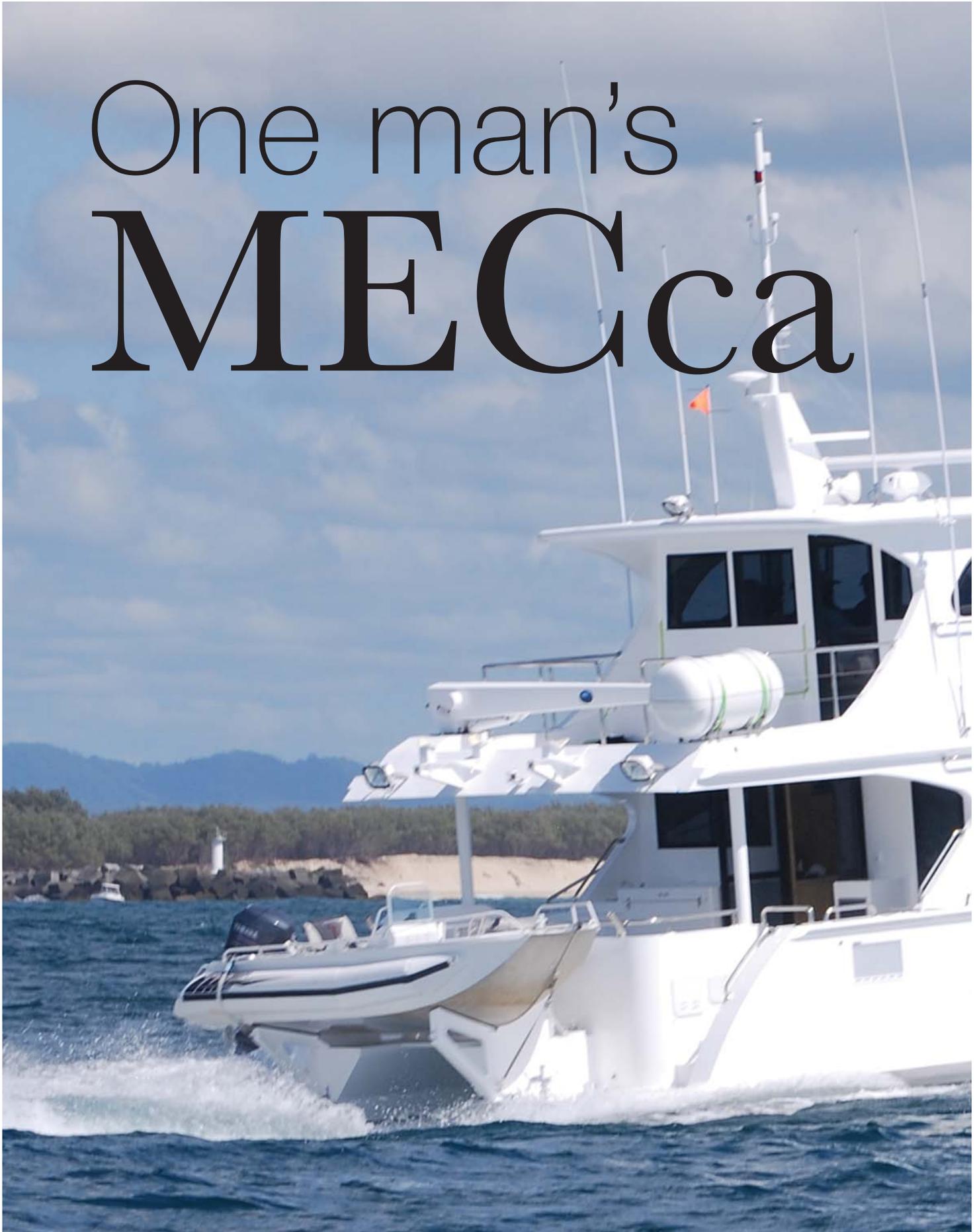


# One man's **MEC**ca



Marine Engineering Consultants, as a company build, refit and maintain superyachts, so it is fair to assume that when this company embarks on a focused program to build a range of recreational and commercial cruisers – the end result will be something special. Their latest model to be launched, the MEC Yachts 19, further confirms and enhances the company's reputation.





text and pics by BARRY TYLER

**W**HEN DARWIN businessman Geoff Annear decided he needed an appropriate sized and spec'd boat to service the corporate side of the oil industry in the far Northern regions of Australia, and in his spare time see a little of the scenic beauty this region is renowned for also, little did he know he would end up on the other side of the country to have his dream boat built.

It is fair to say he did a lot of research, spoke to a lot of people before quite by chance a little idle gossip led him in the direction of the Gold Coast City Marina and Shipyard, and in particular a tenant there by the name of Marine and Engineering Consultants (MEC). A friend of a friend knew of the reputation of this company and was also aware of the fact this company had commenced building a range of luxury cruising catamarans designed by Andrew McDonald-Smith, of McDonald-Smith Marine Designers.

It is history as they say, that the moment Annear saw the drawings of the then 18.0m version, he became a devotee of the brand. He had definite ideas about appointments and specifications and as invariably happens in

a vessel of that size it virtually became a custom build to incorporate those ideas into a bonafide design he would be amenable to.

I am sure the builder, designer and owner won't mind me mentioning the observation, but it appeared from the outside to be somewhat of a design in progress the whole way through the project. Surely a testament to the fortitude and negotiating skills of all three concerned (at the end of the project they were all still talking and smiling to each other), along the way MEC incorporated some significant changes into the original design.

Major changes in fact, for three of these changes included a Portuguese bridge which was added to the foredeck and flybridge structure; a metre and a bit was added to the finished hulls after the owner wanted a second 'dory' tender added, adjacent to the aft swim platforms; and an internal staircase was added, in place of the original exterior version. Most projects would have stalled with requests such as these but such was the obvious harmony between designer, builder and owner – the changes were made without fuss or aggravation. The ironic part I suppose is all three agree the changes did nothing but enhance dramatically, the finished product!

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**The MEC Yachts I9 was a nice combo of rugged dependability and durability, in tandem with an unadulterated luxurious living side. (above and previous pages)**

### **Superyacht heritage**

Not surprisingly everywhere I looked on the MEC cat, I found evidence of almost sublime attention to detail and presentation, yet there was still very obvious robustness in construction. It helps of course when you are building with aluminium - cut a bit here, add a bit there – but the bottom line is this catamaran was built to withstand even the most arduous of conditions. The superyacht mentality by both designer and builder was obvious for all to see.

From the rear *Seacret* (I don't think this boat will remain a secret for long, given the flamboyance of the owner and the profile of the boat) was very business-like. The Caribe RIB tender was mounted in the traditional place up on the flybridge level, beside the 600kg ADC (Australian Davit Cranes), but such was the owner's passion for fishing and exploring that he just couldn't do without a second dory-style tender. "This temporarily created a bit of a headache for Andrew (McDonald-Smith, the



designer)," MEC Director Murray Owen explained. "The only viable place to successfully mount this dory was between the two hulls at the very rear; but we then had the inherent problem of buoyancy; hence the reason for the jump in length from 18 to 19.2m."

MEC did a great job shoe-horning that 450kg boating package into the gap and the extra 1.2m length to the hulls came in very handy for as well as the necessary buoyancy at the rear; it also provided significantly increased underfloor storage capacity each side, and, a great platform for boarding, fishing, swimming and/or diving - when that is, you lower the very serious dive ladder that drops into the surface of the portside platform. This platform, the boarding steps up onto the cockpit and indeed the actual cockpit level itself were all made even safer, following the sensible late decision also, to add a layer of the almost bullet-proof 'Flexiteek' teak-look-alike material. George Fillippow and the boys from Aczel Marine did a brilliant job there.

The outdoor living potential of *Seacret* was graphically illustrated both in the cockpit and on the foredeck. Fully protected overhead by the flybridge structure, the focal point of this area was a huge L-shaped aft 'sunbrella' lounge which at a pinch I would say would easily seat eight adults. The fold-up 'loose' chairs around the other side of the cockpit table would seat another four, thereby providing seating for 12 guests at a wonderful setting from which to enjoy those late afternoon drinkies! Other



features here included a fridge and icemaker module, a barbecue module (a very big BBQ module in fact), an outdoor freezer of equally large proportions, a sink module complete with hot and cold water, and, an outdoor bathroom (shower; head and vanity) cubicle with exterior cockpit access only.

Neat steps scalloped into the side coamings in the cockpit, along with grab

(from top left)

The extra metre now provides a great platform for boarding, fishing or for water pursuits.

The foredeck was very 'Superyacht-inspired' – also very practical and user-friendly!

The cockpit was an entertainer's delight, in every aspect.

rails in precisely the right places along the way, provided good access up onto the generously wide (you can have them, on a boat this size!) walkways that took you forward onto a striking albeit quite different foredeck. I say different in a very nice way, for it was very superyacht-orientated with its central staircase down from the Portuguese bridge.

The high and substantial bow rail, the sun-bathing 'pads' each side, the serious anchoring equipment and the seating provision each side of the walkway at the base of the cabin structure were all most impressive features, but there was one other wee aspect that really caught my eye. Two rather innocuous flush hatches forward of the seats and between the sun-bathing pads, each opened outwards to reveal a surprisingly generous-sized spa pool. With a lot of Annear's boating to be done in the Northern waters that just happen to be full of crocs, stingrays, snakes and other nasties, a hot or cold swim in the safety of the confines of a boat, was an absolute must.

### **Inside - another world**

From the foredeck the natural inclination is to avail yourself of the conveniently-placed central staircase that leads you up from deck level and onto the Portuguese Bridge on the flybridge level. At the top of the stairs you can choose to go either left or right for there is a door each side of the 'pilothouse' which leads you into a virtual upstairs saloon. The centre-piece or focal point of

this level was undoubtedly the ship-style full-width helm station the upright dash fascia of which housed just about every imaginable navigational and operational feature known to the seafarer.

Seated on the three-person Raeline skipper's bench-seat you had a great view of where you were heading, and a great view of the Mercury Marine Smartcraft DTS instrumentation and controls. The actual electronics package within this helm station was obscene, no other word for it. "I intend using this vessel as a corporate charter vessel for the oil industry," owner Geoff Annear explained. "I have had approaches from a couple of companies so I decided to go all out while I could, with a navigational package that would get me safely through whatever mother nature had to offer in our often rugged area.

"I have spent an additional \$150K on everything appropriate in fact, including the very latest Furuno CH-270 Searchlight Sonar that Wayne Beak from local Gold Coast electronics gurus EMS (Electronic Marine Solutions) kindly, or unkindly, introduced me to. Capable of cross-section scanning for instant observation in a vertical or full-circle plane and good to a maximum range of 800m, it will also allow me to undertake search and rescue work also," Annear enthused.

This helm feature, this whole flybridge level in fact was awe-inspiring to say the

least, so well was it spec'd and presented in its predominant décor of African Ash wood, highly polished stainless steel, leather lounge, glass entrypanels and UltraLeather roof and wall panels. And very accommodating it was too for as I say two people could sit with the skipper, plus there was provision to accommodate a further five or six guests on the L-shaped lounge and table setting, aft of the helm. There was even an entertainment module complete with icemaker, bottle and glass storage, servery and sink.

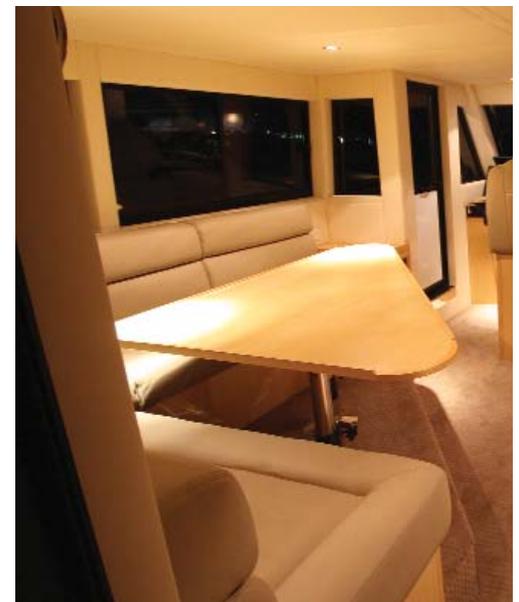
If it was a nice day you could venture out onto the flybridge overhang and have a good view of where you had been, seated on the bench seat that was attached to the rear bulkhead. This outside area was yet again most spacious for while it housed this seat and a Quad bike I found secreted under a full cover, there was still room outside the confines of the pulpit rails to house the Caribe tender, the resplendent ADC davit crane and a rather large 25-man Solas liferaft.

I must confess it was at about this stage of my perusal that I began to have real

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**The helm station was as near as you will get to a ship's bridge – all a skipper could ask for! (below left)**

**The luxury theme was very much maintained on the flybridge level also. (below)**



problems coming to grips with the sublime standard of interior presentation. From the outside it could easily be dismissed as just another albeit well-built, designed and laid out aluminium vessel; then you walk inside and discover another world of ambience, elegance and sophistication. It seemed just so incongruous and even moreso when I came to take the steps down to the saloon level. The effort the builder had gone to with this spiral staircase, a feature that wasn't even supposed to be there in the first place, was quite breath-taking. It was atrium-like in stature!

### **Volumous saloon**

Down in the saloon it was more of the same; superb standard of finish, inspirational attention to detail - and certainly designed to accommodate a crowd. The room was voluminous and granted yes this was a 19.0m boat, but it has been designed so every facet flowed into the next without impinging on the 'character' of each of the other facets. If I could offer one criticism here, it was with the timber colour. I am a timber traditionalist who prefers the darker rather than the lighter timbers, for more of a contrast; as such and it is a purely personal thing, I felt the African Ash did not do justice to the standard of (wood) craftsmanship, and it didn't stand out enough against the other furnishings and décor. For me it was too much of the same; but hey, the owner was more than

happy with it and at the end of the day - that is all that matters!

This saloon was in effect split into two distinct areas; the aft section was your galley, office and stairs area and forward of that was a lounge and dining section effectively sliced down the middle but still close enough so as to be one big circle, from a dining perspective. I estimate you would seat 10, possibly even 12 people around this entirely congenial setting of African Ash timber table and leather C-shaped lounges. Naturally these were close to the television also, a behemoth 42-inch KVH Satellite example mounted on the front bulkhead wall.

Aft of this setting and to starboard was the lower section of the painted alloy and teak timber spiral staircase to the flybridge level. MEC had indeed done a brilliant job of fitting this in three quarters of the way through the build, and an even better job of disguising the resultant void under the steps, by transforming that into a small office or navigatorium. Aft of this again was the massive MEC-inspired switchboard which was recessed into what effectively was the outer wall of the outside bathroom.

Opposite this was the galley, complete with a stand-alone 'butchers block' style of refrigeration module that I could see with its nice granite top - was already masquerading as the place where everyone puts everything, when they first step inside the saloon. Features within this

very cruising-capable galley included a bench-top four burner hob, an oven below that, a convection microwave, a range-hood, twin sinks, heaps of bench space and cupboard and drawer storage provision, and opening rear windows for good ventilation. L-shaped and very open-plan, this was more an apartment-style of kitchen rather than a cruiser galley.

### **Accommodation for six**

As you would expect in a custom-built vessel the accommodation layout is limited only by the owner's personal preferences and while in this instance it was perhaps surprising to find (in a vessel of this size) there were just the three bedrooms - that was what this owner wanted. "As is often the case Geoff wanted luxury and he wanted privacy in his own boat," Murray Owen explained, "so the sensible way in a catamaran to achieve that objective, was to spread his accommodation throughout the portside hull. In other words, have his cabin athwartships in the bow, and the ensuite aft where perhaps a fourth cabin might normally be sited."

As such, both the bathroom and the bedroom were large rooms, the ensuite

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**What an entry feature onto the flybridge level, an atrium in reality. (below)**





especially arguably the largest I have seen in an under-20m catamaran. It was a bonafide bathroom, not a module, and featured separate shower cubicle and head and also included a vanity, hand-basin, towel racks, towel cupboard, opening porthole, extractor fan and even one of the off-vertical longitudinal feature windows. A very modern, easy to clean and spacious bathroom!



Restricted by the height of the tunnel in any catamaran, the designer has done the sensible thing and placed the berth in this master cabin athwartship, which of course demanded the berth be elevated. The massive climb you often find in a situation such as this was cleverly negated by the inclusion of a virtual (carpeted) staircase to provide an easy climb up to this level. As in the case of the saloon and flybridge level the decor was more of the same – and beautifully presented. Features included African Ash wood, UltraLeather bed-frame, wall and ceiling panels and covering, overhead and wall reading lights, overhead hatch, a head-board, huge wardrobe and heaps of drawer storage. It was definitely a room befitting a 'master'.



Over on the starboard side the 'guest' accommodation was in comparison, a little tighter in space allocation, simply because there were two accommodation facilities on this side. The forward cabin featured a queen-size fore and aft berth, with alongside it a smaller ensuite in this instance with vanity, hand-basin, head and remote shower. Perhaps embracing the family ideal the second bedroom layout consisted of two single bunks immediately side by side. I have no doubt these could very easily masquerade as a double berth should there be a third couple aboard.

Two other features caught my eye on this side of the MEC Yachts 19. One was



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(from the top)

The flybridge level catered well for guests, as well as skipper – the perfect setting on a long passage.

That's a very, very big saloon!

This boat was built for a crowd; the galley would certainly cater well for that crowd.

The internal staircase was a brilliant after-thought - well worth the additional effort and expense.

the house-size laundry in the companionway, again built of proportions suited to catering appropriately for a reasonable complement of 'live-aboards'. The other, hidden behind a full-height vertical cupboard, was the 'mechanical' side of the very serious searchlight sonar system. A veritable periscope upside down, which extended below and well beyond the extremities of the hull bottom, all of a sudden I gained some insight into the seriousness of the electronics package Annear was alluding to earlier – and just why it added up to a mammoth \$150K!

**The mechanicals**

The seriousness of the mechanical specification didn't just stop at the electronics though, for during my in-depth poke around the 'bowels' of the 34.5 tonne (heavy ships) aluminium-constructed *Seacret I* discovered item after item befitting a serious passage-making ocean cruiser. Being a catamaran configuration of this dimension and volume, the two hulls lend themselves nicely to the installation of all your mechanicals and of course to the two 3000 litre fuel tanks and the two 400 litre water tanks which were also in the hulls.

Not much water capacity you may suggest, but of course backing that up was a Village 120lph watermaker. Air-conditioning was another 'biggie' with separate MarineAir systems providing a whopping 108,000btu of capacity to every corner of the boat. The bow thruster, a bit of a novelty in a catamaran (they are most handy though, in larger cats), was a 25hp Sidepower system and the anchoring features included two

The 'master' accommodation was classy. The berth was easily accessible on both sides. (top)

Its not often you find a bathroom of this dimension, on a catamaran. (above left)

Guests were well catered for in the second queen-size VIP cabin on the starboard side. (above right)

The 'searchlight sonar' was a very integral facet of Geoff Annear's future plans for *Seacret*. (right)

In keeping with the size of *Seacret*, the laundry was of appropriate specification. (far right)



permanently bow-mounted Sarca anchors and a Muir VRC3500 windlass.

It takes a lot of power to run these plus davit cranes, wipers, lighting, Aqualuma underwater lights, the Jabasco heads, the Interceptor trim tabs and the like, so into play to manage this 12V/24V/240V demand comes a management system that includes two 11kVA Cummins Onan Gensets and a Victron 1500W charger which supply power to a significant bank of Delkor N200 200Ah batteries, four house, two engine and two Genset. There was no Inverter as such, as by the very nature of the region the boat will operate in, the Gensets will be utilised 24/7.

The final mechanical 'item' to allude to, is the all-important engine power! One of owner Geoff Annear's major considerations when he sat down with designer and builder was for a vessel that would perform well both at top speed, if he needed to out-run a storm, and at a generous cruising speed. "If I am to be ferrying clients to and from oil platforms and locations, I need to be doing it in a timely fashion," Annear explained. "But obviously that 'timely fashion' has to be as economical as possible, so I stipulated a cruise speed to go with my top speed of 25kts, of around 18kts. I got that and more, for back the throttles off even more and I have a most acceptable long-range cruise speed also, of around the 9-10kts."

The way he achieved this was courtesy of his engines of choice, a pair of Quantum Series 8.3litre, inline 6-cylinder 500hp QSC8.3-500 HO Cummins diesels which ran through Twin Disc 2.04:1 gearboxes and conventional shaft drive, to the 5-blade Rogers & Lough 25"Dx26"P propellers. Interestingly this particular QSC HO range goes as high as 600hp so I feel it is a real compliment to the hull design that the top speed of 25kts was reached so seemingly effortlessly - with the 500hp versions. It just rose to the plane and got to top speed very quickly, considering it was a 34.5-tonne vessel.

## Conclusion

The saying a sheep in wolf's clothing springs to mind to sum up the MEC Yachts 19. As mentioned earlier, the rugged and decidedly durable exterior very much belied what you found behind

closed doors. There the craftsmanship of the wood, the finish and presentation of the features and the décor were of superyacht standard; I just couldn't fault anything! The designer and builder did a brilliant job, especially considering there were one or two 'detours' during the course of the build. For me the specification and attention to detail from a mechanical perspective was especially exemplary, surely most satisfying for the owner who intends predominantly using the vessel in a reasonably rugged and unforgiving part of Australia. Considering the standard of equipment aboard, the fact the price tag was able to be kept to just \$2.65-million for a vessel of this volume and stature, is surely a huge compliment to owner, builder, designer and all concerned.

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## SPECIFICATIONS (cont)

Stainless steel fabrication	MEC Yachts
Saloon doors	TaylorMade
Trim tabs	Interceptor custom
Helm chair	Raeline - double
Batteries	House: 4 x Delkor N200 - 200Ah Engine: 2 x Delkor N200 - 200Ah Genset: 2 x Delkor N200 - 200Ah
Upholstery	Leather - Raeline
Base price of boat	\$2,400,000.00
Price as tested	\$2,650,000.00

## ELECTRONICS

Autopilot	Furuno
GPS/plotter/sounder	Furuno
VHF	ICOM
Radar	Furuno
Entertainment systems	Sony/Fusion
Engine instruments	Cummins Mercruiser
Wind instruments	Furuno
Software system	Furuno/NobleTec
Switch panel	MEC Yachts

## SPECIFICATIONS

Design name	MEC Yachts 19
Year launched	2010
Designer	Andrew McDonald-Smith (McDonald-Smith Marine Designers)
Interior fesigner	MEC Yachts / McDonald-Smith Marine Designers
Builder	MEC Yachts
Survey	USL 1B/1D
LOA	19.2m
LWL	17.9m
Beam	6.1m
Draft	1.3m
Displacement	34.5 tonnes (heavy ships)
Max Speed	25kts
Cruise speed	18kts
Construction	Aluminium superstructure and hull
Fuel cap	6000L
Water cap	800L
Engines make:	2 x 500hp Cummins QSC 8.3L
Gearboxes	Twin disc 2.04:1
Drive train	Conventional shaft drive
Propellers	5-blade Rogers & Lough 25" x 26"P
Generator	2 x Onan 11 kVA
Charger	24V / 12V System - Victron 1500W charger
Air conditioning	MarineAir -108,000btu
Watermaker	Village - 120lph
Bow thruster	Sidepower - 25hp
Anchor winch	Muir VCR3500
Anchors	Sarca
Steering	Gateway Hydraulics (Electro Hydraulic) MEC Yachts
Engine controls	Cummins Mercruiser DTS
Lighting	Cantalupi/Hella/Aqualuma Underwater
Paint (topsides)	Jotun - Empalite
Paint (antifouling)	Jotun
Hatches - deck	TaylorMade
Hatches - deck	MEC Yachts Bulkhead-style - Built to survey
Wipers	Vetus
Windscreens/windows	TaylorMade
Porthole Hatches	TaylorMade
Heads	Jabasco Silent-Flush electric
Veneer/plywood	African Ash
Deck dinish	Flexiteek by Aczel Marine
Liferaft	Solas 25-man
Davit Crane/passarella:	ADC 600kg
Tender	Ocean Cylinder / Caribe RIB