



Matrix Vision 450

A new modern cruising cat is designed and built in South Africa for world cruisers everywhere

SEA TRIALS

We joined Mark Wehrley, his wife Tara Sharbonda and another couple for a few hours of sailing aboard the 450 on Biscayne Bay south of Miami. It was one of those sparkling south Florida winter days with temperatures in the mid-70s, the sky clear and the wind blowing a gentle 10 knots out of the east.

Under power, the 450 handles easily as you use the twin engines to augment the steering. The boat will pivot in its own length and will crab sideways as you maneuver in and out of tight docking situations. Visibility from the helm is good, although you have to stand up to see the port bow.

We charged down the channel and under the fixed bridge in the causeway to Key Biscayne. The 450 will cruise in flat water at 8 knots and can hit almost 10 knots with the hammer down. South of the bridge, Mark hoisted the big, full-roach mainsail and then we rolled out the slightly overlapping jib. The 450 responded rapidly as we sheeted the sails home and was soon sailing at 7 knots 45 degrees from the wind. While a good turn of speed for a cruising boat of this size, Mark was unsatisfied; the boat's bottom was fouled from too long in the tropics and that was cutting at least a knot from her potential speed.

We threw the 450 through a series of short tacks, and found it easy to maneuver under sail and

The Strictly Sail portion of the Miami boat show last winter played host to a large selection of multihulls from around the world. South Africa—which has become a leader in the design and construction of cruising cats—had six builders at the show, including the largest, Robertson and Caine, which builds Leopard Cats and all of the charter cats for The Moorings and Sunsail.

Following the show, MQ had the opportunity to sail several of the new cats, among them the stylish new Vision 450 from Matrix Yachts in Cape Town. The 450 was designed and built by the Wehrley family—Peter and Fiona and their son Mark. The boat is little sister to the Silhouette 760 and the Mirage 720; the Silhouette is a 76-foot luxury charter boat, while the Mirage is an open-deck daysailer for resort day charters.

The big boats are what Matrix and the Wehrleys are best known for; the new 450 was introduced to fill a gap

in the market and to increase build volume in the factory, which in turn enables the company to maintain its highly skilled workforce.

The Silhouette 760 has been shown at the Miami show several times and always earns “queen of the show” raves from all who go aboard the huge cutter rigged cat. The boat is pure luxury built into a hull and deck design that provides enormous living spaces and high speed sailing capabilities, as well as a distinctive wedge-shaped look.

The first thing you notice about the 450 is the family resemblance to the 760. The Vision has a similar wedge-shaped cabintop, modern plumb bows and a cockpit hardtop that fits the cabintop neatly. The second quality you see when climbing aboard is the fairness of the finish on all fiberglass moldings and veneered furniture. The 450 announces itself as a luxury yacht from the outset.

capable of tacking upwind in 10 knots of breeze inside 90 degrees despite having short keels instead of daggerboards.

With the upwind performance noted, we rolled up the jib and rolled out the big Code Zero headsail. This was the horsepower the 450 really wanted—the boat simply took off. The breeze had built a little to 12 or so knots, so as we fell off to about 110 degrees true wind angle, the boat accelerated from 6 to 9 knots in the span of a few boat lengths.

The 450's hulls are fairly narrow below the waterline and extend the full length overall, so the cat is easily driven and has high potential speeds. With 1250 square feet of working sail and 1650 square feet of reaching sail area on a displacement of only 11 tons, the rig has a sail area to displacement ratio that enhances sailing performance in all conditions.

The 450 we tested had sailed from South Africa to Miami with stops along the way. The design is a true ocean-sailing yacht that also has the ability to sail quickly and easily in coastal conditions.

LIVING ABOARD

On deck, the 450 has wide side decks and a well-designed foredeck area where you can sit out of the wind. The anchoring system is simple for one person to use and set far enough aft to keep the weight of chain and anchors near the boat's center of gravity.

There are handy lockers in the foredeck and aft around the cockpit that can be used for deck gear and to stow sheets and lines while underway. The covered cockpit has a large dinette that will seat eight adults for a meal. An outdoor fridge has been built in under the forward dinette seat.

There is a large sliding window that joins the outside dinette to the galley, which will make serving and cleaning up around mealtime simple and efficient. You can tell the





Wehrleys have a lot of experience running big charter yachts—every function related to comfort, meal-time and shipshape boat handling has been thought through in minute detail.

The saloon and galley work well with the fridge-freezer near the cockpit door and the U-shaped galley to port. The inside dinette seats four on the curved bench and three more can join the party by sitting on stools or small portable chairs.

The 450 can be finished with either three or four sleeping cabins. In the three-cabin version, the starboard hull becomes the owner's suite with a huge head and shower forward, a double berth in the aft cabin and a lounge/dressing area in between. The space where the fourth cabin would have been is transformed into a utility room where you can install a genset, watermaker, air conditioning and other items that make living aboard more comfortable.

The port hull has two double cabins with a large raised double berth in the forward cabin and a fore and aft double in the after cabin. The head and shower amidships are shared.

The 450 has an elegant interior finish with granite counters, finely finished hardwood furniture, expertly-crafted drawers, doors and lockers, and an abundance of natural light.

After only a few hours, it was easy to picture living aboard with plenty of friends visiting, kids diving off the transoms and tradewinds keeping you cool. When it comes to world cruising and extended voyages, the 450 is just about perfect for a couple who wants the latest and

best in their 45-foot cruiser.

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