

feature

Design

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Some boats excel in 'crossover' – they can be multiple, different things depending on the owner's mood, timeframe, location and weather. *Soul* – perhaps because she's homegrown – is a splendid example of crossover.

The bach boat



W

hen I arrived in New Zealand in 2007 there was a thing called the 'Kiwi bach.' I'd never come across a house so engrained in the local lifestyle. Beach homes in my experience were reserved for the rich and famous, and you had to have a few high-end performance cars parked in your five-car garage before you'd ever get an invitation to one.

I'd been in this country one week and was invited to a beach home in New Zealand. At that time, it was common for people to own them and they didn't hesitate in sharing them. Over a decade that iconic cultural experience has faded.

The keys are no longer stashed under doormats and it now takes months of planning before a weekend can be arranged because you can no longer just 'pop in.' The quintessential Kiwi bach is gone, replaced by secondary homes fancier than the primary ones.

This past week I got an invitation of a very different sort, but it reminded me of the changes in New Zealand and that, while much of the country has gone through a metamorphosis, those old roots are still deeply embedded in the culture.

This reminder came by way of an unexpected invitation onboard a newly launched 15m powercat designed and built by Charlie McKenzie over seven years at a rented property in Sandspit.

Without training in boatbuilding, drafting or design, McKenzie took it upon himself to look at the current design of mainstream catamarans and apply his knowledge to create a new and improved version. Relying on his experience designing windsurfers in the 1980s, he pulled out a notepad and his #8 fencing wire, as the expression goes, and got to work.

While experienced in building boats, he was new to this style of boat. Each of its predecessors had been very different, from the 32-foot monohull he built at age 17 to a 41-foot trimaran he built 20 years later.



NIMBUS 305 COUPÉ

The contemporary Scandinavian design coupled with reliable and efficient Volvo shaft drive propulsion make the Nimbus range of coupé motor yachts a must view for anyone considering a new launch. The aft deck shares the same level as the bathing platform and saloon. It has a generously sized comfortable L-shaped sofa for five persons with foldable seating. The dining table folds down into a cocktail table with glass holders with stainless steel handles. Perfect for relaxing or social activities with friends and family. The interior of the boat is of wonderful quality and atmosphere particularly in regard to space and light. The boat has integrated ventilation and five large opening port lights for extra light intake. Upholstered bulkheads in light colours help to reduce noise. The boat has two cabins an owner's cabin (available with Queen bed or V-bed) and a guest cabin, sharing a common head with shower. In all, the 305 Coupé is a contemporary, super-functional boat with reduced environmental impact and which is perfect for an uncomplicated and enjoyable life at sea. The boat is built in Sweden at the Nimbus yard in Mariestad.

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RIGHT A homely, spacious platform, *Soul's* shallow-draft capabilities take you to places off-limits to others.

OPPOSITE The cat has plenty of quirky, design features. The wine rack's a favourite.

BELOW Just like a comfy bach at the beach.



I wondered about the drive one man had to design and build a boat, and then repeat that process again and again. "It all started because I had a father who didn't say I couldn't do it," recalls McKenzie.

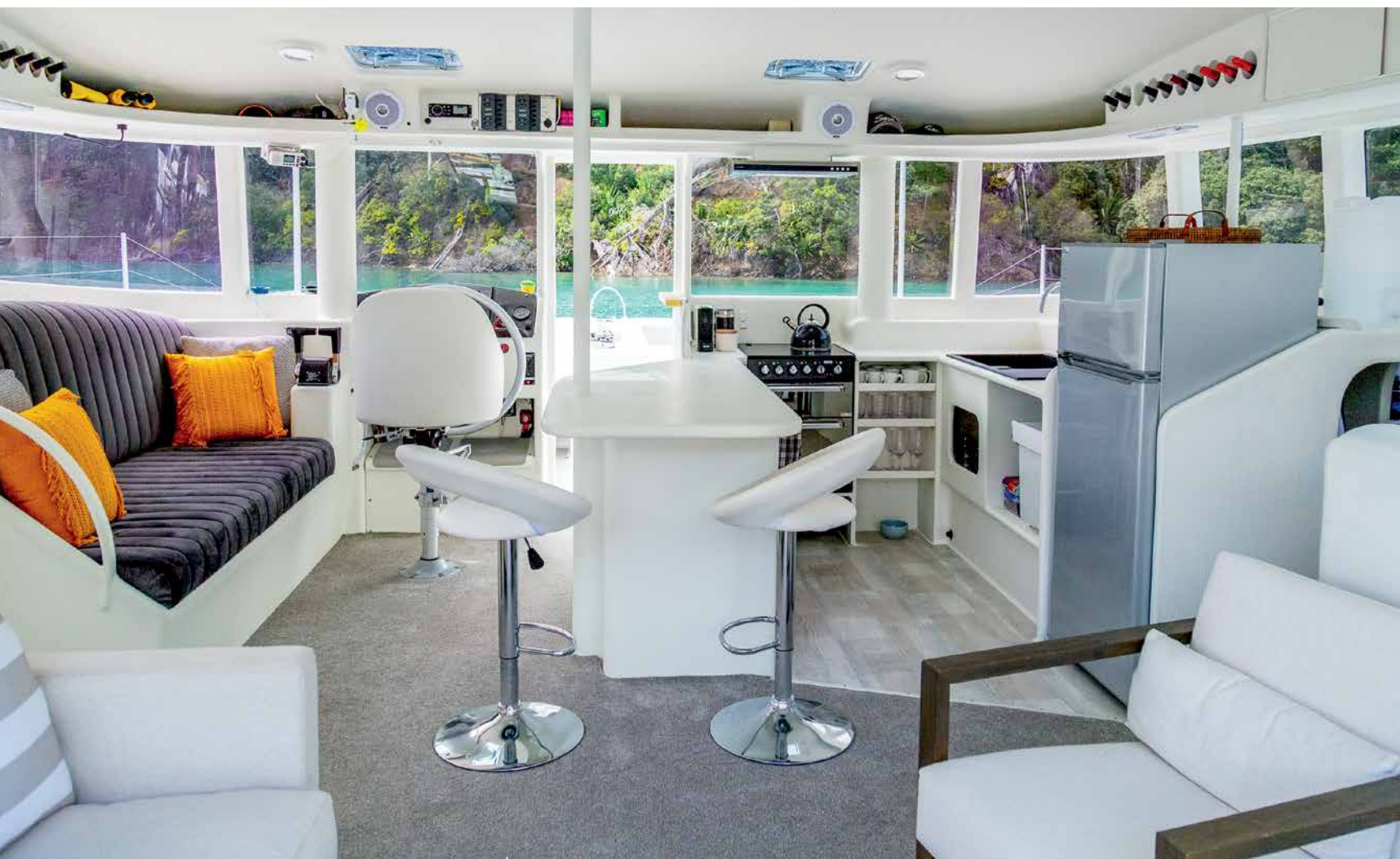
His father had designed and built a boat and when McKenzie suggested he wanted to do the same, he received dad's full support. "I think the key point is that so many people don't do things because they are told they can't, or don't have the environment to encourage them to do it. I was allowed to do it, so I just went ahead and did it. And it's been the same my whole life."

He was empowered by his family to trust in his capabilities

and pursue his interests. This self-belief followed him throughout his life, allowing him to reinvent himself professionally from a wind-surf designer/builder to auto accessory manufacturer to an accomplished artist.

So how does he describe himself – a builder? Designer? Entrepreneur? None of these – "I am a creator." This ability to create – and recreate – himself followed him from his professional career through to his personal pursuits, and the boats he designed are as varied as his career.

Why did he re-invent each of his boats rather than sticking to a proven design? "I like the challenge. All my boats have been





different – not for the hell of it, only because I think I can do something better than what's currently being done.”

SOUL

What he developed with *Soul* is original in concept and unique in design. Having noted that windsurfers reach optimum speed when they ride on top of the water, McKenzie believed the same would apply to a catamaran if he could design a hull that could plane at speed.

Soul's hulls have a straight, sharp stem and a wide, round form from mid-section to stern. The wider, dish-shaped hull would provide additional buoyancy and minimise drag. The design, he reasoned, would provide a light, fast boat with more interior space than its similar-sized counterparts.

By all accounts, this has been achieved. The concept was tested on a sail-driven 1/10th scale model and, theory proving sound, construction commenced. With each hull 14.3m in length and 1.5m wide at the waterline, the boat needed to be light to gain the speed over water he hoped to achieve with the engine configuration he had in mind.

Using a three-piece female mould, the hulls were

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RIGHT She runs easily on one engine.

FAR RIGHT The house batteries are charged by solar. The engine's alternators only charge the start batteries.

BELOW A great view looks even better through of a glass of rosé.

built in PVC foam and fibreglass sandwich throughout, using polyester resin overall and vinylester resin below the waterline. With a 0.5m draft and a displacement of just 8,000kg, *Soul* is undoubtedly a light boat. This was key to her success, as McKenzie wanted a boat that could be powered by two 130hp Honda outboards - and, if necessary, on one.

Soul cruises at 8.5 knots with a fuel consumption of 1.2 litres per nautical mile on one engine running at 2,500rpm. The advantage of having outboards on a light boat is that the second engine can be lifted to reduce drag, noise and extend its operational life.

To counter the typical tracking issue that plagues cats running on one engine, McKenzie has added retractable fins just forward of the engines. Being retractable, they don't compromise the cat's shallow anchoring advantages.

With both engines running *Soul* reaches 23 knots - a speed that rivals similar boats with twice the weight and power. The rounded, wide hulls and lifting outboards also allows *Soul* to venture into very shallow estuaries that dry out at low tide.

The hull design also allowed him to create a spacious, light-filled interior. With a widened hull, he was able to extend the surface area of the internal floor, creating open and comfortable living areas.



ABOVE Retractable fins keep the cat tracking straight when running on one engine.

Soul is the perfect combination of bach and boat.





Large windows surround the saloon, offering 360° views from any vantage point.

Given the desire to maximise options within space constraints, many areas have been designed to be multi-functional. The aft saloon bulkhead tilts up on a hinge and stows away in the ceiling, completely opening up the saloon to the aft deck, increasing ventilation and light.

Forward of the saloon is the navigation station with a settee to port and a large, open galley to starboard. Between these areas is a forward door that provides immediate access to the foredeck.

Full-coverage shade cloth on the aft and foredecks are easily deployed and stowed, and a very clever rotating cockpit table affixed on the aft deck allows either maximum standing room or a quick and comfortable seating arrangement.

Below are four cabins and two bathrooms, each hull a mirror of the other, with modifications made to the master cabin with a walk-around double bed. The aft beds are built at standard height so you don't have to climb up or over someone. Each cabin has generous headroom and plenty of stowage, with numerous opening windows to provide air flow, light and views.

The overall sense is simplicity and versatility – presented in an uncluttered and comfortable living area. One step over the transom and you feel transported to a stylish Kiwi bach.

Rather than building a fixed and expensive interior, McKenzie has used household furniture to furnish much

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Like each of the Launch family of boats, the Launch 27 beautifully combines comfort and performance. This newly updated larger runabout provides even more options than its smaller sisters. Offering greater power, increased agility and additional roominess afforded by the longer hull and wider beam, the Launch 27 is a shining jewel in the Chris-Craft crown.

While Henry Ford was creating the first motorcars, his watercraft counterpart, Chris Smith, was developing the very first engine-propelled boats and skiffs. Even during the Great Depression, Chris-Craft thrived because quality is always prized. During the Second World War, the company reinforced its hold on the American imagination when its landing craft transported the first troops to the Normandy shore on D-Day. In more ways than one, Chris-Craft would become a symbol of liberation and freedom. In 1959, Time Magazine would recognize the popular phenomenon of pleasure boating and put Chris-Craft on its cover. Throughout its rich history, a reputation for quality and style have made it the favourite of presidents, celebrities and icons of American affluence - names like Roosevelt, Kennedy, Vanderbilt, Morgan, Ford, Sinatra, and Hepburn.



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FAR RIGHT The cockpit table is particularly clever – it rotates 180° over the transom when not needed.

BELOW Why anchor when you can park on the beach?



of the saloon, creating a simple but elegant environment akin to a comfortable seaside holiday home. Chairs can be moved to accommodate the size of the group or the setting, tables can be brought out as required, windows and walls opened to provide air flow or space.

Soul is the perfect combination of bach and boat. Sitting on a bar stool in her galley with McKenzie next to me at the helm, we casually bantered as we watched the beautiful landscape slip by on our trip from Sandspit to Kawau. Moving along at 8 knots on one engine, *Soul* glided across the water, the external Honda a muted hum.

Pulling into Kawau, he drove *Soul* onto the beach and we

sat back in our deck chairs to enjoy a wine in the sun. With the saloon wall up and the windows and doors open, I was sitting on the best beachfront property in the world. One step forward and I was on the beach – one step back and I was in the water. No step – I was relaxed in the comforts of home with with picturesque views in all directions.

After wine we gently pulled back from the beach and turned for home. For kicks we spun *Soul* in tight circles in the bay and then dropped the second engine in the water and put down the throttle, quickly powering up to 20 knots in flat seas for a smooth ride home.

Bach or boat... why not both? **BNZ**

