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A story about the first Spirited 480 being built by the whole family. The Hoult family in Tasmania come together to prove that more hands make lighter work!

SPIRITED DESIGNS REPORTS ...

AT THE END OF HIS HIGH school education and after the sale of his father's sailing catamaran, Michael Hoult was at a crossroads.

Should he pursue a surfing career or go to university and get a job? He decided to go with the latter and undertake a degree that would allow him to work

with the ocean and be in a financial position to own his own sailing catamaran ASAP. This was because he had his heart set on one day, setting off on a catamaran of his own and sailing around the world, seeking out the secret waves that the planet had to offer. What he didn't realise was that the dream would become a reality far sooner than

he anticipated due to Spirited Designs. Luckily for him, his wife Mel also had a similar plan. She is hoping to use the vessel as a base for her calling in life which is to utilise her nursing skills in the form of aid work in lesser developed regions and if that comes with a surf or two along the way that's okay with her!

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BLOOD!



The Spirited 480 filling the shed! (main pic left)

Girls are doing it! (left)

The Hoult family live for the ocean. Michael's father John sailed Cherubs competitively as a teenager; surfed all his life, spent a good part of his working life as a professional fisherman and owned and operated a day sailing charter catamaran in Tasmania with his wife Lois and sons, Michael and Andrew, as crew. Michael has been surfing and sailing since childhood and spends up to six months a year on the ocean, sometimes hundreds of kilometres offshore around the Asia-Pacific region installing oil and gas rigs and pipelines.

Michael calls his Spirited 480 his 'surfing adventure vehicle'. It will essentially be their home. He wanted a catamaran around the 50ft mark that sailed really well, was of composite construction, and

could accommodate all his surfing equipment thus leading to a unique customised layout he had designed.

There was no way a secondhand production cat would satisfy his requirements and a professionally built custom boat was not affordable for them so they settled on building a kit catamaran. Michael spent three years trying to convince his father to let him build a catamaran on his land in Tasmania but it was not until the Spirited designs came along that it was agreed it was an achievable plan. This was due to the kit itself and all the attributes that have been well publicised, namely the lack of strip planking, the moulded components and upright construction.

Both Michael and Mel were almost sold on the Spirited 380, but were a little concerned that the size might not be quite big enough to meet their needs. They were nervous about being the first ones to attempt the 480 but Craig Schionning assured them of support and frequent contact which put their minds at ease. This support and the fact that the Spirited 480 shares the same construction method and design philosophy with the established 380 sealed the deal to build the Spirited 480.

Another plus with Spirited Designs was their custom design service. "Craig redesigned the interior of the boat to suit our requirements and this was then supplied pre-cut with the kit."

When the kit arrived, Michael and Mel and extended family were like kids in a candy store! Work started straight away with everyone pitching in. It took a few weeks to work out the perfect resin mixing techniques and how to keep it neat and strong but all in all, they were surprised at how simple it was.

Michael and Mel's 480 was the first to be started. Based on Craig's computer design, the moulded hulls are packed and resin infused by Craig in Port Stephens, the Duflex panels are produced and CNC cut by ATL Composites on the Gold Coast and the whole show was trucked to Tasmania. Once assembled the flat panels and moulded components all fit together as they are supposed to. These modern computers hey!! Unbelievable!

With Michael working out of Singapore and Mel travelling between Tasmania and Singapore as well as spending time recently nursing in Sweden, Michael's father John has been the stalwart of the building project. John is undertaking many of the smaller jobs by himself with Michael's mother Lois providing a helping hand. Larger jobs work better with two, three or four people working as a team to produce the best results in a timely manner so they are done when the whole family is home to produce the best results.

The most exciting part of the build to date has been the main assembly. With the whole family onsite, including Michael's brother Andrew and some mates, the project



progressed from the hulls just arriving and a shed full of large flat pieces to a structure that looked a lot like a catamaran in less than a week. This included both the hulls, all bulkheads, the forebeam, chamfer panels, the bridgedeck and moulded side decks all glued in place

The new Spirited 480 is now at a stage where the lower half of the main structure is complete and it is possible to get a sense of how big the yacht will be as Michael and Mel start finalising equipment and system set ups and layouts etc.



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Mel isn't afraid to get her hands dirty when it comes to building her future home. With coveralls and gloves donned, she eagerly partakes in coving and taping, which is never in short supply. She believes that building a yacht is not just something for the boys, but a project with which the whole family can get involved. Mel enjoys planning the yacht's overall design and is in responsible for aesthetics and interior design choices.

Michael has been amazed by every amateur boat builder he has met, and there are a lot once you start looking with cats being built in every location around Australia. All these builders are taking on amazing projects and the level of advice and ideas they are willing to share is tremendous.

Mel and Michael are not aiming for a particular date for the boat's launch, however the goal is to have the Spirited 480 on the water sometime in the next two years. Michael is 26 now and would

love to be pushing the boundaries of surf exploration before he hits 30. They will also have two permanent residents on board, Max and Carlin, their Daschund guard dogs.

Q & A:

How did you come across the Spirited 480?

Michael had spent years researching which yacht would be perfect for two person sailing but also be big enough to essentially be a home on the water. We really liked the look of the Spirited 380 but we did have reservations about it not being quite big enough for what we were after. We were after a sleek and sexy design that performed well but was most importantly strong and safe. We contacted Craig Shionning and he informed us that he was in the middle of designing the Spirited 480. We were instantly interested. After attending one of Spirited Designs' Workshop days, we were sold on the 480. We did however

have some reservations about being the first people to attempt a 480 but it has all in all been a smooth process.

Why did you choose to build a Spirited 480?

We pondered the possibility of getting a Spirited boat built for us in Thailand or Indonesia, but there were a couple of things that concerned us about doing that. These included money and not being there to monitor what was being done. We realised that by us building ourselves it would take longer, but we would be able to 'quality control' the building and also come up with the money as we needed it. Once we saw the ease of the Spirited Assembly System, we were convinced that it was something that we could achieve ourselves and then be proud with the result when it was finished.

How has the building been progressing for you?

The actual assembly so far has been relatively stress free. At the beginning, it

“All these builders are taking on amazing projects and the level of advice and ideas they are willing to share is tremendous”



top from left:
Kit's here – now what? Transport the old fashioned way. All hands on deck!
Moving hull panels. (above)



took a while to work out how to mix perfectly, make tapes nice and neat and work out a routine but I think now we have got it all in order. We now have the bulkheads standing and can now get a real 'feel' for the yacht. It fills up the entire shed!

How long do you estimate this project will take?

We don't want to set a 'date' as such for the launch but essentially, we would love for it to be in the water sometime in the next two years. With Michael working in Singapore and myself working two hours away from the build site, Michael's father John is doing a great deal of the work. However, we have come a long way in the short time that we have been working on the Spirited 480, so who knows? Maybe it will be finished much sooner if we really put the work in.

What are Mel's thoughts on the project from a woman's perspective?

When Michael first suggested the thought of building a yacht, I truly thought that I wouldn't be much help. But from day one, I have been involved and really enjoying it. I am the 'chief cover' (applying coves) and I love taping and getting my hands dirty. I can't say that I'm a huge fan of the endless amount of sanding but I guess that just comes with the territory. I am really enjoying the design process of the build and now that the bulkheads are up, I can actually stand in my kitchen and start mapping out where I want things to go. I don't think that yacht building is just a man's playground, it can be a woman's too.

What are your plans once you've launched it?

Michael has always been passionate about surfing. He chose a university degree and working in oil and gas over a promising surfing career, so our Spirited 480 is essentially going to be a 'wave finder'. My dream has been to partake in aid work throughout South East Asia or wherever the work is needed, so I am hoping to use the yacht for this purpose. We would love to essentially circumnavigate the world with our two sausage dogs searching out the gems that the world has to offer. Can't wait!



left from top:

Main lower assembly almost done.

Where's the surf?

Husband and wife team.

Mum and Dad team!

Sanding, sanding, sanding ... (above)