

# SHORT TEST



*This Gilles Vaton-designed yacht has a fully radiused stem and a distinctive transom*

## FEELING 286

*A fast family cruiser/racer from the French Kirié stable, the 286 comes with wing or fin keel and two accommodation layout options*

The market for yachts of around 30ft (9.14m) is very competitive and more first-time buyers are considering craft of this size. Naturally, they are looking for something which is easy yet rewarding to handle. In addition, the yacht must be comfortable to live aboard and maintain a good price on the secondhand market. Kirié Constructions Nautique de la Rochelle, who build the Feeling range, have made a direct attack on this market with their new Feeling 286, designed by Gilles Vaton.

The yacht has a hull which is instantly recognisable as coming from Vaton's drawing board. The stem is very fully radiused and the forefoot only just kisses the water when the yacht is at rest. The full forward sections fair into almost a soft chine towards mid-length and this characteristic is carried right aft to the retroussée transom with its bathing step. A fold-up bathing ladder is extra.

We sailed the deep fin version which draws an impressive 5ft 6in (1.68m), but a shallow (winged) keel drawing 1ft 9in (0.53m) less is available for those for whom shoal draught is a prime consideration. The yacht is

tiller steered by a large, semi-skegged wooden rudder of excellent section set right aft.

The coachroof is well styled and plenty of natural light is admitted to the accommodation via large cabin windows, two acrylic fore hatches and a heavy duty, smoked acrylic accommodation hatch which slides smoothly into its garage.

Although the yacht has a modest ballast ratio of only 31.6 per cent, initial stability when stepping aboard is good because the firm bilge produces excellent form stability. The upper deck is stiff, uncluttered and easy to walk about upon. It is finished with a nonslip, geometric pattern moulded in the gelcoat. This is well done and the detailing of the deck as a whole is good. The genoa tracks are carried on ledges which extend along the bottom of the cabin trunk and fair into the cockpit coamings. This keeps the track off the walk-on areas, providing pleasantly clear and wide side decks.

The cockpit seats four in comfort. The seats themselves are covered with teak slats and there is a removable sternsheet moulding which serves as a cover to the self-draining well designed to house both the gas bottle

stowage and the liferaft valise. An Amiot mainsheet track runs across the after edge of the bridgedeck. Efficient, three-part purchases allow one to position the traveller with ease even under load.

Two layouts are offered. The owner's version — which we tested — features a single, large, double-berthed after cabin as well as a sleeping platform right forward which will accommodate a single adult or a couple of small fry. Two more adults could sleep on the C-shaped settee. Also available is a charter version with two identical, double-berthed after cabins and warps, fenders and sails stowage in place of the forward berth.

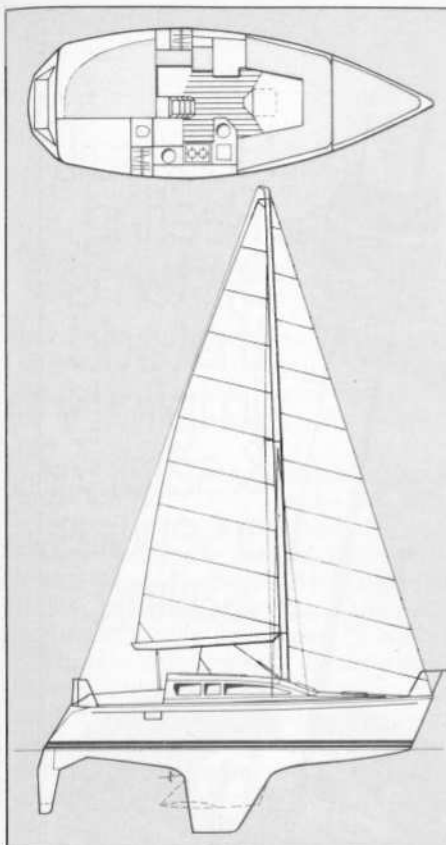
The owner's layout works well. There is room to seat seven or eight around the solid, well-fiddled cabin table which is fitted above the engine casing. The latter, complete with its wired up engine control panel, can be withdrawn aft to expose three sides of the engine. A section of the cabin sole just abaft the engine removes to expose the sump above the ballast keel and the propeller shaft running out just abaft the root of the fin keel.

Engine noise in the saloon was no more than one would expect with the engine more conventionally sited behind the accommodation ladder, but the position just behind the mast pillar keeps weight in the centre of the boat, lowers the cg slightly and provides much useful additional space in the after cabin(s).

The forward position is very acces-

*Simple but well-designed galley. L-shaped, positioned just forward of the head*





#### Dimensions

LOA	28ft 6in	8.69m
LWL	23ft 5in	7.14m
Beam	9ft 10in	3.00m
Draught		
(deep fin)	5ft 6in	1.68m
(shallow)	3ft 9in	1.14m
Ballast	1,738lb	788kg
Displacement	5,500lb	2,494kg
Sail area	463ft <sup>2</sup>	43m <sup>2</sup>
Engine		
Volvo 2001	9hp	6.71kW

**Price:** (Special, one after cabin)  
£21,490 ex VAT.

**Designed by:** Gilles Vaton.

**Built by:** Kirié Constructions Nautiques SA, Route de la Rochelle, 85100 Les Sables d'Olonne, France. Tel: (51) 32.68.83. Telex: 710852 F, France.

**UK agents:** Plain Sailing Ltd, Hamble Point Marina, School Lane, Hamble, Southampton. Tel: Southampton (0703) 453900. Telex: 47235 HPMG (Plain Sailing).

sible for maintenance and repair.

The navigating station is convenient to use and there is plenty of bulkhead space for instruments beside the side-hinged table top. Beside the vinyl-covered navigator's seat is the simple yacht's switch panel which also includes a battery state meter.

There is a simple galley with adequate stowage and a deep, round stainless steel sink served by foot pumped cold fresh water from a 25-gallon, plastic water tank fitted just ahead of the eight-gallon fuel tank. In the yacht we tested the water tank was not strapped down. We are assured that this fault will be rectified in subsequent yachts. Battery isolator switches and the fuel filter are situated beneath the athwartships section of the settee.

In the head/shower compartment there is plenty of room. Stowage for toiletries is adequate and a hanging space for oilskins is provided beside the head itself. All seacocks are readily accessible and double-clipped at skin fittings. The shower tray is drained via its own pipe to the main sump from whence waste water is pumped over-side by the bilge pump worked from the cockpit.

Aft the navigating compartment, the door in the cabin after bulkhead leads into a very large, double-berthed after cabin. There is plenty of hanging locker space and shelved stowage. The cabin sole is carpeted and the area above berth top trimmed with a soft velour lining.

Under power the yacht was exceptionally easy to handle. The engine fires readily from both hot and cold although at high cruising revs the engine noise level in the saloon is intru-

sive. A maximum speed of 6.2 knots was achieved at maximum revs. The yacht could be stopped within her own overall length from full speed ahead and steerage was established going astern just as soon as stern way was on the yacht.

A mainsail with two slab reefs and a number one genoa are included in the basic price of the yacht. The yacht we sailed was equipped with Goyiot roller furling/reefing on the headsail which is on the extras list. This really does make sense when the yacht has mainly a cruising role.

The two-panel Z-spar, deck-stepped mast is supported laterally by cap

shrouds and forward and after lowers. The backstay adjustment is a simple, threaded screw drive.

A light breeze of not more than eight knots prevailed for our test. The yacht proved both willing and very nicely balanced on all points. There is no doubt that she is fast, but then she has a very long useful waterline length. With a breeze up her tail, one would not be surprised if her speed did not embarrass some of her racier sisters of similar size. Closehailed and sailing in flat water, the yacht made 5.4 knots with 8/9 knots of wind across the deck.

The Feeling 286 is a concept which is certain to prove popular. We would have liked to have seen a slightly better finish to some of the joiner work, but the yacht is built to a pretty competitive price. Longer grabrails on each side of the accommodation ladder would be appreciated by small children.

Although the test yacht was equipped with two 75amp/hr batteries, only one is provided as standard. Even small yachts should be provided with a separate battery dedicated to engine start only. Additional battery(s) should take care of the domestic supply.

The yacht is extremely easy to handle under power and great fun to sail. The use of space below is very well considered. This is a yacht which will give every confidence to the family new to sailing. It will find favour also with the more experienced cruising yachtsman. ■

*The main saloon is light and airy with a sleeping area on a platform right up forward. The engine is sited under the table abaft the mast pillar*

