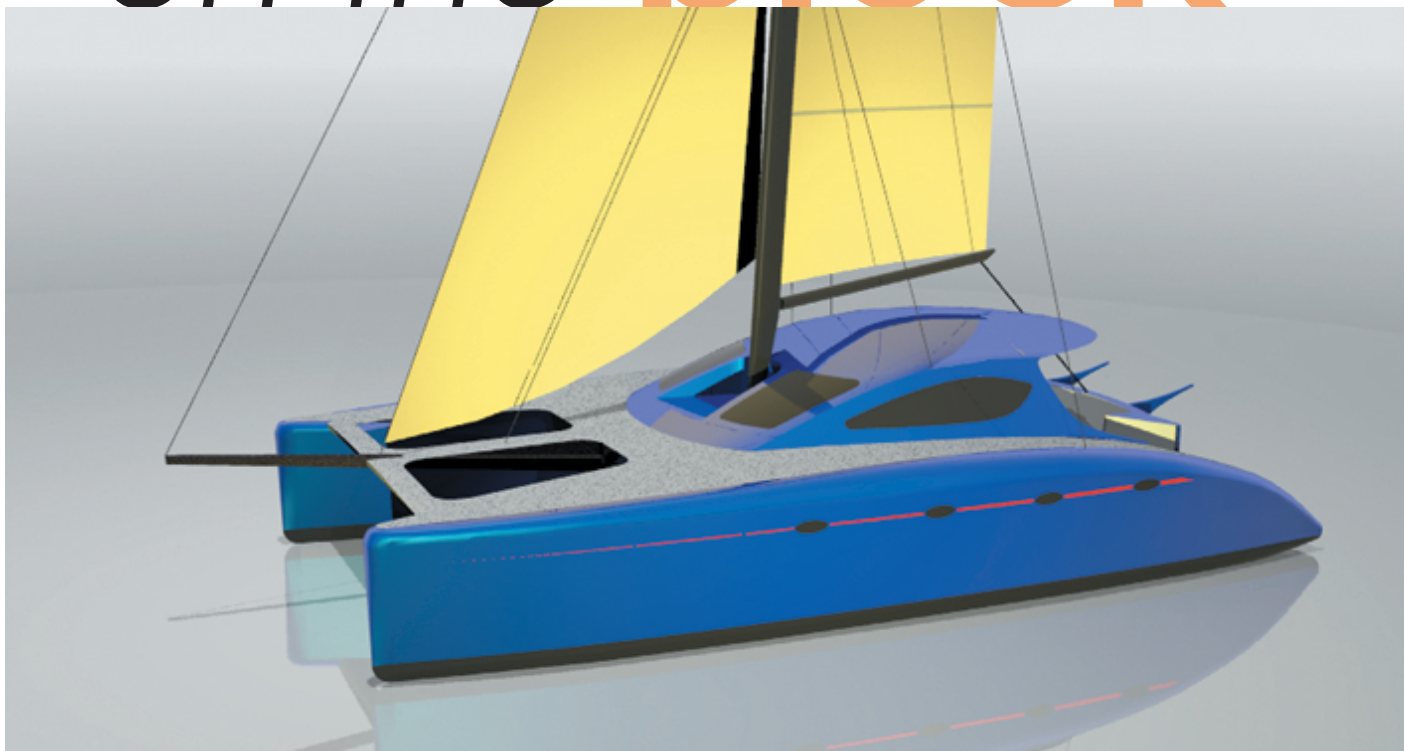


new kit on the block



from Spirited Designs

■ by PHIL THOMPSON

CRUISING catamarans are complex machines, a long way from the simple multihulls of yesteryear. They have vastly better cruising accommodations and payload and often look much more flowing with organic shapes being used in the design. Some of these options come at a cost, and often the cost is borne by the amateur builder. The cost is usually paid in time, time to work out details of the interior,

deck layout and simple but time consuming questions such as where to put the backing pads for deck blocks.

Today's designers are trying to get around the increased build time in two ways. One way is to simplify the shapes drawn by the designer. This can allow methods more suitable for amateurs to be used. The other is to go further down the hi tech route and deliver the boat to a client as a fully cut kit. However few have taken the approach of providing hull parts as well. This is Craig Schionning's choice. Instead of developing a fleet of

designs and leaving it to builders to work out how to make them Craig Schionning has taken kit boats a step further along the user friendliness road.

The Spirited 380 featured in *Multihull World* previously and is significant because the kit comes with moulded as well as flat panel parts. To this end Craig has made moulds for the hull and both deck curves to get a moulded look with a flat panel boat. Craig's company 'Spirited Designs' has called this the 'Spirited Assembly System' (SAS) and the process is engineered to flow from start to finish.

The build process is blended with many design features to make the boat more user-friendly and functional. Features such as wide steps leading up the back of the hull, walkthrough access into the cockpit, swimming platform, work area around the mast, as well as many other modern design ideas.

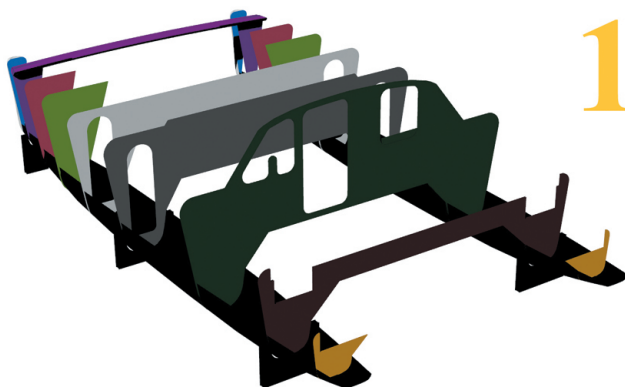
"I wanted to create a catamaran that looked like a fully moulded boat without all the hassles of building in strip plank. With strip plank, builders have to rotate hulls, get good joins between planks and learn to fair well which can be a difficult job. That's what I wanted to avoid. Boatbuilding's a pain in the #! So why not make it as easy as possible? The design philosophy for this design/kit concept was to have high performance design spec's with uncompromised safety but it also had to be easy to build. I don't know of any other kit catamarans with the performance criteria of the 380."*

Craig should know about the building, as he has done little else since the age of 15. Starting with an apprenticeship at his father's yard which later he became a partner in, he was involved in the construction and sailing of many of the multihulls cruising and racing up and down the east coast and beyond. Like most designers who start off building other people's boats, Craig thought he could do a better job for owner builders with a different approach. This was especially brought home to him after working on a large catamaran in 2000. Although the cat was a modern design the amount of work in stripping the hull, deck and cabin top struck Craig as wasteful. After being heavily involved in the design of projects in his father's company he set out on his own to try his own ideas with the 380 with the credo - "there has to be a better way"

"Computer cutting technology is the way to go and has been maximised in this design. The level of pre-cutting in the 380 kit is as high as possible with it being used to aid the builder wherever possible. I find this tool extremely exciting, opening so many new doors in the build process."

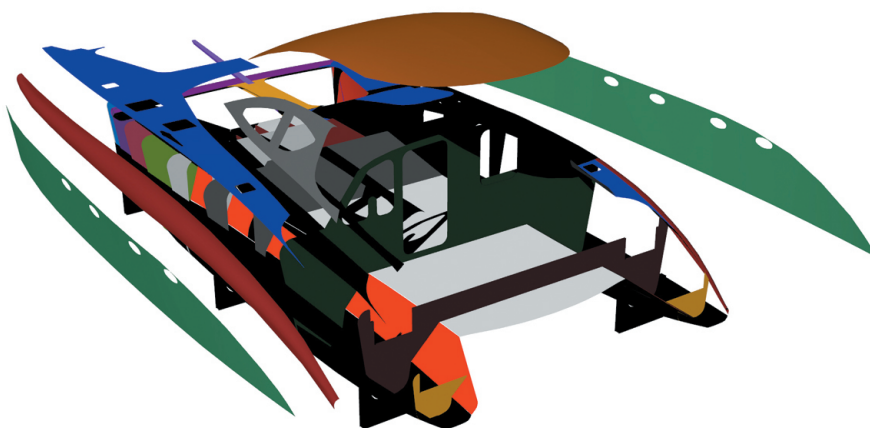
With a background so heavily steeped in catamarans in both the building and designing side Craig was very much aware of the limitations of some of the

IT'S EASY AS 1,2,3...

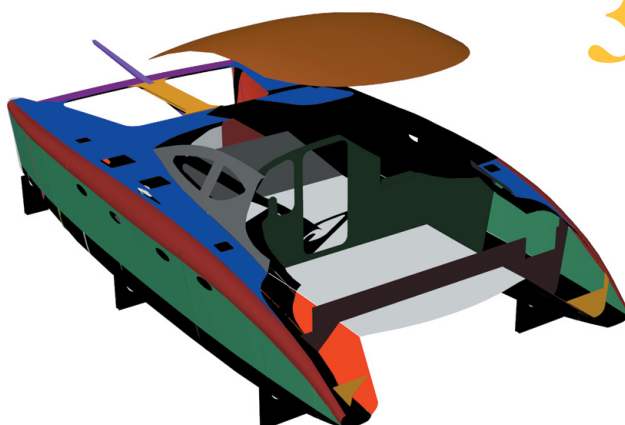


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SPIRITED ASSEMBLY SYSTEM



A Spirited 380 hull being produced from the female mould.

designs being produced. Not so much on the design side but on the design/build interface. By producing an exhaustive kit including MDF cradles for the hulls he feels he has reduced the expectation on the builder and which helped to produce a high quality project. Workshops for builders and project management are also in the pipeline to help give build experience to the new builder.

"Only high quality materials are used, with cutting-edge composite engineering

throughout the whole design to help increase quality and also resale value. All of the parts are laminated by professionals in a high quality environment. This is an amateur built boat where almost all the laminating has been done so that the builder and subsequent buyers can feel confident of the structure."

It is gratifying to find a designer who is happy to put his money behind his idea. To this end Craig has produced moulds and has set up a factory to produce the hull bottoms and deck curves. Construction of a company promotional boat is already underway and the boat is being built and finished by the Spirited team themselves. Due to the construction method the boat should be sailing well before Christmas this year.

Craig estimates that the time saved by using the pre moulded hulls and pre cut kit will be between 500-1000 hours which will translate into dollars saved.

"It is very satisfying to hear from builders who are happy with our kit and

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plan package, and the way their project is progressing. For amateur builders it is vital that they see fast progress, kind of like 'bang for their buck', this keeps the interest level high. Everone's heard about the 10 year build projects or the ones who never finish. Lets face it, we would all rather be sailing than covered in dust still building the boat."

The effort put into the kit is enormous. Craig led me through the design on computer and I saw a fully developed interior with all the parts that make the seats, floors, bunks, cupboards and shelves all drawn on computer and developed into flat panels to be cut out by a computer driven router. It looked like a giant version of a model kit. Craig finds that builders are happy to pay extra for the kit in the knowledge that they will be much further along the road to launch.

I asked Craig what was different with his kit as computer cut kits have been around for many years.

"This kit is comprehensive right down to the smallest part of the interior and we want to get right down to the hatch and portlight cut outs. I want to use technology to get builders to be assembling, rather than building. There are many jobs like fairing where an amateur has a very difficult task of doing a good job in a reasonable time. They have to learn new techniques and can't have to redo a lot of work if the initial work isn't up to standard. That is why we have tried to dramatically reduce the fairing required on this design."

Fairing is the obvious part of a construction project to try and reduce. The time taken to get a large boat fair can run into many hundreds of hours. Even flat panel boats that are amateur friendly can have a large amount of fairing to do. Bob Oram, the iconoclastic flat panel cat designer, once said that putting the chines under the water made sense because it is hard to see an unfair chine when antifouled. He was only half joking.

"Fairing certainly can't be 'flowered' up, it is definitely not one of the nicer jobs but like anything it can be made easier with a good system and helpful instruction, sort of like step one, two and three."

The moulded hulls, made in the Spirited factory get around the fairing problem to a degree but it would be

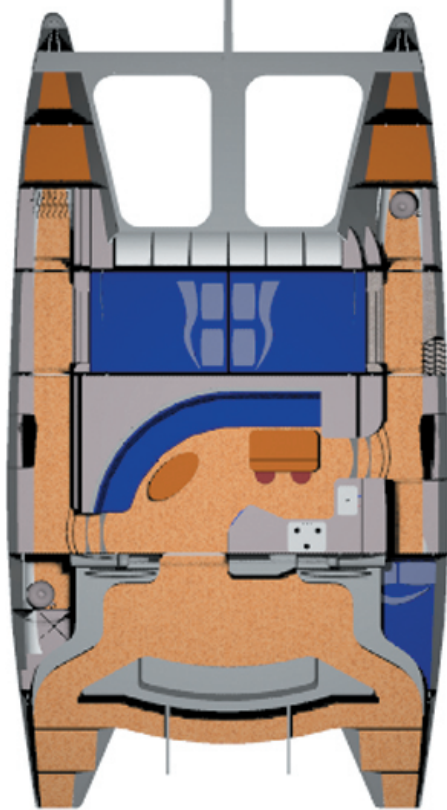
counter productive to have a proud joint between the moulded hulls and the Duflex sheets that make up the hull sides. So the moulded hulls have recessed edges that allow the joint to be smoother and take less work to fair up. The same technique is used on the deck radius. More moulded items such as the forebeam, daggerboards and cases, rudders, bows are to be included in subsequent kits. There is even talk of a carbon 380 being moulded up. In the matter of keeping things simpler Craig specifies inboard diesels rather than the outboards used in many of the designs he built. Diesels are much quicker to install than outboards in wells and not much heavier according to Craig.

"When you come to the engines you can save a lot of time by going with diesels. The installation of a sail drive diesel is very simple compared to the work involved in an outboard well setup and so you save many hours there. Given the compactness of the saildrives I was able to position these outside of the accomodation area, I feel this is a big plus. The diesel leg gets protection from the fixed rudders which are made strong enough to support the boats weight. You also save a lot of time by not building the cassettes and tilt mechanisms."

Although the cost is increased, the weight difference between outboard and diesels is very slight according to Craig. With the weight of the water in the outboard well, the outboard well walls and the sliding assembly, the specified Nanni diesels can come out very close to the same weight as the outboard setup. The back of the boat has no targa bar but does have folding davits and a duckboard. By getting away from the targa bar -

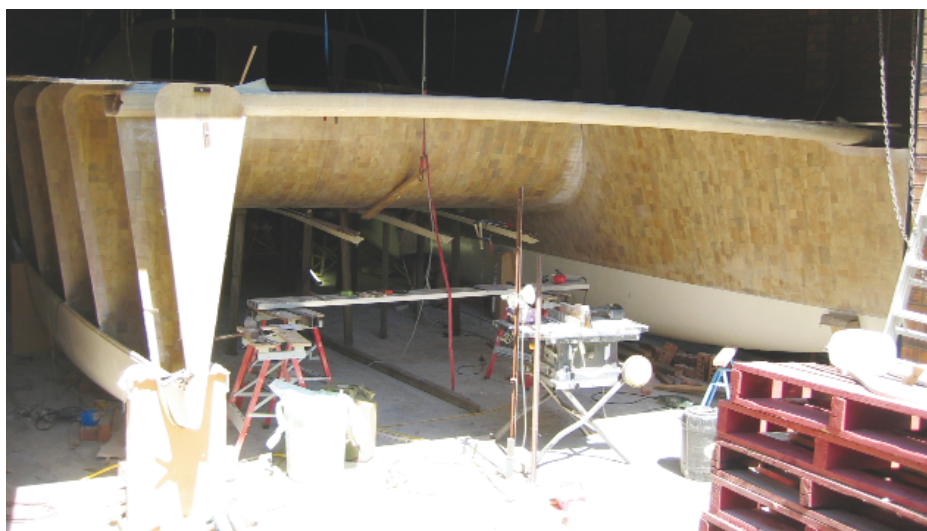
"There is a huge weight saving in the same area as the motors, and is included in my calculation comparison in regards to the outboards."

The diesels can be installed as can major parts of the interior with the hull sides not installed on the boat. This means you can stand on the shed floor when building. Many hours of jumping up and down ladders and installing outboards into small compartments has Craig thinking about reducing time taken in all aspects of the project. These good ideas are all very well but unless they are



Layout. (above)

Spirited 380 under construction, aft view. (above right)



followed up by good plans then the think time required by builders will be great.

“Home builders know there must be an easier way, but unless it is documented and they get instruction from the plans they can do something 10 different ways before they go - ‘Oh this way is better’.”

I was working on my own catamaran when a couple interested in Craig’s design came to talk with the shed owner about catamarans. They were keen on the Spirited 380 design but wanted changes and I realised that this was a major plus

for the individualised kit and Craig’s ‘personalised’ service philosophy. Craig had been able to quickly change the layout to better suit individual preferences such as galley up or down. This is a much harder operation when the interior is fully moulded and the designer is a cog in a large operation. A redesign was already being done on the computer and the kit files. Although Craig is a fan of the galley up arrangement he is happy to change what he can.

“The ‘galley-down’ layout is already



Assembly underway, main bulkheads, chamfer panels and bridgedeck installed. (above)
Deck moulds with two decks just released. (below)

underway, with an interior kit to suit. A couple of hours on the computer in the design office can save days in the workshop for the builder”.

As I talked to Craig about boats and CAD design, a subject dear to my heart, I realised that we have an incredible diversity of choices when buying a catamaran. From fully moulded and finished boats through to moulded hulls and interior mouldings, to flat panel kits and now to the kit that won't look like a kit boat. I realised that by using new technology designers are able to give more old fashioned service than before. Clients wishes can be incorporated into designs rather than being subject to whether a mould is built for that part or not or discouraged because of the

laborious work in a redesign. Craig is all for designers listening to their clients.

“Why shouldn't people have their 'wish-list'? Our company philosophy has always been to keep things smaller and focus on high quality, this gives us more time for the customers if they need help, and also more time for sailing.”

Craig will be sailing the first Spirited 380 before Christmas. It will be a high tech cruising cat that will, according to Craig, achieve a high end product without a correspondingly high build time. All the years building multihulls have given Craig a very strong opinion about a designer using all the tools at their disposal to make a boatbuilding project easier and more achievable. It is gratifying to see a designer providing a total design service where absolutely every part of the boat is designed and precut but still allowing for individual changes. For those builders seeking flexibility, high quality product and shorter build times the Spirited 380 is worth more than a quick look. ❖



Spirited 380 Update!

- The brand new kit assembly system (SAS) from Spirited Designs in Australia is proving to be revolutionary. Spirited Designs has received a huge response from enquirers from around the world who are very interested in this cutting-edge new design and kit system.
- A first time husband and wife building team, who are building a Spirited 380, are very impressed with the ease and speed of this building system. They are ever-more enthusiastic about their boat-building project as the days go by. The build hours are being documented for record to gauge the speed and success of this build procedure.
- Spirited Designs are now hosting regular 'Boatbuilding Workshops' at their Design Studio. This opportunity is available to anyone interested in the Spirited 380, and is very unique and of course attractive to prospective DIY builders who would like to learn more about high-tech composite boatbuilding methods and materials. Contact Spirited Designs if you are interested.
- Spirited Designs also recently had a presence at the 'Spring Athens Boat Show' between March 29 and April 2, which was a great opportunity to promote their new design and build system. If you would like anymore information regarding the Spirited 380 or any other designs, go to www.spiriteddesigns.com.au