

Super cool cats



Bjorn Johansson Design is currently working on two ground-breaking projects in collaboration with other British companies, and both harness the versatility and pace of the catamaran. First is a superyacht support vessel offering speeds and load-carrying capacity superior to the mother ship, and second is a high-speed luxury cat with an integrated glass bridge. Michael Howorth reports

Two companies in the south of England are sharing their knowledge and experience to create what may become the ideal yacht-support vessel.

Bjorn Johansson Design, of Bembridge on the Isle of Wight, believes that owners will gain more freedom by using a support ship whose mission package is superior to that of the mother ship, rather than a converted oil-rig supply craft as is often the case

with present-day support vessels. Johansson's idea is for a wide-bodied second vessel capable of guarding the mother ship and matching or exceeding her speed. Amongst this escort vessel's many attributes would be a transoceanic range and the capacity to carry and launch three 11.5m tenders, a mini-sub, jet-skis and sailing dinghies. It would also have a dive store and wheeled vehicles on board. One of the main advantages of all this to the mother ship would be that her size could be kept below 60m, giving her access to most of

world's favourite yachting locations, which the owners of larger yachts cannot enter. And the cost of this combination is likely to be less than that of a 90-plus metre vessel.

The idea involves harnessing the speed and flexibility of a catamaran and giving it the shadow yacht treatment to form the ShadowCAT. This support vessel is being created using the technology developed by BMT Nigel Gee and Associates Ltd, (an independent company of naval architects and marine-design consultants formed in 1986 and



based in Southampton) in the design of the X-Craft, an 80m 53 knot catamaran that BMT created for the US Navy's Office of Naval Research. Built in Seattle and launched in 2005, the X-Craft was the result of an extensive research and development programme aimed at producing a high-speed platform that met the US Navy's requirements for a fast, mission-flexible vessel.

BMT's design for the hull form resulted in a unique swathe-like catamaran with waisted waterline sections to improve motion levels in high sea states. The X-Craft has transoceanic capability at 20 knots and can operate unrestricted at high speed in sea states up to 4, BF5. It is designed to carry around 700 tonnes of deadweight and has a flexible mission-equipment-handling system comprising an enclosed operations bay serviced by a vertical cargo lift to the helicopter deck, an overhead gantry crane system and a stern ramp capable of deploying large support vessels while under way.

The concept of handling, managing and storing large items of equipment on this type of platform is directly applicable to a yacht-support vessel's role, and these ideals form the basis of the technology from which much of the ShadowCAT notion is derived. In addition to its ability to carry tenders and toys, the supply vessel will have bunkering facilities for refuelling the mother ship and ample stowage for spares and consumables. The design also includes an unobscured

helicopter landing deck with a lift to the operations deck for stowage.

The flat-panelled style used for the ShadowCAT is intended to ensure quick and cheap manufacturing, while the styling could be adapted to suit the requirements of an owner. The top speed should be 28 knots, with a transatlantic rate of about 15 knots.

At present the ShadowCAT's layout is designed to accept the owner's arrival by helicopter, with transfer by tender to the mother ship, while a spacious reception lounge ensures that the owner will be comfortable should he have to spend time on board. However, the configuration and technical specifications are flexible enough to be tailored to a wide range of requirements. For example, the operational range could be significantly increased by using the mother ship's bunkering, or the operations bay could be reconfigured to carry fewer but larger tenders.

Bjorn Johansson is also working on a beautifully styled new 20m catamaran (see below). This high-speed luxury motor yacht is the latest design in the C-Storm collection, a collaboration between Johansson Design and the naval architect and broker the Soffe-St Clair Partnership. The new yacht will be powered by two water jets up to a speed of 50 knots, and will remain comfortable in conditions that would cause most mono hulls to struggle.

Duncan Soffe, a partner in Soffe-St Clair, says: 'We recognised there was a gap in the market for a catamaran



Above: a hull model for the ShadowCAT ready for testing

designed to superyacht standards, and set to work on developing a state-of-the-art performance yacht that is also a stable platform at anchor. This yacht transforms all expectations of what a performance yacht should be.'

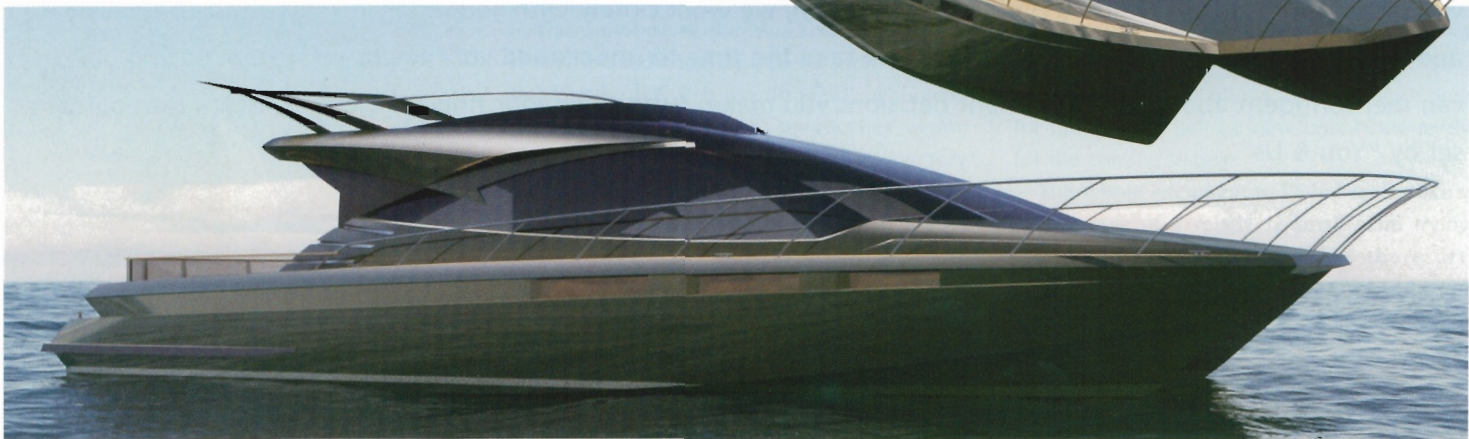
With its spaciouly light interior and integrated glass bridge, the catamaran will offer the interior volume and ambience of a much larger craft. At anchor it will remain steady for entertainment and play, and will not suffer from the uncomfortable rolling so often experienced on many sports boats.

The large aft deck is perfect for relaxation or deploying water toys, while a draft of only 61cm will bring all those desirable small anchorages within easy reach.

'This yacht will be perfect for use as a private yacht or as an exclusive passenger ferry on which to transport guests in unsurpassed luxury,' says Soffe.

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Above and inset: the new 20m high-speed C-Storm catamaran, which Bjorn Johansson hopes will fill a gap in the superyacht market