



SONG FOR SONATA

JAMES HILL thinks the Sonata 6 could be one of the best trailer-sailers on the market. A few hours under sail enthused him more than a little.

THAT ONE SUCCESSFUL TRAILER-SAILER DESIGN leads to another could well be true for innovative Sydney boat builder, Jim Voysey, who last summer surprised the market with a racy little number called Sonata.

Jim is one of those people in the industry who does not have a traditional boat building background but still has succeeded very well in interpreting sailors' needs in trailer yachts.

In 1973 Voysey broke into the market with one of the first big trailer yachts. The boat was the now well-known Southern Cross 23, a Scott Kaufman design and one of the first TSs to combine sophisticated styling and an optional fin keel.

While some manufacturers moved into bigger trailer-sailers, following the

lead of Voysey, he saw the shortcomings of the bigger, heavier boat and worked on the design of a smaller boat.

Not that Jim thought that the SC 23 wasn't a success. It has sold well right from the day that the first glass model was built and today there are around 200 in the country. Jim felt that he could compress a lot of the good points of the 23 into a 20-footer and come up with a less expensive and easier boat to tow.

The Sonata 6, as she is officially called, is not a radical boat although she has a distinct modern style about her with wedge-shaped cabin top, arrow-straight bow and crisp styling.

By comparison to other TSs around her size, the Sonata is not a particularly big boat. She has a 2.1 m beam which gives her a beam-to-length ratio under most Australian TS designs and she hasn't got as much sheer height as some other TSs.

The Sonata's wedge-shaped cabin top is not the biggest lid you could cram on to a boat of this size but it looks to be in proportion to the hull and it certainly

does suggest big yacht styling that owners are keen to get when they are paying out around \$6000.

Like the SC 23, the Sonata has a light displacement hull form and the choice of either a full-retractable swing keel or a bolted-on fin keel.

Jim says he looked very hard at the latest eighth-tonner designs when he was working on the lines of the Sonata and certainly he has come up with a boat that could be a more efficient performer, size for size, than the SC 23.

"We have learnt a lot in TS design in a short time," says Voysey, who believes that the quarter-ton and eighth-ton classes have helped, in an indirect way, to improve the performance and styling of trailer-sailers generally.

The general bulk and size of the boat has been purposely kept down to help keep the price within the accepted economical range of \$5000 to \$7000.

As I said, the Sonata was very much a development from the SC 23 and to this end she has the same cockpit as the bigger boat and the same fin keel design in the fixed-keel model.

SONATA

A lot of the features in the Sonata are directly attributed to lessons from the SC 23. For example, the boat's maximum beam is carried in topside stanchions because Voysey found that some owners found 2.4 m too wide for their garages.

It is unusual to see a boat today with topside stanchions, since most follow the IOR-indicented, big topside flare with the widest point just on the gunwale.

The Sonata on the other hand, has her widest point just a few millimetres above waterline; the reason is to give beam at bank-level height.

TEST

Having been one of the first to test the SC 23 prototype back in 1972 I was interested to compare the new with the old when I took a test sail in the first Sonata production boat.

The boat I tested was a fixed-keel and fairly standard except for the five-sixth rig that packed just a wee bit more sail than the standard masthead rig.

As in many dual fixed-keel/swing-keel designs, the masthead rig is increased in size on the fixed-keel version to carry more ballast and peaks more stably than the centreboard. The swing-keel has a masthead rig standing 6 m off deck level while the fixed-keel has a masthead rig standing 7 m off the deck.

To offset her extra sail our test boat was pulled back to scratch by having a deep, bottom. I have looked at the masthead rig and all considered I can see why Voysey and Barry Cotter dropped the five-sixth rig. The masthead rig seems to give much the same performance, and most importantly, keeps the mast length down for ease of stowing.

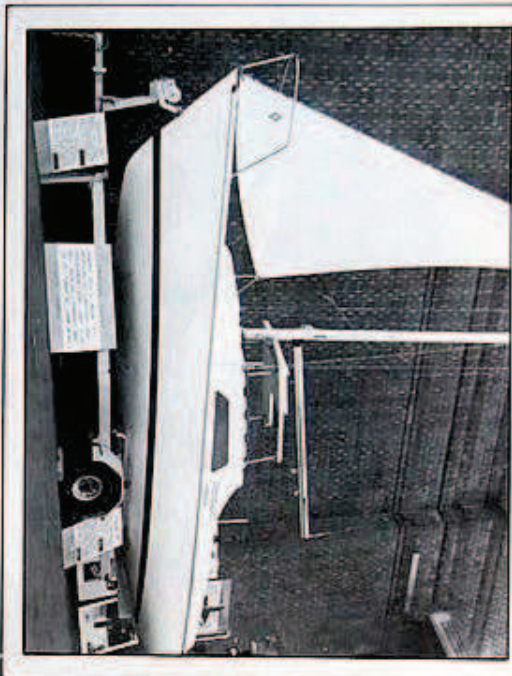
In our test we had a very fresh south-westerly that obliged by giving a right-powered ride. Pilewater under spinaker, round-ups and all, and came fading out for our return beat home.

In both fresh and light air, the boat handled nicely, moving well through the water without any obvious vices.

As always, a boat on its own can never tell you how it will up against some competition that we were lucky enough to get alongside one or two bigger boats going our way to get a rough comparison.

It is quite fun for her 5.1 m maximum and I can believe that she has proved a match for the Admiral 21, another double-mast yacht that might be an alternative.

In addition to light air, the Sonata seemed to be particularly well although



I felt that the narrow side decks tended to restrict the amount of trim adjustment you could carry on the headsail. If you were really racing often it would be worth experimenting with a closer sheeting angle on the headsail.

The standard headsail sheeting is handled by a 1.5 m girth track that is laid down a few millimetres out from the cabin sides and which follows the line of the cabin top.

The side decks are 177.8 mm wide so any closer sheeting than standard would have to come in the form of a sheeting point off the end of the cabin top in conjunction with headrails cut with high clews.

That all sounds a bit too fancy, but then there are sure to be some owners who will want to concentrate on hoisting up, and good luck to them.

Downwind, the boat really flew in the fresh conditions with three of us on board. At one point a savage gust sent us into a round-up which was only terminated by the unclipping of the spinaker sheet snap click. It was a fun ride which I think would have been more fun in the swing-keel version.

The rudder has a deep blade which gives control when you need it.

The problem with most transom-hung rudders is that they are prone to stall out in the boat heave, particularly if the boat is fairly broad, all. The Sonata has a good rudder design because there is a small step ahead of the rudder which keeps water flow moving over the top of the blade and helps prevent ventilating. The rudder is deep and big; there is no substitute for size when you want control.

In the swing-keel version the rudder has the blade lifting dagger-fashion in an

alloy-framed rudder box.

You can seat four adults comfortably in the cockpit.

The test boat had a mainmast traveller as an optional extra. The traveller is fun to play with, but for knocking around the standard single-takeoff block with jammer would be adequate as long as the boom vang is fitted — it is also optional.

The Sonata is a comfortable little yacht to sail and the only drawback in my test was that the transient cockpit drains allowed in a few cases of water during a knockdown. I didn't mind the water coming in, but since the drains were mounted above the floor, it tended to stay around.

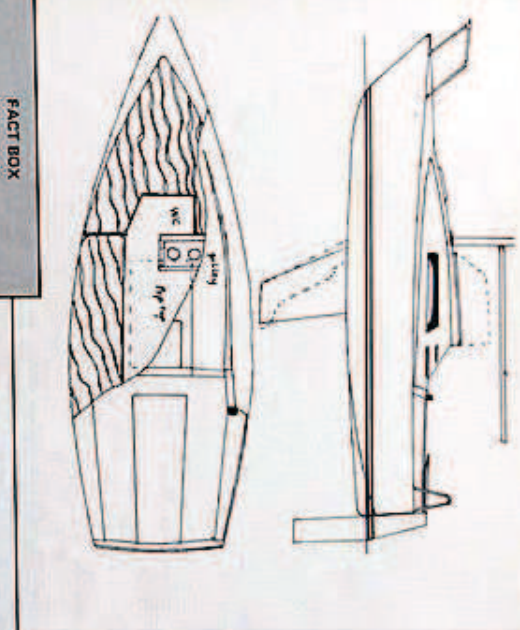
I checked back at the factory on the above point and found that the problem had been seen and rectified on the standard boats.

Our test boat suffered a few other teething problems that also had subsequently been ironed out.

The cockpit seats and floor had been reinforced with what is called reg-cerion construction. It really is light glass mouldings made over egg carton shapes and in theory it gives excellent rigidity to a flat surface. In practice most builders, including Voysey, have found that the reinforcing delaminates and you end up with a squeaking deck that talks to you when you walk on it.

The standard Sonata now has the tried and proven sheet ply reinforcing fibreglassed in under all flat deck areas, including cockpit floor and seats.

As for other features on deck, the Sonata is clearly laid out without a forced-keel anchor hatch or cabin top grab rails. Both the forward hatch and the main companionway hatch are hinged and fold forward.



FACT BOX

SONATA 6
 Builders: Sonata Yachts, PO Box 169,
 Newport, NSW 2100
 LOA 6.1 m
 LWL 5.1 m
 Beam 2.1 m
 Draft 228 mm/1.35 m
 Displacement 569 kg
 Ballast
 Fin keel 226 kg
 Fixed keel 181 kg
 Auxiliary power outboard 10 hp (max)
 Standard sailway price ex-Sydney \$5595.

The main companionway hatch is incorporated in a pop-top which brings the headroom from 1.5 m to 1.8 m, comparing favourably with other TSs I have looked at lately.

With a view to trailing, the shrouds have their take-off point on the edge of the cabin top and in the same relationships plane as the mast step. This allows the mast to be raised and lowered without adjusting the turnbuckles on the shrouds.

In standard form the boat is rigged with Sheerline spars, silver-anodised and with a forestay, backstay, cap shrouds and a single set of lower shrouds.

In standard form there is no quick adjustment on the backstay but there is an optional bridle with seven-to-one tackle for racing.

The spar is a Sheerline S125 section and the boom is the Sheerline's diamond section.

The gunwale is well-protected from possible collisions by an alloy extrusion. The hull-to-deck join is particularly strong, with a horizontal flange securely fibreglassed, crived and capped with the alloy gunwale extrusion.

ACCOMMODATION

The standard layout provides ample four-birth accommodation with the ability to divide the cabin into two sleeping areas — forecabin with two 1.9 m single berths.

There is a galley unit moulded as standard on the starboard side just behind the main bulkhead, which helps take the main thrust of the deck-stopped mast.

In the swing-keel version the centreboard case tends to divide the cabin floor space, but then that is the price you pay for shallow draft in most TSs.

A chemical or pump-out toilet can be fitted for and of the main bulkhead in a space offset to starboard.

Headroom is quite good for sitting in the main cabin area, although I think it would not have hurt if a few more inches had been worked in.

Forward of the main bulkhead the downward slope of the cabin top did tend to reduce headroom and make things a bit tight around the WC.

The galley unit is well positioned for serving on to a table mounted over the centreboard case. It has room for a two-burner marine stove (optional) and for a sink and water tank (optional).

The pop-top is a two-section type with alloy extrusion arms fore and aft. It was fairly simple in construction and should give good service.

Bank cushions are attractively finished with woven fabric covers and the plate is kept down with the use of smoked perspex in the slit-windows.

The interior is fairly simple at the standard stage but this is the way most buyers like to purchase a small yacht. Once they get over the initial purchase

and get to know the boat they can add extras as they go along.

Construction is straightforward and strong with the hull being reinforced along with the hull being reinforced with the centreboard case in the swing-keel version and by a glassed-in ply backbone in the fixed-keel version. The hull and deck moulds are tied afterwards by the main bulkhead in the way of the mast.

The hull is made of two layers chop strand, one 24-ounce layer woven roving and one two-ounce strand in the topsides. In the bottom area up to the waterline there is the above plus an extra layer of the extra-rigid bottom.

The area around the keel where the case is fitted is beefed-up to take the stresses imposed in this area.

The deck has a total of seven ounces of chop strand mat and five-eighths sheet ply in all flat areas.

VALUE

You can buy the Sonata as a bare shell with all mouldings joined, keel fitted and all hatches supplied (see the \$3820 ex-Sydney).

Stage Two is the standard sail-way yacht in either model with spars, rigging, two sails, stem fitting, pulpit, stern board, wood trim, and water-proof carpet on interior of hull \$5395 ex-Sydney.

Our test boat had a number of extras such as navigation light, pump-out lifelines, sink, water tank, WC, stove and a few extra racing sails that brought the price up to \$7300 producing a fairly complete yacht for weekend club racing and overnight cruising.

Depending on extras, a buyer's total price could vary from around \$4900 to a basic fit-out version to about \$8800 for a really well-fitted sailing keel.

Cost of the trailer to suit the Sonata is \$505 with brakes, with a bow that weighs 280 kg would be a worthwhile addition.