

# Spacious Akasha

by Graham Dalton

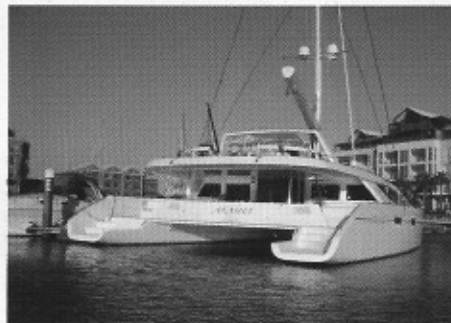
*Akasha*, the first Silhouette 760 to be launched by Matrix Yachts, will charter out for \$45,000 a week (over R1 million a month) - and yet she's about the entry level of luxury catamarans. Nearer the top they go at \$500,000 a week. I can't tell you what people who own or sail a thing like that do, and if you ask the price you can't afford it anyway!

It's hard for an old dinghy sailor to get his mind round those numbers so all I can say is *Akasha* is intended for the Virgin Islands where the kind of people who know the value of a billion dollars go on vacation.

It's just as hard to get your mind into the set where a yacht is designed using finite element analysis, the kind of package used by mine rock mechanic experts four and five kilometres below the earth's surface where they talk about plastic deformation of the rock.

A 77ft 11in catamaran is as much a complex structure as a boat however, and finite element analysis is, according to Peter Wehrley, only using responsible design technologies and is probably why his Silhouette 760 has been granted British MCA Commercial Vessel approval. In the event, it allows Matrix to limit carbon fibre to sections where it is essential for weight saving and the hull is mainly glass, resin and core sandwich.

As a sea boat she looks good, well



clear of the water so that the waves don't slam the sole and a high conning bridge with all round vision. The foresails are roller reefed and while the standard is slab reefing on the main, *Akasha* has a roller reefing there as well. All powered.

Empty, she displaces 22 tons and 33 when loaded. Not bad for a 78-footer, yet she will equal wind speed without trying and being 38ft wide she makes a stable platform. Her twin 240hp Yanmars will drive her at 15 knots and one shudders to think what she will do in a blow when the 2095 sq ft main and 2635 sq ft screecher are up.

Despite that there's no need to worry about a capsized. There is reserve buoyancy built into the design. In any case the radar can track and predict any likely collision between the boat and up to 12 other targets. The computer will also superimpose depth charts on weather



information or any other details you want. Autopilot goes without saying.

Most cats suffer from narrow hull shapes and slightly cramped accommodation but the 760 has wide hulls and the accommodation is easy. Because she is well proportioned it was difficult to get a picture that gives a proper impression of her spaciousness, which the name *Akasha* signifies in Sanskrit.

At a nominal 76 ft you would expect her to have accommodation for a crew of at least 12 (six less than the Global Challenge boats) and another 12 passengers. She takes four crew, including the chef, and 10 passengers, including the owner and his lady, or her gentleman, I suppose!

Her layout was developed over the Wehrleys' five years in the charter business and as they had no need to carry a brand image they were free to design to the

market slot they had identified. She's like a floating Heavenly Bills hotel. Cherry and maple finishes, queen size beds in all the 'guest' accommodation, a Jacuzzi and a panoramic view in the owner's accommodation. There is a bar on what was once called the poop deck or cockpit but is now the entertainment lounge, protected from the noonday sun by the extension of the fly bridge deck. The fly bridge is where the crew work, but as the guests also sunbathe there it has a mini bar installed. The accommodation is air conditioned and each cabin has a flat screen TV and knee level beds.

The galley is better than many kitchens and includes dishwasher, garbage compactor and waste disposal unit. It seems out of character to talk of the laundry on a boat, but that's what is in the starboard fo'c'sle, a washing machine and a tumbler dryer.

There are no free lunches of course and storage for the foie gras is a trade off with accommodation and facilities for Scuba diving. Nevertheless Peter has managed to make it possible to dock a dinghy against the steps at the stern in the calm space between the hulls. This allows aged passengers or visitors in long evening dresses to climb on to the boat without effort or in danger of falling overboard and suing the owner.

The company which build the Silhouette, Matrix Yachts, is proudly South African. It includes both Wehrley sons, Mark and Lee, the labour has been trained by the company and the construction materials, apart from things like the core material in the sandwich construction, are locally sourced.

If you have a skipper's ticket and all of this appeals to you, you will get a separate cabin with a berth, a settee and an office set up much better than the normal nav. station. You might have missed *Akasha* as she has already left Cape Town, but the next 760 already has her bulkheads installed and should be ready for her customer to sign for in December. ↓

## Maritime Miscellany

by Richard Crockett

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