

West Coast Gem



It wasn't hard drawing a kitset boat for a DIY builder who shared the same theory on good design. But Jim Pauling did find it tough leaving Haast after a heavenly fishing adventure on the unique DIYNO 821 *Sapphire*.

Jim Pauling's 'ultimate powerboat' remained a rudimentary sketch on an increasingly dog-eared leaf of notebook paper for 15 years. The DIYNO Kitset Boats founder figured the unusual forward raking windscreen and jet drive he had incorporated into the eight-metre design would have limited appeal, so hadn't bothered "putting it out there".

Still, Pauling remained convinced his function-before-form dream had merit over more conventional craft with aft-sloping windscreens and some form of prop or another.

The trawler-style forward-raking windscreen would open up more space in the wheelhouse, he reasoned, while shielding the driver from glare by day and dash reflection by night. Spray and driving rain would also dissipate more readily than on a forward-sloping screen.

Pauling's liking of jet drives is a by-product of having "so much fun" exploring rivers and estuaries around the North Island in a 4m jetboat over the last five years.

The manoeuvrability and potential speed of jet units make them an attractive proposition. The trick for Pauling would be to draw a hull shape capable of offshore work, not that he had given that much thought.

That was until a Dunedin boatie called the designer/builder saying he had just read a review of DIYNO's 5m kitset in *Boating*. Intrigued, he then got on-line to discover

DIYNO's eight-metre flagship *Reel Screamer*, the type of craft capable of handling the conditions he regularly encountered boating on the West Coast of the South Island after crossing the notorious Haast bar.

Before Pauling knew it, he had picked the potential client up at Auckland airport and was driving to Huia on the mouth of Manukau to show off the 801.

"We soon got involved in a discussion about his requirements and he said, 'this is the boat for me, but I want forward raking screens and a jet unit with a Yanmar engine'," Pauling said. "We were on the same wavelength!"

With the preliminary styling already mapped out, Pauling now had the opportunity to optimise the design for jet propulsion, redrawing the hull from scratch to optimise the motor and drive combination the new client wanted.

"I dug out the sketch from 15 years earlier and put it into the computer. Thereafter followed three months of intensive design work until the cut files were generated to produce the kit. The client suddenly realised what he was in for when a truck-load of pre-cut aluminium, and a few sheets of custom wood turned up on his doorstep."

The owner wasted no time, building

the boat in 12 months. He decided to use a Scott Water Jet unit, the first of their 9.5-inch, two-stage units for sea boats incorporating a patented trim nozzle and two impellers which eliminate the issue of cavitation margins.

In initial sea trials with five people on board, *Sapphire* achieved 39 knots and prompted a group of experienced commercial jet boaters to re-examine their thoughts on sea-going jet boats. It also saw the new owner on the phone to Pauling.

"He said he had worked his entire life for this boat and assured me that he wasn't disappointed."

Fortunately, Pauling was able to test *Sapphire* himself, taking up an offer to do some fishing with the owner off Haast. He had originally planned to make the delivery trip from Dunedin around the bottom of the South Island and up the West Coast to Haast, but time and weather conspired against them and the boat was delivered by road.

Pauling picks up the story as he was greeted by the imposing sight of *Sapphire* parked in the driveway of the owner's Haast holiday home.

Haast happiness

"I couldn't wait to have a good look over the boat and was impressed with the

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Sapphire turning tightly inside the bar in the estuary of the Haast River.

quality of the build. The owner's personal touches really made it something special and it oozed purposeful and practical application. The interior was well laid out for day boating, but also set up for the owner and his wife to do the occasional longer Christmas cruise.

The wheelhouse had an excellent feel. The forward raking screens did their job superbly. No glare and excellent visibility. I loved the feel of that wheelhouse and couldn't wait till the morning."

A breathless break in the weather

"The weather the next morning was, in a word, superb. We launched the boat in the harbour and did some runs up and down the estuary. The trim nozzle gave noticeable trim control, but the boat ran best with the trim nozzle centred.

The owner dropped me off on the spit just inside the bar where I could get some pictures of the boat, both crossing the bar and running in the sheltered water of the

harbour. After months of foul weather and inaccessible bar crossings, the bar was as calm as one crew member, Dave, had ever seen it, and he had fished this coast commercially for 40 years. I was a little disappointed since I was really looking forward to putting the boat through a stern test, but at least we got to go fishing.

After taking some pictures and video, we headed out. Earlier at the ramp we met a commercial fisherman who kindly offered us some bait – two small fish. I looked at these and thought the fishing wouldn't take long; I would feed these to the fish in about 30 minutes in Auckland and catch nothing in return. Still, it didn't matter. We were here to check out the boat.

We crossed the bar with consummate ease and headed out to a pinnacle marked on the GPS. Once there, we dropped a grapnel over the transom onto the pinnacle we could see rising up towards us from the deep ocean as the water was so clear. The owner donned his wetsuit and scuba gear and worked his way down

the anchor warp. Dave decided to throw in a line while we waited for the owner to re-surface. I operated the video camera capturing the beauty of the environment around us. Snow-capped mountains, white sandy beaches and crystal-clear water. As we started to fish, mollymawks and albatrosses glided in and paddled nearby.

Dave's line had hardly hit the bottom when the rod bent over. He wound it in to reveal two good-sized (or so I thought) trumpeter. I couldn't believe it. Surely it couldn't be that easy. I put the camera down, baited up a line and dropped it to the bottom. Within seconds I was hooked up. To the surface came a trumpeter and a blue cod. Maybe we did have enough bait after all? The same process provided the same result. Two fish each time. Blue cod, trumpeter, red cod, even a fish they called 'bastard cod.' We had a bin-full when the owner resurfaced about 15 minutes later. As he swam to the back of the boat, he handed me a catch bag full of crayfish. At this point you start to re-evaluate your own lifestyle. Why aren't I here more often. Is this what life is meant to be?

'You're not in Auckland now, Jim!'

"When we got to the ramp later that afternoon, I jumped off the boat ready to back the trailer in, but realised I didn't have the keys. I called out to the owner who replied that they were probably still in the truck. Sure enough, keys in the



Owner's comments

For some time I had been looking for a hull to operate out of river bars of South Westland. The bars in this area of are notorious for claiming boats, so I needed something purpose-built and it had to be jet. None of the local designs were suitable.

I had met a guy who had built a seven-metre Pelin hull with a 115hp diesel Yanmar driving a Hamilton unit and the boat performed very well. So I went ahead and bought the working plans. I got in touch with a boat builder and discussed plans with him. He was quick to point out that the plans were designed for wooden construction and not really suitable for aluminium.

That put me on the back foot a bit. It was about then that I picked up a *Boating NZ* magazine and saw Jim's concept of building a hull. I got in touch with him and found myself in Auckland checking out his 801 hull. This hull was outboard powered, but the beam of the boat and the looks of it had me interested. I explained to Jim what I required and left it with him.

It wasn't too long and the 821 jet hull was on its way to my workshop.

The aluminium was CNC-cut, as was the jig. I found building the hull was straight forward with help from Jim. I have done quite a bit of engineering, but this was my

first time with aluminium. I assembled all the panels (tacked) and then got a pro in to do the serious welding.

I went for a 370hp Yanmar and Konrad Scott's new 9.5in unit. This was the first of Scott Water Jet's 9.5in units for big boats and he trialed some different impeller configurations. He couldn't get over the torque the Yanmar had and we ended up with 22in pitch impellers. When the boat was light it took it out to 39 knots.

A year later it was completed with help. I am over the moon by the way it performs, especially on the bars and in shallow water; we can pretty well work the tide any time.

In the heavy going it is soft riding and I haven't felt threatened yet; we have been in one or two blows, as can happen in South Westland. As I said to Jim, the boat is very stable and loves a beam sea.

The thing with Jim's concept is that you can add what you want to it. His concept of supplying the hull and decks and allowing the owner to fit the boat out to his requirements suited me perfectly and meant I got exactly what I was looking for. Jim's back-up during the build was also excellent. I would recommend his designs and build to anybody who has DIY skills. If not, it would be an easy and economic build for the pros.



The owner found the boat straight forward to build, although he did enlist professional help when required.

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“You start to re-evaluate your own lifestyle. Is this what it’s meant to be like?”



ignition, window down, ready to go. I looked back to the owner in disbelief. He just called back to me, ‘You’re not in Auckland now, Jim!’ Clearly not!

Back at the house we cleaned the fish, boiled the crays and settled in for a night dining and socialising with the locals. Fresh blue cod, trumpeter and cray, and good company. This is indeed as good as it gets!

We headed out again the next day. The conditions remained the same, but on board were another couple who also dived. We headed out to the same spot

where the new crew members had a dive on the pinnacle and gathered some crays before we sped 12 miles offshore to look for hapuka.

It wasn’t long before Dave had us on the fish again and we were setting the droppers. We left them for about five minutes before retrieving them. While we waited I fished with the owner’s new toy, a rod and electric reel. Now this kind of seems like cheating to me, but when you are fishing in 75 metres of water and you get a big trumpeter on the line, you are

pretty glad to have electricity working on your behalf. So winching in the trumpeter, we went back and retrieved the dropper.

For this purpose the boat is fitted with a hydraulic whizz wheel and a davit. Waiting expectantly as the whizz wheel winds in the line, it wasn’t long before we were pulling in the first hapuka. Add to that the occasional grey shark and big trumpeter on the line, and things were pretty exciting. More drops, more fish.

The huge filleting table over the engine certainly comes into its own when you’re

catching fish this big. The space between the top of the table and the top of the engine box provides room for fish boxes. It keeps them out of the way, but exactly where you need them. The deck wash hose cleans everything down and washes the leftovers out through the transom scuppers. This was just too easy.

After catching enough hapuka, we headed in closer to shore to another dive spot. More crays and more blue cod. The day was running short, so we headed back in to cross the bar before the tide and sun was too low.

Once the trailer was backed in and the boat driven on all the way to the hitch, the odyssey was over with just the last supper to savour before the trip back to Auckland the following day – with a chilly bin full of blue cod, trumpeter, hapuka and crayfish.

It is hard to know what was best: the scenery, the fishing, the company, or the satisfaction of seeing the boat come to fruition, built well and utilised as it should be. Regardless, I owe a very special thanks to the owner. I really enjoyed the project and the weekend capped the whole deal off perfectly.” ■

Quarter
Page

Quarter
Page