

Built for tough stuff

Kirby Naiad 9.8 custom designed as a tender and for all-weather fishing

■ Mike Brown

When Kirby Marine is asked to create a special one-off, the process starts with selecting a proved basic design which removes a lot of expensive and unnecessary development work.

When asked to create an all-weather, long range, hardcore fishing boat with a sideline as a tender, the chosen parent design was a 9.8m Naiad rigid inflatable built for the New Zealand coastguard.

The Bootlegger retains the 750hp Scania diesel driving through a gearbox and the huge Hamilton 364 water jet (364 represents the jet's diameter in millimeters).

This is bulky engineering and many builders would encase it tightly to minimise intrusion into passenger spaces but Kirby thinks differently: cramped conditions make service and repair work difficult or impossible. There are boats needing their engines removed for the simplest work.

Here the engine box is high and crowned with a gas-strut clamshell top that exposes the mechanicals. The box, covered by a padded top, is the right height to sit on.

The Furuno electronic fit-out

is mouth-watering, as it should be for a bill of more than \$40,000. It includes twin 15-inch touch screens, 2kW dual-frequency sounder presenting 3-D images and linked to a satellite compass that removes the effect of sea waves on the picture. A heat compensator further refines the display. There are, of course, radar and autopilot on board.

With six power points for reels, electrical demand can be high. Besides the twin starting batteries there are three deep-cycle batteries aboard, with additional charging provided by a pair of solar panels. These are roof mounted but nearly indestructible wherever they might be placed. The hardtop is a busy place with the radar scanner and assorted aerials sharing the remaining space with a light bar — arranged so no light hits the deck.

The buoyant tubes are foam-filled D-section. This increases internal beam, allowing fishing access to all parts. The aluminium component of the sides has been raised to give security to standing anglers and to accommodate reels, pot winch and hauling arm, sinker cups and rod sockets. These can be used to take the bait board, allowing it to be placed close to the action.

More rods can be housed in the hardtop rocket launchers.

The console is big enough to accommodate a toilet but the owner declined to fit one leaving it available for bulk stowage. It has a full-height windscreen and immaculately laid-out control panel. Driver and one pampered passenger have the use of the magical Ullman jockey seats. At the front is a double seat over a big esky, which the owner preferred over a kill tank.

Considering the presence of the vast engine box, there is a surprisingly big clear area of deck, sheathed in teak-look SeaDek. This is the impervious stuff that wears long but is kind to bare feet.

The anchor is mounted in Kirby's almost-standard location under the buoyant tube. Adjacent to its windlass is a roomy storage compartment. Compared with the traditional rigid inflatable Bootlegger is extravagantly endowed with places to put things: there are even side pockets.

Fitting the secondary role of tender, Bootlegger has a substantial tow post forward, and also an item many insurers insist on: AIS or automatic identification system. This allows searchers for the victim of a parted towline to locate the lost vessel. It is also a handy system for locating your mother vessel in a darkened, unfamiliar anchorage.

The task Bootlegger was primarily specified for is offshore fishing. Like many who buy Naiads, its owner is time poor and can't always choose pleasant weather for expeditions. There will be days of impossible weather but few to trouble this boat.

The experience of its New Zealand parent is the hull can handle almost anything; the limiting factor is the occupants' endurance.

The inherently soft riding characteristics coupled with those seats aid that endurance to the extent there are going to be few days written off.

LOWDOWN

KIRBY NAIAD 9.8 CUSTOM BUILD

Price Not revealed (at owner's request)
Length overall 9.8m

Beam 3.2m
Fuel capacity 800 litres

Motor 750hp Scania diesel plus Hamilton water jet

Builder Kirby Marine, 24 Sparks Road, Henderson, 9410 2270



The engine box is high and it's easy to expose the mechanicals for any work.