

Like its private investigator namesake, this maxi Aussie trailable has been a true survivor in a tough industry. JAMES HILL reports.

MAGNUM



WHEN IT comes to trailer sailer ownership, Australians would have to be world champions. More than a decade after this style of sail craft got an economic puncture and ran off the road there are still thousands around, in a hundred different shapes and styles. These days, however, the number of models still being actively produced has dwindled to more than six or seven.

You don't have to be a genius to figure that tighter economic conditions have caused the slump in new TS sales. Given the strong relationship between family boating and trailer sailing, and the fact that the family unit's purchasing power

has been eroded by the cost of living, the effect has been immediate. Added to that is competition from backyard pools and packaged holidays.

An enigmatic survivor of this harsh climate has been the Magnum 850, one of the new breed of large and luxurious trailable yachts. It was developed by Rudi Waalkens some four years ago as a successor to his South Coast 22 and 25 models; while manufacturers in other boating spheres were looking the other way, towards affordability.

Waalkens was the first builder in the country to foresee the eventual trend to bigger trailer yachts when he released the 25, a heavy cruising boat with no

racing potential and which needed something like an F100 truck to tow it. It wasn't the prettiest of boats either but suited enough people to fill 70 orders over 15 years. The smaller Iain Murray designed 22-footer was more of an allrounder but sold only modestly.

Upon realising that the small boat

There's a saying that the perfect boat is the next size up and the maxi Magnum has proved it, selling steadily to second- and third-time TS buyers at a time when the entry-level spectrum of the market was drying up. Under working sail it achieves a healthy performance.

market was all but dead Waalkens discovered that he was left with the oldest big TS on the market and thus was well and truly missing out. The 28-footer, from the board of Bill Bollard, was born, aimed squarely at the second or third-time owner who desired a smart, versatile cruiser/racer at a reasonable price.

The Magnum is a very appealing

sailboat in anyone's language, attractively styled, relatively quick around the buoys, spacious and moderately priced at around \$50,000 plus trailer. It has proven a real stayer in an otherwise depressed industry, 66 having been built to date at the rate of one per fortnight. At the time of writing, production had been cut by Waalken's factory, South Coast Yachts, to one a

month, yet there was optimism that this would return to normal with the beginning of summer. Even though it is now some four-years-old, in design terms the Magnum is right up-to-date in market appeal and building technology. As Waalkens says, the boat will probably get a good 10 year run in the marketplace.

A one-design class has been established around the Magnum ownership pool and there are associations operating in the boat's two main power bases, NSW and Victoria. "The class associations give owners' the long-term guarantee of racing performance without having to try and compete in open-class race fleet," says Waalkens.

The class rules, while ensuring one-design racing for those owners who like to compete, still allow the opportunity to tweak performance. For instance, fully-battened mainsails were allowed into the class recently. On the other hand, having a one-design racing class has helped keep a level of discipline in the Magnum's development. People are less inclined to try different-sized sails and rigs because ultimately they want to maintain resale value through class conformity, says Waalkens.

In performance terms the Magnum



strikes a nice balance between the outright performance of the modern ultralight TSs, such as the Ross 780, Young Rockets and Spider 28, and the needs of comfortable cruising. It just sneaks in under the boundary for light displacement while still retaining good interior room and comfort through a relatively high freeboard and generous sized coach house.

There is full standing headroom through the main cabin area and even forward of the mast in the fully enclosed toilet compartment. Further, this headroom is achieved without need of a pop-top such as employed by most of the racing maxi TSs.



The interior is pretty comfortable for a family of six with doubles fore and aft, two settee berths, dinette, galley and decent-sized bathroom. It's the sort of boat which would be right at home inshore cruising in lake systems like the Myalls, Gippslands and inshore of Fraser

Island, and at least one has been rated under the Offshore Channel handicap system to race at Hamilton Island.

In terms of trailability this is still very much a maxi-haul boat, tipping the scales at around two and bit tonnes with trailer on the road. Dry weight is about

1500kg, pretty good for a boat of this size, but to that you add the weight of the trailer, approximately 500kg, plus sails, equipment, fuel and water. A powerful 4WD like a Nissan Patrol, Toyota LandCruiser, Range Rover, Ford Maverick or F100 can handle the task easily provided the trailer is fitted with brakes.

Performance

I SAILED the privately-owned Magnum, Nirvana 7 on her home waters of Lake Illawarra. We launched from the excellent concrete ramp at the local yacht club which these days fields a healthy-sized trailer yacht fleet together with its skiffs and sailboards. It was cool but we enjoyed the sail by keeping the boat in race mode, setting the spinnaker,



Above: Light, lean hull slips along under tri-radial chute without fuss; yardstick is in top 10. Stern locker, left, hides 9.9hp outboard, with external control box. The lever to port is for hydraulic keel.

TS

trimming up and downwind and getting impressive speed out of the moderate-strength sou'westerly.

The 850 was designed around the idea of using a self-tacker headsail in moderate to fresh winds. In winds below 15 knots, there's the option of staying with the non-overlap jib or going to a 15% genoa. In a wind of around 10/12 knots we achieved an upwind speed of 5.8 knots, which is pretty good going for a boat of only 7.5m waterline length. Off the breeze, we set a tri-radial chute and broad reached at speeds averaging 5.5 to 6.3 knots, competitive for a cruiser/racer.

Lighter displacement TSs would break away in fresher conditions, purely because they can plane earlier, but the Magnum is no slouch in this department either. To improve upwind sailing ability 100kg was added to the ballasted lift keel to bring it up a neat one-third of overall dry weight. This level might sound low by keel-boat standards but is actually the common average for trailer yachts. Given that these boats generally sail on flat water in light to moderate winds, it is not necessary to go to 40% ballast as you would find in modern offshore keel yachts.

The boat has a nice, predictable response and doesn't feel as flighty or twitchy as some of the real ultralights. Stability is good for a trailer yacht but it's obvious you need to change down to the smaller headsail once the wind kicks in with any purpose. Racing sailors might consider fitting a headfoil to facilitate a quicker headsail change, though you can often do the headsail switch when sailing on the downwind or reaching legs under spinnaker.

As with most modern cruiser/racers the halyards are led back to cabin top winches, in this case Barient 8s. A bank of Spinlock rope clutches lock off the various halyards, thus allowing the two winches to be used for spinnaker hoists, mainsail jiffy reefs or a temporary sheeter for the kite.

Accommodation

A FULL interior moulding provides a double quarter berth to port of the companionway and there's a small but functional L-shaped galley opposite, comprising sink, hand-pump, icebox, two-burner stove and a pair of teak-faced lockers. Two settees in the saloon and a double vee berth complete the accommodation.

A stowage bureau is located between the starboard settee and the forepeak



berth, the fully-enclosed toilet compartment is to port, adjacent to the centrecase and isolated from the saloon by a full bulkhead. A table folds out from this bulkhead, enabling four or five crew to dine comfortably.

The overall impression is luxurious, aided by such comforts as padded backrests, teak trim, floor carpet and full fabric lining, and the sleeping configuration is practical for a family or two couples.

Construction

TO ACHIEVE the relatively light displacement of 1500kg the Magnum is built with Divinycell high-density foam coring of 12mm in both hull and deck moulding. The layup features a semi-exotic woven fabric cloth sandwiching the foam plus a chop-strand mat layup on the outer skin to give protection against knocks and scratches. The interior moulding doubles as a structural sub-frame and ties in with several 12mm ply bulkheads including the one which

takes the load of the chainplates. Further strength is provided by the aluminium box channels which form the front and back of the centrecase. These large beams help tie the deck and hull together and give the boat the required degree of rigidity for sailing and trailing.

Quality of finish on the test boat was first class. As standard you get a one-tone colour scheme for the deck, moulded-in non-skid deck pattern, cockpit sail locker, outboard fuel tank locker, cockpit coaming gloveboxes, bow anchor locker and transom boarding steps.

A pump action manual hydraulic lift is provided as standard (operated alongside the helm) as is a factory-built fibreglass dagger rudder.

Optional extras include tandem-wheel trailer, electric power for the keel lift, pump-out toilet in lieu of the chemical one provided, mast support for trailing (very handy) and spinnaker gear.

Coloured hulls are also an option but dark colours are a no-no due to possible problems of heating and foam core print-out with a sandwich core hull.

Auxiliary power is provided by 9.9hp Yamaha longshaft outboard mounted in a locker at the aft end of the cockpit floor. The motor well has bomb-bay doors to give a smooth no-drag surface when the motor is not used; the leg tilts within the well.

The Magnum is available in stages starting from a basic structural boat for \$26,915, keel, rudder and windows fitted. A sail-away kit adds another \$10,227. The full factory fit-out with teak trim, carpet liner and accessories adds another \$9339, the trailer a further \$4180, the motor approximately \$3200.

All up our test boat, with a few other extras such as spinnaker gear, cost \$56,360.

MAGNUM 850

LOA.....	8.5m
LWL.....	7.5m
Beam.....	2.45m
Draft.....	0.26m/1.5m
Dry weight.....	1500kg
Trailable weight.....	2200kg
Ballast.....	500kg
Sail Areas: Main.....	18.5sq m
Genoa.....	17.8sq m
Jib.....	9.6sq m
Manufacturer:	South Coast Yachts, Unanderra, NSW. (042) 71 7844.