

:: boat review

# REFLEC XXVIII (28)

CATAMARAN

# TION

A modern white boat with a large glass enclosure is shown on the water at sunset. The boat has a sleek, angular design with a prominent white overhang. The glass enclosure is dark, reflecting the sunset. The boat is moving, creating a white wake in the water. The background shows a sunset sky with orange and blue tones, and dark hills in the distance.

# UTILITY

The concept is a winner,  
the profile grows on you!

# GETAWAY...



## on *land* or *water*

▼ by Barry Tyler

IS IT A BIRD? IS A PLANE? NO IT IS A REFLECTION. A REFLECTION WHICH INVARIABLY RAISES THE EYE-BROWS OF people who are not sure what it is or what it does. But the closer you look the more the Reflection XXVIII (28) appeals, the more the concept makes very good sense. Yes it is undeniably different but it is also most ingenious and in reality the plausible solution to a good many prayers!

HAVE TO BE BRUTALLY HONEST, WHEN MY INTREPID leader phoned me to say he had a boat with a difference for me to review, my subsequent perusal of the Getaway Concepts' website left me somewhat aghast – what the hell was I getting myself into, what the hell was that! Ever one for a challenge however, I read on. And the more I read, and indeed read between the lines, the more inquisitive I got

for there was quite obviously a lot more to this boat than first meets the eye. The two directors, Brian Gimpel and Mark Evans, just might be onto something here, I thought.

In the car I got and made the trip out to the other end of the world, well Mutdapilly (south-west of Brisbane city) actually, the most unlikely place smack in the middle of a farming community, where you would expect to find a boat



manufacturer. It certainly wrecked my theory about first impressions being the most reliable indicator for what I figured on first sighting to be somewhat unusual turned out to be a veritable wolf in sheep's clothing. Unusual is perhaps not the right word in fact, different would be more applicable, but the more I walked round and round this hybrid boat-come-caravan, the more it endeared itself to me – and the less outlandish and in your face the concept appeared.

The story began as it often does around a beer and a barbie, with a friend lamenting on the trouble he was having locating a workable yet still affordable solution to his retirement dilemma. You guessed it, he wanted to spend more time in his twilight years exploring Australia but it all seemed too hard – for he wanted to take his boat along too.

The more the beers flowed the more grandiose the ideas which emanated from (far) left field. Some were totally unworkable and nonsensical, others had merit but what it did do was 'light the internal fire' within Gimpel, an electrical contractor; and Evans a boilermaker and engineer. Away from the light-heartedness and near idea-hysteria of the night before the next day the two sat around a table and in the cold hard light of day jotted down some ideas and rough conceptual drawings.

Both realised there was a practical and workable solution to combining boating with caravanning and while it would have to be 'out there' as far as the finished product would appear, the idea was to still make it as modern, uncomplicated and acceptably presentable as possible whilst still embracing the two totally opposite mediums of recreational transport. "Although from two diverse backgrounds it was quite uncanny how we were both on the same wave-length right from the word go," Gimpel explained. "It was always going to be a radical 'vehicle' both in looks but more importantly in engineering feasibility as we were covering a fair bit of territory. Mark's engineering expertise certainly ironed a lot of the 'bumps' out, along the way."



**It had all the features - just like a caravan in concept, but better presented. (above left)**

**It was either two single berths or drop the table, add an insert and it transforms into a queen-size berth. (above right)**

**No it wasn't a phone box; this was your privatised bathroom with head, shower and vanity. (below and inset)**



**It all wrapped up into a tidy bundle, for trailering.**

With initial conceptual drawings completed, the two then made all the right moves consulting with a naval architect, designer and hull engineer before finally putting their 'cunning plan' into action. What I found most meritorious though, from a bystander's perspective, was the fact the bulk of the plug, engineering and actual construction work on this boat (and the trailer) was done by these two relative minnows to the marine industry. That they were able to first design then produce a 'caraboat' of this standard was an absolute credit to them.

Sure they made one or two mistakes along the way; they were the first to concede that fact. "This is very much our prototype model," Evans noted. "As with any ground-breaking exercise there are little things you learn as concept becomes reality. Weight for instance was a wee problem we totally under-estimated. For obvious reasons we brought in specialised contractors during the project and sadly our chopper gun man got rather carried away with the lay-up, with the net result our 2000kg design weight all of a sudden blew out to 2500kg.

"Not a problem though, I can assure you our first actual production model will come in at the prescribed weight, plus as extra insurance against over-loading we will add an additional 100mm of width to each hull, for added volume. Combining

## Electrical problems got you stumped?

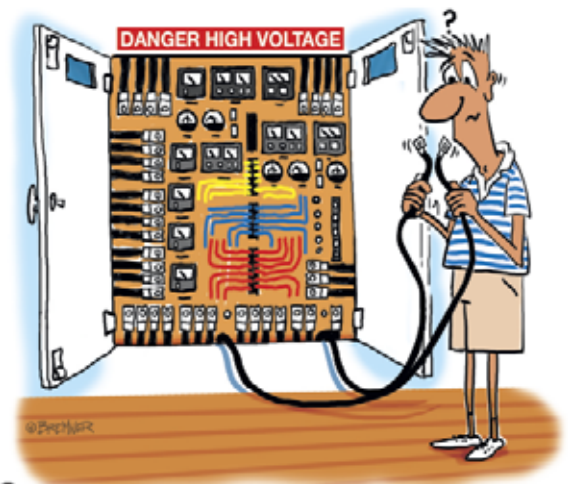
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the two mediums of caravanning and boating requires a fair degree of give and take, trade-offs, and if that is all we have to do to cover the unexpected, then we probably haven't done too bad really," he matter-of-factly observed.

One of the biggest problems with a project such as this is, from an engineering perspective, was combining the respective requirements; what will suffice in a road situation will often come up very short in marine application. It requires real innovation and the right materials, and I have to say it was this aspect of the Reflection 28 which impressed me most. With a cabin and deck design in reality 'floating' and therefore divorced of the two hulls the package needed to be secured (engineered) in an acceptably strong and rigid fashion; their solution was a back-bone as such, an internal underfloor aluminium space frame.

In effect the nerve centre of the boat also, this space frame housed the actuators (yes actuators, mechanical electrical linear actuators in fact, rather than an hydraulic system), a series of levers and cantilevers, the sliding 'rams' or main beams, and the batteries and water tank. The secret weapon if you like, of this package, was its ability to transform from a little boat into a big boat and to accomplish this satisfactorily the pair chose these more mechanical linear actuators. More reliable in operation, they would also better withstand the rigours of a marine environment. Reliability especially, is a big factor when you are sometimes hundreds of kilometres from help, when camping or boating in the outback.

To legally transport it on the road the vessel had to fall within certain height as well as width parameters so in order to gain living height as well as an acceptable beam for stability – the hulls would have to expand outwards, and the roof rise. Trailering was a problem to be overcome also, for in order to accrue stability under tow, a full-width trailer was required. Therefore the boat would have to sit atop the trailer; to fall within the legal towing width of under 2.5m.

Sounds really 'techo' and believe me from all accounts it was, but Getaway Concepts have designed and built a most impressive tri-axle trailer which while entirely capable steaming up the freeway at 100kph, was also simple, easy and quick to launch. A maximum 15 minutes at the boat ramp and the transformation was complete. Linak linear actuators aboard the Reflection spread the two hulls outwards to the maximum 3.6m, with integrated and linked actuators on the trailer lifting the vessel prior to the hulls being spread – then lowering it right down again – in preparation for launching. This would be the same scenario whether at a campsite or the boat ramp.

One feature I do need to mention was the storage potential for the tender, canoes, water toys and myriad other items which can be stored during transit, up the centre 'bed' of this



**right from top:**

**Before the boat is lowered, is a good time to remove the toys that can be stored up the centre of the trailer, while in transit.**

**The central aluminium space-frame was a multi-faceted engineering work of art.**

**Activated by secreted linear actuators, the square tube raises the boat; the large round tube above it spreads the hulls.**



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trailer. But a word of warning here, the trick is to not overdo it and transcend the maximum towing weight behind most (not all) 4WD tow vehicles, of 3500kg. Then again, it won't be a problem with the new production model, for it will come in at around 400kg lighter than this prototype, with an all-up towing weight of around 3000kg!

The roof-raising exercise/ability was a lot more complicated. To operate successfully the whole assembly would have to lift as one so entering into the equation were considerations such as twisting frames which might damage/break the windows glass, and an effective seal so the assembly wouldn't leak water into the actual cabin. Again a series of activators working in tandem solved the problem, raising the roof over a metre higher so as to provide internal head-room of 1950cm.

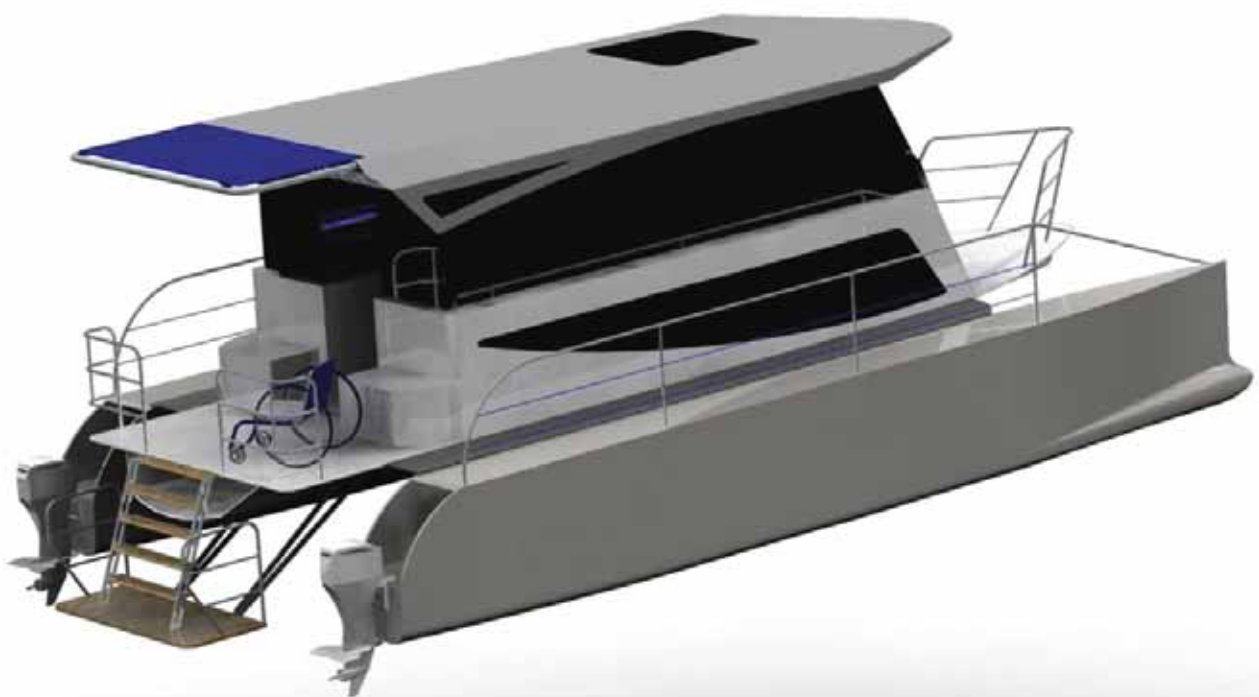
**Raise the roof, spread the hulls, lower the trailer mount and in 10 minutes you are ready to go boating. (below left)**

**The Reflection 28 is sure to start the camp dwellers tongue's wagging. (below right)**

**A CAD-eye of the evolution of the enclosed version of the Reflection XXVIII. (bottom)**

Having worked out the 'nuts and bolts' of this unique vessel, I boarded the Reflection with eager anticipation; eager to establish just what she had to offer internally. Ascending via the steps within the aft extremity of each hull I was reminded of an earlier comment by Gimpel, "Another change we will make will be to replace the single central 50hp Mercury Big-foot 4-stroke outboard power option with twin 25 or 30hp outboards integrated into the rear of each hull," he alluded. "We will add a little innovation here too though, by building the mountings so we can lift and retract and therefore completely secret, with sliding hatch covers, the engines right back into hull cavities at the rear. Boarding will then be courtesy of a central rise and fall staircase (probably done with linear actuators I venture to suggest) which not only provide a below water-level swim platform, but also wheelchair access as well as a place even, to mount/store a dreaded jet-ski if you so desire."

The aft deck was ideally where you would spend a lot of time, whether on land or water. With a barbecue on the back, as we did during the course of this review, a sumptuous steak egg and onion roll and a quiet beer 'sold the sizzle' magnificently. This deck area was in fact surprisingly spacious (30sqm) for it encompassed the side decks and boarding platforms also; you could have half a dozen people on this level



No space is wasted; the batteries were housed within the aluminium space-frame. (below left)

There was so much space around this boat, for all manner of pursuits. (below right)



and not be tripping over each other. Two neat storage seat-boxes either side of the saloon door took care of items such as a spare tote tank, gas bottle and all the wet gear, and there was further storage in huge side lockers each side, along the walkways.

Stepping into the saloon was not unlike stepping into a caravan; surprise surprise we should find an influence such as this! Again though the reality of the situation suggested that exactly as in the instance of a caravan – you have a lot of features to include in just the one room – so why not emulate the successful way caravan manufacturers circumvent the inherent problems involved. While the layout was akin to the caravan ideal, I must add however that the décor and presentation was actually of a (much) higher quality than most caravans. Their modulated square-edged monolithic approach to





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interior design can be quite stereotyped, but with this Reflection there was an element of opulence, even ambience, included in the equation.

The focal point if you like, was the bathroom to port after entering the saloon. I suspect this was some form of structural assembly also but the bottom line was it was definitely a bathroom/head with a difference. Just like sitting in a giant bubble you sure as hell had a great view (as did everyone else) of the surroundings whilst sitting on the perch; then again I did note that there were actually fashionable blinds you could pull down, so as to privatise the occasion. Features in there included the head at one end and the vanity and remote shower; at the other. In answer to your perceived next question, yes the Reflection does carry enough water for a quick shower, with 200L water capacity and a 30L hot water provision.

Opposite the head was the galley, which in effect was part of a long wall module which included the helm station also. The galley consisted of a combo three-burner gas stove with, beside it, a decent-sized sink, recessed into the wooden bench. Below it was a pair of drawers for cutlery and crockery and below that again a pull-out drawer which housed the rather large Engel portable fridge. Bench serving space was provided by lowering the helm wheel and throttle lever and placing a Western Red Cedar solid-wood (removable) 'fitted' cover completely over the top of the helm.

The helm ahead of the galley was your typical 'bus-driver' style of side helm, out of the way from passing through-traffic. Very comfortable too may I add, which is important when you were on a long leisurely cruise or indeed trolling for the big one. Features included hydraulic tilt steering, Mercury throttles and instrumentation, two banks of rocker switches and a Humminbird sounder/GPS/fish-finder to hunt down unsuspecting prey.

Ahead of the helm and head was the ambidextrous dining setting, nicely presented in velour upholstered seating each side of a rise and lower table. Complete with drawers in the sides and rather substantial supporting legs, this table lowered to a height that would with the addition of an insert, form a queen-size berth. Another change is due here also, between this prototype and the first fully production model for while you can have either two singles or the one queen with this layout, the new version will offer two singles as well as a double berth which will innovatively appear from overhead. It may well mean the storage cupboards and television above the dining setting will be re-located elsewhere, but the trade-off will be accommodation for four instead of two.

Enough of the chatter and exploration, I was keen to get started on the water test proper; to enjoy the day out on one of the most picturesque settings in the world, nearby Moogerah Dam. Launching, as our intrepid trio insisted, was a no-fuss exercise we completed well within our prescribed 15 minutes time-frame. Interestingly the Moogerah ramp was far from a steep ramp, so it necessitated backing the towing rig into the water, up to the rear rims. "On a normal boat



The R&D team doing a little tank-testing of their own.

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ramp incline," Evans explained, "you would be lucky to get the tyres wet. The beauty of building our own trailers though is we have the ability to add a longer draw-bar to overcome that scenario, if it is on a regular basis; and of course if you wanted to tow it with a larger utility, in a fifth-wheeler situation, we could even build the front of the trailer accordingly, so it would accept that style of coupling."

Cruising somewhere like the Moogerah Dam, really accentuated the usage potential of the Reflection XXVIII catamaran. We could 'sprint' around at 14kts, we could troll for a fish, we could enjoy the scenery cruising along at a sedate five knots, or we could do as we did and stop of at Moogerah's 'Gorge' and enjoy a family barbecue. With its shallow draft with the engines trimmed up, exploring all the nooks and crannies and upper reaches of a region is also feasible. Then, at the end of the day, you don't have to go home, pitch a tent or whatever; simply put her back on the trailer and continue the 'moment' on land.

**Under full power, the Reflections rose to a top speed of 14kts – not bad, from a single 50hp outboard? (top)**  
**The head certainly was a room with a view! (above left)**  
**Uninterrupted vision from inside the cabin. (above right)**

### Conclusion

Whether your penchant be camping, boating, or both, the Reflections XXVIII (28) will give you 24/7 access to most regions. Half way to your intended camping spot or waterway, just pull off the side of the road and your overnight accommodation is virtually ready and waiting. Tired of paying campsite fees or tired of camping with the great unwashed and/or unruly, with a Reflection you can get away from it all. In short it will open up a whole new world for those looking for multi-faceted adventure



## SPECIFICATIONS

Design Name	Reflection XXVIII
Year Launched	2009
Designer	Brian Gimpel & Mark Evans - Getaway Concepts
Interior Designer	Brian Gimpel & Mark Evans Getaway Concepts
Builder	Getaway Concepts
LOA	8.6m
LWL	8.35m
Beam	3.6m
Draft	0.4m
Displacement	2,500kg (New Model --2000kg)
Max Speed	14kts
Cruise Speed	5-8kts
Construction	GRP Composite of Balsa & Cedar cores/CSM and multi-axial cloths / Alloy space frame
Fuel Cap	50 litres
Water Cap	200 litres
Engines Make	50hp Mercury Outboard
Gearboxes	Mercury Big-foot
Propellers	Mercury Vengeance 12" D x 14" P
Generator	Honda 2 kVA Portable Inverter/Charger Projecta 150W Inverter / Zivan 24V Charger
Anchor Winch	Muir DW08 Drum
Anchors	Manson Plough 15 lbs
Steering	Seastar Hydraulic
Engine Controls	Mercury
Lighting	Hella LCD
Paint (Topsides)	Jotun
Paint (Antifouling)	Jotun
Windscreens/windows	Alfab Tinted
Heads	Johnson
Veneer/Plywood	Western Red Cedar / Pacific Maple
Tender	Euro Marine MS300
Stainless Steel Fabrication	Getaway Concepts
Saloon Doors	Extruded Aluminium - Getaway Concepts
Helm Chair	Getaway Concepts
Batteries	House: 2 x 12V All-rounder 105 Ah, Engine: 1 x 12V All-rounder 105 Ah
Upholstery	Brady Magnussen Upholstery
Furniture	Kirkin Fine Furniture in Red Cedar
<b>Electronics</b>	
GPS/Sounder	Humminbird 757C
VHF	GME GX600
Entertainment Systems	Xi-En TV / Clarion Stereo/DVD
Switch Panel	BLA V-Series Contura III
Base Price of Boat	\$210,000
Trailer	\$28,000

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From a 'lifestyle caravanning' perspective this boat had all the mod-cons you would ever need whether on land or water. Presentation was superb; the engineering was a work of art in every facet. \$300,000 may seem a lot for a caravan, but when you factor in the hypothetical cost of a caravan and a cruiser, add the convenience factor and finally appreciate the work that has gone into making this such a user-friendly (and marine friendly) vessel – like me you will consider this caraboat that is built to stand the test of time – good value for money. It is not for everyone sure, but for those on a mission, arguably it is – unprecedented!

**The aft platform was so adaptable, certainly the 'lifestyle centre' of the Reflection 28 – all in stainless.**

