

AUSTRAL 24

TY TEST : AUSTRAL 24

SAILING

in Style

SOME TYs are big dinghies; some are small yachts. The waters off Adelaide are famous for their liveliness, so a home-grown TY from the Adelaide area should fall into the latter category. The Austral 24 is indeed Adelaide-grown, and indeed is a smallish yacht, rather than a dinghy on steroids.

Australs are famous in their home waters. For years their Allen Blackburne-designed 20-footer starred in the Tripolis Race. Austral chief Adrian Keough's 24 design had immediate racing success when launched, but since then (MB last tested an example in 1981) the emphasis in TY marketing has changed somewhat, and Austral now aim their 24 directly at the comfortable cruiser end of the buying public. A jig, furler, and roller reefing main are part of the package.

Adrian Keough's 7.47m hull has a modest beam of 2.36m, weighs in at 1650kg and has 595kg of ballast in a big lead swing keel. The test boat — the personal boat of NSW agent Theo and Evelyn Schneider — shows Theo's preference for a manual winch which lifts the keel via a Kevlar line, eliminating the need for annual replacement of a wire rope. Optional are hydraulic or electro-hydraulic operation.

The boat originally had a lifting keel, but our 1981 tester Paul Hopkins, who knew his subject, felt

this cramped the accommodation. On our boat, the lower keel case doubled as saloon table (with a folding leaf either side) and the structure picked up with the half bulkhead on the port side which formed one of the walls for the toilet. You can have no division at all, a full bulkhead, or the half arrangement we saw with enclosed toilet. Most families demand an enclosed dunny for weekendng; my 1.72m found it a snug but pleasant fit. The enclosure, not the dunny itself.

Keough's hull has a fairly narrow stern, and strong tumblehome in the topsides. The foredeck and sidedeck are heavily cambered, the sort of arrangement that can be difficult to walk on at rest, perfect when the boat is heeled. To offset this there are inboard teak toerails. Our boat had a

A small yacht rather than a big dinghy, the Adelaide-grown Austral 24 had racing success when launched but is now aimed at the comfortable cruiser end of the market. Report by BARRY TRANTER





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pop top. The galley is set out against the cockpit bulkhead, on a moulded step, the two-burner metho stove sliding out from its sheltered position partially beneath the cockpit moulding.

The intrusion of the toilet restricts the vast area of the forecabin, but there is still no reason why two adults would not be comfortable. The extreme sharp end of the forepeak houses the anchor locker; all the foresails go under the cockpit with access through a raised hatch set against the cockpit bulkhead. Here Austral put the inboard auxiliary if you demand one, though according to Theo, most opt for outboards these days as inboard prices have soared.

There are three big lockers (one an insulated icebox) under the cockpit seats, all drained. There's a big portable icebox behind the companionway steps. There is stowage under each of the saloon berths. There are full length shelves in the saloon; their edges, suitably padded, provide the backrests for people sitting on the settees. This boat is very, very carefully thought out.

It is also carefully and cleverly built. Austral line everything with carpet, so it creates an atmosphere of a padded cave, a snug and secure feeling. Handrails and deck fittings, which have to be through-bolted, are fitted with chromed, domed nuts on the saloon roof. The portholes are trimmed in surrounds made of chromed brass — very shippy, very nice. The hull is hand-laid; the decks are balsa sandwich.

The saloon floor is of classic splined appearance, with light-coloured splines between the planks, and the rest of the woodwork is teak — again a nice compromise between the shippy and the overdone. The seat cushions are deep; your bum doesn't bottom out on the moulding.

The rig is as simple as it can be, a threequarter rig with single spreaders. The furler on the untapered spar means mast weight has gone up, so Theo and Evelyn usually ask for help

when hoisting the mast. Otherwise this is a two-person boat.

Main and jib halyards are led to clutches on the cabintop; a Darlow 15 takes care of them. Sheet winches are 16s; the jib sheets cleat off on the coaming behind the winch; Paul Hopkins complained about this in 1981, and during our extremely blustery test sail, this set-up twice caught Theo on the leeward side when we definitely needed him to windward.

The mainsheet is carried on a short traveller on the cockpit floor, not a bad set-up though with the traveller down to leeward, sheet friction on the cockpit seats made dumping the last few millimetres of sheet slow. The backstay is adjustable.

The Schneiders' boat has a 9.9hp electric-start Mercury outboard mounted on an excellent bracket whose brand I forgot to note — lowering and raising was a one-hand job, a promise rarely fulfilled by these devices which are almost always annoying. The Merc had plenty of power, but I wish they'd go back to a separate gearlever/throttle set-up. The glass rudder blade is carried in a massive cast alloy frame, with two control lines — each with its own cleat — to raise and lower.

The mainboom has a through-mast roller reefing with a permanently-rigged winding handle, not a bad idea for a family boat, particularly at the end of the day when you just roll the thing up, slip on the boom cover and put it all away below. We had a big breeze when we sailed — above 25 knots in the gusts — and maybe we should have reefed — after all, it's pretty easy with a roller. But we didn't really need to, though with slow footwork, we knocked the Austral flat twice — it really was not the boat's fault, its handlers were dithering. She rounded



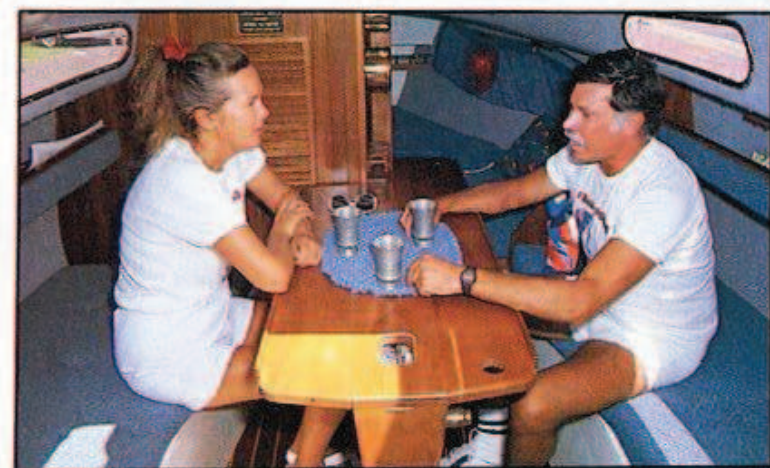
up, then the rudder bit and she pulled away again. Some boats we won't mention would have tacked after the roundup. If the Austral had tacked after rounding up, on one occasion we would have converted a passing rowing eight into a pair of fours, going nowhere fast.

The boat is very handy, very quick to tack and react in tight situations, as she should considering her hull shape and weight. We sailed her through the moored boats and along a lee shore to please the photographer, who was giving more trouble than usual, and felt confident all the time of her ability to act like a keelboat, which she assuredly does. She was close-winded, too, when we got her settled down, and felt very quick off the breeze.

You can have your Austral at hull and deck stage for \$13,850; add a rigging and deck hardware kit for another \$5935; sailaway for \$26,485; or fully fitted at \$31,995, well below the going rate of other fully-fitted yachts of the same size. This is a pretty, well-mannered conservative yacht; South Australian in character, I suppose. ©

AUSTRAL 24

Length.....	7.47m
Beam.....	2.36m
Draft.....	0.38m-1.22m
Displacement.....	1650kg
Ballast.....	595kg
Sail Areas	
Main.....	15.05m ²
Working jib.....	11.15m ²
No. 1 Genoa.....	16.72m ²
Builder: Austral Marine Pty. Ltd., Hackham, SA. Phone (08) 384 5487.	
Test boat from Theo F. Schneider, Chipping Norton, NSW. Phone (02) 602 2827.	



Stove slides out from bulkhead when needed. Table leaves fold out from keel casing; optional enclosed toilet is on port side. Note boarding ladder, electric start Merc on excellent bracket.