

It has long been fashionable for Australian boat builders to point to their New Zealand cousins with a disparaging look and blame them for the ills in the local boat building scene. The arguments have been . . . "How can we compete with their labour prices . . . We don't have the government subsidies they get," etc.

It is true that labour prices are less than they are here and it is true that the New Zealand Government helps its manufacturers with tax concessions but, it is also true that New Zealand craft are subject to a duty and sales tax levy and the freight rates across the Tasman are among the highest in the world. So, when local boat builders point to a New Zealand product and try to blame the outside world for why they cannot compete, they really should be looking inwards instead.

The Noelex 25, subject of our first sail maxi test, illustrates this point perfectly.

When first AB had the opportunity to sail aboard this well-designed Kiwi trailer sailer/racer, a panel (myself,

craft for at least a week; to do with what we will. To say that Aussie manufacturers were not falling over themselves to offer us craft on this basis is an understatement. However, when we approached Tony Barns, the NSW agent for the Noelex 25, not only was he agreeable to such an examination, he was pleased that someone was prepared to go to the trouble. Naturally Tony feels he has a good boat and he wants to let the world know all about it: we did warn him, however, that a long test of any craft is inevitably going to discover some warts. "No problem", said Tony, "maybe we'll all learn something."

So, without further ado, AB's first maxi yacht test — the Noelex 25 — warts and all.

DESIGN

The Noelex 25 was designed by Alex Tretthewey and Steve Marten of Marten Marine Industries in Auckland. What they set out to do was add a big brother to the already existing Noelex 22 — create a genuine trailer sailer capable of

The hull is unballasted, all the ballast (272 kg of lead) being encased in the centreboard. This is vertically mounted and raised and lowered with a worm drive winch in the main saloon. When fully raised, the board is flush with the hull. The transom is square, with the tiller connecting to the rudder through a horizontal slit in the transom, restricting movement up and down.

DECK

The Noelex has a long cockpit with an even longer sloping cabin taken out to within 140 mm of the gunwales and a comparatively short foredeck. The foredeck has an arched, hinged lid right in the bows under which is the anchor locker and behind which is the main mooring bollard. Fairleads either side of the forestay are provided. Behind the bollard is the forehatch, hinged on its after end, the lid going slightly uphill on to the taper of the cabin. The coachroof is, as mentioned, almost the full width of the boat and its centrepiece is a 1.75 m × 8 m hatch, the whole struc-

NOELEX 25

sailmaker Rob Antill and US racing helmsman Cam Lewis) were all impressed by two things: the vessel's well-mannered behaviour — clearly attributable to the designer — and the ingenious usage of space and finish below decks. It is this latter point that illustrated the competitiveness of the Kiwi boat builders. Given a wealth of competition to face in Australia, they came up with a new variation on the old theme and paid meticulous attention to its execution. To beat the Aussies at their own game, the boat had to offer something genuinely better than the price equivalents already available. To me, this attitude reflects a fundamental difference in the approach taken by the artisans of both countries. We in Australia do not generate the same sort of enthusiasm for our work as they do. Time and time again while cruising in New Zealand and visiting their boat yards, I saw employees working into the night — not for overtime but because they felt a job had to be done then and there. As I said, it's different to our approach.

A similar attitude is adopted by their marketing agents. For AB to undertake a maxi test, it is necessary for us to have complete control over the test



sleeping up to six people, sail fast and yet still be light enough for a family-sized car to tow. A tall order indeed!

The hull is quite high sided, with a moderately raked bow, fine sections forward and a flat run aft. A skeg runs from just forward of the centreboard to the transom, which has an outboard rudder hung on two pintles. With the centreboard fully raised, she draws 300 mm. Maximum beam is 2.50 m (the legal limit) and is carried for about one-fifth of the overall length, aft of amidships, so the boat tends to sit on her fat, flat stern sections when running downhill. The fineness of the bows and the lack of bulk in the forward sections give her the necessary cutting power upwind but in no sense is the design extreme. A glance at the plan will show the clean symmetry and proportions.

ture of which can be removed by undoing four locking bolts. Sail controls are routed either side by fixed turning blocks. The cabin bulkhead is sloped inwards.

The cockpit is a full 2.2 m × 1.55 m divided by the mainsheet traveller, which is bolted proud across the thwarts. The back third of the cockpit sole is open in a shute type arrangement which houses the outboard motor. A raised coaming surrounds the cockpit on three sides, with the tiller emerging from through the transom. Side decking in way of the cockpit coamings is too narrow for comfortable foothold but is moulded to get rid of excess water quickly.

RIG

A simple, flexible and heavily-tapered New Zealand Baverstock spar is held up by three stays only: two shrouds, angled at 45 degrees aft and the forestay. There is no backstay and no topping lift. The boom is set 1.1 m off the deck and reached back well over the cockpit, its bitter end just clearing the helmsman. There is enough sitting headroom under the boom to avoid being clobbered by a jib. The mainsheet is a four to one tackle with an inbuilt jam cleat and the cam is

