

Targa 27.2

Alex Smith investigates the latest incarnation of Targa's fabled 27-footer.

There's a thoroughly justified element of smugness involved in the ownership of a Targa. Designed and built in Finland, they have never been about extravagant displays of wealth or potency. Instead, the established

formula is all about effectiveness at sea, ease of use, and the provision of safe and enjoyable year-round recreation. Now as ever, Targas are bought by people who are more concerned about ability than appearance – and while I don't much hold with the idea that automotive products are ambassadors for your personality, there's no doubt that, despite the brand's enduring stylistic modesty, most of us view the owner of a Targa, as well as the boat itself, with envy and respect in equal measure.





The pilothouse is longer, wider and altogether better than before. Access to the three-man cabin is beneath the central part of the aft bench.



So when a company like Targa puts its best-selling model out to pasture and introduces a direct replacement, you tend to suspect that there will be very little difference between the two. After all, the 27 has always been a mainstay of the range, with the original 1991 model selling 200 boats and the second-generation 27.1 selling around 400 models in its 16 years of service. And yet, when you look more closely at the 27.2, you discover that this fresh model is in fact an entirely new boat, built upon a new hull, with such

comprehensive alteration in proportion and fit-out that virtually no components are shared with the outgoing 27.1. That's obviously a bold and labour-intensive approach for Targa to have adopted, but, given the extraordinary pre-launch sales of the new boat, it already seems to be outgunning its predecessor. So what makes the 27.2 so special?

New and improved

Launched at the Helsinki Boat Show in February 2018, the basic concept behind the

27.2 is of course no different to the one that has brought the company its success. It's an offshore pilot house craft with walk-around side decks, a compact fly, sliding doors on both sides, an inboard engine and a traditional aesthetic. However, from that point onwards, virtually everything else is new.

For a start, the hull is 13cm longer than the old model, and the overall length has also been increased by 29cm. While that creates a more versatile and accommodating footprint for the designers to exploit with a reconfigured internal layout, it is notable that Targa has also increased the waterline length and given the bow a steeper stem in order to generate a more graduated and efficient transition to the plane with less in the way of bow elevation.

Step on board and the new dimensions again come to the fore. The new boat is 6cm wider

than the 27.1, which means that, while the side decks are slightly narrower and the bow deck slightly shorter, the pilot house is in fact 20cm longer and 12cm wider than that of the old model. And yet the side decks remain easily wide enough to be used by a big man in bulky offshore gear; and the bow is also impressively expansive, with easy dining for five, as well as plenty of space to make your way around the front edge of the pilot house. In fact, there's such ergonomic excellence here that I can't help thinking the old boat must have been quite wasteful in its allocation of on-board spaces – and that's a hypothesis that is in no

TARGA HAVE TAKEN THEIR TIME-HONOURED FORMULA, PLAYED WITH THE PROPORTIONS AND THE LAYOUTS, AND BROUGHT IT WITHIN TOUCHING DISTANCE OF PERFECTION.

way rejected by our skipper, who merely smiles and nods, content (as he should be) that the new boat has got things just right.

It's also notable that every inch of the 27.2 has been profitably employed. With its fold-down seats robustly mounted on the aft end of the pilot house, the cockpit is very large and accommodating, with plenty of storage and easy access to the swim platform, where a prop hatch and a set of four fender holders keep the space clean and tidy. The engine (in this case a D6 400) is also beautifully rigged beneath the aft deck, with every wire, cable and pipe properly labelled, clipped and routed. And even some of the smallest items feel like a conspicuous pleasure – not least the absurdly deep drawers, mounted in the risers for the steps to the aft cabin, which emerge



The cockpit features folding seats on the aft end of the pilothouse.



The bow makes a beautiful venue for a five-man lunch.

... THE 27.2 IS MORE ABOUT PRACTICALITY, SAFETY, COMFORT AND REFINEMENT THAN OUTRIGHT PACE.



Despite the broader pilothouse, the walkways remain impressively wide



The Fly is currently a standard option on the 27.2.



ABOVE: Left: The swim platform comes with a prop hatch and a set of fender baskets. Right: Ease of movement around the pilothouse is outstanding. TOP: The 27.2 is a pleasure to drive.

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 9.19m
Beam: 3.10m
Weight: 4100kg
Fuel capacity: 530 litres
Engine options: Volvo Penta D6 330, 370 or 400
Test engine: Volvo Penta D6 400

PRICE

27.2 with 330hp: From £179,940 (inc. VAT)
27.2 with 370hp: From £185,920 (inc. VAT)
27.2 with 400hp: From £191,940 (inc. VAT)

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and emerge and emerge from their compact housings as though starring in the finale of a magician's act.

There are plenty of striking successes elsewhere too. The walkway section of the wheelhouse enjoys 2m headroom, and the four-berth cabin, accessed beneath the middle part of the aft bench, is equally surprising. In addition to a lofty central changing area, which boasts around 6ft 10in of headroom, it offers a big port double with a removable infill, plus a starboard berth that's the best part of 9ft long, creating space for a very generous single or a small double with lots of room for extra bits of gear.

And as you would expect, the quality is also bang on. The woods and fabrics feel first-rate, the fixtures and fittings are heavyweight items, sensibly placed and powerfully installed, and the calibre of joinery throughout this boat is really quite rare. In fact, there is even evidence of the use of proper timber plugs set into the leading edges of the ply steps. That's a difficult thing to achieve and it's very impressive to see, particularly given

PERFORMANCE

RPM	Speed (kn)	Fuel flow (L/h)	Noise (db)	Range (nm)
600	4.3	1.2	52.5	1,709.3
1000	6.6	3.1	53.4	1,015.5
1500	8.8	13.0	67.9	322.9
2000	15.0	23.0	73.1	311.1
2250	20.5	27.0	73.9	362.2
2500	24.0	32.0	75.8	357.8
2750	28.0	39.0	76.5	342.5
3000	31.2	48.0	78.9	310.1
3250	33.8	63.0	80.6	255.9
3500	37.2	73.0	81.1	243.1
3600	38.4	80.0	83.9	229.0

Acceleration

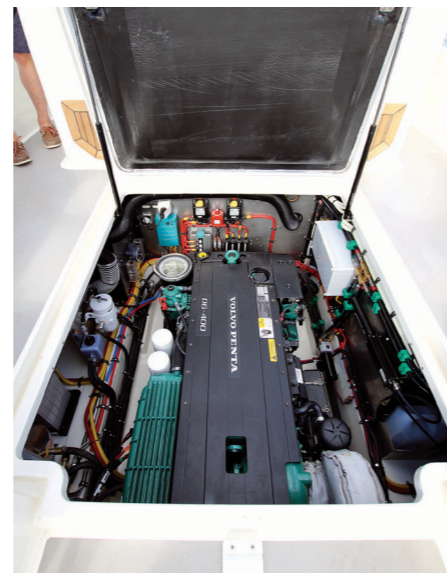
0-plane: 5.0 seconds, 0-20: 7.0 seconds
 0-30: 10.0 seconds, 0-35: 14.5 seconds
 0-40: 20.0 seconds

how commonplace it is, even for high-end builders, to take the soft option by popping cheap plastic caps into recessed screw holes.

Soft, quiet and quick

With the top-rated D6 400 under the engine hatch and three men on board, the driving experience here is supremely impressive. We're hitting the plane in 5 seconds and powering on beyond 30 knots in 10, which, for a soft-riding offshore powerboat weighing in excess of 4 metric tonnes, feels really quite affecting.

However, as expected, the 27.2 is more about practicality, safety, comfort and refinement than outright pace. At cruising speeds of between 20 and 30 knots, the generous 530-litre fuel tank gives you a range well in excess of 300nm, alongside passenger-friendly noise levels of just 74 to 78 db and a very acceptable fuel flow of between 30 and 40 litres per hour. Coupled with the game handling, the responsive acceleration and a top end in excess of 38 knots, it's enough to suggest that, for most people, the 400 is well



The care and cleanliness of the rigging is superb



1. The helm is classic Targa. 2. The forward heads compartment is bright and functional. 3. 16 The wide starboard double is very spacious. 4. 17 The starboard berth operates as a compact double or a very large single

worth the extra £12,000 over the base 330hp option.

As for the new hull and the fresh layout, they seem to have created no difficulties at all with the renowned balance and composure of Targa's 27ft platform, and, as promised, the transition onto the plane is flat as well as fast, with retention of near perfect visibility at all speeds, both fore and aft. The only issue on our test day was the fact that, with the automatic trim control engaged, the electronic settings seemed to cause the bow to run a little lower than you would generally

choose – causing the boat to plough a touch and throwing a fair amount of spray at the pilot house screen whenever things got rough. That aside, the on-water performance, like the internal environment, is one of uncommon and striking excellence.

Verdict

There are obviously lighter boats around for those who like their sport, more spacious boats for people who like their cruising and more open boats for those who enjoy basking in the sun. Much as I admire the modest self-

assurance of a boat like this, there will also be plenty of people who continue to favour the more youthful aesthetic of competitive all-weather pilot house specialists like Sargo. But Targa have taken their time-honoured formula, played with the proportions and the layouts, and brought it within touching distance of perfection. Buy it, keep it for a generation or two, and rest assured that it will take a very long time before the compact pilot house market comes up with anything substantially better than this. **PBR**



WHAT WE THOUGHT

- FOR**
- Soft, quiet ride
- Long-distance tank
- Roomy pilot house
- Accommodating fore and aft spaces
- Easy single-handed helming
- Unrelenting user-friendliness
- Impressive quality
- AGAINST**
- Auto trim runs bow-low
- The traditional styling is not for everyone