

CAT FACTORY



powers on

A new fuel efficient power cat latest exciting project for The Cat Factory

"We love the water and we love messing about on boats." Western Australian based company The Cat Factory epitomise the concept of no nonsense, get on with it boat building, based on a love of what they do. Their consistent adherence to customer service and delivering 'the goods' is leading them ever onward in the competitive arena of quality catamaran construction.

BY JO DJUBAL

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This last year has seen The Cat Factory busy as always, launching their demonstration sailing cat, a Fusion 40, *Sonra* in October 2010. "We've been busy on a number of different projects over the last year," said Lloyd. "We particularly enjoyed refurbishing a Crowther 42 that we built in 2004. Still with the same owner, this much loved cat got a modern makeover inside and out, and the owner is delighted that *Forte* now looks and performs as well as any new sailing cat of its size."

Their latest project is one they embarked upon with "much excitement and anticipation" in June this year. "It was a move away from sailing cats to a building a custom designed power cat," Lloyd said. "Some of the sailing fraternity may consider this a move to the 'dark side' but there are lots of innovative features about this powercat that may convince even the diehards that powercats aren't all bad!"

And so how did this latest project arrive at The Cat Factory's shedstep?

"The cat was designed by Noah Thompson of Noah Thompson Designs in New Zealand and was commissioned by a Perth local with a passion for fishing," said Lloyd. "Noah approached ATL Composites, whom he has a long association with, to recommend a local Perth builder for his client – ATL recommended The Cat Factory and the rest unfolded from there."

As for the initial design brief and those innovative features bringing light to the 'dark side, Noah Thompson himself explains.

"I was approached by the customer who currently owns a large production sportfisher. His design brief called for a more fuel efficient vessel of the same size and weight of his current monohull. After a lengthy design study of hull shapes with POD drive engine packages we opted to

use a custom design planing hull and the Volvo IPS-400 Inboard Performance System.

Once we established that the hull design was proving to be more economical to run than his current vessel, we started to look at construction methods using lightweight materials to reduce the running weight. We then finalised the design to use lightweight foam cored pre-laminated panels from ATL composites. The design was then transformed into a large kitset, and shipped from Queensland to the Cat Factory in Western Australia."

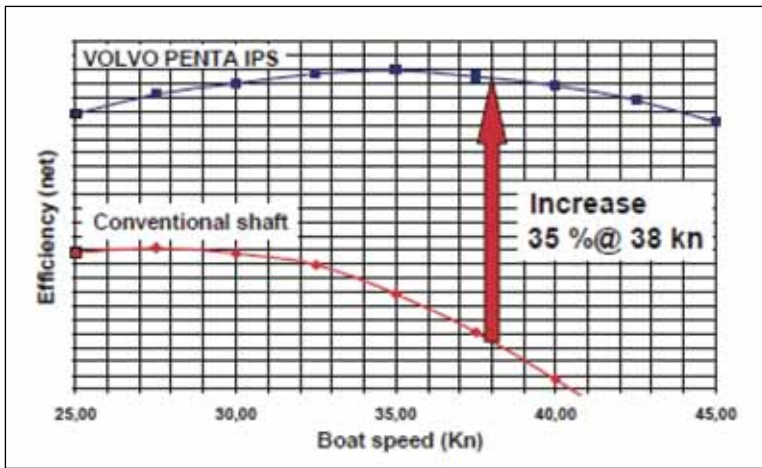
As with all projects, evolution of initial concepts often occurs as discussions take place and logistics are considered. Noah said the majority of discussions between all parties revolved around the selection of the engines.

"A number of different engine options were considered, with the final decision going to the Volvo IPS System as it ticked all the required boxes."

Mark Skrzypek from Sea Power Australia explains the Volvo 400 Inboard Propulsion System in more detail ...

"At around 30kts, the conventional propeller shaft system starts to lose efficiency with the thrust angled downward and the propellers working in water disturbed by the propeller bracket and shaft. Low efficiency means that more installed power is needed, which, in turn, results in increased fuel consumption, reduced cruising range and more exhaust emissions.

The IPS propellers provide for increased blade area, half the load on each propeller, and smaller propeller diameter with minimised tip losses and cavitation. In addition, the propeller system prevents rotational losses and does not create any side forces. The thrust the propellers produce is horizontal with all the force driving the boat forward. The propellers are at the front of the propulsion unit, working in



talking to them about how we can make this happen for them as well," they said.

The first lucky client watching it

efficiency. I looked at production multihulls but found none of them fit my layout and look criteria.

My design priorities were:

- 15m (had to fit into existing pen as they are hard to come by)
- Fuel efficiency
- Ease of handling – hence the pod drives
- Fishability – ie traditional monohull cockpit layout
- Layout and standard of finish to a class of production boats.

After thorough researching of boat builders nationally and internationally John was keen to have the boat built locally. "Provided I was comfortable with the capabilities and quality of the builder," he added. "The reason for leaning towards a local builder was the ability to have more interaction and input into the process as the boat was being built."

Initial meetings and discussions are always an important precursor to the 'Go Ahead' phase. How did this unfold with The Cat Factory?

"I already had a preliminary layout of the design and budget in mind. I did as much research as I could online about the experience and history of the Cat Factory.

undisturbed water with a minimum of pressure pulses affecting the hull."

As always, one of the biggest questions revolving around boat builds is time frame – everyone wants to be out on the water sooner rather than later! "We anticipate that this project will require around 10,000 hours to complete," said Lloyd. "With our team that means around 14 months."

While Cat Factory duo, Lloyd Powell and Kate Tarrant, admit they are still "very much sailors ourselves", they recognise the predominance of 'power boaties' in Perth and the need to cater to them. "We are confident that this powercat will be of great interest to those boaties who are looking to cut down on their fuel bills without sacrificing comfort or performance. We look forward to showing them the finished boat and

'happen' is the avid sportfisher who commissioned the boat.

Having owned numerous trailerable boats up to 23ft over the past two decades, and a production 40ft power monohull for the past four years, John was ready to upgrade ...

"I have always been a power boat person – haven't had the patience for sail and given one of my passions is fishing, sail doesn't lend itself to this," he said.

"I have been very happy with the layout and handling of the 40ft monohull. However, the monohull consumes 100 litres+ per hour at cruising speeds. Given the distances on the WA coast this can add significantly to costs and limits fuel range. I have extensively researched custom mono and multihull designs. The three major attractions to the multihull are sea keeping, volume and fuel



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My key objectives for the initial meeting were:

- Gain an understanding of the technical capabilities
- Ask for a preliminary review of the design
- Obtain some references from past owners
- Request a preliminary estimate to confirm budget/timing

Initial reactions were very important for me as this project is a big investment both in terms of dollars and time. It was important that I felt comfortable with not only the technical capabilities of the builder but could I actually work with the person and entrust them with such an important project for me.

The Cat Factory met my key objectives by openly providing references (which were all very supportive), obviously took the cost estimate seriously and put in a lot of work and detail, then spent the time taking me through it, spent some

time trying to understand what I was looking for in terms of functionality and finish.

Oh ... and they seemed like switched on, nice people!

Pre-build discussions I had with The Cat Factory saw Noah Thompson's design basically untouched but discussion saw input and views offered to the build approach which meant Lloyd got involved with the designer at an early stage."

So how much interaction with the actual build process do you envision when embarking on such a project?

"It's a balance – enough to stay involved but not so much as to distract the builder and make change for change's sake," John said. "I'll probably get a bit more involved with the fitout, selection of major componentry etc." He listed 'build quality, budget and timing' as his basic expectations from the builders. "Given we worked on a reasonably detailed cost estimate upfront I'm comfortable with build time projections."

And so where does this lucky 'power boatie' plan to be sportsfishing and cruising once his new cat, tentatively named *Affinity II* splashes down in WA waters?

"With any luck ... spending a reasonable amount of time cruising to Abrolhos, Dunsborough area, Steep Point, Exmouth, Monte Bello's and eventually spending some time cruising the Kimberley coast

And in two years time?

"North of the 26th parallel!"

Sounds like the perfect plan ... and this new powercat sounds like the perfect example of a great boat built upon the foundations of a fine 'Affinity' between owner, designer and builder.

For more information on this project or its components please go to:

- www.catfactory.com.au
- www.noahthompsondesign.com
- www.seapower.com.au
- www.atlcomposites.com

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