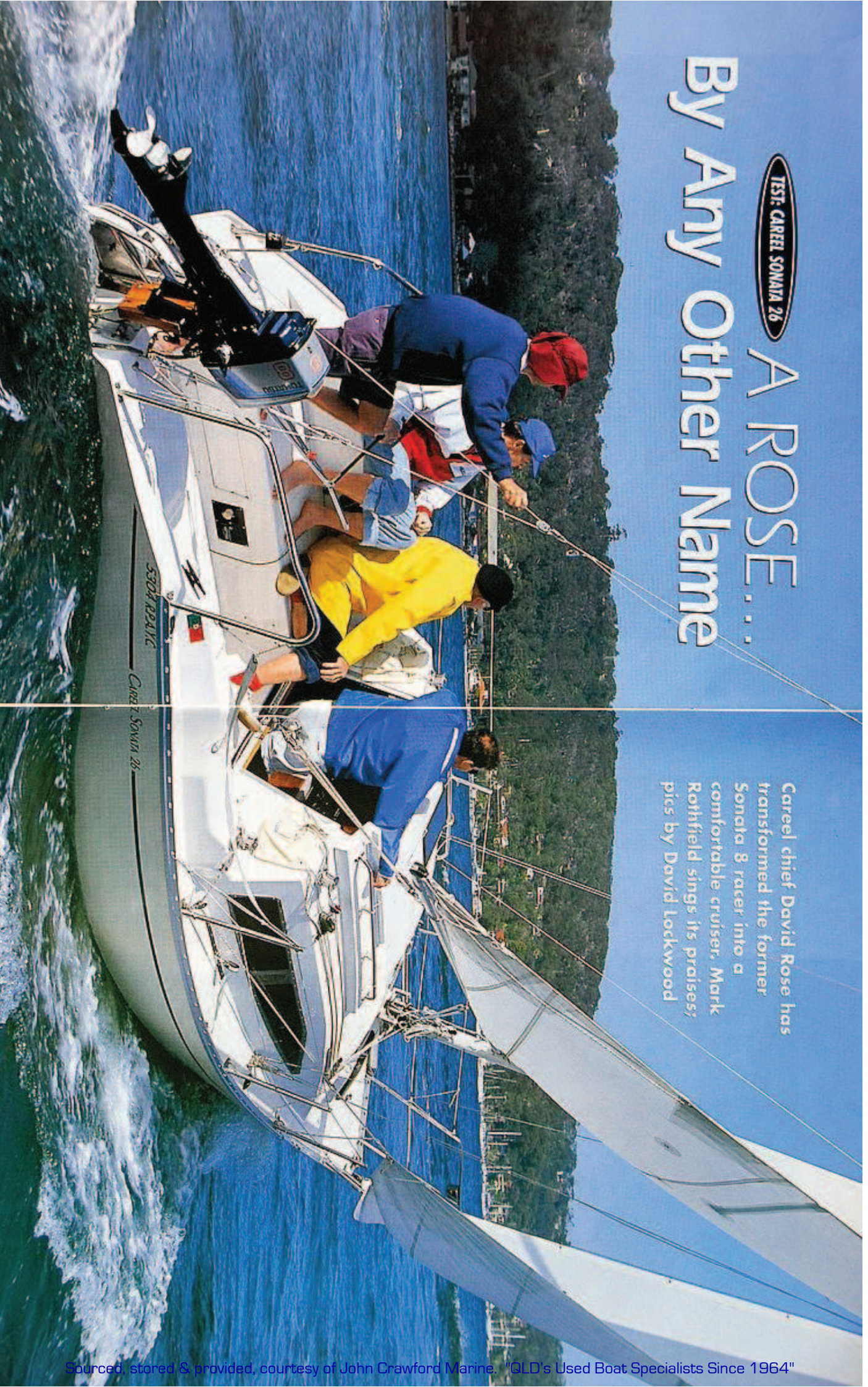


TEST: CAREEL SONATA 26

# A ROSE... By Any Other Name

Careel chief David Rose has transformed the former Sonata 8 racer into a comfortable cruiser. Mark Rothfield sings its praises; pics by David Lockwood







**B**OATBUILDER David Rose knows there's infinite improvements one can make to a sailboat. For 23 years has been progressively refining the Careel 18, now tagged Mark III, and for 19 years the Careel 22, which is still in MkII phase. In an industry that has seen hundreds of contenders come and go, it's a remarkable achievement.

Rose's latest project is the Careel Sonata 26, which started life as the Sonata 8 in the late 70s. Boasting an easily-driven hull, it proved adept at both TS and JOG racing, then, in the mid-80s, the cabin top was widened and extended in a bid to attract family cruising interest. It was in this format that Rose acquired the 26-footer in 1989.

Deciding that major modifications were not warranted, he has spent the past five years upgrading the construction and engineering to a point where the boat can wear the respected

Careel badge. It extends from the use of a high-quality silicon gelcoat to a patented mast-raising system.

The latter is crucial to the 26's viability as a maxi cruising TS with small-boat user-friendliness.



Realising that older couples would represent many of his customers, Rose set out to make erecting the 10m twin-spreader spar a solo task. He called in mast-maker Kerry Bokenham and got out the old Meccano set. Together, they came up with a device that indeed allows easy lifting and lowering, even once on the water.

Simply, the foot slides along a track spanning the top of the pulpit to the mast step, a distance of roughly 3m. Supporting the spar athwartships, while acting as a fulcrum point, are a pair of alloy arms. It's then a matter of simply winching on the hauling line,

**ABOVE:** In mid to heavy wind, you need to plonk the crew to windward to keep boat speed up. The cabin top comes in handy.

**LEFT:** Big dagger maintains control of the buoyant and beamy hull.

**OPPOSITE:** Nice, wide aft berths.



which the wiry Rose managed easily. The process seems fool proof, though we didn't try it in a strong cross wind. Should the rigging catch on the way up, the hauling line can be cleated off. Also, there's a crutch over the companionway which, in the unlikely event of total failure, would act as a rollbar in catching the falling spar.

A secondary benefit is that the mast automatically resides in triling position when lowered, and is still high enough to allow the pop-top to be raised and the cockpit accessed; both essential when using the boat as a caravan. The only detraction, perhaps, is that the ancillary items have to be stowed aboard or on the trailer.

Having gone to this trouble it was logical that the 26 had be launched and retrieved single-handedly; easier said than done for a boat weighing 1800kg on trailer. With the help of trailer specialist Bob Kemp, a multi-roller Tracer rig was devised which keeps the boat snug and also self-centring — achieved by leaving two inches of keel exposed, enough to slip through the rollers either side of the centreline. Surprisingly, only a single axle is required, but heavy duty wheels and tyres are employed, along with Alko independent suspension and vacuum-boosted over-ride brakes.

Weighing 370kg, the dagger keel used to be a handful for the old block-and-tackle lift system. Rose replaced it with hydraulics, which he's been playing with since 1973. On the 26 it takes some 200 pumps to raise the keel, which means you have to approach the beach cautiously. Rose argues that if the keel strikes the bottom it only has to be raised a few inches to clear, however he is looking at beefing up the mechanics to speed it up and also offering an electric option.

Down below the changes are slight but significant. A general facelift of the furnishings lends a cool, contemporary ambience to the saloon, aided by a simple pop-top

## *Instead of a built-in icebox, a portable 45-litre Coleman cooler is used*

that affords 1.93m headroom and excellent ventilation. The package includes contoured bunk cushions and backrests along with subtle use of teak trim and front-runner carpet.

The galley has been moved from amidships to the area between the keel case and port gunwale, backed by a bulkhead. There's space for a



# CAREEL SONATA

## David Rose Yachts Pty. Ltd.

### Trailer Yacht Specialists

14 Currawong Ave, Palm Beach 2108

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**CAREEL 18 MK3**

New Model  
with double berth.

**CAREEL 22**

Joe Adams' Brilliant  
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**CAREEL SONATA 26**

New improved Model now  
being built.



A blade jib is standard, sheeted from a sliding track adjacent to the mast then back to the primaries — there's a case for a self-tacker, though Rose feels the blade is simple enough to handle when cruising. If nothing else, it allows you to carry a full mainsail into higher wind ranges. A mylar genoa is an option that racing sailors should consider, along with a spinnaker; J24 or Etchells size as it happens.

*Upwind we were doing about 4.5 knots and pointing to within 30°, reaching we peaked at 6 knots and I got the impression that with a kite we would've planed*

The design is a throw-back to the days when yachts were fine aft to improve windward tracking and settle them downwind — since then, designers have learnt how to make wide-bummed boats perform well across the spectrum, with the added benefit of greater space. Otherwise the hull shape is good, with a fine entry and flattish run aft.

## SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: .....8.0m  
LWL: .....6.38m  
Beam: .....2.50m  
Draft: .....0.21m/1.55m  
Trailable weight: .....1800kg  
Ballast: .....370kg  
Mast height: .....10.06m  
Sail area: .....Main 18.86sq m  
                                Jib 10.86sq m  
                                Genoa 19.69sq m  
                                Spinnaker 40.96sq m  
Designer:.....Gary Mull  
Price (as tested): .....\$48,000  
Builder:.....David Rose Yachts  
Ph (02) 974-4701

To sum up, the Careel Sonata 26 is a good, honest toiler, hard to fault because of the many improvements David Rose has made. There's no escaping the fact that old technology exists in the hull and deck, but still this 15-year-old craft has what it takes to perform in mixed company. It also enjoys a comparative price advantage, because Rose picked up the moulds at "fire sale" prices. As tested, on trailer and fitted with the deluxe interior, it's going for a song at \$48,000.

