



TRANSOCEAN TS

US-built folding trimaran can cross oceans, lives in the backyard. Story by BARRY TRANTER.

IT'S NOT easy to pigeonhole the F27. This is a trailer yacht that can be hauled behind the Little Aussie Bleeder's family six-cylinder car. It can also cross oceans. The tri was designed by expatriate Kiwi and former Queenslander Ian Farrier, and is built by Corsair Marine in California. The device that makes these capabilities possible is the folding crossbeam system Farrier developed three years ago, first for his series of build-yourself Trailertris, then the production fibreglass Haines Hunter Tramp, now being redeveloped for production by OSTAC of Hemmant in Brisbane, the F27 importers.

So this 27ft 1in (8.25m) tri, which weighs approximately 1200kg, can be launched, rigged and retrieved by one person. Production models have sailed the Atlantic, and raced from California to Hawaii.

If you really want to, you can load up your F27 in the backyard, tow it to the nearest saltwater ramp, and take off into the wild

blue. You can see what I meant about pigeonholing.

The unfolded F27 in sailing trim is a moderate boat in most respects, though foam coring, carbon (mainly in the crossbeams) and vacuum bagging help keep the weight under control, always a contentious issue in multihulls, doubly contentious if you want to drag them behind the family hack.

The 8.25m main hull has a waterline of 8m and an overall beam of 5.82m, or 19ft 1in, not excessive in this era of Formula 40s which are as wide as they are long. The main hull has a healthy beam/length ratio and a lot of beam aft. This is a light boat, after all, and bound to be sensitive for fore and aft weight placement. Down the back (more or less) is where the bodies will be, and down the back is where the buoyancy must go.

The main hull is flared, but not substantially — it's not wide enough to put berths up in the wing stubs, for instance,



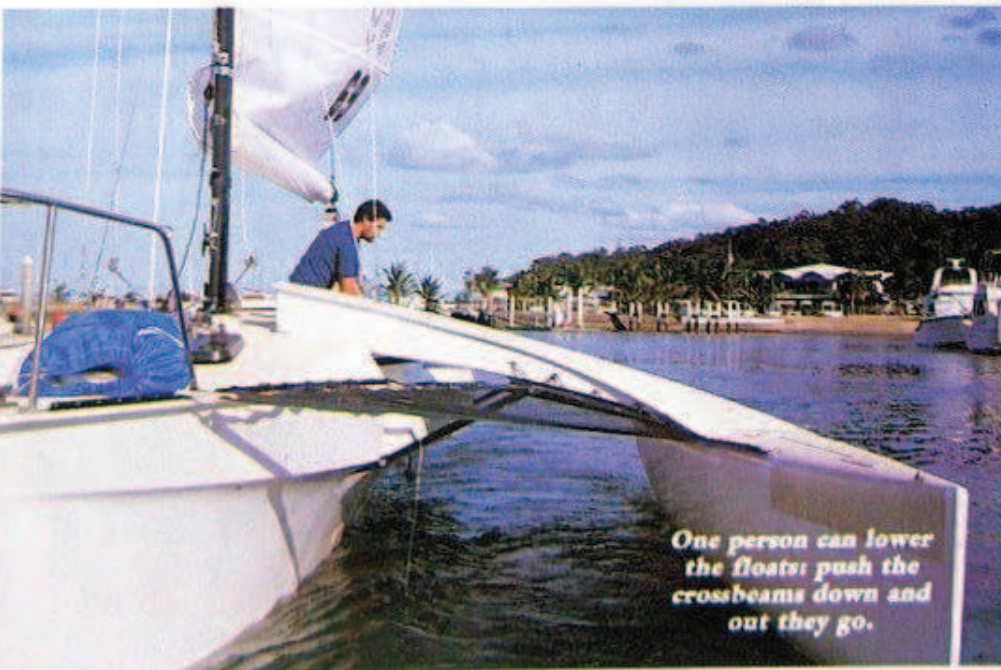
*Working the F27 to windward,
with a touch of heel and weather
helm, is one of sailing's nicest
jobs . . .*



Bernie Summers



To simplify raising, the mast base is pinned to a sliding bracket.



One person can lower the floats; push the crossbeams down and out they go.

so the interior is limited to a double berth in the stern cabin, two singles in the saloon, and a single up front. Limited is the wrong term — this 28ft boat sleeps five, two in their own cabin. Four is a happy number for the cockpit to carry, and even then someone is likely to be out on the trampoline.

The amas (outriggers) are BIG, with plenty of volume, maybe as much as 200% of the boat's total buoyancy, and plenty of depth, so initial angles of heel are quite low. This also means a cross wake can make the F27 flick roll from one float to the other, the only drawback with such a layout.

We sailed the first boat into Australia, which has a folded beam of 8ft 5in. Subsequent boats will have a dimple moulded into the ama gunwale which will bring folded beam down to Aussie (and European) limits.

In the photographs the F27 looks big squatting on its trailer behind the towcar. When it rolls into sight behind the OSTAC Commodore wagon it seems a small, manageable boat. That mast looks hard to handle, but there's a trick. For that matter the whole boat looks hard to handle, but there turns out to be a series of tricks.

First you slide the mast back on the roller it sits on, at the top of the trailing frame that slots into the transom.

A bracket at the mast base slides into deck tangs each side of the mast step, and a retained pin each side is slipped into place. At this stage, eyeing the size of the mast and conscious of the \$120 recently spent with the chiropractor, I thought it was time for my infamous invisibility trick, but OSTAC's Paul Koch ducked into the cabin and returned with an alloy bracket which slots into the upper ends of the still-folded front crossbeams.

Paul then dropped to the ground, ran the hook and wire up from the trailer winch, and told me to lead it over a nylon pad on the upper surface of the alloy bracket, then hook it to a mast fitting. Then you wind up the mast with the main trailer winch. EUREKA! said I. It helps if you get things started by lifting the mast from a point down near the stern, improving the wire's angle of attack on the mast, but you don't need to. Reverse the procedure to lower. How many Darby and Joans have you seen

wrestling valiantly, he hurling abuse? No more, dear friend.

The main wraps around the boom, which has a pin on its front end which simply fits in a hole through the mast, where a sort of clamp locks it in place. The boom rotates easily for furling and, if needed, for reefing, though Paul reckons that at about 25 knots it's easiest to go with full main and drop the jib.

So there's a lot of machinery, bits and pieces connected with getting the F27 ready, but it makes the work so easy it's worthwhile. It feels less of a *contraption* than I had thought, the criticism I had always levelled at the smaller Tramp.

The forestay and inner forestay both screw home, which is slow, but the designer seems serious about keeping the mast down, you clip the two backstays to points on the rear crossbeam, then tension with tackles led back to the cockpit. You treat these like runners, letting them off downwind, set and forget the rest of the time.

All the gear is top quality — the mainsheet runs on Harken cars, winches are by Barlow and Lewmar.

Accommodation

The little stern cabin is just that, a sleeping place for two. The main saloon has settee berths either side of a small table. The galley is basic, a metho stove and a sink unit on the port side, back down near the companionway, under the top which goes up 15 inches or so. The forepeak has a small vanity unit, with the dunny under the single



Bernie Summers

berth. Stowage in the saloon is behind the settees, where the hull sides curve steeply down and away, making particularly safe bins. You could wedge the baby in here, if you had to.

On the water

Accommodation is important to most people, but there's not a lot to tell here. You can live on board comfortably for weekends or holidays; enough said. Sailing ability will sell this boat, not its caravan features.

Having rigged your F27 you now push it off the trailer, a task we found difficult on the public ramp near Royal Queensland YC on Moreton Bay. This was more the fault of the shallow ramp than anything; we'd been having the same trouble all day, with a number of boats at a number of Brisbane's ramps, all of which seemed painfully shallow. A couple of times we got the boat off the trailer only marginally before the car floated off the ramp.

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Anyway, with F27 off the trailer, the starter cord on the 8hp outboard refused to budge, having been jammed by the in-gear lockout. Paul elected to raise a bit of main rather than wrestle with the engine, as it nestles in its trunk on the portside aft, projecting through the flared hullside to the water. We obviously couldn't try the outboard in any sort of a slop; another tri I tried years ago had the outboard in the hull flare amidships, and the prop came out of the briny in every passing trough. The world has spun on its axis a few times since then, and the outboard shafts have grown. It should be better down the back, too.

Paul hoisted a couple of metres of main and sailed away from the ramp, floats still folded. We took a line on board the camera boat, as the marina is a little confined here, but there was no need — the boat tacks and behaves itself in this conformation.

To extend the floats you just push down on the crossarms and out they go. Two bolts in each crossarm stub lock everything into place, though the designer claims you can sail the boat without the bolts being tightened. There are no hinges, just an upper and lower alloy beam in each crossarm stub that act like a pantograph to guide the crossarm into its recess in the hull moulding. You push down to extend the floats, lift up retract. A sort of wheelbrace is standard.

The mast is 37ft long, the main is 25



Trailer winch makes light work of mast raising. But where's the editor?



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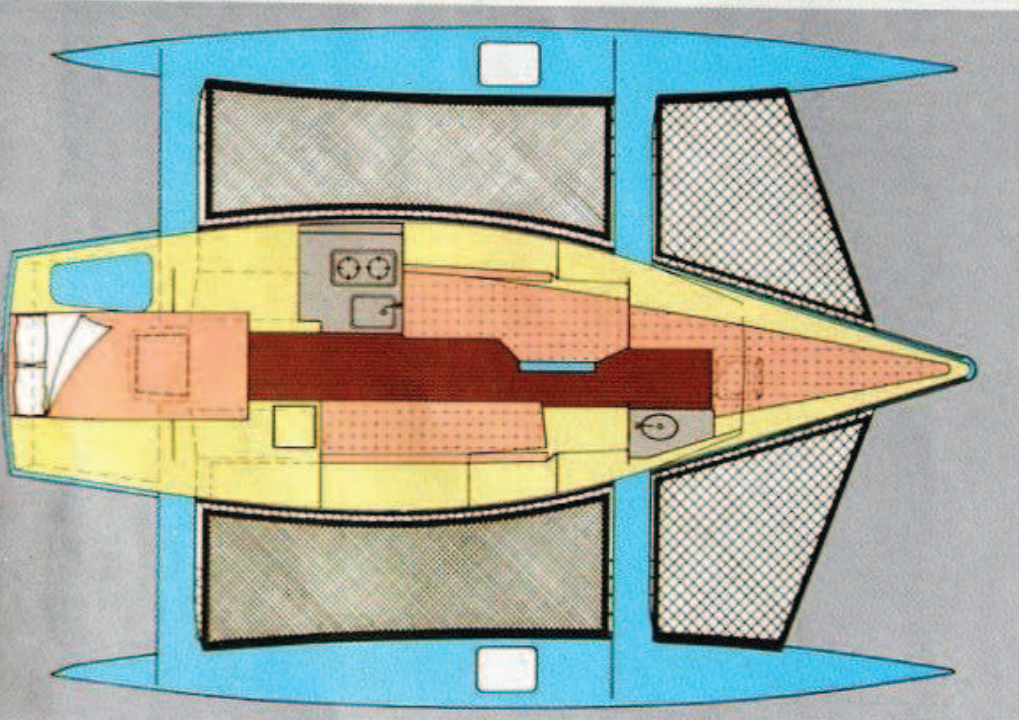
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require their own skills and provide their own rewards, but for me working a light boat, with a well-tuned rig, to windward, is the greatest joy of all, the time when you become the link between the wind and the sailing machine, the go-between, the Zenithal servant of the forces of nature. You don't get the same feeling from the heavily-canvased racing tris, and certainly not from the rigidly horizontal, two-ruddered cats. A good tri always reminds me of one of the immortal Paul Elvstrom's quotes. When asked what he thought of the then new Tempest as a potential Olympic class, he replied, "A keelboat is like a Flying Dutchman half full of water."

To conclude; the F27 seems well-built, it is fast, it is obviously seaworthy, or as seaworthy as this sort of multihull can be. This folding trimaran is less of a design compromise than maxi monohull trailables, as the restriction on beam and ballast inevitably compromise their upwind performance. It is a good weekender for four of five, a good holiday boat for fourth multihull home in the Bay to Bay trailer yacht race. It is, as we said at the start, unique, unclassifiable, a boat you can keep in your backyard, and sail across oceans in as much security as a small multihull can confer. So what's the drawback, you ask? Where's the catch?

Where else? In these inflationary times. When the OSTAC guys brought in the first F27 they calculated Australian retail price at somewhere around \$86,000, good value for an exceptional boat.

But then the dollar dropped, remember, in late May, and now an F27, sitting on its trailer in your driveway, will set you back around \$96,000. And that may be the big hurdle this able and willing small yacht may have trouble climbing. ☐



There's accommodation for five on a vee-, two-settee and a double-aft berth, and the dinette seats four. Stove doesn't need gimbals.

square metres, the genoa around 23, a healthy amount for a boat of this weight. We had a light (maybe 8 knots) nor'easter out on the bay, and all I can say is the F27 behaved perfectly.

The 6:1 mainsheet runs on a big (and ugly) alloy beam carried above the rear coachroof, with the tiller extending below it. The cockpit is comfortable, all the winches well placed. You can steer from the cockpit seats or the sidedecks, using the tiller extension. The boat is a delight to work to windward, with the tiniest amount of weather helm — it luffs very, very slowly when the helm is released. In light winds at least, despite what the pictures indicate,

the angle of heel is slight. In smooth (ish) water, working a trimaran of this configuration to windward is one of the nicest jobs in sailing. While the controls and responsiveness are not quite as immediate, as sensual, as say a lightly ballasted monohull TY, or a small well-tuned ocean racer, they're not far off. The absence of ballast keeps the controls light and direct; only the drag of the lee ama dulls the immediateness a little.

The F27 responds to every tiller input, so that working your way upwind, and through waves, is a never ending source of pure joy. This, for me, is the best sailing. The screaming reach and the driving run

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA:	8.25m
LWL:	8.0m
Beam:	5.82m
Folded Beam (see text)	
Draft:	0.36m-1.5m
Weight (approx):	1180kg
Main:	25sq m
Jib:	16.3sq m
Genoa:	22.9sq m
Spinnaker:	76.4sq m
Designer:	Ian Farrier
Builder:	Corsair Marine, USA
Imported by:	OSTAC Pty. Ltd., 25 Akuna Court, Hemmant, 4174. Phone: (07) 893 1133.