



Clipper CM21

Another very popular American trailer sailer brought to Australia and modified to suit our rather more rugged conditions. With her unique styling, handy performance and ample accommodations, the Clipper is going to be permanently in demand!

Despite the usually dull and uninspired approach of the annual boat shows, there is always some individual display or presentation which stands out head and shoulders above the others. It may be an eye-catching layout, a new boat with unusual features, or some kind of a gimmick. Whatever it is, it pulls the crowds, and in a boat show, that's the name of the game.

At the 1975 Melbourne Boat Show (and subsequently other boat shows) a new presentation from Coast Catamarans was just such an eye-catcher. This firm has a head start in setting up a crowd pulling display because they market the incredibly popular Hobie Cat, and wherever you find a Hobie there you find a crowd. But quite outside the catamaran, there was another eye-catcher in the Coast Catamaran display — the Clipper 21 trailer-sailer.

Now trailer sailers come by the dozen at boat shows, and new ones are just new ones with the usual gimmicks. But the reason why this trailer sailer stood out was because of its unusual design. Getting right away from the "ducky little boat" aspect of many trailer sailer designs, the Clipper 21 took a page from the big yachts and went right out on a limb with a sweeping, stylish profile that made it look more like a miniature yacht than a trailer sailer. The sweeping clipper bow, flared and swept back along the lines of a 40 or 50 footer, gives her the name, and the rest of the stylish hull is proportionately matched to give a

sum total of attractive, pretty, yacht-like appearance.

While we were not specifically looking for any one product at the Melbourne Show, we came away with one picture firmly implanted in our mind, and that was of the clipper bowed trailer sailer. And judging by the crowd gathered around the stand, we were not the only ones so impressed. The next step, of course, was to find out if this boat performed as well as she looked, and with that in mind, we contacted Coast Catamaran to set up a test.

Now there is one thing most trailer sailer manufacturers detest and abhor, it is a boat test in a strong wind. Judging by the light conditions we usually get for these tests, the manufacturers must spend a lot of time on their knees and burn

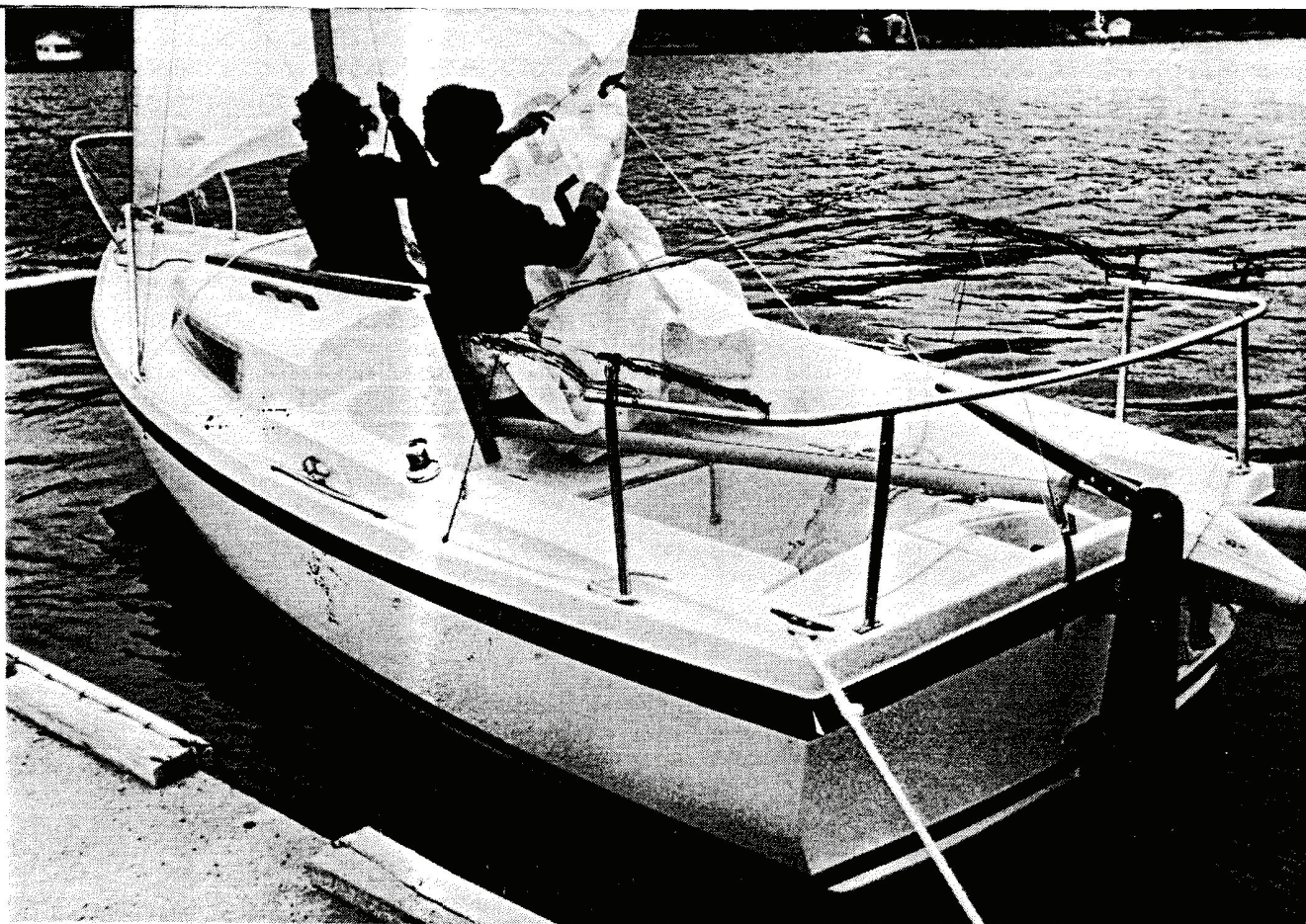
a lot of incense the night before. But when the Gods favour us and not the manufacturer, then we get a strong wind and a good boat test, while the manufacturer gets ulcers or a cardiac condition. Because, let's face it, just by virtue of their basic design, the average trailer sailer is not made for strong wind conditions. Indeed, there is only one place for most of them when a gale is blowing, and that's on the trailer.

So it was with considerable fiendish delight that we found a Sou'Westerly gusting to 25 or 30 knots as our breeze for testing the Clipper 21. With an enthusiasm that bordered on the sadistic, we waived aside the suggestion of a reef (although reefing was definitely in order) as we wanted to see just how stable are these trailer sailers. With a working jib and full main, we should be able to really thrash her in those gusts. To our surprise, the Coast Catamaran boys seemed as enthusiastic as us to work the boat hard. The obvious inference was that they had a lot of confidence in her.

Within a few minutes we were sharing their confidence. While we had intended to test the boat hard, we had not anticipated a jammed mainsheet (due to a faulty cam cleat) which clamped the main on hard as one of the 25 knot gusts bore down on us. With no way of releasing the main, and no time to bear up, she took the full brunt of the gust almost broadside on — a familiar method of suiciding in a trailer sailer. When the gust had

At A Glance . . .

LOA	6.36
LWL	5.44
Beam	2.21
Draft [Min]	.64
Displacement	815 kg
Ballast	217 kg
Berths	4
Mainsail Area	96 sq ft
Jib	96.5 sq ft



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Above: The big hatch over the companionway is certainly a boom to rigging the Clipper — although it would be slightly uncomfortable below during this operation.

Far right: The Clipper has good non-skid decking on most obvious areas but could be well served with additional handrails — particularly forward.

passed and she came upright again, we had a full crew still aboard, the boat tearing through the water at a rate of knots, and — apart from chaos in the cabin — everything looking disgustingly normal. Indeed but for ankle-deep water in the cockpit and decidedly wet backsides, one would never know we had been on our beam ends.

Most important lesson of this exercise, on reflection, was the fact that the boat took the full brunt of the squall and remained, not only upright — where most trailer sailers would have done a cartwheel — but in fine shape. The water in the cockpit proved we had put the cockpit coaming under, but the boat had righted herself as though it was all part of the day's work. The self-drainer got rid of the water, and we settled down to enjoy a hard work-out with a boat that was obviously going to enjoy it too.

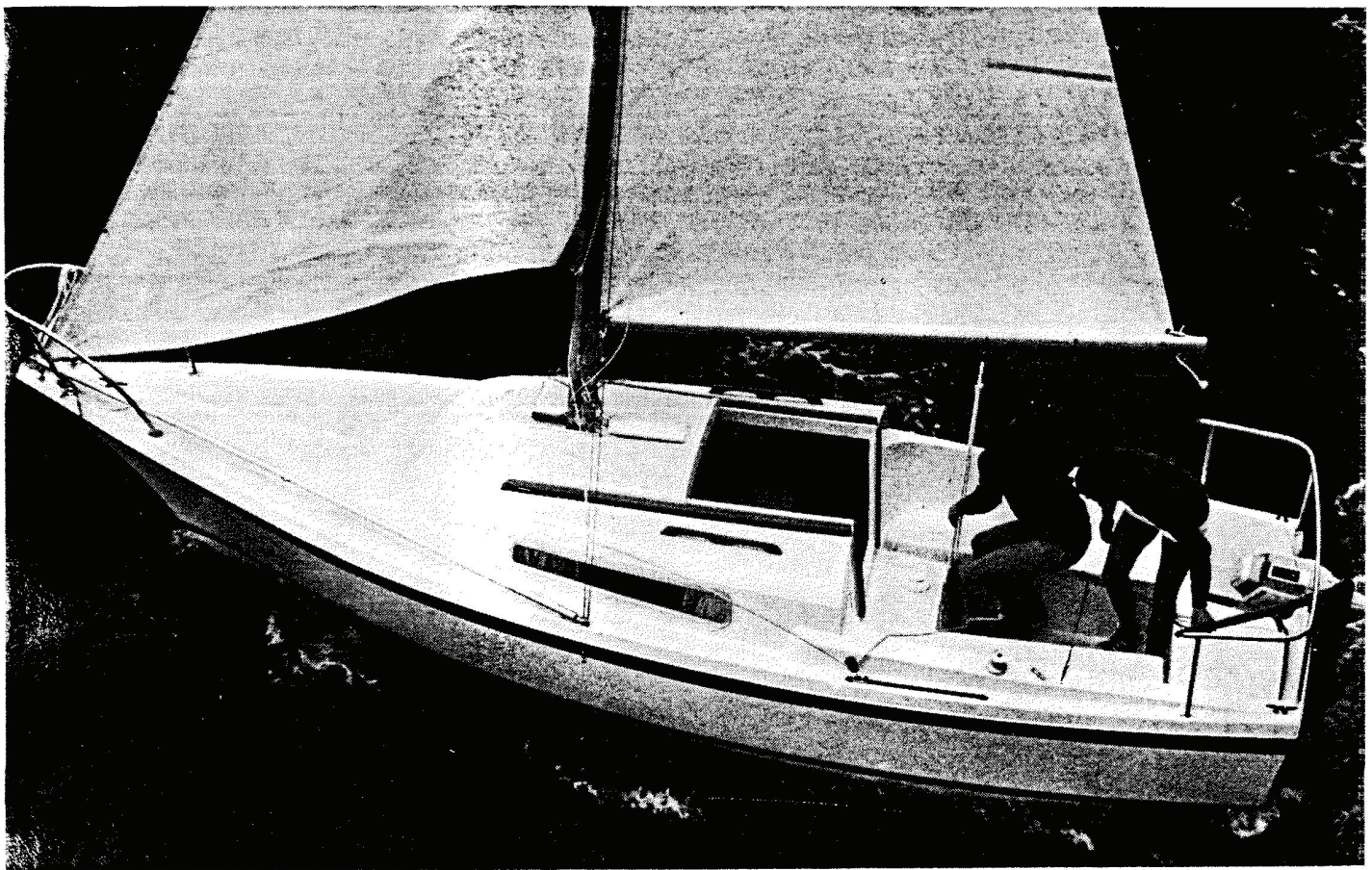
The jammed cleat was a bad blue, and will be changed as from our test day. Jam cleats are not the best at any time on small boats, and when they are difficult to release in an emergency, they are downright dangerous. But the stability of the boat was proven in a very definite, if hair-raising way. It goes without

saying, that this is number one factor when analysing a trailer sailer, since over the years they have built up a bad reputation for instability, and only recently have manufacturers come to grips with this problem.

The Clipper tended to round up somewhat in the hard squalls, but as mentioned before, that is a characteristic of the centreplate design. Only a long, deep, skeg or keel will reduce this, and these features are not permissible on a boat that has to be trailered. But her rounding up was moderate, and at no time was she out of control other than when the cleat jammed. With the sheet in hand she was a delight to handle, moving hard and well up to the wind, with minimum heel, and no sign of the usual trailer sailer tenderness.

We threw her around the harbour through gusts that must have closed on gale force, and still with the full rig. At no time did we feel uncomfortable or nervous. This is a fine little boat which revels in strong weather.

With the strength of the wind we did not set a spinnaker. Visions of winding up in the parking



lot tempered our enthusiasm. Down wind she again handled well, with no vices other than to attempt to break speed limits.

We returned to sheltered water after one of the most exciting rides we have had for a while, convinced that here is a boat that will make a mark for herself in this country. Already well tested in the U.S., where she was designed (there are 2000 on the water over there) one model is currently being raced to good effect in Queensland, and there is no doubt, that with her turn of speed, the Clipper is going to make her mark in races in the future.

But it is more as a family sailer that we saw her, for, apart from her stylish appearance, which must have a lot of appeal for old and young in the family, she is well laid out accommodation-wise for the average 4 person family. Forward, a neat innovation converts the normal "V" type berth into a settee by raising a thwartships cushion as the back rest. This is a delightful idea. How often does one sit perched or slumped on a double berth when just having a social drink on board. The settee berth will seat three with comfort and provides a sizeable

back rest. This idea must find favour in other designs.

Two quarter berths take care of adults, the forward berth, although being full length, would only take two adults "sardine" fashion — head-to-tail. But ideal for kiddies who would have room to romp around up there. Two tables, one on each side of the boat, offer work space on top, and storage beneath. In the test boat these had not been fitted out, but they would be the obvious place for galley and sink, plus storage for kitchen utensils. Storage space is also available under the bunks, and there is an extra-large cockpit locker for stowing petrol and other essential but less attractive items.

A design feature which made the boat seem bigger inside than her 21ft LOA, was the wide opening hatchway. This is a feature appearing in a number of trailer sailers nowadays, and is essential to make life comfortable aboard, avoiding the usual humped-up crawling in and out of the companionway. It is particularly essential if the boat is to be used as a caravan while on the trailer, since an awning strung up over the boom makes the cockpit an additional

room with the wide companionway for ease of access.

We didn't like the centre cockpit sheeting for the mainsail. This tends to get in the way both when coming about, and when carrying a large crowd on board. The cockpit is very spacious, but the main sheet intruding slap bang in the middle spoils this spaciousness, and in our view, end-boom or cabin sheeting would be better. The latter might be difficult because of the large hatchway, but some solution could be found without too much of a problem.

Everything is nicely to hand, with sheet winches on the cockpit coaming, and the centreboard winch attainable through a small hatch also in the cockpit. This is a good idea because scrambling below each time an adjustment is required to the centreboard is cumbersome, whereas lifting a small hatch and winding a winch handle in the cockpit makes life so much easier. The motor well is recessed into the transom, keeping it out of the way when sailing, and although the boat would need only a 4hp motor normally, a 9.9 Chrysler was fitted to the test boat and hooked up to the batteries, so that full charging



These two views of the fore and aft areas of the Clipper illustrate just how big this trailer sailer really is. Note the unusual bow styling!

of the boat electrics could be carried on while under way.

Stability, which, as we proved, is excellent, comes from the wide beam of the after proportions of the boat, and her 480 lb keel. Full flotation — as required by U.S. authorities — is fitted under the floors, and in special tanks forward and aft. This is foam, giving positive flotation to the boat even when swamped completely — a factor which should feature in Australian boating regulations, as well as in the U.S. It is good to see a manufacturer taking a lead in this direction, too many trailer sailer manufacturers hedge round this vitally important point. Where families are concerned,

the safety factor of full positive buoyancy is imperative, and, after all, most trailer sailers are family boats.

Sail area on the Clipper is about average at 183 sq ft and the aspect ratio is moderate, offering an efficient, but easily handled rig. Genoa is optional extra as also is the spinnaker, and slab roller reefing allows the main to be taken down about 1/3. Foredeck room is good for working either with anchors or sails, and although a forward hatch would have been useful, it might have interfered with the good working space on the foredeck. As it is, the main hatch, which has a section opening to allow it to slide past the mast, is big enough to double as a forward hatch without too much effort.

The cabin is low and streamlined to fit the general sleek profile of the yacht and has elongated windows which, with such a large opening hatch, serve as ornament rather than for effective lighting. The gunwale is turned over to form a rubbing strake, and a sheerline is moulded in to the hull colours to add style to the appearance of the hull. Bow pulpit is standard as also are sheet winches, teak rails and all internal cushions and carpets. In short, this boat is provided ready to sail, with none of the usual extras that add so much to the bill just to get her afloat.

The sum total of our examination of the Clipper was most favourable. Here is a boat that proved to be very stable, even in strong winds, yet easy to handle even under those adverse conditions. She has full fitted buoyancy, a factor we cannot emphasise too much, and is equipped with all but the luxury extras, so that her initial price is really a sail-away figure. She is one of the most stylish trailer sailers on the water, having more the appearance of a trim yacht, is easy to rig and handle, is reasonably comfortable below decks, and, most important of all, is priced well within the average family's boating pocket.



