



*Sabre's appearance is  
conservative, won't date.  
Everyone wants a pop top, says builder.*





Cockpit is a good size, aided by vertical, cutaway transom.

# FRIEND OF THE FAMILY

**Sabre 25 gives priority to good, old family values, and it's not a bad performer either. BARRY TRANTER reports.**

**A** FEW years ago, just after the passing of the Ice Age and before full Banana Republic gloom set in, *Modern Boating* magazine did a survey of trailer sailers, a valiant attempt to list most of the TSs built in this still sceptred isle. We turned up 84 separate models, from 32 suppliers.

Admittedly some of these suppliers were manufacturers, some were retailers, and some were agents for builders from overseas. Some could best be described as hopefuls who had access to a mould of some sort, though maybe the latter had been lying outside in the rain for a few years and had been used by the kids occasionally as a skateboard rink. However a boat could be whipped up for anyone silly enough to ask.

The 84 different models included a huge variety of styles, but most of them, to put it bluntly (isn't that the best way to put it?) were marine caravans. Sure, some of the 84 were fast and handy, but most were aimed at the *family buyer* who, in the vain hope that his family would sail with him, had to buy a waterborne holiday barge, that sailed like one.

But time, as tradition established long ago, marches on. There are not nearly as many TS builders left in the current era of harsh economic reality. These days the only boats guaranteed a reasonable market are the big, fast ones, but there will obviously always be a place for the family TS. And that's where the Sabre 25 steps in.

John Hay, a Kiwi living in Brisbane, took

over the moulds for the well known Sabre 22 a couple of years ago. Despite a problem with keel positioning, which made her a handful upwind in a blow (John later fixed this by moving the keel back) the 22 has sold well over the years, with numbers up around the 100 mark. The 22 is a handy family boat with timeless, crisp styling that has saved it from dating too quickly, and John has achieved the same effect with his 25. This is a traditional family boat (i.e. roomy) but a cored hull, which keeps the weight down, and reasonable sail area, ensure good performance. The best, as they say in the tabloids, of both worlds.

John Hay has met one or two family boat buyers over the years and reckons he knows what they want. What they get with the



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*Builder John Hay in roomy saloon; stub keel protects cored hull; mast is an easy two-handed lift.*





Sabre 25 is a hull of 7.7m or 25ft 3in, with beam under the towing limit at 2.45m, or 8ft. The hull echoes the 22's profile, with a sharply turned forefoot, a narrow stern and quite rounded sections by the standards of '89. To protect the cored skin from being assaulted by the stresses of trailing, a long, shallow keel has been included to cop the brunt of any blows.

The boat displaces 1250kg, not bad for a fully-fitted 25-footer and easily towed by the Falcon wagon most TS owners favour, though full trailing weight is a different story — 1870kg on the tandem rig. There's a pop top, only about 150mm, but "everybody seems to want one", says the builder. There's a galley unit, forward in the saloon set against the bulkhead. There's a separate shower/head, with folding doors to give privacy from the main and fore cabins.

The shower is a ripper, a Queensland solution to an old problem. You drape your five gallon (25 litre) solar shower across the cockpit floor, below the tiller where you won't step on it. To shower, you screw the shower neck to a deck fitting in front of the mast; hoist the bag's tail up on a halyard; dive down below and turn on the warm water. So the water's not hot on a cloudy day? Why shower on a cloudy day? How bad can those armpits get? And five gallons is plenty: one gallon per person is enough. Hot water from the motor — if fitted — is an option, however, the water coming from a 150 litre tank carried in the bow, under the vee berth.

The forepeak has a vee berth with infill, for one adult plus kid, or two children. There's a translucent forehatch above, and a good stowage shelf down both sides and across the bow bulkhead.

The bathroom is full width, using the doors to close it off. The toilet is to port, and on the test boat there was a vanity to starboard. Instead of a vanity you can have an icebox, or a hanging wardrobe.

On the starboard side the settee runs full length, enough for two adults to sleep head to head, or however they may like to do it. The starboard settee is for one person; room beneath the cockpit is limited on this side by the cockpit stowage locker. The drop leaf centreline table is mounted on the case for the pivoting, ballasted centreboard, a fibreglass fin with a lead core carrying 460kg of ballast. The keel is winched up, and down, by a clutched handle on the aft end of the centrecase, about 25 turns up to down.

The Sabre's mast is a slender section, quite heavily tapered, that can be heaved up by one fairly fit adult male. The mast slides aft from its towing position, aided by the roller on the towing bracket, and the mast base pinned to its step. Then one of our small team of fairly fit adult males stood astride the spar, facing aft, grabbed the mast about a metre above the gooseneck, gave a heave, took a step backwards, and pulled the mast



**Like the 22, this is a conservative boat that is likeable. It is roomy, it moves well, and it looks good**

up with him. The forestay clips to a strop which turns around a pulley in the bow and connects to a highfield lever mounted up under the foredeck, in the anchor locker. The highfield lever permits adjustment of the forestay length to vary tension and mast rake. The rig is a simple single spreader arrangement.

The hull's core is Termanto, a foam slightly more brittle than some, so the shallow keel has an important role when retrieving and towing. The Tinka trailer we saw had a row of lateral rollers set down the centreline, and a pair of rocking rollers each side. The boat was easy to retrieve: how very civilised is the modern tilt trailer, with all its accessories such as the electric winch.

The cockpit is civilised, too. The mainsheet traveller runs across the bridge at the front end of the cockpit, the 4:1 mainsheet mounted on a Ronstan car with the traveller cams on the car itself. There are three cockpit lockers — a big general one on the port side, which also carries the battery; and two smaller ones aft (one each side) for fuel and gas. The thwarts are long and well spaced. You can step through the transom, and climb back on board using the planing board extension of the hull skin. The outboard mounts on a conventional bracket on the starboard side.

Main and jib amount to 29.3sq m, enough to keep this quite narrow and slippery hull moving well in the light airs we had on test day. In a way the breeze we had — rarely more than five knots — was a better

test of this hull than any other. For this is the area where a family boat should not perform well, but the Sabre 25 drifted along with the best of them. The way the hull floats to its lines, though the test boat was by no means overloaded, indicates that maybe the builder hasn't strayed too far from his designed displacement.

The dacron Fraser sails did their job well, and the boat slipped along easily, without vice. In its first big race — Queensland's Bay to Bay classic, through the Sandy Strait to Hervey Bay — the Sabre finished 39th over the line in a fleet of 138; all but two of the boats ahead of it should have finished ahead. The handicapper, unfortunately, treated the boat a bit roughly.

The Sabre 25 was originally to have a taller mast, but John Hay used the existing section, and found that the slender tip laid off too much, so rather than go up in section, he came down in length. The boat was happy as we sailed it. Like the 22, this is a conservative boat that is likeable. It is roomy, it moves well, and it looks good. As John Hay says: "I know what the people want". And the Sabre 25 should be able to give it to them.

On the subject of price, at first glance the Sabre looks good at \$35,000 sailaway (add \$4500 for the trailer). But you will have to add things like quarter rails (all rails are anodised aluminium, by the way), outboard bracket, spinnaker, genoa and anchor kits, cockpit cushions, etc. So it should be quite easy to push the boat-only figure up around the \$40,000 figure. ☺

## SPECIFICATIONS

LOA:	7.70m
LWL:	7.00m
Beam overall:	2.45m
Beam waterline:	2.11m
Displacement:	1250kg
Ballast:	460kg
Weight on trailer:	1870kg
Draft:	0.44m-1.70m
Height on trailer:	2.80m
Mainsail:	17.8sq m
Jib:	11.5sq m
Spinnaker:	42.0sq m
Price:	

Sailaway boat: \$35,490

Kits from: \$16,800

Dual axle trailer with vacuum brakes  
(all States except NSW) \$4450

Options include: Antifouling and epoxy undercoats, quarter rails, outboard bracket, spinnaker kit incl winches, genoa incl tracks, leads and winches, full interior electrics, gas cooker including bottle, chemical Porta Potti, marine flush toilet.

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