

NEWTech

The latest marine engines and innovations



Installation is neat and unobtrusive, tucked under the helm seat here

The 3DC made its presence known even at high speeds on the 35ST



SEATRIAL: Seakeeper 3DC

£30,000 (inc VAT) for unit and parts; approx £10,000 installation

At the end of last year Seakeeper launched the 3DC, an entry-level unit based on its 5 model which, thanks to being battery powered, claimed to open up a whole new world of gyro-stabilised comfort to smaller boats that weren't fitted with generators. The way Seakeeper managed this was to take the compact blueprint of the 5 (765mm x 757mm x 628mm) and 358kg of weight and slow down the spin rate of the gyro to reduce the power consumption. The result is a spin rate of 6,400rpm, as opposed to 10,700rpm, and a maximum anti-rolling torque of 6,500Nm, almost half of the 5. So the science all makes sense but how does the 3DC work in practice? We were given the chance to find out on Seakeeper's own Contender 35ST at the Fort Lauderdale Boat Show.

Unsurprisingly, the 35ST is the perfect craft to demonstrate the 3DC's abilities as the gyro to bring stabilisation to the masses. It is not a big boat, it has a narrow beam, a totally open deck and would be very unlikely to have a generator installed, so say hello to the 3DC.

The 3DC was mounted beneath the helm bench within a Perspex case on this demo boat so we could see all the gubbins at work. As we pulled away from the dock the skipper engaged the gyro and the 27-minute spool up process began. This is something that

critics always highlight about a gyro as opposed to fins – that long time it takes to get going – but very few people will be off the berth and at their destination in under half an hour no matter how quick the boat is and, anyway, you can't fit fins to a boat this small.

THE GYRO IN ACTION

Out to sea and it was time to see the 3DC do its thing. We weren't confronted with a big sea but a messy one, the sort of sea that a fast fisher like the Contender would have to run through and bob around in for hours on end in some instances. We began with the gyro locked (fixed in position) and turned beam-on to the waves. Sure enough, the boat started to wallow around and sent the five or

six passengers to the edges of the cockpit to find something to steady themselves with. This was familiar territory for the keen sportsfishermen I was sharing the demo with, as they absorbed the motion with bent knees and wide stance.

Then in an instant the skipper unlocked the gyro via the control unit on the dash and we all looked at each in total disbelief. The difference was absolutely remarkable and it only took the passing of one wave for the ECU to analyse the wave pattern and adjust the gyro to stop the rolling motion. The fishermen beamed with surprise and delight at what the gyro was managing to do. There was no need

to hold on to anything or even brace

yourself, and it was as easy to move around the boat as it would have been if we were tied to a pontoon. And the 3DC does all of this without any commotion or noise, another benefit of not needing a generator.

Yes, the boat still moves with the waves but as opposed to a sickness-inducing roll the boat gently rises and falls with the crests and troughs in perfect sync.

As impressive as this was it didn't come as much of a surprise, given our experience of other Seakeeper products, but something that did give cause for surprise was the effect the gyro had when the boat was in motion. The perception is that gyros have very little effect above displacement speed, and that may be the case on larger vessels but on the Contender, with the gyro active, the boat definitely felt more sure-footed tackling the rough seas at planing speeds. It felt more planted in the water and the wave pattern wasn't dictating the boat's course as much as it was when the gyro was locked. In a nutshell, it improved the ride to a noticeable extent.

It certainly worked its magic on the fishermen, who were asking the skipper to cost them up a retrofit on the way back into base. **Jack Haines**

Contact www.seakeeper.com

Slowing down the spin rate of the gyro reduces the 3DC's power consumption

