

MOONLIGHT SONATA

REVIEW: CAREEL SONATA 26

This popular maxi cruiser is now moonlighting under the prestigious Careel badge, with magnificent construction and a user-friendly rig. James Hill tells.

ONE of the most interesting moves on the manufacturing front in 1992 was the decision by David Rose Yachts to re-market the Sonata 26 as a Careel product. The Sonata 26 has long been a popular boat for the maxi TS enthusiasts and no doubt, many will be pleased to see the boat go to such a well-regarded builder.

First seen at the last Sydney Boat Show, the 26 only was released in early 1993. David Rose says his main aim was to achieve a maxi style, cruising yacht with small boat user-friendliness, so he has spent a lot of time ironing out the mechanics of this boat, ensuring it is easier to launch and handle.

The challenge of lifting the mast single-handed has been tackled with an innovative cradle device which Rose and his team have developed. The basic idea is that the mast is supported athwartships by a pair of alloy arms

which pivot in the same plane as the mast while acting as a fulcrum point.

The mast is raised with the help of a rope and a cabintop winch, which pulls the foot of the mast along a track fitted between the top of bow pushpit and the mast step. With the mast being supported sideways and at its base, the whole mast lifting process then becomes simply a case of winching on the hauling line while someone makes sure the rigging does not catch as the mast goes up.

Rose admits that the mast system probably has its limitations — particularly where there is a strong side wind — but he says in normal trailer park conditions it has proved to be safe and reliable. He hopes it will be a major selling point with the new Careel, especially for older couples who dread the idea of man-handling a long, heavy mast.





Once the mast is raised, it's supported by the swept-back cap shrouds and the tension on the support arms and haul line. All that remains is to remove the demountable track and attach the forestay.

Another change which will make the boat easier to handle is a hydraulic pump for the vertical-lift keel. This unit operates from the cockpit with a pump alongside the helm position. An electric winch drive will also be offered as a factory option. For ease of beaching, the keel fully retracts, plus it's contained within its case so as not to interfere with the mast raising/lowering operation.

The Careel Sonata will also feature a new Tracer trailer design with single-axle configuration to help reduce road weight and cost. The trailer has a rigid main frame, and a tilting frame on the rear to capture the bow and help feed the boat onto the trailer.

Even with the single-axle trailer, the new Careel still weighs in at around 1850kg Tare, putting it within big 4WD tow territory. However, David Rose says he does not see this being any barrier to the marketing of the boat as most people who'll buy this boat will probably have made the move up to a 4WD.

Other improvements include a new stainless steel lifting bracket for the pop-top, as well as a new rudder case with a

positive screw lock and rope control lines for the kick-up style rudder. The safety rails have been raised to suit family sailors and now include kevlar safety lines instead of stainless wire. The reason for rope is it can always be

useful on the boat even after it's past its prime for guard rail duty.

The interior has been given a facelift to suit market tastes in the 1990s. The cabin now has padded backrests behind all berths as well as U.S.-style, contoured, padded cushions,

for greater seating comfort.

Around the galley, major improvements include raising the bench top to a level where it is more comfortable when standing. The galley unit has been redesigned to provide a new wide locker and deep stowage draw.

Other interior changes include a new detachable saloon table, more walking space around the table and a portable Coleman 75 Litre cooler instead of a built-in icebox. The latter unit locks into a floor bracket to form the bottom companionway step.

"The raising system will be a major selling point with the new Careel, especially for older couples who dread the idea of man-handling a long, heavy mast"



A prototype mast launching assembly. The plank on the pushpit approximates the angle and position of the sliding track to be fitted (opp. page); the new Careel Sonata features attractive lines and revised deck gear (above left); David Rose with the new rudder box assembly (above); the cabin features newly contoured lounges (below).

Considering that many maxi TS end up spending a fair bit of time moored afloat, the Careel Sonata has also been gel coated with Ferro "non-stick" silicone gel coat which greatly reduces problems with bottom fouling.

Rose estimates the final market price of the new maxi Careel to be around \$48,000, including trailer, electric trailer winch, two sails and a fully fitted interior. This price includes an extruded alloy gunwale, carpeted cabin area, teak cabin trim and all interior and navigation lights, as well as a two-burner Maxi stove and four, two-speed winches.

For further information, call David Rose Yachts on (02)974-4701. 

