



LEOPARD
48

BIG, BOLD BRILLIANT

by John Devers

A recurring theme when talking with those who sign on to the cruising lifestyle is how well the vision and expectations align between the participants. Often there is one person in the partnership with a clear vision, energy and motivation ... and a supporter along for the ride with varying degrees of personal commitment to that same vision. In many cases, true success and fulfilment vary depending on which partner you are talking to and how honest they are about their shared experiences.



Over recent years I've been growing my awareness and understanding of the Leopard cruising catamaran brand. I've previously sea trialled their 39, 40 and 44 offerings. A consistent theme has emerged, no more so than when meeting up in recent months with several owners of the big, bold Leopard 48. Summed up, it's the extent to which a Leopard vessel lays such a strong platform for shared fulfilment. The visits from grandchildren and other extended family members and also pets, are just as likely to be in frame as more practical considerations like sailing performance, handling and manoeuvrability.

The combination of outstanding design, rugged build, ease of operation, stability, performance and attention to so many of the details that enhance the cruising lifestyle are wrapped up in a package that quite literally ticks countless boxes across the long list of expectations required to satisfy each partner. And the Leopard 48 seems to take this important advantage just that much further.

THE COMBINATION OF OUTSTANDING DESIGN, RUGGED BUILD, EASE OF OPERATION, STABILITY, PERFORMANCE AND ATTENTION TO SO MANY OF THE DETAILS THAT ENHANCE THE CRUISING LIFESTYLE ARE WRAPPED UP IN A PACKAGE

There's also an additional dimension buried deep in Leopard's DNA. It's the abundance of features that not only surprise but delight their owners. In my conversations with owners of the L48, there were a raft of outstanding features for which there was unanimous approval.

In both form and function, the Leopard 48 is a strong, robust and capable cruiser. Fud and



Faye MacKenzie from Esperance in Western Australia did extensive research before stepping up to their boat from smaller catamarans, including seven years spent on a Fusion 40. Fud puts it like this. "The idea of a bigger boat didn't phase us. Our professional lives before retirement were spent on bigger commercial vessels and they have a lot of pluses. Our Leopard is easy to manage, more comfortable, sits well in the water and doesn't blow away when you are trying to throw ropes. She is a real lady, well behaved, stable and with good speed," he adds.

All owners of the Leopard 48 especially love the forward cockpit accessed by a watertight door from the main saloon, and the flexibility it provides for outdoor living. The reality is that there will always be times at anchor when the aft cockpit is faced to the sun and out of the cooling breeze. The ability to move easily to the comfort of this alternative forward cockpit with comfortable seating and twin drop down tables is a definite winner. While the 44 also has a forward cockpit, the 48 has expanded on the concept with additional volume,

ANOTHER FEATURE ENJOYING FURIOUS APPROVAL AMONGST OWNERS IS THE RAISED HELM STATION OFFERING 360° VISIBILITY

walk up steps to the fore deck and an overhead hatch in the hardtop that slides back so you can ascend without ducking your head.

Another feature enjoying furious approval amongst owners is the raised helm station offering 360° visibility and exceptional control. All lines are led aft to two electric winches on either side of the instrument and control panel. Sails can be handled from here and engine controls as well as the impressive electronics are all within easy reach. Access is via the aft cockpit steps or the starboard side deck and the seat is big enough so that two people can keep the helmsperson company while under way.

The ability to move from one side of the boat to the other on the same level without disrupting those sitting in the aft cockpit is a definite plus, and it allows for easy operation of the unique dinghy davit which hinges out to set the tender onto the water well aft of the transoms.

The boarding platforms are long, high, and broad, so they're easy to manage from the water or from the marina berth. On Fud and Faye's Leopard, additional stainless rail work has been installed extending around the aft section of each hull for some additional protection and safety for their young visitors.

There will always be tweaks to personalise and take account of individual circumstances and priorities. For example, full time live on board residents Andrew and Trish Ebert installed drop down screening fore and aft on their Leopard 48 Sengo for extra shade as well as security for their live aboard cats.

Just as the lines get blurred when considering inclusions in the modern apartment, so it is on luxury cruising vessels. What's considered mandatory for some will inevitably be considered an optional extra for others. It's here that Leopard strikes a sensible and pragmatic balance across its entire range.



A professional life that evolved from tugs and commercial marine operations into fishing, ferry operations and tourism along the wild coastline of southern Western Australia preceded retirement for both Fud and Faye MacKenzie and the opportunity to indulge their continuing love of the sea. These days however, it's aboard their new Leopard 48 *Fayzee Days*. – Fud and Faye

“Fishing was getting too hard so we decided to get into tourism, operating a big catamaran to and from accommodation we built on Woody Island off Esperance,” says Fud. “These were great years and working together in the business this way helped lay the foundations for a great team approach to everything when living aboard. Each one of us has our defined area of proficiency. I look after the mechanics, systems and maintenance while Faye takes care of planning and provisioning. After all her experience in keeping tourists well fed, comfortable and safe, she really is a master of this art!”

“When retirement beckoned in 2008, we opted for a Fusion 40 having owned a 37 footer before that. It was more of a custom cat with rotating mast and angled rudders so not very suited to cruising. The annual routine became six months on the boat with the six month summer period back in Esperance attending to family and business commitments. It also gave us plenty of opportunity to indulge

our other passion for camping and fishing in that part of the world.

“We’ve logged a lot of sea miles in recent years including time in PNG, across the top to Broome, the Louisiade Archipelago, across the Great Australian Bight and up the east coast of Australia to the Whitsundays. On these trips, Faye occasionally heads back to Esperance for family or business commitments but the regular trips home each six or seven months become part of a regular cycle that we look forward to. It keeps life interesting.

“There’s no question that we absolutely love this lifestyle and our new Leopard 48 is the perfect vessel for us at this time of our lives. We are both totally committed to enjoying the boat to the fullest possible extent. Decision making is important. We’ve both got that in our backgrounds, having worked for so many years on the ocean. With a boat load of visitors, you want them to be as comfortable as they can be.

“It’s all about comfort and because we’ve got time there are no deadlines. The unpleasant experiences usually occur when you’ve done something in conditions you didn’t have to be in. We love spending plenty of time and having a good look around,” says Fud.

“This year we’re taking the boat to Tasmania at the end of February and during March. We’ll stop in at Port Lincoln, Kangaroo Island, and then Robe. Somewhere further along the Victorian coast, we will head south, straight down to Strahan. The crew will then leave and Faye will join me for a trip around the Tassie coast and we expect to be back up to the mainland by around May, subject of course to the weather patterns. Once on the east coast, we’ll head north and may make it up to Moreton Bay before heading back for our home time.”

These really are the lazy *Fayzee Days* ... not just of summer, but all year round.



Our wired world of the internet gives us extraordinary connectivity, knowledge and insights never dreamed possible several decades ago. For those with salt in their veins, it has been a game changer like no other. Weather conditions and other risks are better understood and managed, families are able to stay in closer touch, skills are enhanced and adventures shared like never before in the history of putting to sea.



I was reminded of this when jumping on line to explore a remedy for a faulty marine instrument only to find that it was anything but an isolated problem and an inexpensive step by step fix was on offer, courtesy of a YouTube post uploaded from a cruising yacht somewhere off Vancouver Island by an enterprising amateur electrician. He was happy to share his valuable experience with fellow cruisers regardless of where in the world they happened to be.

Manufacturer’s websites, media reports, industry commentary, boating awards and owner reviews all combine to give us unprecedented information ahead of committing to the boat that will fulfil our dream of a life enriched by the experience of cruising on the water.

While all this research and due diligence helps to narrow the field, it is just a warm up for the real thing. Nothing fully prepares you for that day you step onto your new boat

and in the process transition from planning and preparing to actually realising your new life afloat.

If it’s Robertson and Caine’s new Leopard 48 that’s won over both your head and your heart, there’s a massive dividend of confidence that will lift you up, carry you aboard and sustain you throughout the life of your connection to this brilliant vessel. It’s certainly no accident that this South African marine industry innovator has grown over the past 25

STANDOUTFEATURES

- Four comfortable steps to starboard take you to the raised helm station with its clever mini hardtop for protection, 360° visibility, comfortable chair, and well placed handholds. It's an outstanding arrangement and there's more than enough room for a seated couple to share the controls.
- The single-spreader Sparcraft fractional rig is strong and effective.
- The hardtop is enormous as it is one continuous platform that incorporates the hard biminis of both cockpits as well as the cabin top of the entire saloon and galley.
- Controls for both 57hp Yanmar engines, Raymarine instruments, and sail handling hardware are all close at hand, and the sheets, halyards, and reefing lines are well organised thanks to two banks of Spinlock clutches and a pair of Lewmar self-tailing electric winches.
- ^a The forward cockpit is even better than on this Leopard's smaller sibling. On this newest Leopard, the forward cockpit table has been halved, and a clever overhead hatch opening allows easy access to the foredeck and trampoline.
- The main aft cockpit has a large dining table with a wraparound U-shaped settee to port. A smart touch is the roomy seat locker beneath the aft portion of the settee for generous storage.
- A substantial sliding door provides access from the rear cockpit to the large main saloon. Internally the layout, fittings and equipment are everything you would expect in a luxury cruising vessel of this calibre. The visual impact is rich and luxurious.
- The U-shaped settee to starboard is surrounded by windows, so light and ventilation are good. The galley has Corian countertops and stainless-steel appliances including two-drawer Vitifrigo refrigeration. Headroom is excellent throughout.
- There is a dedicated forward-facing navigation station located to port of the door leading to the forward cockpit with ample space for charts, cruising guides and navigation instruments.
- The entire starboard hull is dedicated to a private owner's suite with a large island berth aft, storage and office amidships, and a large ensuite head forward with generous size shower and a locker for an optional washer/dryer.
- The large hull ports give you quick and easy visibility to check the boat's position at night without having to leave your berth.
- The quality finishes extend to the port side cabins and stowage on the Leopard 48 is exceptional
- The 48's outstanding design features are not just skin deep. Well thought-out layout and convenient access to all electrical, plumbing and mechanical systems win nods of approval from owners and marine professionals alike.

years to be one of the biggest manufacturers of catamarans worldwide, dominating both the US market and the most renowned catamaran cruising grounds on the planet – the Caribbean.

Virtual tours, video commentary and spec sheets tell just part of the story as to why the Leopard 48 is such a design and construction triumph. Behind this design from the drawing board of internationally respected South African designer Alex Simios sits Robertson and Caine's production pedigree spanning more than 25 years and a team of 1,300 employees at multiple production sites around Cape Town turning out around three vessels a week. More than 1,400 of their boats have notched up eight million blue water delivery miles to every major recreational marine market in the world.

WHEN YOU TALK TO ANY 48 OWNER, YOU'LL FIND THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE THEY VALUE ... AN ABUNDANCE OF CONFIDENCE IN THE LEOPARD BRAND

Accumulated feedback over many years feeds directly into a multitude of refinements across all of the construction disciplines including joinery, moulding and assembly. Take a tour of the images under the production tab on the Robertson and Caine website and you'll soon see why they have gathered so many international awards across their range, including *Cruising World's* Best Full Size Multihull gong awarded to the 48 in 2015.

While the 48 is the beneficiary of this outstanding South African heritage, another important reason why this model is so impressive is to be found in the same part of the world. It's in the seriously challenging waters off Cape Town where all Leopard models are subjected to the most rigorous and unrelenting testing regime. Hulls, rigs, sails and hardware, equipment, systems and general fit-out are all designed to perform well in these conditions as well as the hard life and heavy use ahead in charter fleets. Private owners get the pay-off from all of this in looks, build quality and performance.

When you talk to any 48 owner, you'll find there's something else they value ... an abundance of confidence in the Leopard brand. And I define a company's brand as everything about that company, its reputation and its products that distinguishes it from others. The 48 has raised the bar for all.

DESIGNER - LEOPARD 48



ALEX SIMINOS – Esteemed ringmaster tames this spirited big cat

Respected naval architect Alex Siminos has been designing catamarans for more than 30 years. Splitting his time between his native South Africa, the Netherlands and the US, he is the design inspiration behind Robertson and Caine's very successful Leopard series.

I recently had the good fortune to catch up with Alex via a lengthy Skype chat from his Cape Town office. With one eye on his busy schedule including a sea trial immediately after we spoke, he was nevertheless happy to open up on a whole raft of perspectives including his perpetual quest for the perfect design. Here's what he had to say.

Last week, we celebrated 25 years of our design partnership with Leopard's manufacturer Robertson and Caine so the relationship goes back a long way. As naval architects, we do a lot of designs ... monohulls, multihulls, racing and cruising yachts. In some ways the Leopard range of catamarans is a niche design in that it has been developed, tweaked and optimised over more than two decades to exactly what this big manufacturer and their parent company wants in their charter fleet as well as spinning off into their customised offerings to private owners.

Feedback over all these years has been immensely valuable because there's such a wealth of cumulative experience coming out of their

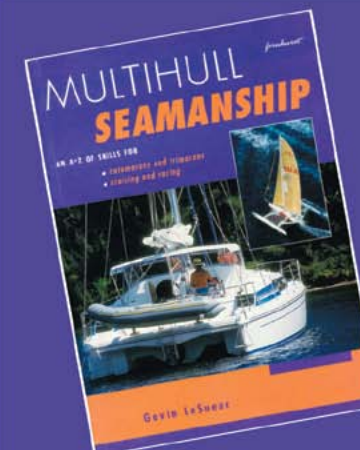
charter history. For decades the parent company has had these extensive questionnaires gathering knowledge about the user experience ... What they liked, what they didn't like ... all providing an enormously rich pool of information allowing us to make better and better boats in terms of comfort and usability.

My job as a designer is to combine all of this knowledge with firstly safety and secondly performance considerations. What we've achieved is a really nice balance between having a good performing catamaran which is still spacious and comfortable. We also concentrate on giving them generous load carrying capacity. That's what people want when they go chartering. Naturally they want to take everything along for the trip so they must perform well

when loaded up. This capability then becomes a real bonus for the private owner.

My philosophy, putting it in simple terms, aims at achieving 200 miles a day in cruising mode in good conditions. A family of four sailing comfortably should be able to do this. You'll see this especially in the design of the 48 with their hulls designed to have this good weight carrying capacity while being capable of reaching a hull speed of 10 or 11kts very comfortably in modest conditions.

I keep an enormously strong emphasis on safety and comfort. And the performance dividend comes out of my passion and love of sailing especially in these Cape waters which can be quite challenging at times. Our whole state of mind is



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set in a context of dealing with the conditions we see around us every day when we go out here. I think this helps us tremendously in making these boats very robust.

To those who say this has been designed as a charter boat, I say that makes for very good insurance and helps people stay out of trouble. There's nothing more demanding of a vessel than a life of charter use. The level of reliability required is enormous. This makes for the best private cruising experience you can get.

I believe the 48 is a particularly good boat for Australian waters. We know it handles the wind and the waves in its stride. And its every day operational performance is already proven all around the world. Its extensive use and success in the Caribbean confirms it as an outstanding performer in tropical waters. Sun control has been a key consideration and is managed well with generous covered space including above the helm station.

Of course, we are always chasing improvements to what we do which makes progress evolutionary and incremental. In some ways it's a conservative approach but that is good. New ideas are looked at carefully. Where this takes us in the future is to constantly come up with more interior space and comfort without compromising the performance. That is the general theme in how we try to progress, and of course we are constantly looking at improving on the techniques used throughout the building process.

I run my side of the partnership from Cape Town. I love living here, less than three miles from the yard. I have a very close relationship with the manufacturer as well as responsibility for the overall design, safety, performance and structural

integrity of the boats so I spend a lot of time with them on the shop floor to ensure that the building process gives the desired results.

We've worked hard to make the 48 a very good boat. Over many years now, we've managed to massively improve the whole motion and behaviour of a boat in the water. There is no comparison when you



compare the behaviour of the 48 with the pitching and heaving motion in a big seaway of past designs from 20 years ago. In those days there was a lot of slamming under the bridge deck. The hull design of current models means you can drive a boat into head seas without any slamming and a very much reduced pitching motion.

Years of research and our good use of computational tools of fluid dynamics have helped to constantly evolve the hull shape. Multihulls have plenty of sideways stability so

it's about the best way to disperse energy to reduce pitching. We've concentrated on this. Weight distribution and centre of gravity considerations are also optimised to give us speed, comfort and a reduced pitching motion. Boats have also become heavier. We now have to work with more equipment including generators and air conditioners.

In some ways, we are probably not very different to the car industry in that there is constant convergence. We do take account of what the others are doing and no doubt they do the same. It's a logical thing. Theoretically there is a perfect design and everyone is working towards achieving that. When you buy a high end car these days, they are all pretty good. The same applies to the big boat builders. What makes Leopard unique is that it has 40 years of the parent company's experience as input to their product development.

There is no doubt that it is the only brand that has notched up the most miles of testing. It's only up until recently that every boat was launched here at Cape Town, tested here and then handed over to a crew with a brief to deliver the boat as

new to its destination. These trips averaged 6,000 miles and gave us great knowledge about every bit of equipment and every aspect of performance. On the original 45 and 47, we clocked over two million miles on deliveries of those models alone. So I would say that if you want to go and buy a boat with complete confidence – one that it is well designed, reliable, durable and safe, then this Leopard is without question guaranteed to perform to the very highest standards.



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