



STREET

BOASTING the considerable design talents of Beale, Davidson, Elliott, Farr, Farrier, Holland, Mummery, Ross and Young, along with a tight-knit sailing community, New Zealand has long been a hotbed of development for performance yachting. The environment is akin to a vast think-tank, with none of them lacking that forthright "I can do it better" Kiwi confidence, so collectively they've pushed each other, as well as their nation's yachting ranks, to the fore.

One of the most prolific in this prestigious bunch is Greg Elliott, whose 7 and 7.8m trailables are the subjects of this report. His designs stretch from tiny TSs to ocean racers such as the 55ft Rager, and without exception they're exciting to sail, to look at, and to own.

Elliott is not one to tinker with handicap rules, his single goal being the pursuit of speed.

His hulls share a common design theme of plumb bow, sharp entry, wide beam, powerful turn of bilge, flat run aft, balanced buoyancy distribution and deep bulb keel, manifesting into giant-killing performance on the race track. And atop these "overgrown dinghies" are some of the most eye-watering cabin profiles imaginable, sweeping sleekly forth from the deck like the bonnet of a Ferrari. Blended with racing-inspired cockpits, shallow and open at the transom, the impression is slick, ultra-modern.

Not that Elliott has a monopoly in this department. The designs of Jim Young and Murray Ross in particular employ

similar concepts and a battle royale has developed in the mid-sized yachting classes. As an indication of the rivalry, Ross has called his latest boat Pretty Boy Floyd ... the gangster who shot Elliot Ness!

In the trailer sailer field, all three offer slick 7.8m linehonours contenders, along with Beale and Davidson. The later designs of Young and Elliott are currently slugging it out for supremacy, with a hair's breadth between them, but any can

Fast, futuristic, formidable — that's the design road Kiwi Greg Elliott has always followed and it's more evident than ever in his new-generation TSs.

Mark Rothfield reports

win on their day. Add the Australian-designed Spider 28 and a stretched MASRM, and you get a veritable inferno of competition here.

Elliott's TS range progresses in narrow increments — 5.9, 7, 7.4 and 7.8 — so there's something for every budget. However due to some politicking in New Zealand he's apparently only putting his name to the 7 and 7.8. The Elliott 7 was created primarily for the lucrative Japanese market, debuting at the Tokyo Boat Show. Cleanest and sleekest of all his designs, it immediately caught the eye of the Nippon sailors and five were bought off the floor.

They weren't the only ones to admire it — the order was matched in New Zealand and news soon spread across the

Tasman, four being commissioned by NSW sailors. Now, Modern Concept Yachts in Sydney are fully manufacturing the E7, along with the 7.8.

Driving force behind the boat locally is Kerli Corlette, owner of The Sailing Scene at Mona Vale, who bought one of the initial batch to sail in TS events and twilight races on Pittwater; along with some 140 boats which turn up regularly! He's also the sole agent.

Kerli's crew comprises his wife and two young children so he has fitted the boat to be as simple, functional and bullet-proof as possible. Rigging was done by TS "guru" Steve Kiely, based on a spun-tapered Goldspar mast supported by a set of wide, aft-swept Peelgrane spreaders. It's fractional, with sidestays and lowers; no backstay or runners.

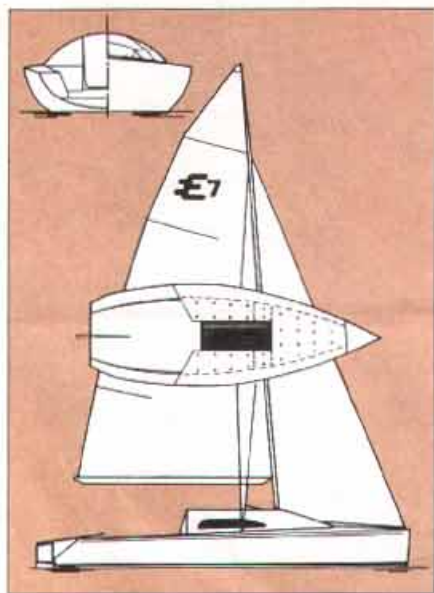
Tension comes simply from cranking the forestay down with the trailer winch, bend being controlled by the lowers.

The deck-stepped mast base incorporates a fixed pin for ease of raising, and also houses the exit blocks for the hal-yards and spinnaker topping lift. These run back along the coachhouse to a pair of small Barient winches, which are also the primaries for headsail and spinnaker sheeting.

Fittings and sails are left to the owner's discretion, the class' one-design aspect only covering the hull, mast and foils. Kerli has opted for Ronstan gear in his fitout, including the stylish new cam cleats and low-profile, recirculating-ball mainsheet traveller. His previous catamaran sailing experience is borne out in his



Thanks to the light, easily-driven hull form and moderate sail area, the E7's deck layout and control systems could be kept simple yet functional ... former dinghy sailors would feel right at home.



choice of mainsheet system, very Hobie 16, and sails, from former Tornado champion Chris Cairns.

Construction is Termanto foam sandwich with biaxial glass, a mid-tech laminate that's light (all-up displacement is 600kg) yet sufficiently strong to be low-maintenance. The keel, which has 250kg of lead in a bulb, drops to a depth of 1.6m via a self-contained pulley system, the control line running through a clutch jammer and finally on to the hard-working halyard/primary winch. Making light work of the lifting process, it's an excellent piece of engineering. Ditto the dagger rudder which plunges into a hand-crafted stainless steel case.

The only drawback of the vertical keel case is that it punctuates the cabin, blocking the vision of people sitting down below; still, there's adequate headroom and an attractive headliner finish to make it a comfortable place to relax after a race. Bunk cushions run from the forepeak to beneath the cockpit, accommodating four adults. There's good-sized storage bins in the bunks, plus a 2.5m tunnel extending below the cockpit, swallowing longer items, extra sails, and a decent-sized icebox. A portable stove and toilet could be added and a makeshift table erected around the centrecase or in the cockpit, but with its low freeboard hull and supersleek cabin this boat is an overnighter at best and there seems little point in making it anything else.

Racing's the E7's game, and after

motoring away from the ramp under 4hp outboard it wasted no time in strutting its stuff. With a light breeze off our aft quarter, Kerli called for the chute and had it drawing smartly, the mark of a well-sorted system. The boat accelerated like Kiwi in the Melbourne Cup, and in a silky smooth transition to planing lifted its bow and left the stern wave behind. Aboard the GPS-equipped cameraboat, colleague David Lockwood clocked us at 10.3 knots, equal to, if not eclipsing, the wind speed.

Helm feel was decidedly heavy, not only under spinnaker but also upwind as I was to find, and I'm damned if I know why. The blade may be on the largish side but it was well balanced and certainly maintained positive control over the hull, enabling us to bear away in the gusts and maintain a level planing attitude. Also, tacking and gybing were vice-free. Probably you'd learn to live with the heaviness.

We were joined by Modern Concept's Elliott 7.8, being tested by contributor James Hill (see panel hereabouts), and the two red thoroughbreds made an impressive sight sliding downhill in unison. I expected the 7.8 to draw away, given its taller, twin-spreader rig, fully-battened main, asymmetric kite, and weight-saving carbon fibre fittings. Yet the 7 kept nipping away at its quarter wave, and it would frustrate the hell out of a crew in a race situation, not to mention an owner who'd paid twice the price. Rounding Barrenjoey and hardening up

ELLIOTT 7

LOA:.....	7.00m
LWL:.....	6.20m
Beam:.....	2.45m
Draft:.....	1.60m
Displacement:.....	600kg
Ballast:.....	250kg
Sail area:	
Main.....	18.5sq m
Jib.....	12.1sq m
Spinnaker.....	52.0sq m
Price:.....	\$25,950
Kitset.....	\$17,500
Builder:.....	Modern Concept Yachts Ph (02) 982-5936
Dealer:.....	The Sailing Scene Ph (02) 979-6546, Fax 979-6548.

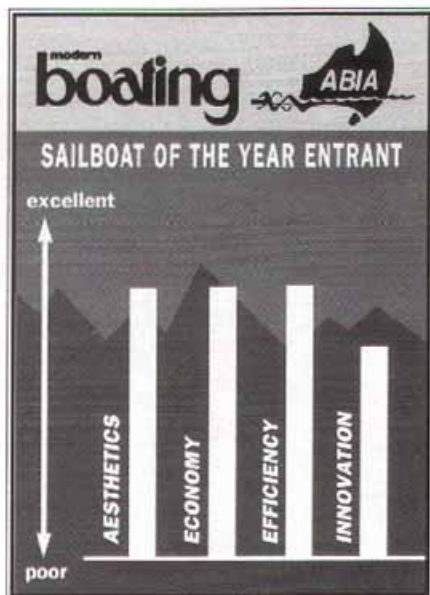
for a beat to sea, the two were still neck and neck. The bows of both boats leapt clear over each oncoming swell, before easing down into the trough to tackle the next one. Gradually but surely, the 7.8 began to break the shackles. It was a case of longer hull, more sailpower, deeper keel and two extra "males on the rail", and they climbed to windward of us. Still, the speed difference wasn't so apparent, the GPS reading around six knots for each, and the 7 was by no means disgraced.

We could've continued on for New Zealand, such was the comfort of the ride, but we'd eaten all the sandwiches and so reluctantly headed for home. Another spinnaker duel ensued, one drawing away with a gust, then the other catching and passing it. Ultimately the 7.8 "won" by about 100m. In a three hour race, says Kerli, the difference is usually around two minutes.

Perhaps it's wrong to draw comparisons between the two Elliotts because they're different kettle of fish. The 7.8 offers more in the way of accommodation and mostly will lock horns with Young 7.8s and JOG-ers. The 7, on the other hand, is a day racer that will combat others of its ilk, as well as Spider 22s and the like. Judging from Kerli's race results there's little in it. He won the twilight race on

the day of our test sail, lost the next week.

As far as cost is concerned, you can sail away for \$25,950, including a multi-roller Mackay trailer and two racing sails. That seems extraordinarily inexpensive but Kerli's reasoning is simple: "My philosophy is that I want to go sailing against a lot of the same type of boat". At that price, I'd take two ...



ELLIOTT 7.8

THE Young Rocket 7.8 has reigned in the TS linehonours stakes virtually since it was released in 1982, thanks largely to a series of upgradings by enthusiastic Aussie owners. Now, however, the Rocket owners are having to hit their after-burners when they take on the Elliott 7.8.

This newcomer obviously means business, employing space-age construction and packing more working sail area and a bigger, more powerful hull form that goes like a missile in downwind conditions.

Built by Modern Concept Yachts of Dee Why, Sydney, the Elliott 7.8 weighs in at 900kg in its standard cruiser/racing trim, and only 850kg in its super-sports model. Of this weight, some 400kg is taken up in the deep (2.1m) dagger keel with its slim, torpedo bulb. The super light hull weight is achieved by use of carbon fibre reinforcing in the hull and components like spreaders and rudder box and blade.

The rig is fairly typical of performance TSs, featuring a big fully-battened main-

sail on a fractional rigged spar with small blade jib and twin swept-back spreaders. The choice of weapons for downwind sailing include either masthead maxi spinnaker of 57sq m, or a "chicken chute" for strong winds of 45sq m. Builder Darren Schofield is also experimenting with skiff-style asymmetric spinnakers which utilise a retractable bow spinnaker pole.

While accommodation is not a high priority with boats of this pedigree, the Elliott 7.8 sets out to be more comfortable than most with an interior that sports up to five berths, a proper galley and enclosed toilet. Priced at around \$52,000 in full trim and mounted on a road trailer, the Elliott represents good value for the racing set. Trail weight, by the way, is just under 1300kg, putting the boat within the range of many of the larger family sedans and wagons.

For more information, phone Modern Concept Yachts on (02) 982 5936, and watch for a full report in the annual Trailer Sailer magazine, out soon. — James Hill



NEED FOR SPEED