BOATING NEW ZEALAND

Elliotts Pilothouse Evolution

Story by Mike Cahill, photographs by Mike Hunter

They come from the same hull and deck moulds, the same designer and the same builder but Ubique and Elysium are sisters rather than twins, entering the water six months apart and reflecting their owners' different interpretations with different uses in mind. Boating looked at both and sailed them together for some sibling rivalry.

The two Greg Elliott-designed, 14m pilothouse yachts are part of Elliott's Tourer series and were built at Custom Yachts in Albany

under the project management of David Lewis from M&D Marine. Elysium was launched before Christmas 2001; Unique (pronounced you-bee-quay) entered the water in May.
Designer Greg Elliott says the boats are a continuing evolution of his pilothouse cruising concept. He has designed 15 pilothouse yachts, each one incorporating refinements on the previous yacht. Many of these refinements have their genesis in Elliott's racing designs as he works to make the cruising designs more efficient, faster under power or sail, and easier to handle.

"For these boats the significant difference is the styling change," he says. "The boats look lower. We have changed from flat to curved windscreens and they look much better. We are down ten to twenty millimetres on height and that helps the overall profile."
These boats carry more shape and volume further aft in the hulls to allow for the weight and volume of the extra equipment that is becoming more standard as specifications rise. For better efficiency they have the latest design profiles for foils. Overall Elliott describes them as "better all around - better looking and better performing".
Ian and Betty Studd, Ubique's owners, want their boat purely for cruising, around the South Pacific, where they have already

cruised extensively, and the east coast of Australia. They have owned previous yachts but this is their first pilothouse style. They like having everything on one level, compared to their previous, traditional-style Lotus 1280.

"You sort of disappear into that sort of boat," says Studd. "Here the pilothouse is like a solid dodger, with great visibility, and everybody is in touch with what's happening. We wanted a big volume boat that the two of us could handle easily and a yacht that sailed well."

Ubique has a shallower draft keel and therefore more displacement than Elysium as Elliott wanted to maintain the same righting moment with the same rig. Studd anticipates passage making with three or four crew, and cruising either on their own or with other couples.

From the outside, there are only a couple of features distinguishing the two boats. Ubique has a slightly more pronounced bow rake, barely discernible, and a longer pilothouse, with bigger windows. The coachroof overhangs the cockpit to provide more shelter but as the cockpit sole comes up a step at this point, the overhang can collect the heads of taller people. She carries a windmill battery charger mounted on the port transom.

Elysium's owners, Humphrey and Sarah Sherratt also plan extensive cruising but Humphrey Sherratt has racing ambitions, particularly short handed, and intends racing to Fiji next year. His goals are reflected in more attention to performance factors, like Elysium's deeper keel, B&G instrumentation and lighter fit out below.

The interior of the Greek-named Elysium is painted finish in, appropriately, an off-white named Athens Grey. The Sherratt's previous boat was a Farr 1220 they have enjoyed the more spectacular sailing performance of the new boat, particularly fast two-sail reach to Great Barrier Island over Christmas.

They have three young children and have dedicated Elysium's forward cabin to them, with four bunks. Ubique has the master cabin in the bow with en-suite access to the head. Otherwise the interior layout for both boats is similar. They each have double quarter cabins that access from the aft end of the pilothouse. The starboard quarter cabin on Ubique has an additional head.

Forward to starboard is the saloon table with settee seating on the port side which can be a single berth. Ubique has a removable shelf in the middle of the settee, to take the television during America's Cup racing.

The navigation station is forward to port, at the pilothouse level. The floor level then steps down with the galley to starboard, the

head to port, and the forward cabin. The galleys are well appointed and maintain excellent visual and physical relationships with the saloon and cockpit. For tropical cruising the boats have a vegetable chiller, although Studd thinks it may see service as a beer cooler.

Of the two interiors, my preference was the American oak timber-veneer finish on Ubique. Matched with traditional teak and holly floors, she felt more inviting than the more austere modern lacquer finish with Euro-beech timber trim on Elysium. The traditional panelling style adds some additional weight and cost.

Builder Darren Schofield at Custom Yachts originally estimated the extra cost of the panelling would be balanced by the work required for the mirror paint finish but this wasn't the case. The paint finish on Elysium is a credit to the Custom Yachts team - the result of thousands of hours of sanding and filling, sanding and filling...

Under the pilothouse sole, the Volvo MD22 sail drive is installed backwards, with the sail drive shaft forward, to keep the weight close to the centre of balance. A half shaft runs off the aft end of the motor to drive the alternator, refrigeration compressor and water maker. Access for service is excellent.

The boats have a walkthrough to the stern in the aft cockpit, splitting the helm seats between the twin helms. On Ubique, the inboard end of these seats has a vertical support, ideal for bracing your leeward foot when steering at heel on-the-wind.

The deck rigging and layout is the same for both boats. Everything has been kept simple with all controls led to the aft of the cockpit. The twin wheels are on pedestals which have the electric winches on top. All controls lead through jammers to these manual/electric winches; the electric controls are recessed in the cockpit sole for foot operation.

The headsail has manual winches further forward on the coamings, however the sheets can be led to the powered winches if required. The top of this pedestal is open, providing a locker for the rope tails.

Sailing conditions were excellent for our trial: fine and 18-24kts of southwesterly breeze. We had three onboard Ubique and five on Elysium.

Hoisting the main was a one-man operation with the Leisurefurl and we ran down harbour bareheaded at an easy 8kts. Part of Elliott's philosophy is to maximise sail area and performance for lighter wind strengths.

"If you start with an easily driven boat, you don't need a lot of power to get them up to hull speed. The extra power or sail area is

for lighter winds and not having to use the motor," he says. "If it sails well in light air you have a boat that uses less fuel. That's very important in a cruising boat, because there are two things that are hard to come by - fuel and water. If a boat performs well in the light you can keep up your daily averages. In New Zealand we're so used to having a lot of wind, but as soon as you go to these tropical latitudes there's a lot of no wind."

With the headsail unfurled, our broad-reaching speed was around 9.5kts with 20kts of breeze. We tried to slow Ubique so we could get Elysium close alongside for the photographs. No matter how badly we under or over trimmed the sails, the two boats wanted to stay at maximum hull-speed in the fresh conditions. The headsail track cars can be adjusted from the cockpit to alter the sheeting angle.

In the Rangitoto Channel we wanted to try the boats on the wind. To compare different sail combinations, we reefed to the first spreader while Elysium just took a flattening reef to the first batten. Elliott was right. We had more than enough power and a comfortable angle of heel, achieving 8kts. The extra sail area overpowered Elysium, back-winding the mainsail and she sailed slower. Later, they matched our deeper reef and immediately improved performance. Even when we cracked the sheets to a tight reach, our smaller sail area didn't reflect a slower comparative speed.

Boat for boat, Elliott expects Elysium to be faster because of the lower weight and higher aspect, deeper keel. "You will get a slightly higher daily average miles with a lighter boat with the same stiffness," he says. This sail demonstrated how sensitive the boats could be to overpowering, and how little sail area is needed to achieve hull speed. Easily operated reefing systems make such adjustments simple. The helm on Ubique remained consistently light and sensitive. The helm position was excellent, with great visibility. The blade headsail tacked effortlessly, and the helmsman can easily sail the boat solo.

With the wind increasing to around 24kts, we took a couple of turns on the headsail furler before slogging up the harbour back to Westhaven. We enjoyed a punchy sail into the outgoing tide. The boat stayed dry and comfortable with a moderate angle of heel and little weather helm. Furling the sails in the lee of the wharves, we completely unfurled them first, before furling them in. This is sail-maker Rick Royden's recommendation for looking after the sails. Because we had furled under load while sailing, he believes it is better for the sails and furling gear to relieve that tension when

finishing for the day.
This is the third pilothouse style cruiser I have sea-trialled in the last year. The concept has great appeal - the one level approach maintaining openness, visibility and communication unachievable in a traditional style. It is a neat style for cruising, locally or offshore. On these boats the cabin entrance is flanked by a couple of swinging barn doors, that is, a door that splits horizontally, to provide cockpit-height integrity for inclement conditions.
For yachts less than 14m, it is difficult to get the aesthetics right, and to balance pilothouse headroom with cockpit visibility. In this design Greg Elliott has done a nice job as it was certainly the best I've sailed for vision and accessibility to sail controls. There is a small 150mm step down to the pilothouse cabin sole at the forward end of the cockpit. Headroom at this point is compromised by the overhanging coach roof extension. This wasn't a problem for me, but our photographer Mike Hunter, who is less vertically challenged, discovered how solidly the boat was built.

Builder profile
Husband and wife team Darren and Nicky Schofield's first project was to build an Elliott 7.8 in their backyard in Australia, 15 years ago. They raced it successfully, sold it and soon established Custom Yachts, building 28 to 35ft racing yachts destined for the local market and Japan.
Darren Schofield's experience included time at Marten Marine, where he worked on KZ 3, KZ5 and KZ7. He and Irish-born Nicky raced extensively in Australia. Carbon fibre components and keels for Australian America's Cup campaigns were a major part of their work.
They moved back to New Zealand, Darren's home country in 1996, still concentrating on composite construction but in bigger yachts, of 40 to 70ft. They specialise in latest technology composite work, which suits one of their biggest clients, designer Greg Elliott.
Custom Yachts' Elliott designs include the Elliott 50, Kotick; the 14m Maverick, previously Elliott Marine; the Elliott 55 Bushido and the Benny 53, Go.
The company employs 34 staff and has exported 15 of the 18 boats built. Their new, purpose-built premises at Albany can fit four to five boats under construction at one time.

Specifications

loa	14.36m
lwl	13.4m
beam	4.6m
draft	2.3m
displacement	10,000kg
engine	Volvo MD22, 50hp
mainsail area	60.5m2
headsails area	52.6m2
designer	Greg Elliott
builder	Custom Yachts

Suppliers to Ubique include - Custom Yachts: builder, painting, furniture/cabinet work; Greg Elliott: design; MD Marine, David Lewis: project management; Lusty and Blundell: Raytheon GPS, Raychart 520, radar; log, Raytheon ST60 wind instruments, Sealand holding tank, Muir Atlantic VRC 2200 windlass, Raytheon autopilot, Sealand vacuum flush toilet; Crystal Electronics: Icom VHF, Icom SSB, Shakespeare antenna; BEP Marine: switchboard; 121 Marine Centre: Force 10 3-burner stove with oven; Coastmarine Stainless: S/S fuel and water tanks; Ovlov: Volvo MD22 engine, PTO system; Kiwi Yachting: mast, standing rigging, Lewmar traveller, blocks and hatches; KZ Marine: mainsail Leisurefurl; Nordic Marketing: furlex; A Foster and Co: Harken winches; So Pac: Edson/Custom Yachts wheel; Hutchwilco: safety gear; Vern Newlove: signwriting; Marvel Distributors: watermaker; Fridgetech: refrigeration; Bruce Erceg Electrical: electrical installation; North Sails: leather/ fabric; Euromarine: lighting; Rick Royden Sails: sails.