business here, he told me the Navetta 73 holds true to the company's plan to offer value. "We have the slogan that says, 'More value for your money,' and this is intended to extend to the full range of Absolute Yachts," he said. "We want to give more to those who would like to invest money in yachting, and would like to extend their ability to cruise most of the year, and their ability to invite more guests aboard, and have more comfort compared to what yachts offer so far. We realized the possibility of having larger dimensions without increasing the budget would be appreciated." He cites the example of the 73 with its 72-foot 10-inch LOA, which he says provides the same level of comfort found in boats larger than 80 feet. I set out to see if he was right.

Absolute touts its use of Italian design, which stands on proportion, and the 73's flybridge makes the most of it by adding useful features: That aforementioned brow over the windshield lends shade and protection from spray and rain, while the flybridge adds cover to wide side decks—a nice, salty touch.

"We have the integrated structural system by which we are able to obtain these dimensions without increasing the weight of the boat too much," Mastroianni said. "Without compromising the ability to have attractive design, we use different materials in different areas of the boat. We use glass and wood in the hull and we have Kevlar and carbon fiber in the upper parts."

That well-shaded cockpit has access to those side decks as well as a nicely railed stairway up to the flybridge. A settee across the transom has a dining table in front of it. Glass and steel doors open wide to the salon, giving a broad entry from the cockpit to this delightful

A huge foredeck seating area is another option with terrific views at anchor.

LOA: 72'10"
Beam: 18'4"
Draft: 5'4"
Displ.: 115,400 lb.
Fuel: 1,057 gal.
Water: 293 gal.
Power 2/1,000-hp Volvo Penta IPS 1350
Transmission: Volvo Penta IPS
Propellers: Volvo Penta IPS Q1 propset
Generator: Onan, 29-kW
Base Price: $3,508,000
(landed at Port Everglades, Florida)

space. There's a conversation area aft, with a sofa, loveseat, and chair surrounding a cocktail table. Forward of that lies a formal dining table with seating for eight and excellent views from truly large windows on either side; they extend nearly from the overhead down to just above knee height on either side, making the space bright. In the European style a galley is forward of the dining area, enclosed for the crew to do their work out of sight. Opposite the dining area are the stairs to the accommodations.

You would be forgiven if you thought you were in the master when you walked into the large full-beam stateroom located amidships just forward of the engine room. After all, its hullside windows, separate shower and head compartments to port, plus a dressing table in a nook to starboard all point to the luxury appointments of owner's accommodations. Of course you've guessed by now that you'd be wrong, since this is merely the VIP stateroom, situated off a passageway that also grants access to a pair of double guest staterooms, one with a single double berth, one with twins, and both en suite. Crew's quarters abaft the engine room offer accommodations for up to three, with a separate entrance and head and laundry facilities.

The master is located forward, with a separate stairway from the pilothouse for true privacy. In that stateroom, you will find plenty of floorspace and headroom, with a longitudinal berth with its head aft and large hullside windows. "We had seen a similar approach on yachts, but we were not satisfied with the method that other manufacturers used to implement this idea," Mastroianni said. "We thought the idea was great but the implementation was not. What we ended up with is more astonishing because we have full headroom and huge glass windows, so when you stand up in the cabin or you are lying down on the bed you have a wonderful panorama from the windows. Also there's more privacy here because the master cabin is totally separate from all the other accommodations." Beneath the cabin there is a great space to put mechanical systems and also stowage for luggage and provisions. This master is a great concept and it's well executed.

But to my eye it's the pilothouse that is the true master on this boat. Two steps up from the main-deck level, the helm feels like a real command center. The Glass Cockpit system, the joint venture of Volvo Penta and Garmin, is the centerpiece. It's a very striking installation as it integrates radar, chartplotting, and engine systems with three 22-inch Garmin displays arrayed around the helm dashboard, and one 24-inch Garmin touchscreen display mounted within the dash itself, as a sort of electronic chart table. "The difference is in the performance," Mastroianni says. "The Glass Cockpit adds more efficient integration between the displays and the interaction possible with the electronic EVC system of the Volvo Penta engines. And the dimensions of the entire boat do not compromise the sightlines from the pilothouse." This makes more and more sense when you drive the boat.

The Navetta 73 is the first boat introduced with the Volvo Penta IPS 1350, which uses a pair of 1,000-horsepower V-6 Volvo D13 diesels linked to third-generation IPS pods, and the performance is striking. As I said, this is a large boat and we're not setting any speed records here. But the smooth control afforded by IPS means that taking the helm gives you the confidence to take her where you wish.

WHILE THE SEAS WERE not terribly rough on our sea trial it was a breezy, drizzly morning, and the Baie de Cannes offered a delightful proving ground, with the sun occasionally peeking through the overcast skies. I drove from the flybridge helm, which had a couple of 22-inch Garmin displays and a nice installation of the Volvo Penta components: Both joystick and binnacle were situated on an outcropping to the right of the wheel. She handled nicely, responding to steering and lever controls and heeling just a bit inboard on the sharpest turns. Absolute paid attention to the center of gravity on this boat, using those high-tech materials to distribute the weight as the design team intended.

But Absolute has the IPS system dialed in. "We are real partners, not simply a client of Volvo Penta," Mastroianni says. "We contributed to the development of IPS2 and IPS3 because we shared our hulls with their team in Sweden to test the prototype of the IPS system at the Krossholmens Testing Center close to Gothenburg. This is a mutual benefit because at the end of the day we have acquired a lot of experience in optimizing the design of the hulls so that the IPS systems performs well."

Everyone on board for our little cruise seemed to find something else that they liked at every turn, and I was no different. But if I had to choose, I would say the flybridge had me from the first. But it wasn't only the space and the views that appealed to me, delightful though they were. It was the flybridge where I got to take the helm seat and drive. ❐

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Guests will be drawn into a welcoming salon. The forward master (below left) is a true sanctuary for the owner, while the VIP has a dressing table befitting a master (below).

RPM	KNOTS	GPH	RANGE	DB(A)
600	5.5	2.6	2,012	53
1000	9.2	10.6	826	54
1250	10.5	16.9	591	55
1500	12.2	27.7	419	61
1750	14.6	43.9	316	63
2000	18.2	61.6	281	62
2250	22.3	85.3	249	64
2370	25.5	101.7	239	68

TEST CONDITIONS: Air temperature: 68°F; humidity: 80%; seas: 2-3'; load: 45% fuel, 30% water, 11 persons. Speeds were measured in two directions w/ Garmin GPS. GPH recorded by Volvo Penta engine-monitoring system. Range is based on 90% of advertised fuel capacity. Sound levels taken at the helm. 65 dB(A) is the level of normal conversation.