

a cat factory



the JOURNALS

CREATION



LAST ISSUE WE ENJOYED THE STORY OF LLOYD AND KATE POWELL'S JOURNEY towards setting up The Cat Factory (or 'Dream' Factory!) in WA. Recently another Cat Factory dream boat was launched, a Fusion 40 sailing catamaran. Needless to say, the owner is delighted, as are Lloyd and Kate, to see *Cloudy Bay* hit the water. But how does the build process actually work at The Cat Factory and what can a client expect from the experience?

KEY

by JO DJUBAL

WITH A SHINY NEW cat just in the water and while everything was fresh in their minds, I asked Lloyd and *Cloudy Bay* owner, to explain the build journey in more detail. Firstly – why a Fusion?

After growing up with small power boats, the owner chose a cat for the stability and comfort. He wanted a “wide bodied vessel with the latest technology and internal living space comparable to large slimline cats” – and after researching the options, decided a



A cockpit designed for the Aussie sun. (above)
 Room for a crowd in the saloon. (below left)
 Light and airy midships. (below centre)
 Master cabin. (below right)
 Cloudy Bay ready to go. (bottom)

Fusion 40 fit the bill. And why The Cat Factory to build it? "The Cat Factory was a local business where I could enjoy the building process. I was also lucky enough to be acquainted with the quality of other boats Lloyd had built!

The Cat Factory first became aware of Fusion Catamarans in late 2004, however it wasn't until late 2005 that they signed as West Australian agents and assemblers for the company. "Since then we've had a great working relationship with the Fusion team," said Lloyd. "Their excellent support and encouragement has made it possible for us to provide great service to our Western Australian clients. To date we have constructed two Fusions to full sail away finish and have a third currently under construction. The two finished vessels are very different in their final look and fitout as both owners had very different purposes in mind for them. One was destined for a circumnavigation of Australia (currently underway) and the other (the subject of this article) for family and corporate cruising and entertaining locally."



Speaking of customisation, have any modifications to the Fusion design or building process been affected while working on the Fusions?

“Overall, we’ve found that by leaving off the topsides and therefore the cabin top until much later; it gives us much better access in and out of the boat and more importantly better ventilation whilst glassing up various joins internally!” said Lloyd. “We’ve also made some small modifications, like creating internal sheave areas for halyards and lines to be concealed whilst coming back to the cockpit. Other modifications are always being thought up, and we like to keep the boats up to date with whatever is ‘in’ at the time!”

“The whole concept of the Fusion kit is that it is pretty straight forward”

The owner believes one of the best aspects to building a Fusion 40 is the fast build process overall, in particular from kit arrival to the motor away stage. As a professional boat builder Lloyd agrees and explains why.

“The Fusion kit is exemplary,” he said. “All Fusion components are moulded at the Fusion Factory using industry-leading modular vacuum infusion technology. By using modified vinyl ester resins, the Fusion 40 has a strong composite structure with weight kept to a minimum. Unfortunately weight is often a problem when owner builders construct kits from flat panels. This fully moulded kit eliminates this issue entirely and, provided the fit out is undertaken with due attention to weight, the Fusion 40 is guaranteed to give you outstanding performance.

Where assembly is concerned, with the moulded kit components there’s a significant saving in construction time (therefore dollars) in comparison with ‘build from plan’ boats and even other kit designs. As far as the ‘look’ is concerned – with its ‘aerodynamic’ cabin top and sleek, racing profile – it’s a smart and



from above:

From kit to lock up in just five weeks, fully finished in 10 months.



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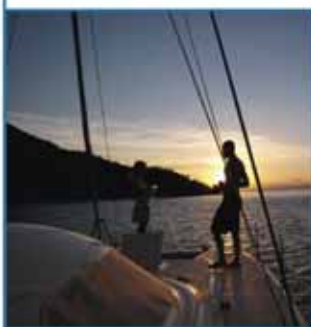
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stylish design that definitely has the 'wow' factor!"

Lloyd said that although every Fusion exterior will exhibit the quality of the Fusion production moulding system, every boat can also be a unique reflection of the owner's desires. "They may choose a seven star deluxe interior; or something more low key, it's all up to the owner's imagination – and of course, budget."

Sounds too easy! But every project has its problems – doesn't it?

"Not really!" Lloyd said. "The whole concept of the Fusion kit is that it is pretty straightforward. There's a little bit of time initially to set the jig up, (we have made a set of cradles to support all the major components) but once you've glued the main structure together, the picture becomes clearer!"

So how long does the build process actually take?

"We generally expect to finish a Fusion to a Sail Away Stage in nine to 10 months," Lloyd said. "However this boat was constructed in just under 12. The additional time was due in part to the high gloss paint finish for the interior specified by the owner. This is more labour intensive and time consuming than other possible finishes – but the end result is stunning! The main contributing factor however, was that this project was initially a victim of the boom in Western Australia. When we commenced building it was still extremely difficult to find competent staff, as a consequence we estimate we lost a minimum of six weeks due to staff shortages. The one upside of the 'recession we had to have' is that staff are now more readily available!"

Despite the hold up in build time, does Lloyd believe general time frames and budgets were maintained?

"As far as the budget goes, this particular boat was undertaken on a custom build basis, meaning that whilst the owner was given an 'estimate' of the final cost, we didn't agree on a final price

Easy entertaining and living space. (below left)
Galley down. (below centre)
Master bathroom. (below right)
Clean lines. (bottom)



nor did we work to a specific budget," said Lloyd. "This allowed the owner to make choices and changes during the build without the constraint of a 'fixed price'. The only budget considerations undertaken were by the owner himself, as the project evolved. The necessity of a detailed and

regular consultation process becomes very obvious in this kind of builder/client

relationship. The expected time frames were maintained with the exception of delays due to those staff shortages. "

The owner did find the lack of labour available frustrating. "But the best aspect to building the boat was knowing that Lloyd was striving for the highest quality finish" he said. "His attention to detail is tremendous. Don't expect any shortcuts! It's great to have that trust in your builder."

Lloyd cites such trust and client interaction as imperative in the Cat Factory build process.

"We believe it is essential to involve the owner in every aspect of the construction and actively encourage a detailed and regular consultation process," he explained.

"In addition to 'on the go' communication as required, we like, (if possible) to see the owners at the factory on a weekly basis so that ideas and practical solutions can be talked through 'in situ' and decisions can be

made without delay. It enables the owner to get a real feel for their boat and most importantly, it provides the opportunity for the degree of customisation simply not possible at a production boat facility. This is really at the heart of what we're about and allows us to absolutely deliver

on our

“His attention to detail is tremendous. Don't expect any shortcuts!”

customers' expectations. Due to work commitments that required a great deal of travel the owner on this particular project wasn't always able to make it down weekly, but communication via mobile and email still allowed the project to proceed smoothly."

Okay, so my new cat is in the water (I wish!) and I'm ready to sail off into the WA sunset. What follow up can I expect and what kind of warranties etc are in place?

Lloyd explained ...

"Once the boat is launched, sea trials are conducted and any commissioning, equipment familiarisation and trouble shooting is undertaken. This process generally takes around four weeks and on completion, the Certificate of Satisfaction is signed by the owner. After this time we offer a 12 month warranty on any construction work (in addition to the equipment warranties) and a complementary construction warranty inspection at six months post launch.

Of course we're always available to

answer/act on any general queries the owner might have about the boat. This is particularly important when the owner first takes over the boat as there may be some teething problems that need to be resolved."

The owner said he's a little nervous as he gets to know his new boat but just wants to "spend time on her, irrespective of where!" That's got to be the sign of a happy cat owner!

And it looks as though there'll be plenty more with some exciting developments in store within The Cat Factory. Currently on the agenda is building the first Fusion Share Boat.

"This is a scheme we've been promoting recently to potential customers who may not have the budget, time or desire to be the sole owner of a large sailing catamaran," said Lloyd. (See the scheme advertised in this issue). "We're very optimistic that this will be the first of many share boats, with the long term goal being to have a whole network of them around Australia. We also anticipate that within the next twelve months we'll be commencing work on new Schionning and/or Grainger Raku designs which we're really excited about."

Whichever state of the art designs come their way, there's no doubt The Cat Factory will continue to approach all with the same degree of enthusiasm, eye for innovation and pursuit of quality that's fast becoming synonymous with their catchy name – and that there will be many more lucky owners elated to be on their Cat Factory built boats, irrespective of where!

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