

Purple Haze — new racer

aims to
'kiss
the
sky'



Seeing this little racer out in front of a very competitive trailer sailer winter series fleet (on more than one occasion) prompts us to investigate further. The boat responsible for this not so easy feat is the Elliott 780 Purple Haze.



The little Elliott leaves a clean wake upwind.



The superb finish is not just external.



Accelerating downwind in the light breeze.

Having seen many photos of the boat in *Boating Yards* over the last two years we are certainly keen to test this new speedster.

As a change of venue for the test our intrepid team heads west to Herald Island in the upper reaches of Auckland's Waitemata Harbour where Purple Haze lives on a mooring.

While the camera boat ferries crew from the wharf we have time to do our deck and interior inspection.

The two years the boat was under construction and the skilful workmanship of owner and builder Grant Barker are evident as we climb on board.

Starting at the long sloping transom, there is an Arco solar panel mounted to starboard and this is the sole source of power generation. Barker reports that even the longest of parties do not give the single battery any problems.

Immediately forward of the transom on the aft deck are two enormous lockers, boasting more than enough

team guess is only around five knots, but there is only five knots of breeze.

On this point of sail the little Elliott impresses us with its performance and ease of handling. Everything on the boat is a one-hand operation. Even pushing as hard as we can in the light southerly we can barely get the boat to heel.

With the end of the deep water night it is decided to douse the kite and try Purple Haze's upwind performance.

The winch power comes from two Lewmar 16 single speed self tailers, mounted on the aft end of the cabin top and all sail controls run aft to each winch. The halyards are held by Easi-lock rope clutches, while all of the other controls are cleated with Ronstan jam cleats.

The rig is a single spreader system with check spreader and, in true Elliott fashion backstay-less. The rig was built by Mast and Spar Services and supplied to Barker in kitset form.

The cabin front is broken up by a

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Immediately for'ard of the transom on the aft deck are two enormous lockers, boasting more than enough stowage capacity for sails, dive gear and other cruising essentials. These lockers drain through the flat of the transom, just above the waterline.

The fibreglass rudder case is moulded around the laminated cedar and carbon fibre rudderblade. The clear finished kauri tiller gives us a hint as to the quality of the workmanship elsewhere.

All the stainless steel ware on Purple Haze was done by Rod Chalmers Marine.

A Harken traveller dominates the cockpit. The mainsheet system is a 4-1 tackle with a Harken ratchet block centrally mounted.

Directly below the traveller lies the outboard fuel tank. Immediately for'ard of this is the outboard well, which is home to the Johnson 8hp outboard. The well is designed to house the motor horizontally when not in use — it lives on a permanent panel which simply drops into two aluminium channels, making it an easy operation to fit or remove. The Johnson can push Purple Haze at an easy 8 knots in most conditions.

The rest of the cockpit is uncluttered, the spinnaker tweakers and jib barber haulers are cleated at the for'ard end of the cockpit, the tails are kept at bay with tail bags either side of the cockpit.

Light sailing

Once around the western side of Herald Island in the clearer breeze we hoist sail in the light southerly and begin our test.

With the spinnaker set we quickly accelerate up the harbour. Speed, by

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The cabin front is broken up by a Weaver hatch, making sail handling a breeze.

The entire deck area has an excellent non skid finish — the traditional epsom salts in paint.

The two Horizon instruments to port give speed, log, race timer and a host of other functions. As the depthsounder is not yet working we find other methods of finding the bottom. (Luckily Purple Haze is a centreboarder!) A Silva tactical compass lives on the starboard cockpit bulkhead. Both it and the depthsounder are clearly visible from all cockpit positions.



Plenty of room with three in the cockpit.



The far reaches of the upper harbour being contemplated by the mud-bound crew.

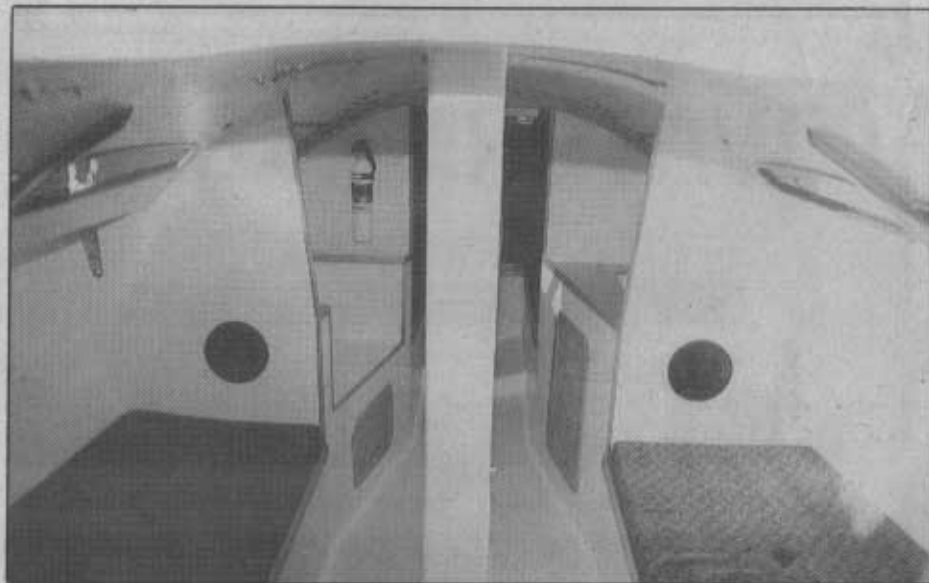


The large uncluttered side decks are made for comfortable sailing.

After a no-fuss drop and with the spinnaker pole stowed back on the boom we sheet the number one genoa in for an enjoyable upwind sail.

We uncover the true advantages of a centreboard configuration in this interesting part of the harbour. With both sails set perfectly we stop moving — all part of a cunning plan to test the centreboard lifting equipment. This proves to be another one-handed operation, with the port primary winch doing the hard part.

After we have finally freed ourselves from this small upper harbour trap we can really evaluate this stunning little boat's upwind performance. Purple Haze tracks well upwind but seems a bit sensitive to fore and aft



The centre case divides the relatively spacious main saloon.

weight distribution. The helm is light and very positive. Even sailing two-handed in the light breeze makes very little difference to both the speed and heel of the boat. (This is even the case in more breeze, as we saw the Elliott performing admirably in the last two-handed winter series race with a steady 25 knot breeze.)

Much like the rest of the boat there has been considerable thought put into the deck layout. All of the sail controls are easily worked from the helm position, short-handed the helmsman sits forward of the traveller. When fully crewed he or she sits aft of the traveller and the sheethand controls the main-sheet and traveller.

Striking interior

Having been built by an apprentice boatbuilder in his spare time over the last two years we were expecting

something special, and we are not disappointed.

The striking lilac interior contrasts the clear finished laminated kauri trim throughout.

The bow can be either two single bunks or a double if the insert is used and there is full sitting headroom.

The standard trailer sailer problem of having a mast compression post has been eliminated with the use of a laminated beam above the front bulkhead. This makes the front bunks very easy to get in and out of.

Immediately aft of this to port is provision for a gas cooker, although budgetary constraints mean this has yet to be installed. Ample storage for pots and cooking essentials is provided in the locker below.

Directly opposite is the other half of the galley, the sink. The bench top is also varnished kauri, with further stow-

age beneath. The water is supplied from the 60 litre tank through the manual sink pump.

The main saloon is divided by the large centre case, the saloon berths leading aft into the larger quarter-berths.

The main switch panel is a BEP electrical unit and is in the port quarter-berth. The Alpine stereo is fitted in the starboard quarterberth and can be reached from the cockpit while sailing.

Very careful use of colours in this boat give it a very liveable and spacious interior and, once down below it is easy to think you are on a much larger yacht.

The hull and deck are built in 12mm cedar strip with double bias cloth either side. The side decks and cockpit are the same thickness plywood.

Both the hull and decks are finished in Epithane. Epiglass also provided all

of the HT9000 epoxy, glass cloth, varnish and antifouling.

The centreboard is a steel frame fabrication with a plywood and fibreglass skin, and has all the ballast in a bulb.

Summary

Having been under construction for so long under the watchful eye of well known boatbuilding team Geary and Sherson, apprentice builder Grant Barker has made a superb job of completing Purple Haze. Barker is so impressed by the performance and practicality of the Elliott 780 he has started building a second boat on spec.

While the original design is now several years old, it is still more than competitive in the local racing scene — as we went to print Purple Haze had notched up the impressive record of four doubles from four starts — all this and cruising too!

The vitals

LOA	7.8m (25ft 6ins)
LWL	6.9m (22ft 4ins)
Beam	2.45m (8ft 2.5ins)
Draft	1.59m (5ft 3ins)
Displacement.....	1000kgs (2200lbs)
Ballast.....	400kgs (880lbs)
Designer.....	Greg Elliott
Builder	Grant Barker
Rig	Mast and Spar Services
Engine	Johnson 8hp
Paint and epoxy systems	Epiglass
Deck gear	Ronstan
Upholstery.....	Marine Covers and Canopies
Instruments	Horizon