

THE TS THAT'S REALLY A YACHT

Austrian-designed, British-built and described as a fin-keel sloop, the Manta 19 is a true yacht with trailerable possibilities. She handles like a yacht and has a lot going for her, says PAUL HOPKINS.

THE MANTA 19 was released at the 1977 Sydney Boat Show and seemed to interest mainly owners of similar-sized trailer sailers. My family and I climbed on board at the Show and were impressed by the use of the limited interior space as the Manta is only two metres wide — but in proportion, which is something unusual as some trailer sailers look like floating caravans.

Designed in Austria, built in England by Blakes Marine Services, Cheshire, and sold in Australia by Ekedo Pty Ltd of Chatswood, NSW, this handsome newcomer should be described as a fin-keel sloop. She's trailerable but the 0.46 m deep skeg/keel makes it necessary for the skipper to sink the special trailer to launch or retrieve her and that's tough on wheel bearings.

Ekedo keeps the Manta 19 demonstration boat on a mooring at Greenwich on Sydney Harbor, but I wanted to see how easy it was to retrieve and launch her, so the Ekedo team motored her around to the excellent Drummoyne launching ramp and pulled her out.

They then relaunched her.

Retrieving and launching the Manta 19 is more difficult than retrieving and launching a simple centreboard trailer sailer. The trailer has to be let down the ramp on a chain and submerged. The boat is then floating on or off the trailer and the trailer is pulled up the ramp via the chain, attached to the tow vehicle which is kept out of the water.

It takes a few minutes longer to launch or retrieve the Manta 19 and not all ramps would be suitable particularly those with many boats waiting. The steeper the better... without gradually shelving sandbanks off the ramp end.

This yacht can't get close to ramps or riverbanks unless the bottom shelves suddenly. At Drummoyne, it was a case

of wading out knee deep to clamber on to the bow (high water) and carrying my wife ashore from farther out at low water.

So, if you don't mind getting your feet and pants wet, the getting to and from the beached Manta 19 can be managed reasonably well.

I'd rather step off the bow of my centreboard TS on to dry land, but it hasn't the stability of the newcomer; compromise comes again.

Climbing on and off the Manta's bow isn't for the elderly; it's quite a struggle. I tested the pulpit by putting all my



Hungry crew get stuck into the food with table in position. It stows under port quarter berth when not in use. Centreboard case is set below companionway to leave cabin floor uncluttered.

weight on it and it bent alarmingly. It's decidedly flexible and I'd like to see something more substantial as it would take a hammering in a season of sailing into secluded beaches.

The non-skid on the deck and cabin top may be fine if you are wearing sandshoes or similar but with wet, bare feet it's tricky. It's as slippery as some Sydney ramps. The non-skid finish looks like vinyl plug inlay which is repeated on the cabin liners. It looks good but is dangerous because it's a shoes-off proposition to board the Manta.

I've made a production out of the Manta beaching problem for a very good

reason: I could find little else to criticise! She's a handsome, well thought out sloop with good accommodation, nifty ideas and really good handling. What's more, she is well-balanced and sails well.

When I test a yacht I like to go below while the regular crew get the sails on I then survey the activity and surroundings. You'd be surprised what the trained eye can pick up that way. Instead of bull-dozing in and taking over, it's best for the experienced observer to sit quietly and observe.

From my seat in the cabin I observed I was on a very small 19-footer which reminded me of a Hunter 19. The Manta 19's designer went for traditional beauty of line.

To get accommodation for four into the Manta 19 he put the centreplate into her skeg/keel, leaving the cabin floor free and uncluttered by a centreboard case.

Two forward vee bunks are very comfortable. The foam mattresses are firmer than found on Australian boats and give excellent body support.

Two quarter berths give full 1.83 m (6ft 2in) stretch and are wide. The timber stowage shelves each side of the cabin take some of the quarter berth shoulder room. These shelves are double banked and will accept all manner of items including camera, spray jacket, brief case and jumper.

A novel inverted wishbone stainless steel mast support gives easy access to forward hatch and the chemical toilet. The table, which stores under the port quarter berth cushion, hooks onto the mast support and is supported at the other end by a single post which slots into the plywood floorboards.

The stove is stored under a hatch in the port quarter berth — with cushion removed the plywood hatch cover is inverted to produce stove stand on to which the stove is mounted. Very neat, although somewhat cramped.

The companionway step hides the small centreplate case and the area between step and actual companionway opening is taken up with stowage shelves.

As well as the side plywood shelves

Manta 19, one of the most complete trailable yachts available in Australia. British-built, its finish is good.



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there are cloth storage envelopes each side forward.

The tear-shaped windows (one each side) let in sufficient light. An extra window forward would reduce a slight closed-in feeling.

Inner liner and built-in GRP furniture give a clean appearance with the timber/plywood stowage areas adding a feeling of the traditional. Finish is reasonable, but not exceptional.

An interesting anti-thief cockpit locker could be copied on other moored boats. Simple lines go from locker lids, down to fairleads and back to cleats inside the quarter berths. One has to get into the cabin to release the lines to open the lockers.

The chemical toilet hides in its central locker (forward), but some means of restraining it is recommended

as a knock down could cause some messy problems.

Twin moulded-in ice boxes each side of the toilet compartment (under the bunk cushions) could store a fair quantity of perishables and cans.

An electrical fuse box is located on the inner starboard companionway bulkhead and it has a heavy duty look about it.

Sitting headroom is ample and the stowage shelves give good back support. In a nutshell, there's a kernel of truth in the belief that one can get a quart into a pint bottle. The Manta 19 gets it all in and still gives space for four average adults.

The boat doesn't boast a pop-top yet it gives a quiet confidence in its ability to handle a variety of weather conditions. Her designer has gone for proven qualities at the expense of

expensive accommodation. This doesn't mean accommodation is not good; it's just cramped.

The designer's belief in seamanlike design is shown in the cockpit which is self-contained and self-draining through its transom. A cockpit full of water will not drain directly into the raised companionway and even the twin storage lockers aft have heavily lipped surrounds to keep water out. The interior locking lines should keep the lockers secure in a complete knock down.

On the other hand, I was disturbed by the cabin windows being held in place only by rubber gaskets. Even heavily built cabin top and sides could flex in extreme conditions and perhaps pop out a window. In my opinion you can't beat metal threads and silicone and aluminium frames to fasten cabin windows.

Windows aside, safety and buoyance are high spots on the Manta 19. The forward bunk furniture is foam-filled right back to the quarter berths and foam flotation supports the cockpit floor. (Manta 19 passed flotation tests in England. We don't know whether she had engine and stores and crew on board. Suffice to ask how many locally-built trailer sailers would pass a proper flotation test.)

On deck, this craft is yacht-like with lifelines all round, simple forestay, backstay, two shrouds/spreaders rig and end-boom sheeting.

The standard boat comes with no 2 headsail, so that's the one we hoisted. The mainsail is small and total sail area is adjusted by the use of no 1 genoa, no 2 genoa and jib. The mainsail has English roller reefing — the boom pulls out from the gooseneck and you wind the sail around it.

The large halyard cleats have a habit of snagging the headsail sheets as does the large mooring cleat on the foredeck. Anchoring is more important than people realise. The Manta 19 has a solid cleat for'ard, good bow roller and sharp-jawed fairleads on each gunwale, fore and aft. The anchor is kept in the port locker alongside the helmsman.

I am told that, in the UK, one must now (by law) carry the anchor and chain on the foredeck. However, Manta's set-up is quite satisfactory.

Talking about chains, this yacht is the only one I've sailed on which one must pull the chain to haul up the centreplate. The chain with handle is at hand on the outside companionway step. The centreplate is so light that even a child can haul it up. It increases draft to 0.9 m (from 0.46 m) and is a definite advantage to windward.

Winches (with fixed handles) each side of the cockpit handle the headsail. Jamb cleats for headsail sheets and



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mainsheet are angled and inset as required to give instant engagement.

Although the mast step is adjustable, the backstay isn't.

The tiller is well finished in contrasting timbers and lifts when

required. Rudder blade is alloy flat sheet, as is the centreplate.

The cockpit can seat four adults with room to spare. It's not too wide and one can brace one's feet on the other side when the big puffs surprise you.

HOW SHE SAILED

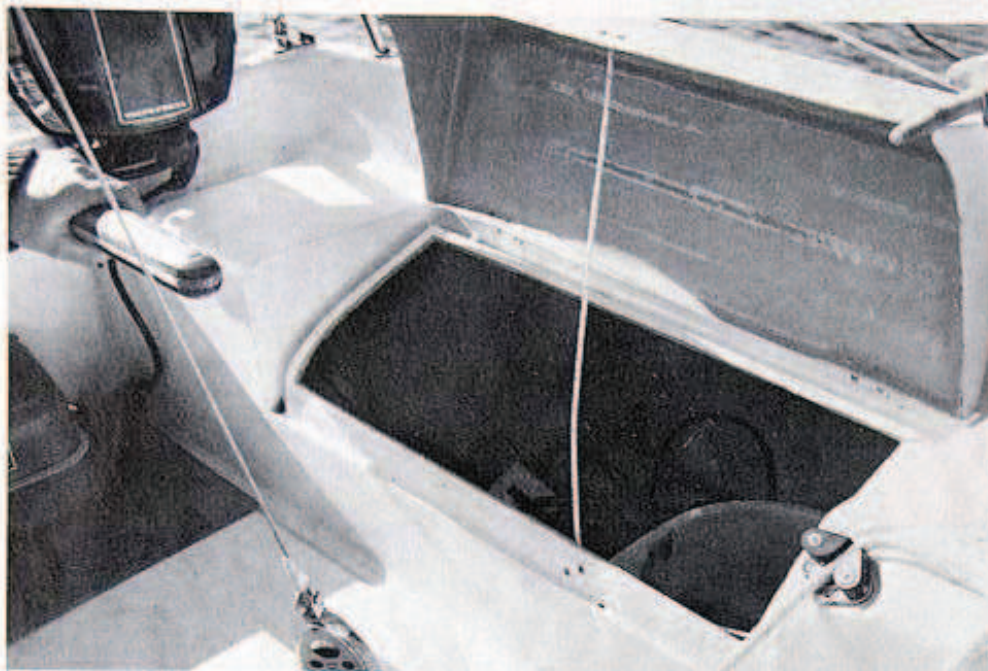
A moderate nor'easter was making as we motored under Gladesville Bridge, pushed by the Volvo-Penta 5hp clamped on to the transom, to port. The breeze huffed and puffed from different directions in typical Parramatta River fashion and gave us a chance to really test the yacht's balance and response.

The Manta came up trumps. She is beautifully balanced and most responsive to helm and sail trim. Unlike some trailer sailers that feel heavy, the Manta 19 goes where you point her and accelerates in the puffs.

Although I don't like overlapping masthead headsails on trailer sailers, I must confess that the Manta's no 2 genoa was easy to handle.

We sailed from Gladesville to Pinchgut into the increasing nor'easter and enjoyed the experience. There were no noticeable vibrations from the alloy centreplate or the alloy rudder blade and tacking was easy.

The long run back to the launching ramp — into the tide! — took just under an hour as we alternatively ran, reached and worked with and across the slanting breeze which has to work hard to invade the Parramatta River. The high headlands do some funny things to the



Above: Everything is included — including electrics and lifelines. Halyards are tied off on the mast. Boom vang could do with modification and the racing skipper would want to upgrade some fittings.



Top left: Heavily lipped port stowage locker hatch with its secret line which secures inside the cabin when hatch is locked.

Above: Cockpit can house four or five adults in relative comfort. Manta comes in one state of finish: complete.

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sea breeze inland from the Sydney Harbor Bridge. It's a frustrating place to sail because of the foreshores and a dangerous place if you don't watch for ferries, tugs, ships and other commercial traffic.

Back at the ramp I did my Sir Walter Raleigh act and waved the Ekedo lads

goodbye as they sailed their surprise package back to the Greenwich mooring.

SUMMARY

The Manta 19 is a trailerable yacht. She's not a trailer sailer in the true sense of the word as she has a permanent keel

and a yacht feel about her. I'd like to see her sailed against Hunter 19s and trailer sailers her length. She could surprise them.

She is easy to sail and she sails well. When you tack her she doesn't fall away, demanding to be poked back up into the wind. She tacks like a yacht. Like a Hunter 19 for example. This, in part, is due to her yacht-like keel centreplate profile.

Accommodation is reasonable although a little cramped. However, some ingenious stowage ideas provide all the mod cons necessary for family cruising.

Her only drawback is her 0.46 m fixed skeg/keel. It prevents her nosing right into sandy beaches or shoaling river banks. On the other hand it gives a safety margin not found in most trailer sailers and provides unusually excellent handling qualities.

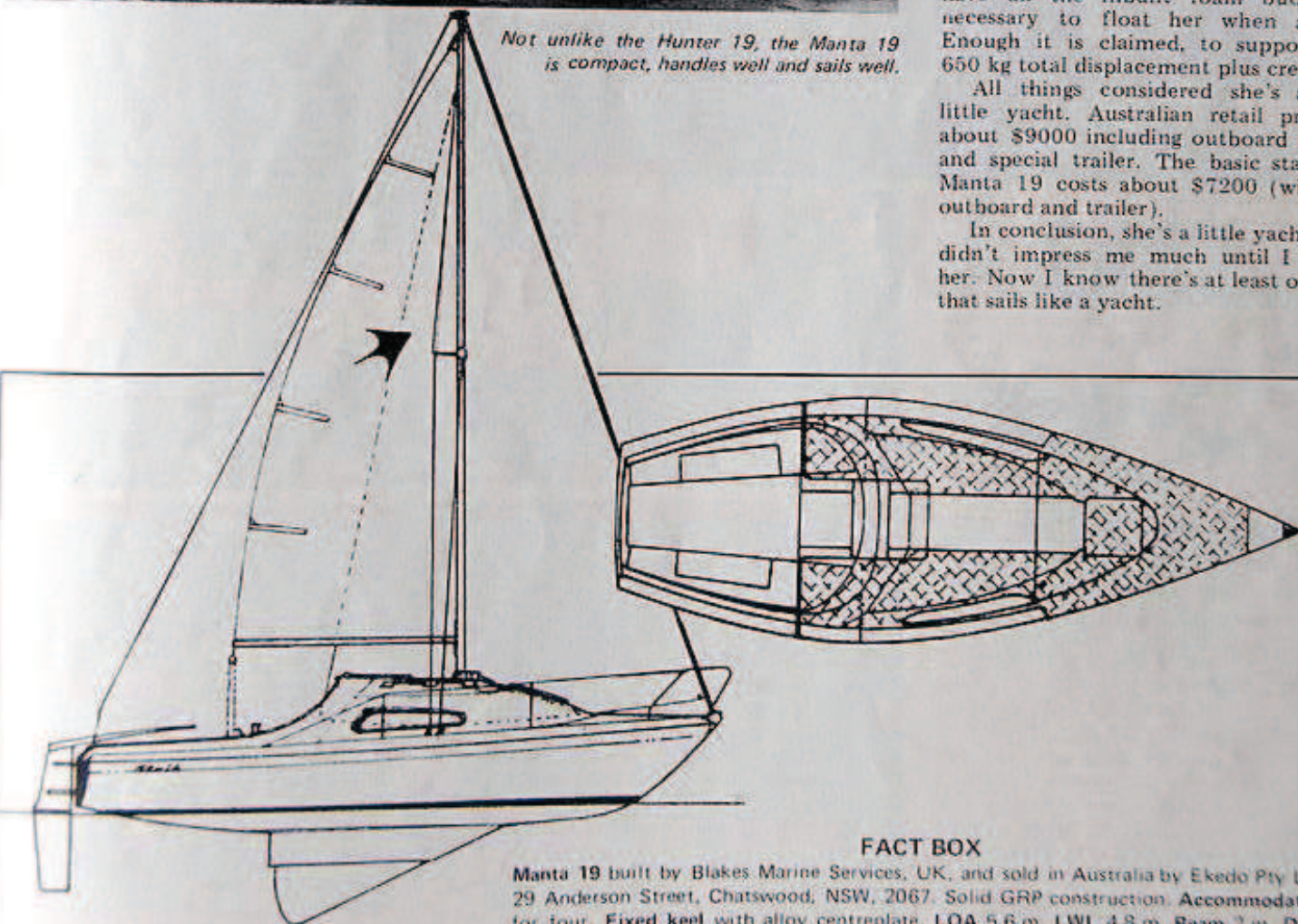
Some "self-righting" trailerable yachts have been known to sink because they didn't have sufficient inbuilt buoyancy. The Manta 19 appears to have all the inbuilt foam buoyancy necessary to float her when awash. Enough it is claimed, to support her 650 kg total displacement plus crew.

All things considered she's a fine little yacht. Australian retail price is about \$9000 including outboard motor and special trailer. The basic standard Manta 19 costs about \$7200 (without outboard and trailer).

In conclusion, she's a little yacht that didn't impress me much until I sailed her. Now I know there's at least one TS that sails like a yacht. *



Not unlike the Hunter 19, the Manta 19 is compact, handles well and sails well.



FACT BOX

Manta 19 built by Blakes Marine Services, UK, and sold in Australia by Ekedo Pty Ltd, 29 Anderson Street, Chatswood, NSW, 2067. Solid GRP construction. **Accommodation** for four. **Fixed keel** with alloy centreplate. **LOA** 5.6 m. **LWL** 4.8 m. **Beam** 2 m. **Draft** (keel only) 0.46 m. **Draft** (plate down) 0.9 m. **Ballast** 400 lb. **Displacement** 650 kg. **Sail area** no 1 genoa 7.4 m², no 2 genoa 9.00 m², working jib 5.34 m², spinnaker (optional 18 m² (FD size), mainsail 5.48 m². **Price** as sailed \$9000. Standard boat \$7200 ready to sail but without outboard, trailer, stove, toilet, electrics, jib furling gear and safety gear.