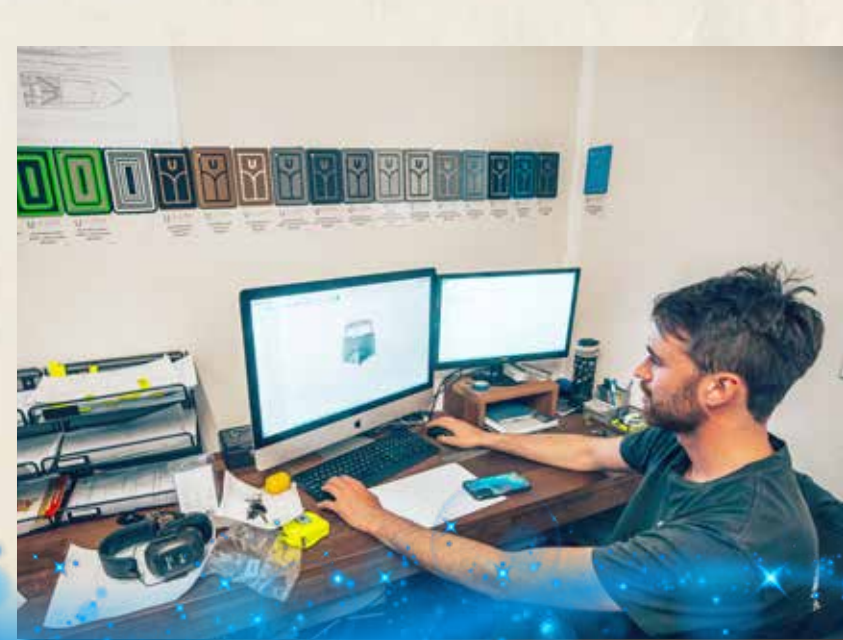


SIMON MINOPRIO



boats
INNOVISION

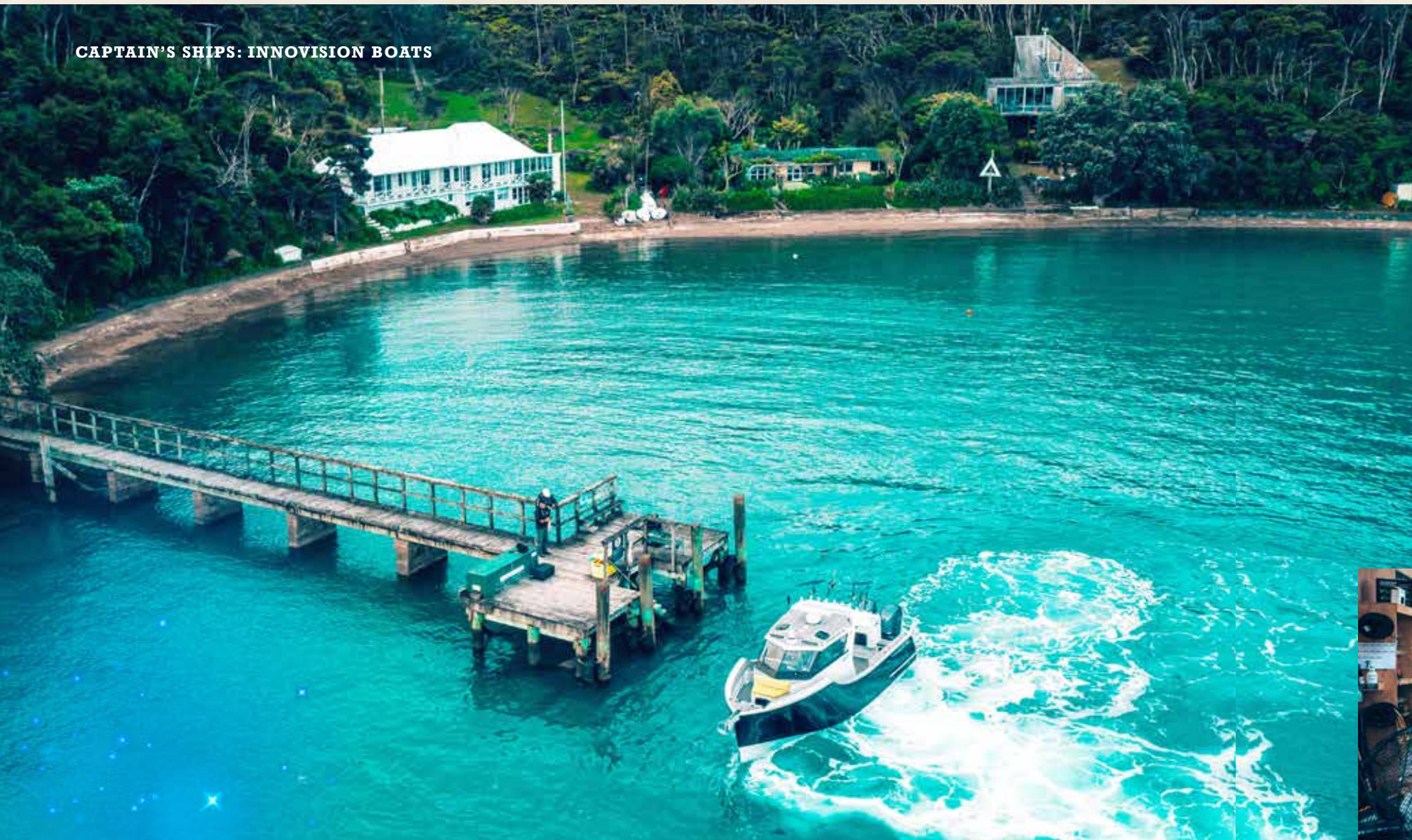
SIMON SAYS

THE CAPTAIN CROSSES THE DITCH TO HOOK UP WITH ANOTHER
KIWI BOAT BUILDER ABOUT TO TAKE ON THE AUSTRALIAN MARKET.
MEET SIMON MINOPRIO, FOUNDER OF INNOVISION BOATS.



WORDS and IMAGES
The Captain





FROM CITY TO SEA:
The Innovision factory is located just 30 minutes from the Auckland CBD, but after checking it out we'll be hitting the water and heading to Kawau Island.



“WHEN WE MENTION THAT HIS BRAND NAME SOUNDS SUSPICIOUSLY LIKE HE’S SELLING SUNNIES ON THE SIDE, SIMON CHUCKLES.”

The Captain is in New Zealand, but it feels like we never left home. That could be because we’re anchored in Mansion House Bay off Kawau Island, watching wallabies consume the lawn of the old governor’s mansion. In 1870, Governor George

Grey populated the island with exotic plants and wildlife as part of some DIY science experiment. The Aussie marsupials are now unwelcome immigrants. Not so The Captain’s crew. Innovision Boats boss Simon Minoprio is in the running for world’s best host. An electrician by trade and former competitive sailor, Simon decided to get into the boat design game 11 years ago. After building up his boutique brand, he’s sending his first Innovision plate boat over to Western Australia, hopefully just the first of many orders.

After a tour of his Auckland factory and an epic day on the water, we’re now chilling on Simon’s IV808 Venture. Actually, it belongs to one of his extremely accommodating clients, as does the 656 anchored alongside us, which in its McLaren sports car light blue with orange detail paint job stands out from the crowd. We’re quaffing cold ones and talking about Simon’s, er, vision.

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

The story goes that about 20 years back, Simon was in Europe and came across a Wally boat powered by a gas turbine. Although he didn’t realise at the time, he would eventually fall in love with its distinctive plumb bow.

“After a couple of bottles of wine one night, I thought, shit, that’s a tin boat,” he recalls. “I’d been fishing with some mates in a pontoon boat and wasn’t overly impressed. When I spoke my mind, they dared me to build my own boat if I knew better. So I saved some cash and built the first one.”

While coming up with his design, Simon admits that he wanted to mate a Wally with a Chris-Craft. “Back when I first saw them 20 years ago, Wally boats were out there, beautifully finished with their edgy architecture and superstructure,” he says. “They’re probably not everybody’s cup of tea, but I thought they were sick boats, epic. And I just love the plumb bow. Smoosh that together with the classic lines of the Chris-Craft and you get an Innovision.”

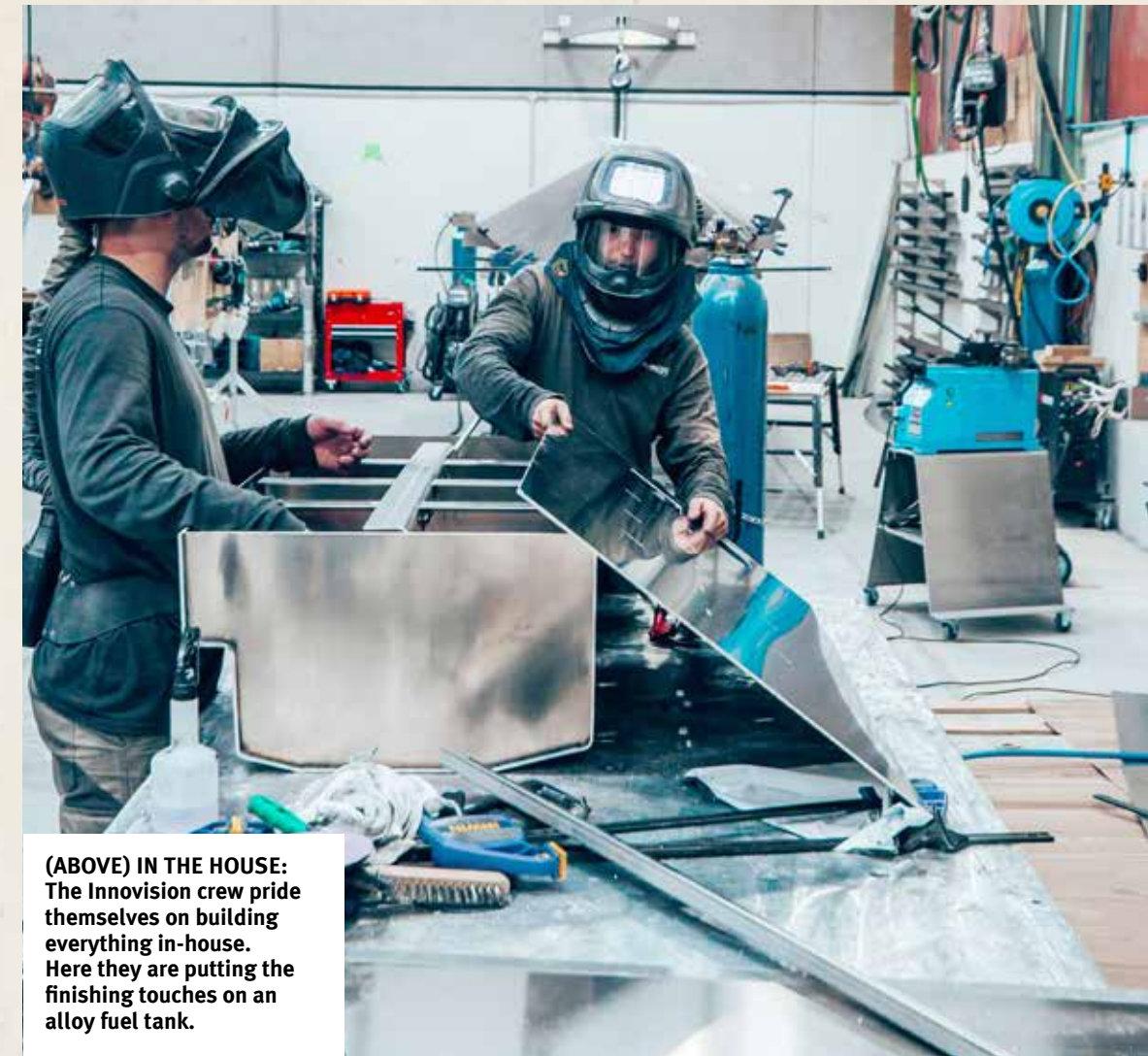
When we mention that his brand name sounds suspiciously like he’s selling sunnies on the side, Simon chuckles.

“Back when I was sailing, I’d had an eye op and





IV757 EXPLORER
 LOA: 7.65m
 Beam: 2.65m
 Bottom: 6mm
 Side and deck: 4mm
 Deadrise: 19°
 Tow weight: 3100kg approx.
 Fuel: 425L



(ABOVE) IN THE HOUSE:
 The InnoVision crew pride themselves on building everything in-house. Here they are putting the finishing touches on an alloy fuel tank.



IV555 ACTIVE
 LOA: 5.56m
 Beam: 2.35m
 Bottom: 5mm
 Side and Deck: 4mm
 Deadrise: 18°
 Tow Weight: 1500kg approx.
 Fuel: 150L

“I DON'T THINK I BUILT ONE BOAT THE SAME — THERE WERE CONSTANT CHANGES TO IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY OF THE BOATS.”

couldn't see too good, so I called my team Vision Yachting. Later on, I was importing a product into NZ and called the company Vision Innovation. When I started the boat brand, we couldn't decide on a name, so I decided to flip it and came up with InnoVision.”

INNOVISION EVOLUTION

For his first few boats, Simon contracted out the fabrication. Then a bloke from New Plymouth got in touch, saying he wanted to build his own InnoVision 8m in his shed. Gary Nothcott would build six more boats for Simon.

The fit-outs were even more random. “I was doing the fit-outs on the road outside my house,” Simon says. On rainy days I'd go to work, but on sunny days I'd be fitting out each boat, putting the glass in, cutting the carpet up on the footpath. I'd go out to Yamaha to bolt the engine on.”

Things got more professional when Simon met Luke and Kelly Seuren from Tangaroa Marine in Whangarei and began building the boats in their factory, working with their team. “It really helped the development process. I could understand where I needed to make design changes. In the first few years, I don't think I built one boat the same — there were constant changes to improve the efficiency of the boats.”

Before long, Tangaroa Marine couldn't handle the increasing demand for Innovation builds on top of their regular work. It was time for Simon to get his



own shed. "We outgrew that in a year. Now we've got 400sqm factory in Auckland, a team of 10 and make 15-20 boats a year, depending on the size. We're working on two new models for 2024."

Simon is the first to admit it's been a rough haul, but at about 70 builds and counting, he's confident they've cracked it. "I got laughed out of the first three boat shows I entered," he says. "To be honest, the easiest part of the whole process was designing it. It was hard to market — it takes time for people to accept a different style of boat. Then it was about building the right team. We've got a great group of guys now. We'll stay small and maintain the quality."

Speaking of design, Simon, who puts a plumb bow on a tinnie?

PLUMB CRAZY

Even though the plumb bow is still an oddity in Australasian waters, Simon points out that in Europe, the design goes back to the late 19th century. "It lengthens the waterline of the boat so you can get a bit wider in the back, which increases the stability," he says. "It fines up your entry so going into head chop, it cuts more into the wave and your hydrodynamic lift isn't as great — so when you cut in you get that extra lift from the buoyancy, then the hydrodynamic lift and then the lift off the chines. With a conventional bow you get the buoyancy and hydrodynamic lift at the same time, which is why a raked bow lifts higher and comes down harder. With the plumb bow the pitch is a lot less."

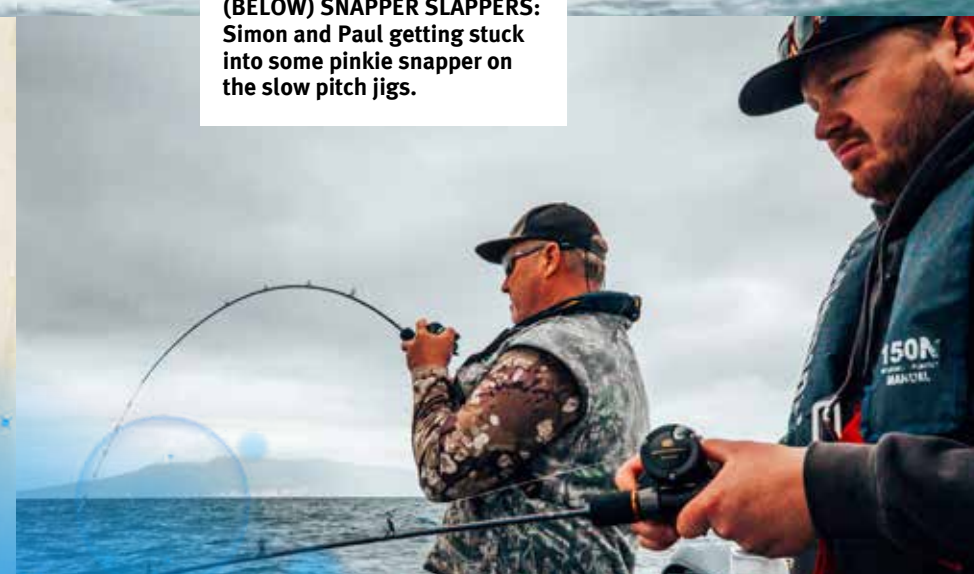
"SIMON IS THE FIRST TO ADMIT IT'S BEEN A ROUGH HAUL, BUT AT ABOUT 70 BUILDS AND COUNTING, HE'S CONFIDENT THEY'VE CRACKED IT."

IV656 EXPLORER
LOA: 6.65m
Beam: 2.5m
Bottom: 6mm
Side and Deck: 4mm
Deadrise: 18°
Tow Weight: 2450kg approx.
Fuel: 275L



(BELOW) MORE MODELS INCOMING: Simon has plans for two new model releases in 2024. Keep your eyes peeled.

(BELOW) SNAPPER SLAPPERS: Simon and Paul getting stuck into some pinkie snapper on the slow pitch jigs.



What about those old salts who reckon a plumb bow creates too much bow steer?

"I imagine you would if you carried the keel line forward and then kicked it up," Simon replies. "But ours starts coming up sooner and we've got chines that support the front of the boat, so when you're on the broach angle she's all good. I've been out in some pretty shitty conditions and she was fine. It's all about finding that recipe to get the balance right — it could be better in a head sea if it had less chine, but then in a following sea it wouldn't be so great."

SAFETY FIRST

Simon nominates safety as at the forefront of Innovision design, saying his boats' lower centre of gravity compared to the relative buoyancy ensures better stability. "We run a massive structure in our hulls — two buoyancy chambers down the side and four longitudinals per side, frames every 800mm and a 10mm keel bar down the middle. You can punish them pretty hard, but the hulls are really quiet in the water because the surface area of the panels is small. I want peace of mind my boat's not going to fall apart or crack. Especially now we're exporting to Australia, the last thing I want is to have to hop on a plane and come over to fix boats!"

That said, Simon's confident his boats can handle the rough stuff. A lot of that confidence comes from the punishment given to the 8m boat fabricated by Gary Northcott six years ago.

"New Plymouth is on the west coast, so as soon as you go round the corner, you're in the Tasman Sea getting smashed by Southern Ocean rollers," Simon says. "It's a brutal place to go boating, but also a good testing ground. Gary's 808 is on its third Yamaha now — he rolls them out every 2000 hours. He's done around 5000 hours on one of our original designs — that's a lot more than most people do in a lifetime."

With all Innovision centre consoles, the sides are partially enclosed, which act as defacto pontoons. "It's not a pontoon down where your toe kicks, just up high where you need the buoyancy," Simon says. "So, if you're going out through the surf or over a bar and you cock it up and your boat gets swamped, your buoyancy's high — it's always going to be above your centre of gravity."

Unlike many other plate boat manufacturers,



IV808 VENTURE
LOA: 8.15m
Beam: 2.7m
Bottom: 6mm
Side and deck: 4mm
Deadrise: 19°
Tow weight: 3400kg approx.
Fuel: 487L

JUST SAY RAYMARINE

At the helm, a custom electrical panel explains all the switches and how to power up the boat. Simon takes his electronics seriously. "We've got a full Raymarine set-up," he says. "You couldn't squeeze much more into a boat this size. There's a 19in XMSL on the dash and a 12in XM custom-mounted at the back of the hardtop, a Halo 3ft radar, plus FLIR night vision. It's about a \$50,000 package. It does the job — we were out there today in bad conditions and got a pretty clear picture."

A lot of Simon's boats have Raymarine packages and he rates it as tidy and user-friendly. "But it's probably also because of my suppliers Lusty and Blundell, who stand behind the product 100 per cent. The sonar module wouldn't update on this boat, so they got a brand-new unit, updated it in the shop and came down to the boat at 7am to reinstall it so the owner could be out fishing by 9am."

Simon's not a big fan of foam. "If you have to repair the boat, you can't weld plate with foam on the backside," he says. "With the structure and strength of our design, it's not necessary. The pontoon guys do it because their pontoons are just 3mm and they drone and bang — one way to dampen that is to pump them full of foam."

CHASING BIRDS

It's at this point that a gannet plunges into the bay like a guided missile. Looks like a bust-up, which is ironic as we've just spent the entire day searching for bird strikes and work-ups all around the Hauraki Gulf, almost out to Great Barrier Island — about 120 nautical miles all up — with a few kingfish and a couple of snapper to show for it. Paul Senior from lure manufacturer Ocean Angler was along for the ride.

"His G-bombs lures are super-efficient around bust-ups, but we didn't get much chance to check them out," Simon says. "We spent two or three hours driving around the gulf trying to find gannets diving like that one. If Paul had listened to me, we would've used the radar and realised there were no work-ups out there because there were no birds."

We did get to check out amazing scenery, whales and dolphins — and put the 808 through its paces. "You can't control the weather," Simon says. "We've had 15–30 knots at times — not necessarily the best fishing conditions. Out at Flat

"WE'VE JUST SPENT THE ENTIRE DAY SEARCHING FOR BIRD STRIKES AND WORK-UPS ALL AROUND THE HAURAKI GULF — ABOUT 120NM ALL UP."



ALL BASES COVERED:
The Innovision range runs from 515 to 909.





(BELOW) THE GONGS: Innovision have picked up a boatload of awards over the years.



“THE BOAT WAS REALLY STABLE AND SAFE IN THOSE CONDITIONS — YOU CAN’T TIP THEM, THEY STAY FLAT ON THE KEEL.”



(ABOVE) SLOP STOPPER: The IV808 punching hard into some seriously shitty conditions.

Rock it was probably 20-25 knots with about 1m-1.5m of chop. It was running hard so I was going upwind into it at about 20 knots and downwind at 20-25. The boat was really stable and safe in those conditions — you can't tip them, they stay flat on the keel."

PICK AN OPTION

With the gannets gone, we're back into boat chat as Simon ticks off the features of the 808. At the bow is a Lone Star drum winch set-up, standard on all his boats mainly because it keeps the anchor wells clean and minimises salt build-up. There's a seat up the front and toe kicks on the sides. The full walkway is about 300mm wide and the two helm seats are comfy bolstered chairs with a rack underneath to take chilly bins/eskies and drawers above them. Other features include Hella lighting, Exploding Fish 360 rod holders and an impressive custom bait station that Simon is very proud of.

"Our deluxe bait station has the full tackle drawer on the front," he says "It's a dry drawer with a false front so any spray runs straight off. A lot of our boats have this bait station, it's an uncomplicated, practical

design. All the wet areas, the wash-down pumps and plumbing, and fuel filters are tucked away underneath in service compartments."

The bait station is just one of the Innovision options. "Superyacht Coatings in Tauranga do all our boats and you can get full custom paint, any colour of the rainbow. Same with upholstery — we've got an old bloke who does a stunning job out of his garage. All our people stand by their work."

Simon says Innovision can take the boats right back to bare bones or pump them out to full custom, depending on customer requirements. "We can strip out the bait station, the seating, customise the hardtop lengths, to suit the owner's boating or fishing needs — a family day out, towing kids on a biscuit, the boats are suited for anything and everything. It's my brand, but it's the client's boat."

The 808 runs twin Yamaha 200s with the full Helm Master EX, which push her along at up to 45 knots, depending on the load.



FISHABILITY PLUS

With centre cabs and centre consoles available, Simon's confident his vessels will suit Aussie fishing styles. "We've also got a sedan cruiser with twice as much transom size and space at the back and a longer hardtop," he says. "There's plenty of room to fish, but it's also got a big lounge for cruising around and day boating."

He rates the fishability of the 555 as awesome. "The wider boat means there's a lot of room, giving 360-degree fishability. The console is wider so you can have two people sitting behind it protected from the wind without losing walk-around space. There are full toe kicks around the front and a step up to the casting platform. And there's easy access to the back. We rig our engines high up and all the hydraulic hoses come out low down, so you can walk across the back easily."



(BELOW) AWESOME ANCHORAGE: As far as anchorages go, they don't get much better than the picturesque Mansion House Bay.



(BELOW) RECORD BREAKER: Simon wrangles what might just be the smallest kingfish we've ever seen in New Zealand.



www.thecaptain.tv

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MORE INFO

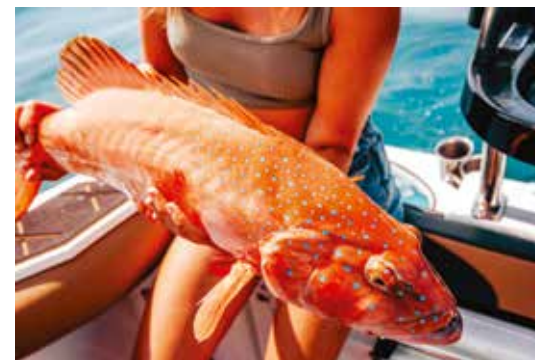
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WHITTLEY SL 27 HT OB

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