

Buizen 48

LIVING *Legend*

The Buizen 48 is a lively boat that makes good passage times



THE BUIZEN 48, NOW IN SERIES 3 FORM, IS MOST PEOPLE'S IDEA OF THE PERFECT CRUISING YACHT

By Barry Tranter

Photography Warwick Gibson / bigfish

In a world of hysterical change, the Buizen 48 looks much the same as it always has, though beneath the skin it continues to evolve. Indeed, the 48 evolves with grace, always moving forward but never pursuing change for its own sake. Eddy Buizen built the first 48 in 1995 and, 32 boats later, hull and superstructure are unchanged. But the process of refinement has been constant.

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Three years ago, the Series 2 was introduced, with a new bulbed keel for a lower centre of gravity. The boat under review in this article has enough changes incorporated into it to justify being called the first Series 3.

The Buizen 48 is unique, in Australia at least. Each one takes 12 months to build and the company – Buizen Yachts – builds only three at a time. The fibreglass is hand-laid, and the interior and trim are also done by hand. Each boat absorbs 10,000 hours of work and is tailored to the owner's requirements. They are cruising yachts and weigh around 15 tonnes, and though they are not compromised by the ubiquitous cruiser/racer tag, they sail well.

There are three accommodation layouts available. The boat I saw



The interior is finished in cherry

has the owner's suite forward (with an island bed and an ensuite head) and two double cabins aft. Then there's the 'family' layout (including a cabin with two single bunks) and the 'passage' layout, where the owner's berth is offset to starboard.

Owners specify variations on these themes, too. Some have one of the aft guest cabins adapted as an office. The starboard side stern cabin may become a single when you add a washer-dryer. In fact, the possible refinements are almost endless. "These are bespoke boats", says director Steve Howe. "We act as partners, if you like, with the owners."

The galley has a big fridge, both top- and front-opening, and a top-opening freezer. They are 240 volts, with a 24-volt motor which kicks in when you unplug the shore power. The charging system has an auto-start function when the batteries drop to a certain level of charge. Most of the boat is 24-volt except for engine start, radios and nav lights. The galley is two steps down from the saloon (on the level of the cabins) and the cook passes food up to a serving bench (the dinette is in the pilot house). For this boat, Buizen made a unit of a two-burner electric cooktop and a convection microwave oven with griller. You can, of course, specify gas. An icemaker is standard. There are two heads, the day head opposite the galley and the ensuite owner's head on the port side.

The interior trim is in cherry, though the traditional Buizen teak is also available. The cherry is nicely grained and lighter than teak. The pilot house is a fine place to be, with 360-degree vision. There's a dinette and settee, and to starboard a choice of settee or individual chairs. The helm position in the pilot house has a throttle control but steering is by autopilot (there are two, one as backup).

The owner's cabin and ensuite



Owners can specify electric or gas cooktops



The 48's engineering profile is solid. The Buizen's auxiliary is a Yanmar diesel, with choice of 110hp or 150hp. But considering that the typical Buizen owner will be a retired (or semi-retired) couple, probably not in the first flush of youth, the rig and hardware have been given a lot of thought and development.

The boat is rigged as a masthead sloop but there is a removable inner forestay so you can add a jib and storm jib. With the running backstays (not used

when sailing with the genoa) the inner forestay steadies the centre of the mast in a bouncy sea, when the motion can cause a mast to pump. Phil Bate rigs the Buizens, and for this boat he recommended the Leisure Furl boom furler for the main, moving away from the usual in-mast furling. The Leisure Furl is a hydraulic system which makes raising and lowering sail a painless exercise. Phil has organised a simple gauge, a fine shock cord led back to the cockpit on the boom's underside, which determines the optimal angle for the boom so the sail rolls evenly into the boom every time, the weak point of many a boom furler. The boom is locked radially by an hydraulic pin, which fixes a ratchet at the front of the boom. Open the pin to raise the sail; to lower, the ratchet licks over the pin. This system enables you to reef the sail to any area you want.

This boat had an Holmatro hydraulic vang, which supports the boom and stops it bouncing in a seaway. Phil says that the vang enables the skipper to open the mainsail leech in a seaway in a stiff breeze, which helps tracking and motion. All these controls are mounted in the cockpit, but there's a switch for the furler at the mast base as well.

The headsail winches are big, two-speed, powered Harken #70s. The smaller winches near the helmsman provide muscle for the main halyard and boom brake (a standard fitting), mainsheet and headsail furler, a Reckmann which Phil imports and reckons has a far superior bearing system which enables him to furl by hand in 12-15 knots of breeze.

Phil has added to the mast, alongside the mainsail track, a separate track for the storm trysail. He says you can set up the trysail early, in a turtle at the mast base, sheets on and ready to go, a good idea because when the going gets rough it is hard enough to hang on, let alone change sails. At the same time you can set up the storm jib.

The Buizen cockpit seems small at first sight but on longer acquaintance it is the right size, because there is room for enough bodies and handholds

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are never far away. The helmsman's seat, and two others, are in the stainless steel pushpit arrangement right aft. This boat has a very smart bimini arrangement; Steve unzipped and removed the centre panel for our sail.

The chances of a good sail looked remote. Sydney in early winter had a week of glorious

sun and still days after months of mayhem. But the day we set out, the leaves were stirring and a zephyr was tickling the ears. With Steve and Phil in charge, we set out onto Pittwater, one of the few places which stays the same and unspoiled.

Handling the Buizen 48 is easy. One squirt on the bow thruster helped us out of the marina, the 150hp Yanmar did its job, the main went up and the jib unfurled.

The breeze was moving all over the place. It was one of those days when it lifts every time you tack, or it least it did when I was steering. How does Huey know these things? We even threw in a false tack to fool it, but that only bought us another minute on starboard before it lifted, backed, gusted and died, all at the same time. Then, as if Huey had decided to take pity on us, a newborn sea breeze moved in and for a while we had glorious sailing. The 48 accelerates well when she's given something to work with, and suddenly we were seeing six knots-plus over the ground beating into 11-14 knots of nor'easter, but the breeze was still swinging and aggressive steering was needed to keep the headsail tufts streaming. The hydraulic steering was slowish for this sort of dinghy sailing, but it's perfectly geared for offshore.

Reaching towards home we have 5.3 knots in eight knots apparent, at 90 degrees. The 48 is a lively boat which will make good passage times. Sails down, engine on, the Yanmar did its work. Both engines (the 110 and 150) will push the boat up to 9.5 knots, driving through a four-blade stainless prop. The 110 has a slight advantage in fuel economy, but both units will

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My emotional reaction is that I would feel confident about cruising the Buizen 48. Part of the reason is that the owner is invited to be involved in the construction process; you can watch the hose clamps being screwed home and know how it

was done. You know that nothing has been skimped. In the finished boat, nothing is hidden. You can inspect every aspect of the engineering because in a hand-built boat, nothing is buried irretrievably behind mouldings. Confidence comes, too, from the most crass of reasons; you know this boat has not been built to a price. In past decades a phrase like that has meant that the price could be a shock. But the 48's starting price of \$1.265 million is no longer shocking because production cruiser/racers of comparable length easily clear the million mark. For a Buizen equipped like this one, with watermaker, aircon, GPS/Radar, teak decks, Bose Audio visual system, the price is around \$1.4 million. But it's worth a lot to know that your Buizen has been built by human hands, untouched by the robot's steely claw.

The Buizen style of keeping owners closely involved at all stages of the build of their boat creates a family atmosphere and is a welcome respite from these most impersonal of times.

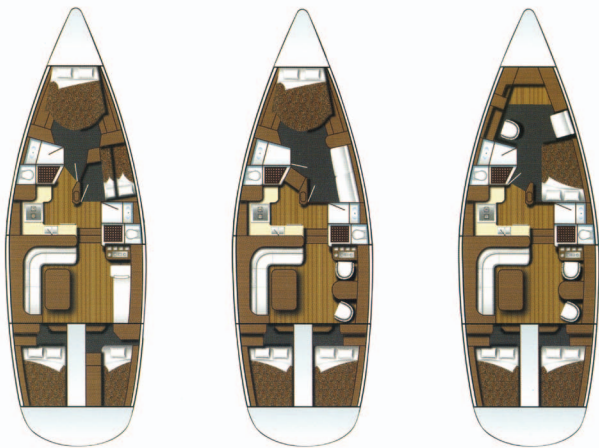


The 48 sports a smart bimini

For further information contact
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TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS



From left: Family Layout - Island Stateroom - Passage Stateroom

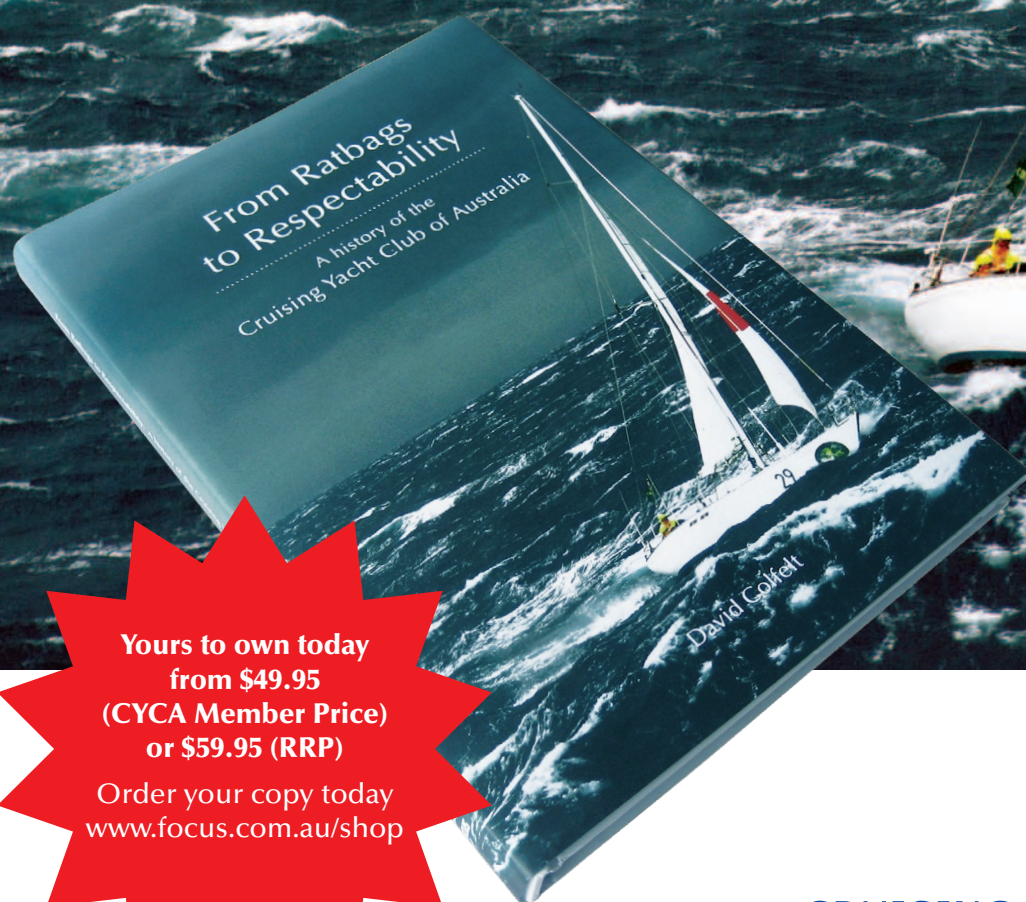
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