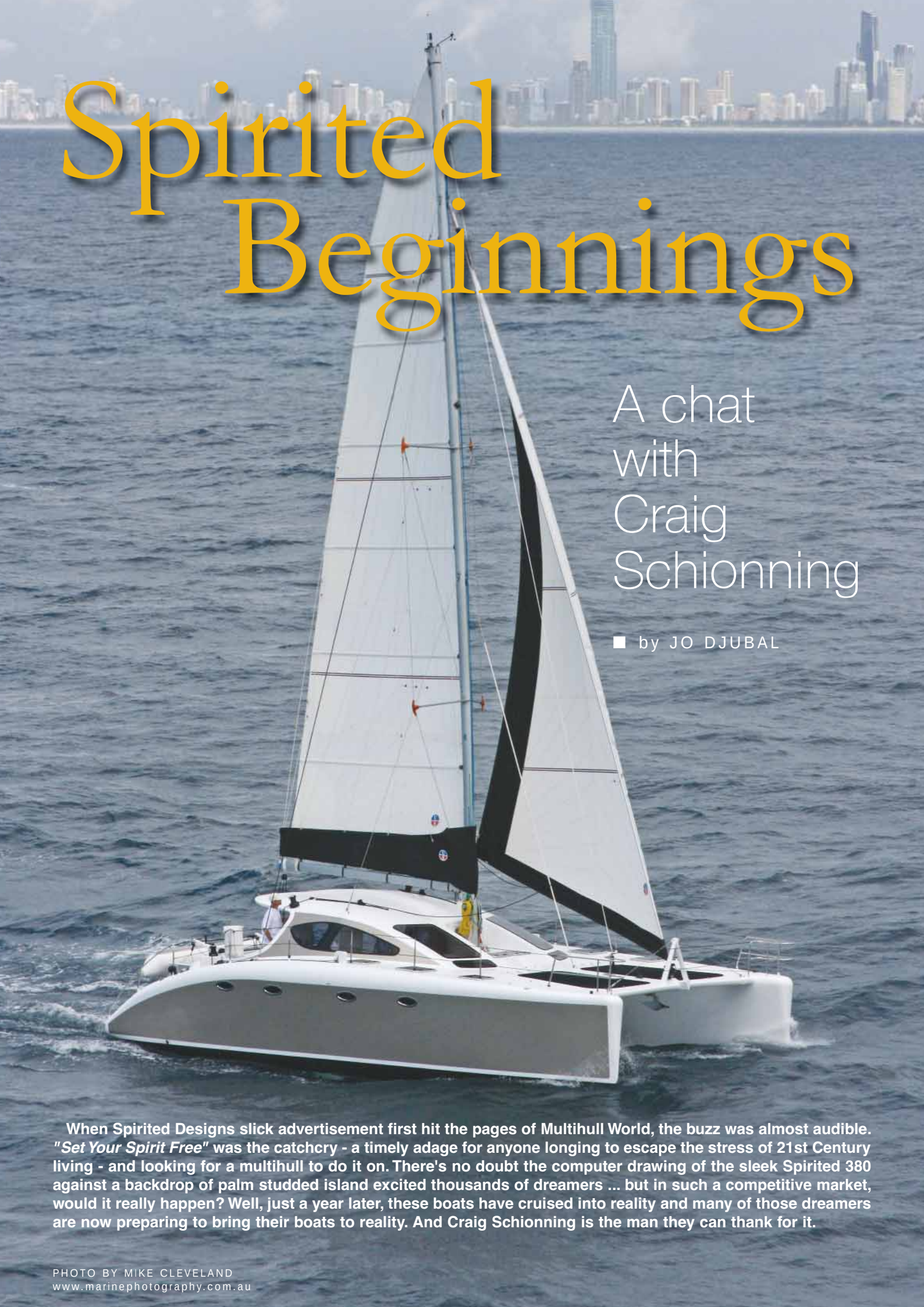




Spirited Beginnings

A chat
with
Craig
Schionning

■ by JO DJUBAL

When Spirited Designs slick advertisement first hit the pages of Multihull World, the buzz was almost audible. "*Set Your Spirit Free*" was the catchcry - a timely adage for anyone longing to escape the stress of 21st Century living - and looking for a multihull to do it on. There's no doubt the computer drawing of the sleek Spirited 380 against a backdrop of palm studded island excited thousands of dreamers ... but in such a competitive market, would it really happen? Well, just a year later, these boats have cruised into reality and many of those dreamers are now preparing to bring their boats to reality. And Craig Schionning is the man they can thank for it.

literally all of Craig Schionning's thirty seven years have led to the creation of the Spirited 380. The first fifteen years of his life were spent living aboard in South Africa, an exciting, fun filled childhood afloat where every day was a water based adventure.

"Growing up living on a boat was a great experience" he recalls, "you kind of become one with the water". I remember rowing myself to school at the age of six or seven and then walking to school. On the way home I would pump yabbies on the mud flats for bait before dinghying back to the boat. The water was our backyard - everything revolved around fishing, sailing or something water-orientated. The old 36ft trimaran (I forget the design but in the Piver vintage) my father swapped for our caravan was in a sad state when we moved aboard but we made her live-able and comfortable and she was always in use, as we enjoyed weekends away, fishing expeditions or just booze cruising around the bay."

Sailing was simply an integral part of Craig's life. "I always loved it - even the dramas were a buzz! I remember sailing through the heads of our home town once on a friends small deep keel yacht and getting half way through before realising we were going to get hit with a massive set of breaking waves... All of the kids and mothers (along with the cat!) went below and held on for grim death. The boat burst through the first wave and fell into the next trough with a severe impact. All we could see out of the small port holes was green water... I vividly remember the cat wedged up in the very front of the bow with huge wide eyes.(Almost as big as ours!) Needless to say, we promptly did a u-turn and came back into the bay! At this time, especially in South Africa, things were very relaxed in terms of safety measures and planning when it came to sailing, even offshore. But we had some very exciting experiences, learnt a lot and survived!"

In typical down to earth style, Craig recounts another experience years later which also proved a good learning curve... "One trip I'll always remember was on a small cat we had built years before which had been totally neglected. A friend of mine bought it and asked me to help deliver it from Mackay to Tin Can Bay. Of course I jumped at the opportunity! However, being young and



Craig, 18 yrs building himself a sea kayak. (top)

Both Spirited 380's side by side at this year's Sanctuary Cove Boat Show. (above)

headstrong and in such a rush to get the boat down south, we didn't spend enough time checking her out...And later into the trip discovered the forebeam threatening to pull out from one side of the hull... This really spoilt the trip for everybody and created unnecessary stress for all on board. Although we got home safely, a valuable lesson was learnt, namely - spend the time to check and survey any unfamiliar boat - even if you've built it years back!"

In 1986 the Schionning family immigrated to Australia and once high

school was over and done with two years later, Craig dived straight into his trade as an apprentice boatbuilder with the family business called Schionning Boats.

This was always my passion and in my younger years I was crazy about traditional boats. I loved all the polished timber and the romance of it all. I'd always had small boats and dinghies and had grand plans of building myself a 25 foot gaff-rigged traditional yacht. I even drew a couple of designs of this 'dreamboat' - until at 18 I found a 36 foot 1927 pilot boat for sale in a hardstand

yard near where I was working. Although a neglected hulk, she had beautiful classic lines and I approached the owner to buy her.

Well he seemed to either have a soft spot for me - or just felt sorry for me taking on this mammoth task - and sold me the boat for the value of the engine! (Which thankfully was in very good condition.) Over the next four years I lovingly restored and then lived aboard her for some years ... I still often wish I'd never sold her..."

Between restoring his 1927 pilot boat and learning his trade, young Craig Schionning was still out there on the water, racing actively to gain experience. "This was mostly on monos but once I started building tri's and cats, I took a keen interest in any racing experience I could gain on the multi's we were producing!

I did a few Hamilton Island Race Weeks as crew, along with other events and also raced Hobie 18's for ten years up and down the coast. Our club had six Hobie 18's at one point which made for some fantastic friendly racing! All of these boats were around the same vintage (i.e. old and buggered!) so we couldn't keep pace with some of the more modern and lighter boats like Nacras but I still found the 18 to be one of the most enjoyable cats to sail in this size."

"In both boatbuilding and design I was trained by my father Jeff Schionning. While still doing my apprenticeship within the family business we built a number of boats, including some of my father's early designs. He has some beautiful designs and has broken some very important ground in terms of both design and composite engineering/construction. He has pushed the boundaries of light weight construction and never suffered a failure - which has helped everyone involved in the multihull industry."

Craig says he first truly got the 'multi bug' when he began building some Grainger designs. "They were so light and nimble, and performed very well. They also looked modern and attractive and the composite method of construction was fascinating and continually evolving. Off-the-beach cats also gave me a great insight into how any performance cat, big or small, will handle under speed. My

experience has been that once someone is used to a cat that can perform, they will never go back. To be at the helm of a well-performing cat when it's in the groove and well balanced is a thrill."

After finishing his trade as a boatbuilder, Craig started his own business, doing mostly repairs and maintenance. But the lure of multis remained and he eventually sold the business to get back into building again." I built a 50 foot sailing cat and then a 9m power cat before becoming involved in design in 2002. Since starting my trade I've enjoyed building over a dozen cats and tri's - and a couple of mono's on the side! The multi's have been mostly sailing boats with the exception of the 9m semi-displacement power cat."

With so many years building behind him, working in an era of such quickly developing technology, Craig has obviously had the opportunity to deal with many materials and methods of construction.

"My very first build project was an 11m Simpson cat. This was built using ply and stringers which was very time-consuming and difficult to seal effectively from water ingress. This boat was built out in the open in Darwin, where in the wet season we were often dodging summer rain squalls by hiding under the bridgedeck. Building boats in Darwin is certainly not the ideal environment!"

As material technology increased, so too did Craig's usage. "It's interesting to reflect on how the materials gradually changed from ply and stringers to strip-planked cedar with ply bulkheads etc, and then to the balsa and foam core products/panels," he says. "Nowadays, consistent material density is recommended throughout the structure. Combining different types of materials can cause hard spots with interrupted stress flow. I had the opportunity to build a couple of carbon masts which was very interesting. These were vacuum bagged for optimum strength and once built, they were deflection tested to ensure a balanced laminate was achieved."

So does he have any particular preferences in materials today?

"I have always used end-grain balsa core which is stiff, strong and high in compression strength, combined with epoxy laminates this material is ideal for

l a u n c h i n g Spirited One



Spirited 380

Spirited Designs' 380, *Spirited One* was lifted gently onto the sand at Taylors Beach, near their Design Studio on Wednesday the 9th of May. The lead up to the launch was hectic for the Spirited crew with the truck and crane booked but a million too many jobs still to be done.

With the main deadline being the Sanctuary Cove Boat Show (which was racing towards them at a rate of knots) stress levels were high. The boat had to be in it's pen by Wednesday the 23rd at the latest - which wasn't too far away!

There was still plenty to do: stand the rig, build and fit the sails, finish building the saloon table, fiddle rails, varnishing, final electricals and the list goes on.... Many late nights were spent on the boat beavering away...

The mast was stepped on Monday the 14th. It doesn't get much closer than this! Sails were fitted on the Friday and without even a chance to hoist them, *Spirited One* cleared the heads of Port Stephens early on Saturday morning.

Brand new design, brand new boat and off she went in an 18 knot Westerly doing close to 20 knots boat speed in the first half hour! The trip to Sanctuary Cove went like clockwork. The boat handled beautifully with good motoring speeds as well. She entered the Gold Coast seaway at around 10am on Monday morning, motoring in company to Sanctuary Cove with her Stallion sistership which had been launched the day before *Spirited One*.



The 'warm' interior colours of Spirited One's saloon. Note the functional galley up. (above)

cruising boats where general toughness is required. Water ingress is always a concern but if properly built, balsa boats will last indefinitely. I haven't seen any of the boat's that I've built have problems. Some of these are nearly 15 years old and look like the day they were launched. It all comes down to build quality and attention to detail. A foam kit is also available for the Spirited 380 but requires much more laminate on high impact areas such as bridgedeck, hull topsides and side decks. The foam also has a severe price penalty which can sometimes price itself

out of the home builder market. We use foam cores for daggerboards and rudders and also areas in the superstructure where weight can be saved."

Looking to the future in multihull building Craig nominates technology as the key. "As materials and techniques evolve there are improvements in quicker build times and also lighter materials. Weight is such a huge part of the design and success of a multihull - the stronger the material the less you need to use. ATL Composites produce the panels for our boats which is called Duflex, these panels

would be one of the lightest/strongest on the market. ATL can also custom produce more exotic panels if required for those more 'out-there' designs. This flexibility caters to pushing the boundaries with new and exciting projects. The panels are pressed with minimum resin to cloth ratios guaranteeing quality, strength and lightness. Hand lay-up on the job will slowly be phased out because of the superior quality gained by these types of products/panels."

The Spirited 380 is obviously a boat borne of years of both technical build considerations but also contemplation of what the average cruiser wants and needs in a boat. What was in Craig Schionning's mind when he first dreamt up the Spirited 380? What was 'The Brief'?

"Well, firstly, the boat had to do everything....Tall order! But really the brief was essentially for a simple, functional and great looking sports cruiser that was easy to manage and handle. It also had to be easy to build but still look attractive. Hence the flat fore-decks which just made so much sense to me. It has achieved such a clean look and is so simple to build. As per usual, to make things easier for someone else meant I had to do the hard work myself! And so started the hull and deck moulds... first the plugs ... then the moulds.

Pre-made hulls and decks were always part of the plan, the assembly system would simply not work without these components. The design features needed to include certain 'wish-list' ideas too... things like: diesels outside, walk-through transoms, good headroom, galley-up and duckboard to name a few. Performance was paramount but without compromising safety with good reserve buoyancy in the bows and high bridgedeck clearance."

OK, so you've got the idea but how do you implement them successfully and approach such a huge undertaking?

"With Spirited Designs, I feel fortunate to have been able to start with a wealth of knowledge and experience from other aspects of my life and trade experience to date." Craig says. "I always felt my designs would have more chance of success and market appeal if I listened carefully to what people want and make their life easier. It seems to have worked with the most common response from the

THE NEW SPIRITED 380

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Welcome to the next generation in multihull designs from Designer & Boatbuilder, Craig Schionning - **The Spirited 380**. This design takes kit catamarans to an exciting new level, using moulded hulls and decks combined with precision CNC-cut flat panels designed specifically for DIY amateur builders.

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public so far being what a great all-rounder the 380 is in every aspect, from build system to layout and features. We hardly ever get people who want to change the boat, which is a good sign that it suits most people!

From the outset I figured that if the boat has everything they want, looks good and is easy to build, why wouldn't they want one?

My business philosophy has always been to treat others the way you would like to be treated. And to be honest and straight-forward in all my dealings and relationships. I believe strongly in trying to look at the bigger long term picture and try hard to resist being distracted from my goal. It's easy to get caught up in the thrill of design and move through too many projects. This means you run the risk of not completing your designs to your satisfaction (or the clients!) before moving onto the ever next 'new' project.

To give clients deserved confidence in your product, I think the boat must be

complete in every way. This helps standardise the product in the market place without too many variations being available. (Which can be all too common in kit/custom built boats in the market place.) The fact that the design works so well means that the kit doesn't require much, if any modification, other than possibly interior layout design and refinement. Being in full control of the design cadwork myself allows me to easily modify the kit without much fuss. This makes the build so much easier – a few minutes on the computer saves many hours in the build process!"

Craig's design expertise is obvious but as a boatbuilder foremost, he also has an inherent understanding of what the amateur builder faces when contemplating the build process.

"I think the whole Spirited Design concept began by trying to make things easier for people. Being a boatbuilder, my mind is always rationalising. When I see or do something a certain way I keep thinking about how it could be

easier/quicker/cheaper etc. The "Spirited Assembly System" (SAS) works so well and is a combination of good basic build process and design mixed with accurate computer-cut parts."

Craig knows support is also hugely important for amateur builders and strives to ensure his clients are never 'in the dark'.

"There's so much more to building a boat than just the structure. There's interior layout options, equipment spec and placement, electrical, plumbing and, of course, sailing and handling. We can offer support and advice on all aspects of our clients project and thoroughly enjoy sharing their journey towards fruition. Our "Boatbuilding Workshops" are a great way for prospective clients to see what's involved in building one of our boats as well as getting to meet and know us a little better before committing to their project.

We also invite existing clients who are building to come along and 'brush-up' on

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their skills. This also gives prospective clients the opportunity to talk with other home builders about their experiences. My main advice to any amateur builders of any chosen design would be to never give up once you've started and also to get as much of the boat computer-cut as possible. This saves an enormous amount of time and thought. As with the 380, if it doesn't fit, it's probably in the wrong spot! Also, try not to cut too many corners, especially with quality of materials, these are so important to the structural integrity of the boat."

Part of ensuring his product meets all of his personal criteria was for Craig to first build and sail his own Spirited 380.

"Building and owning our own design and actively using the boat has given us good hands-on experience to pass on. Things like refining the set-up of the boat for off-shore work and also long term liveaboard options can be relayed to our clients who may want to personalise their boat accordingly. I can't think of a better situation than for a designer to build and then rigorously test sail his own design. This sees the project right through to the end. It not only promotes confidence all





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round but it's a great feeling to see it all come to fruition, especially when everything works according to plan!

Of course, all good systems or concepts can be improved in some way. Building our own 380 meant we carried out a lot of refining along the way. It's also good to get feedback from our builders, more heads are better than one!"

All of the hard work - or 'head work' - has paid off enormously. The delivery to the Sanctuary Cove Boat Show confirmed all of Craig's hopes where his boat is concerned.

"Although hectic, it was a good opportunity to iron out any bugs which proved to be only a couple of minor things," he says. "The boats performance was much better than I expected. Although I was hoping for a fast cruiser, she's all that and much more. What really impresses me is how fast she is, even when fully loaded. For example we left the heads of Port Stephens very loaded but she accelerated as though in light trim, hitting almost 20 knots in around 18 knots of breeze. The motion at sea was very comfortable, the fine entry hulls making for a very soft motion. Upwind performance was also very impressive, tacking easily through 90 degrees. The finer bows tend to keep good grip upwind preventing the bows from falling away. Edson cable steering was a good choice with the helm responsive, very light and well balanced."

So now that *Spirited One* is back in Port Stephens after turning heads at Sanctuary Cove, what's next on Craig's agenda?

"My wife Marina and I are planning some great adventures in her! Much of my adult liveaboard experience was spent in the Sandy Straits between Tin Can Bay and Bundaberg but my



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Spirited One



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favourite cruising ground is between the Keppels and Whitsundays. I've done this trip a few times but never with enough time. I find this group of islands to be spectacular and, best of all, so isolated that you usually have them to yourself for the most part. I'd love to head back that way again with Marina and share the area with her. Without her full commitment and support, I'm not sure if I could have achieved our goal to this point in our young business and remained sane! Marina is fully involved in the business and we work very well together. It would be great to enjoy cruising together on our

own creation through this magic part of the East Coast..."

But it's hard to see how Craig and Marina will find the time for a little while yet! With such a huge response from Sanctuary Cove, demand is pushing that they gear up for major production of the kits. "Stallion Marine are also gearing up to assemble/complete 380's and have just moved into a bigger new factory in preparation for the flood of orders." Craig says. "Stallion are excellent builders and have achieved a beautiful finish yet kept the boat very light. Because they are using our kit as the basis for their boats, they have a huge edge over other production boats. Finally, there is a production boat on the market that has some high-performance characteristics/potential! There's also considerable demand now to produce the bigger brother of the 380, the Spirited 480. It's my next project to come off the drawing board. (well...the computer!) and will just be a longer, sleeker and faster boat with, I'm sure, stunning lines."

So Craig Schionning has some busy days ahead. He's certainly enjoyed Spirited beginnings, both in his life on the water and with his business venture. His relaxed yet determined attitude, swag of experience and true love for what he is doing is a great way to start and a good foundation for the future. And what of his dreams for 2020?

"I can't even think that far ahead, I'm just really enjoying my life right now and just want to keep doing what I'm doing ... but sailing around the Pacific doesn't sound too bad!" ❖

Craig readying *Spirited One* for the trip North. (above)

Spirited One's spacious queen size forward cabin. (below)



Spirited Shipwright Julian Griffiths



■ by JO DJUBAL

Julian Griffiths is doing his forefathers proud. At 37 years of age his list of boatbuilding accomplishments would undoubtedly see his family of Royal British Navy shipwrights in the 1700s and 1800s taking their hats off - and scratching their heads as they pondered his multihulled creations!

No less than four Whitehaves, eight F33s and two Schionning powercats make up the talented shipwrights building resume, along with countless other projects on hundreds of other vessels. Spirited 380s now head the To do list and as this innovative design by Craig Schionning takes off, Julians talents as an impeccable builder are in demand. True craftsmanship in boatbuilding is a timeless art and it's interesting to take a glimpse into a contemporary shipwrights motivations and inspirations towards refining this art.

After moving from Tasmania when he was five, dinghies and trailer sailers always featured in the Griffiths home environment. By six years of age, Julian was out on the Noosa river racing Sabots

two up with his brother. "My first multihull experience was when my brother and I were T Boned by a Tornado at the start of a race, cutting our Sabot in two..." Needless to say, a Hobie 14 was his next boat of choice!

Spending happy family time on the water instills enthusiasm but can also build confidence. "When I was ten, I was the only one aboard our trailer sailer when it started dragging at Inskip Point out towards Wide Bay Bar." Julian recalls. "I had to up anchor, start the motor and safely put us back in the bay again. It was a little scary at that age to say the least! Nowadays, there's a bit of a role reversal. I take Dad out sailing, give all the orders and he obeys!"

Work experience in 1988 saw Julian enjoying an inspirational stint at Norman R. Wrights in Brisbane. The experience led to an apprenticeship the following year and an invaluable further eight years honing his art with true masters. His enthusiasm for the trade went beyond work hours as during his apprenticeship he acquired an old H28 and set about rebuilding it - while living aboard on the Brisbane river! "Restoring while living aboard - never again!" he recounts.

But restore he did which ironically led to his next multihull revelation..."I was

motor sailing the H28 back to Brisbane from Noosa into a 25 knot South Easterly when the diesel ran out. I had to go below and bleed the system while heeled over at 45 degrees with no auto pilot. While I was trying to correct the tiller, I saw this fifty foot cat go gliding past leaving me wallowing around in its spray. I said to myself - "I'm getting one of those!"

So he did, building his own Pescott Whitehaven, *Sunday Session*, in his backyard at 26, working his day job and then working on building the boat four hours each evening and weekends. The process included the usual agonies and ecstasies, including a tense moment when fire threatened to ruin his plans in a big way! "The neighbours were burning off and set the fence alight. I had visions of the boat going up in smoke ...try telling that one to the insurance company!" Looking back on his first building experience, Julian remembers it as a "Good character building exercise. I guess I did it the hard way at first but you always learn more the second, third, fourth and fifth time around!"

When *Sunday Session* hit the water a couple of years later, Julian enjoyed it to the max.... Racing Brisbane to Gladstone and the AMOC Races, one of the the latter in which *Sunday Session* took out



Spirited shipwright. (far left)

Shipping a Tri. (middle)

Stallion's new Spirited 380. (above)

third. "During that particular race it was blowing so hard that a lot of the fleet pulled out. We ended up taking a fair few crew from other boats out with us, which was probably just as well as the weight kept us in the water! We recorded over 20 knots at some moments during that race..."

His childhood racing spirit is definitely still evident, three other Brisbane to Gladstones, seven Bay to Bays, (One sailing with Ross Blair on Firefly) and numerous Hogs Breaths and trailer Multi Nationals in his wake.

Although time is limited nowadays, cruising is also special on his sailing agenda. "My cruising's always been on a time restraint so I haven't been able to enjoy it as much as I'd like to. I love the top end of Moreton Bay where the water is clean and warm and the sand fine and squeaky clean and there's usually not too many other boats. I've also been lucky enough to sail a 42 footer to Sydney with just two up when I finished school and also a Lightwave 38 to the Whitsundays along with sailing my H28 up and down the coast a few times ... Hopefully my next boat will carry me farther afield..." And what is the 'next boat'?

"I'm currently restoring an old Hartley 16ts which I'll pass up to my father! But I'm gearing up to build myself a F22 to campaign on the race track and also do a little cruising in." And what about his dream boat? "A sixty foot cat, simple, smooth, with no flash gadgets and set up to easily sail single handed."

Where designers are concerned, Julian rates Pescott and Farrier as a few of his favourites, along, of course with Craig Schionning. "Craig's Spirited 380 design is a real beauty and shows a gifted eye for line and function. We like them so much that we decided to produce and promote them through Stallion Marine so that says it all I guess! As far as Pescott's go, I've built and worked on five Whitehaves

and find them a great all rounder multi, simple, light, fast and smooth. I admire Marks designs because he's proven them himself with all the miles he's clocked up on his own boats. There's not too many designers around now that have their own boats. Ian Farrier is a genius and I love his concept of a trailerable multi that you can have a great time on and then just pack up and take home with you, insurance and moorings not a problem! "

Although he's never brought a design to fruition, Julian says he's drawn "plenty of boats but none have made it onto the shed floor.

The Stallion 'shed floor' is at Yandina on the Sunshine Coast and it is here where the second Spirited 380 is currently being created by Stallions talented and enthusiastic team. "The beauty of the Spirited 380 is that the hardest parts are already made for you and turn up on a truck!" he says. "The rest is CNC cut so it's like putting a big Meccano set together. The trick is to plan ahead, visualise what you're doing, prepare well and not to get carried away. It's a pretty easy boat to build as Craig has taken the hard parts out! The boat is built in about six different sections and these can be added at any time, so you can leave the side of the boat off until it's ready. The boat is flat panels, joined to length and shaped and then shaped around bulkheads - very simple."

As a contemporary shipwright who has worked with everything from wood to exotics, does he have any material preferences? "Foam is great - a little more expensive but good for resale value. Duflex is quick, light and strong and a great material as long as it's sealed up and built properly. Western Red Cedar is great for one off vessels but is very time consuming and needs a lot more work in construction with temporary frames and patterns. The dust danger, of course, is also a concern."

As far as the future of multihulls goes, Julian believes "Methods will get quicker with new products on the market, but it won't get cheaper." He also sees a lot of opportunities for new designers. "There seems to be a big hole there. A lot of designs appear very similar, some with a little more rocker, some a little fuller etc but only really differing in cabin and window profiles. The designers I've mentioned are to be congratulated for coming up with designs that are truly cutting edge and always breaking new ground, but there's not many I feel that do at the moment." Julian does concede it's a hard road.

"As a designer you have to enough money to advertise, build and get your products out there and make them viable." Regardless, he does have an interest in perhaps pursuing that hard road in the future. "I want to build up my reputation as a shipwright over the next few years and possibly also work on design. I love sailing and sailboats so whatever the future holds, it will always involve these two things. You never know what's round the corner."

So finally, as an accomplished boat builder and experienced multihuller, what advice does he offer the home builder? "Take a break if you've had enough." he says "You'll come back feeling fresh and charged. Don't go overboard with Gucci stuff, you're building a boat that will get wet ,sails dragged through it, along with sandy feet. You're not building a penthouse! And don't ever give up, you will lose your money". And finally, "Keep your partner, they're good for moral support and don't forget the woman always has the last say!" ♦

The Stallion Story

■ by JO DJUBAL

The gleaming 380 is teeming with excited, inquisitive boat show punters. “How’re you going?” comes a happy call from the dock. “We thought this looked like one of Julian’s boats!” Frank and Val Pate step aboard and greet Julian Griffiths like an old mate, which he is, after building their last immaculate Pescott, *Playtime*. The fact that Julian Griffiths quality of work has become a recognisable trademark has a lot to do with how the Stallion Story began. This, and the entrepreneurial talents of young Dave Biggar has seen the creation of a fresh new build company who are definitely on the right track to success in a tight field.

Dave, National Sabot Champion and avid multihull enthusiast had a brain wave early in 2006. Recognising a market need for a Sports Cruiser at an affordable price, he did his research and decided the Spirited 380 was the way to go. Here was an innovative and eye catching design with an ingenious kit system which would minimise build time (and hence overall cost) and almost be a pleasure to work on. And he had no doubt the resulting boat would be a hit in the market place.

But his plan called for an uncompromising builder - one with a track record of excellence, staying power and, of course, a ‘nice bloke’ demeanour! It wasn’t long before his search through the network led him to Julian and the Stallion Marine concept truly began to take shape.

“We’d actually both sailed at the Noosa Yacht and Rowing Club but had never crossed paths,” says Julian. “I was ready to try something on a larger scale and was already impressed by Craig Schionning’s design. Daves bigger picture also made good sense. We got on well, shared similar ideas and I could see straight away that we’d work well together.”





Scurfing behind the boat outside the Seaway! (above)

So with the initial plan in place, the intrepid pair set off south to meet Craig, trusting the idea would make as much good sense to him too. The meeting was a successful collaboration between like minded enthusiasts, Craig was delighted to have Stallions considerable expertise available for those clients without the time to build a Spirited 380 themselves while Dave and Julian were thrilled to have Craig's valuable support.

"Craig was happy to approve our suggested modifications such as the positioning of head sail winches, changes to bathroom layout, hydraulic as opposed to cable steering, more cockpit seating and storage etc." says Dave. "We're also happy to customise further to suit clients specific needs and will continue to have such changes approved by the designer himself."

Stallions snappy marketing and soft sell approach is also in line with Craig's philosophy, namely. "If the boat is well priced, aesthetically pleasing and measures up to all its design criteria, there shouldn't be a need to push clients at all."

The essence of the Spirited Design and Stallion Marine collaboration was displayed perfectly at the Sanctuary Cove Show. The two boats side by side, each with their individual differences but exuding the same friendly vibe aboard and level of excellence from start to

finish. Potential clients had their field of choices expanded to enable the dream to become that much more accessible. Response was, needless to say, tremendous. "We also had a huge amount of interest on the upcoming 480." says Julian. "So it's lucky we've got a nice new big shed!"

With a veritable stampede of orders about to happen, Stallion are positioned well. "With our new 'headquarters' at Yandina on the Sunshine Coast, we envisage producing five to six boats per year with a five month build time per boat, three boats at once." he says. "We now have several hand picked builders and also have apprenticeships happening so we're very happy with what we've achieved since launching the company in August 2006. We use the cost effective and very safe service of a hydraulic lift house removal truck to get the boats to the water - Mooloolabah is just 40 minutes away and Brisbane only an hour. It's a great setup."

Stallion Marine is really offering something exciting for potential buyers - the chance to have a thoroughbred kit boat built by a team of enthusiastic professional builders at an affordable price. It may be early days for Stallion Marine but with such solid foundations, it's bound to be a long and satisfying ride ahead. ❖

l a u n c h i n g Stallion Marine Spirited 380



Spirited 380

Just two weeks before the boat show, Stallion Marine's first Spirited 380 was carefully placed on the truck and carried to touchdown at Mooloolabah. It had been six and a half months since Julian, Dave and two other builders took possession of the kit - and went for it! The result? An impeccably built and finished cat for delighted new owners, John and Sue Hope. And the start of something big for Stallion Marine.

As usual, no launch is really complete without the odd hiccup, in this case, a slight misjudgement of the tides! But in typical 'she'll be right' attitude, the 4 tonne boat was set free of the sand with just a meagre push/lift manoeuvre by a small group of the Stallion 'herd'.

The next day the rig went on, followed on Thursday by the sails. The boys could hardly wait to get out there on their creation and Friday saw an exuberant crew head out for a hoot. David, Julian, Yancy and Godfrey (from Ullman Sails Sunshine Coast), Ian McMahon (Stallion builder) and young Jay Sherwell (Stallion apprentice) were more than rapped when the Spirited 380 glided along at 23kts in 3.0m seas and about 20-25kts of breeze with minimum sail. Young Jay had never sailed a multi before and his huge grin confirmed he'd picked the right apprenticeship!

Saturday rolled on and saw some more serious test sails ensue, (in other words - more fun!) before a photo shoot on Sunday. Owners John and Sue finally got a look in and chance to enjoy their very first multihull. Their smiles probably beat Jays in the stoked department!

So whaddya do when you have three days to get your new boat to the boat show? Make it a Surf Safari of course! With seven boards on the tramps, the Stallion crew set off on the following Friday to enjoy the cruisability of the boat they'd created. "We had a dream run" said David "maintaining 18 knots most of the time in about 18-20 knots of NE, without screecher or spinnaker. (cos we didn't have any yet!) and enjoying the odd stop for a surf. The boat was really comfortable as well, even with seven motley crew aboard!"

And the highlight of the trip? "Scurfing behind the boat outside the Seaway!" all agree. So you could kind of say the first Stallion Spirited 380 literally surfed into the scene at Sanctuary Cove. And the wake barrels on!

Spirits of Sherwood

■ by DARRYL SMITH

As I write this we are approaching the imposing twin heads of Port Stephens. It's late morning on Sunday with 5 kts of breeze from the west and we're nearing the end of our journey to Sanctuary and back. The visible signs of whales are seaward of us in the form of boats orientated in semi-circles - similar to the wagon trains of the Wild West. This is mirrored ahead inside the Port by a similar scene, this time involving boats and dolphins. Having already seen our

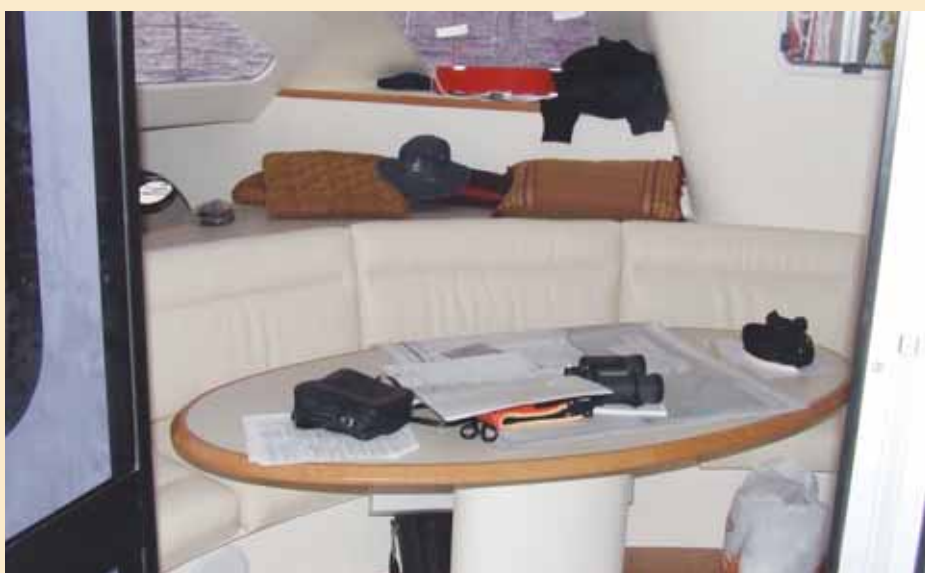
share of whales and dolphins on the 700nm return journey, we're happy to leave these local sights to others.

Having reached Sanctuary you may wonder why we would leave again. Well the Sanctuary I refer to is the Sanctuary Cove Boat Show. We journeyed from the Anchorage in Port Stephens to the show and back with all the bravado of early explorers on a new unproven design that had wet its antifoul for the first time just a week or so before our departure. With

the fit out continuing aboard during the trip north, we were well equipped for repairs, carrying a mini workshop stowed in the storage lockers.

The crew was made up of those that had a financial or professional interest in the boat. Leading this band of merry men, (who tended to get even merrier after beer-o'clock), was Craig, the designer and builder (who coincidentally also has a striking resemblance to Robin Hood) and willing crew - Nathan, the eager





Spirited One, just before departure from the Anchorage. (top)

Looking into the cabin. (above)

apprentice (got to get a job like that one day), Kevin, the instigator, Darryl, the amateur journalist, and the two Johns.

One just had to be Little John and it follows the second was Big John. Work commitments meant this was definitely a one John journey so, Big John joined us traveling north with Little John onboard for the return trip. This tale would not be complete without King Richard, who unfortunately was detained in a far away land called Singapore by work and family commitments. He did promise to join us for the next crusade however.

As we glided gracefully into Shoal Bay we could see a rabble forming on the jetty. They were waving their arms violently in some strange form of greeting. Aren't family great? My head was spinning with the events of the past three weeks and in fact, the last year. I pondered how effectively my heart has been 'spirited away' from my beloved multihull of nine years, a Crowther Buccaneer 40 Trimaran that sails by the name of *Wings*. What could do this to a long standing trimaran owner who possessed a vessel as beautiful and

graceful as *Wings*? *Wings* was strong and sturdy, sails beautifully and had served us well whether it was protecting my family from the elements in Bass Strait or revealing the beauty of cruising the Australian East Coast. She was always going to be in the photo's when we cruised the Pacific or did the Kimberley trek. Now, sadly, I knew this could no longer be the case. A separation was inevitable.

No ordinary boat could do this, could change your dreams so effectively. It needed something special... Pretenders had come and gone for years and all had failed to tempt this sailor to drop one hull and join the twin hull ranks. That was until I saw this new Spirited Design.

The lovely lines of this boat are the first thing that hits your senses. Surely this can't be a kit boat? Kit boats are meant to be easy to build - and ugly - aren't they? Where was the hard chine design whose flat bottom slams so loudly when coming off a wave, or the deep V that buries so effectively when loaded up with real life necessities rather than a daypack that wouldn't nourish a four year old? This spirited one looks like it was popped out of a mould. Can't be! Now there's a great name for a great boat, *Spirited One*, thanks Lady Alison. (Fair mistress of Kevin.)

I once heard monohull sailing compared to sitting on a fence watching the world (aka multihulls) go by whilst a sadist sprays you with a fire hose. If this is so, then strip planking two 12m x 1m hulls must be penance for past crimes against humanity - for the penance is inhumane. Not only do you get to build them one inch at a time upside down, you then (many times over) get to review how unevenly you did it- with countless hours of fairing. What's fair about that? Seems the best part of this exercise is the party you throw for the turning over ceremony.

But here was a boat available in kit form for the home builder or finished to perfection by your builder of choice. What a great concept! You're not tied to a particular builder or timeframe to build and minor customisations are easily integrated without the usual project home style pricing escalation. If you'd have to rob the bank to buy a Spirited 380 outright and don't have the time to build, do what we did - get a few mates together and share in 'The Spirit.'

Pretty boats, however, don't always work well at sea no matter how good they look at the dock. Curved decks that can turn an ankle are more for aesthetics than functionality. But this one was undoubtedly a head turner. Integrated composite beams... not heavy bolt ons. Composite stanchion bases and rigging fittings ... not leaky chain plates etc etc. This boat was fine.

But how would this *Spirited One* perform? Well everything on paper looked right for speed and safety. Slim hull entry at waterline that swept smoothly back to the stern. A length to beam ratio in each hull that Gloria Marshall would be proud of. Forward, there were flat decks devoid of complex curves or toe stubbing steps. Flush strong nets with the ability to shed green water quickly. A centre catwalk for easy access to the bow, ample flat working area at the base of the mast.... the list is endless.

For the sailor there were twin helms - and no high chair like helm position exposed to the elements (some designs almost require working in high places permits just to steer them). And would you like mini-keels with that sir? No thanks. I love sailing all yachts, including mono's, but after *Wings* I could never again own one keel let alone two. Mini keels appear to me to be a choice made to simplify building rather than enhancing the sailing experience-less efficient upwind and they slow you down downwind. No thanks again. Dagger boards for me.

And to round out the sailing experience, a modern rig with prodder mounted screecher and room for a kite.

Twin diesels, mechanical propulsion. This boat will pivot on its own length without resorting to bow thrusters. These sometimes smelly workhorses are nicely contained in their own compartments away from where humans live.

So, our maiden voyage was a memorable one.

We had finally finished preparations for our departure at 11pm on the Friday before the show opened. We woke the next morning with a 25 kt westerly challenging us to come out and play. Our initial steps were tentative, running before the wind with headsail only. Port

Stephens disappeared all too quickly and we were at our decision point to head north or retreat back to the anchorage from whence we came. There was only one answer really.

Up went the main and *Spirited One*, half dressed with headsail and one reef

was reaching northwards at 20 knots. The official record was 19.6 knots on the GPS and, since the log was a late starter, we unanimously decided to add a 0.4 knots allowance for the averaging effect of these devices. Craig was pacing around like an expectant father in a delivery

A few of the merry crew. L to R Kevin, Big John, Darryl. (top)

Craig, taking from the sea to give to the poor.....crew. (bottom)





ward, nervously scanning all points of the boat each time we surged forward on a gust.

A noticeable point for me was the ease at which she accelerated to this speed. It was deceptively fast. No tell tail rooster tail, no creaking, groaning or shuddering, no clouds of spray billowing across the decks. As we caught the waves in front and sliced on through, the buoyant bows knew it was time to go to work and they kept the bows high.

As the day wore on, the wind eased but stayed in the west. There was movement in the galley around sunset as the preparation of the evening meal began. The galley up design provided fantastic visibility under way and the large drop down window made access to the cockpit easy for passing nibblies out to the hungry crew. No sooner had someone asked "What's for dinner" than the trolling rod answered fish with a whirr of the reel. What a beauty. It fed five of us for two dinners. Once the fish was no

Caption?.

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Craig in the galley still boatbuilding.

more we caught a second, larger one. Even the fish loved this boat! The walk through transoms made landing them a dream - just reel it in right up the steps and into the cockpit. No gaff or net required here!

We had travelled 120nm before undertaking our first jibe, initiated by the autopilot who seemed upset by the lack of popularity at that time and decided New Zealand would be good to visit.

The crew had retreated to the cabin to brew some coffee where the 360 degree view made this a safe and warm exercise. The autopilot thereafter went by the name of Howard.

Consequently, we then performed our first tack to get us back on course. I thought I was dreaming. Could it be *Spirited One* tacks better than my beloved trimaran? Cats aren't meant to do that are they?

Assigned to the dogwatch, I took the opportunity for an early nap. The huge queen size berths run transverse across the bridge deck for easy access for both occupants. And the headroom would satisfy a Zulu warrior. But something was missing when I came up on deck for my watch. I wasn't quite awake yet and was missing that adrenaline rush you get from the midnight free fall from your bunk seconds after banging your head on the

cabin roof. That's the Crowther way that I was familiar with having sailed on a number of old Spindriffs. (Stalwarts do claim it is character building though and saves on the first coffee.)

On the second half of the trip north the winds were very light, and with a timeline to meet, we motor sailed through the second night at sea. I did initially have concerns that 2 x 21 hp was not enough power for this cat but the twin Nanni's were superb. We motored on one engine at a time easily exceeding 6.5 kts whilst consumption was less than 2 ltrs an hour. Want to go faster? Just start the second engine to add a few more knots. As soon as a breath of wind was felt, the log jumped to 8 kts.

Two days and two hours after leaving the heads of Port Stephens we were entering the Gold Coast Seaway. There, waiting for us, was our sister ship from Stallion Marine. And what a sight she was. The Cat looked in the mirror for the first time and recognised its reflection. Sleek, graceful ... could that really be us?

Stallion had sailed down from the Sunshine Coast where they are assembling the kits for customers who do not want to build themselves. Together we motored up to Sanctuary Cove where we tied up next to each other and compared notes and boats. Stallion's

KVH Introduces worlds smallest stabilised marine antenna for Australian satellite TV



Coursemaster Autopilots introduces the new KVH TracVision(R) M3 marine satellite TV system for Australia and shows the boating world that great things can come in small packages. Available for mariners in Australia for the very first time, the TracVision M3 is the worlds smallest stabilised marine satellite TV system and is ideal for installation aboard vessels as small as 8 metres.

"The addition of the TracVision M3 to KVH's product line now enables us to offer maritime satellite TV solutions for consumers cruising on boats of virtually any size" said Richard Chapman, Managing Director of Coursemaster Autopilots who distributes the award-winning range of KVH satellite communications systems around Australia.

The award-winning system means that boaties can enjoy their favourite satellite TV programs, sport, news and weather while cruising. Consisting of the TracVision M3 antenna, a 12V multi-satellite control unit, and a single cable for easy installation, the TracVision M3's super-efficient, 37 cm (14.5") diameter antenna offers a rugged design, precision tracking, quiet operation, and coverage range comparable to the larger 45 cm (18") diameter antennas in most areas.

For further information on the full range of KVH's award-winning satellite TV marine antennas, and satellite TV coverage areas for Australia visit www.coursemaster.com or call Coursemaster Autopilots ph (02) 9417 7097 fax (02) 9417 7557 or email sales@coursemaster.com



Note: Flat working area around the base of the mast.

Spirited 380 was launched within a day of *Spirited One* and had recorded 23 knots in a 20 knot breeze with the aid of a wave or two.

The boat show was a hectic time for Craig and his partner, Marina. (The nautical version of Maid Marian. Only a truly passionate and dedicated yacht designer would search until he found a beautiful partner with a nautical name!) And of course there was young Will - err - I mean Nathan.

My better half, Deb and I spent Saturday night of the Boat Show handing out Spirited 380 brochures at the Riviera Ball. How we got an invite was another story.

My fellow guests thought I was drunk when I claimed our boat had a water line of 74 feet (not a lie if you count both hulls) and did 20 kts with the engines off and consumes 2 ltrs an hour at trolling speed versus their 40 ltrs per hour. We had the "how big is your boat" contest

won - until they realised ours was a catamaran. The fact that Riv don't make a 74 footer gave it away... or maybe it was the 20 kt boast.

Rumour has it that *Spirited One* was expelled from Sanctuary because Nathan was found cavorting with older women in the Tavern in the wee hours of Sunday morning. Whilst he denies this, the evidence shows he was a bit seedy the next day. He was, however, bright enough to respond to a serious question from the gallery (aka tavern) overlooking *Spirited One*. "What are the two wheels for?" was the call. "Well", he responded, "The one on that side (port) turns the boat left, and the other one turns it right". Amazingly, this answer was accepted.

Before we knew it, the time had come for the return journey. The forecast was for light headwinds most of the way and this held for the first few hours but soon we had 16 kts on the nose. What? We had to tack more than once in 300nm? But it was a good test of *Spirited's* windward ability. We were charging along at 10 -11 kts in 16 kts of breeze. We soon had the tacks down to a tee, getting the heady in before full pressure came on and without the need for the winch handle. The log who had turned up for work during the show registered 11.6 kts as our maximum during this period.

Coursemaster Howard was fresh from a makeover by the experts. There were serious claims the crew had molested his controller on the trip north, changing all the settings, a claim strongly denied by all



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on board. Unfortunately Big John was back at work in Sydney so was an easy target to shift the blame to. What did that button do again? I must say, Howard did a brilliant job on the return trip, with a prime ministerial single-minded focus on his purpose!

Sunset was again approaching so we brought out our secret fishing weapon. We rattled the pans in the galley and the trolling rod again answered the call. Brilliant Craig! How did you design that feature in?

We had opted for Tacttic instruments on *Spirited One*, partly for their functionality and partly for the ease of installation. And what great instruments they are! If you don't like where they're mounted, pick them up and take them with you. What every twin hull boat with twin helms, twin engines and twin daggerboards needs is twin sets of instruments! Just before the end of our journey we did realise the "faulty number 2" analog wind display suffered from



Caption?

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INNOVATION AWARD FOR TACKTICK...

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U.K. marine electronics manufacturer Tacktick has just received the prestigious Queen's Award for Enterprise in the Innovation category for their Micronet range of wireless, solar powered electronics.

For Australian distributor Oceantalk it is an acknowledgement of the vision they had in bringing this technology to Australian boat owners.

Managing Director Robin Kydd is delighted with the award: "When we first took Tacktick on board, they were a relatively small company – but we recognised that they were developing the technology that was going to take on the world. And they did. We're really proud to have supported them in the early days and now, of course, to be the exclusive distributor in the region."

Tacktick was established by two young brothers just ten years ago but today their Micronet range is used across the globe. It's the technology of choice for Olympic sailing teams, owners of ocean racing yachts and thousands of cruising yachtsmen... and it's easy to see why.

Wires and connections cause 80% of marine electronics failures so with the Micronet wireless, solar powered system there's a massive increase in reliability. Installation is also so much simpler as there are no wires to run through decks and up masts.

Being lightweight and self-powered Micronet contributes to superior speed and performance and the instrumentation is fully portable so you have access to data where you need it. It also helps that the items are totally waterproof to a depth of ten metres!

"Already this year they have launched a new Race Master wireless compass, speed and depth instrument for sports and keel boats; there's a new Power Boat Wind instrument for motor boat owners; and a new wireless Remote Display that fully interfaces with all main brands of marine electronics. In the next few months we are also going to see the Maxi range for large racing yachts."

For owners of boats large and small, sail or power, it is definitely worth finding out more about this award-winning technology: just call Oceantalk on (02) 9981 9500, fax (02) 9981 9555, email: sales@oceantalk.com.au or visit www.oceantalk.com



Caption?.

operator error. It spent the whole journey set on a +/- 0 to 50 close hauled readout where the "better numero uno" instrument was on standard +/- 0 to 180 readout. And we cursed it all the way for providing the 'wrong' readout. The only excuse I can offer is we were exhausted after many hours working to lighten the boat by tipping excess beer out through the five human bio-filters on board.

The kite went up on the second day after two false starts. The wind was light and flukey and blew from three different directions before settling in the north west. Then it died out totally. But it was nice to get a bit of colour up, even for a short period. We continued south, motor sailing on one engine and covering 9 nm an hour with some assistance from the current. (You gotta love multihull cruising, traveling 50% faster than a mono in 5 kts of breeze!)

The crew realised we were close to returning home when Broughton Island came into view. This was the first time this crew has sailed together but it won't be the last. There was talk of Lord Howe Island, Noumea and the Kimberley's. All plans spurred on by a successful trip, fair weather, good company and pleasant sailing in a boat full of spirit.

Memorable moments.... For me it was how well this new catamaran sailed. The first few hours reaching at 18-20 knots with reduced sail, a crew of five and a mini workshop on board made me eager to see what she would do in racing trim with full sail. Some of our crew logged their first coastal passage during the trip and the grins on their faces were unforgettable. Little John took navigation lessons on the way and often the excited call would come out to the cockpit "we have traveled 15cm in the last hour"... Maybe still a few of lessons to go.

Many thanks also for the watchful eye- or should I say ears of the VMR Coastal Station operators we chatted to along the way. What a great job they do. We did however sound a bit Shakespearian once or twice when trading Romeo's during our position check. The newcomers on board liked it anyway.

If you want to get a glimpse of this Spirited beauty for yourself, try Craig's website at www.spiriteddesigns.com.au or you can catch her in Port Stephens for a while before she moves to Pittwater. You will recognise her. She is like no other. Don't get too close though or she will spirit away your heart as well...

Well done Craig and Marina, she's a classic. ♦