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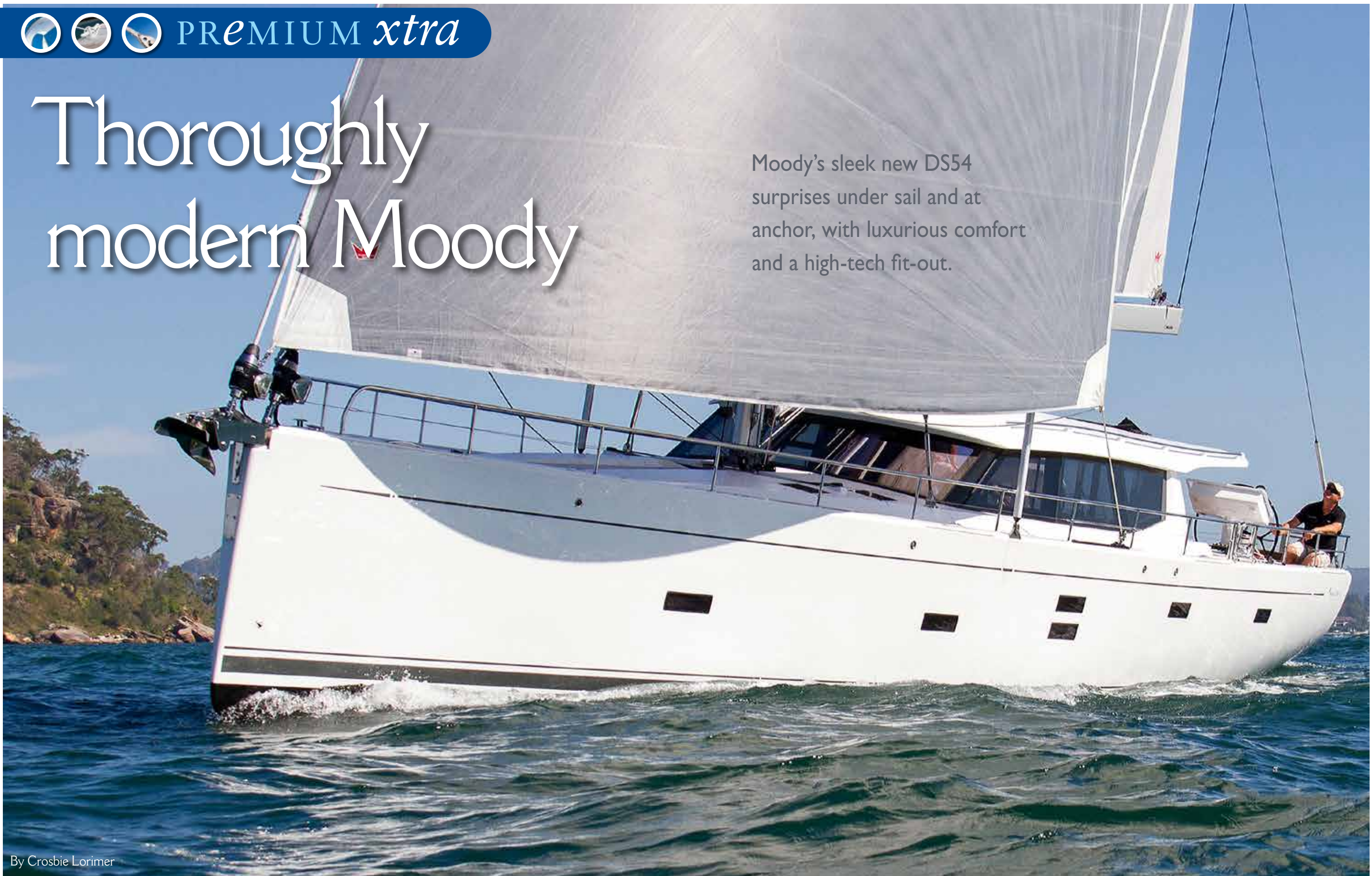
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Thoroughly modern Moody

Moody's sleek new DS54 surprises under sail and at anchor, with luxurious comfort and a high-tech fit-out.



By Crosbie Lorimer

Cast your mind back to the cruising yachts of 50 years ago and it's hard to believe it was the same era in which the screenwriter and futurist Gene Roddenberry first devised the cult sci-fi television series *Star Trek*.

Yet such is the advance in the evolution of lightweight materials and digital wizardry in the marine industry that a cruising sailor from the 1960s would feel almost as disoriented aboard a modern yacht as they would aboard the *Starship Enterprise*.

Long gone are the days of rugged exertion and hours spent mending and fixing. The axiom for today's cruising fraternity is 'more fun for less effort' and the Moody DS54 appears to be leading the charge in using technology to meet that aspiration.

This is a yacht with countless bells and whistles delivered with ingenuity and sophistication. All that and it sails well, too.

Stepping aboard the DS54, it's hard not to be seduced by the one-level living concept of contemporary deck saloon designs. The Dixon Yacht Design team set the benchmark with the Moody DS45 and now the DS54 supersedes the concept. While there are inevitably some compromises to space and deckhead heights in a couple of the berths below, the advantages to be had from time spent in the saloon enjoying an ever-changing diorama far outweighs any minor downsides from some rather eccentric shapes in a couple of the cabins.



Main pic: The spacious deck saloon layout also frees up stowage space below.

Right: The owner's cabin is well lit with natural light and is elegantly finished with stylish fabrics and cabinetry.

Far right: The galley is equipped with all the modern conveniences and enjoys an all-round view.

The Hanse Group, which now owns Moody, has made a number of astute acquisitions, gaining some considerable competitive market advantage by doing so and using this leverage very wisely. The evidence of this strategy is appreciable in some subtle ways in the DS54, such as in the fine textile trim inlays in the cabinetry and in the shower bulkhead finishes, both drawn from one of the powerboat companies acquired by Hanse.

And while on the subject of cabinetry, the extraordinarily high-quality joinery finish aboard this yacht is worthy of particular mention. Hanse is well known for this aspect of its build but the DS54 seems to ramp up the standard a further





notch, not only in what you see at first blush but also in the excellent finishing of the insides of cabinets and covers.

REFINED INTERIOR

The galley is very much in the vein of modern apartment design, allowing for easy conversation from the workspace with those seated at the dining table or out in the cockpit. Not only is this a galley with every conceivable mod con and a great all-round view to boot but, at a very practical level, this location makes a great deal of sense when at sea: the prospect of heading below to prepare a drink or food when feeling a little queasy is often enough to dissuade crew from doing the very things that reduce exhaustion and seasickness.

Being able to move quickly between cockpit and galley while watching the horizon and without having to tackle stairs makes life aboard safer and more pleasant. For those not worried about such matters, Moody also offers an option with the galley forward and at the berth level.

Everywhere belowdecks there are clever and sometimes whimsical touches: the TV cabinet beside the navigation desk also contains a chartholder, a heavy-duty sliding toolbox drawer is revealed when you lift up the stairs to the forward cabins, the saloon table edges flick over to free up space while providing cup holders on their reverse side and, in keeping with our modern city lifestyles, the DS54 even boasts its own pop-up wine bar, quite literally – a gentle press down on the Corian surface above the microwave cabinet and your wineglass and wine appear from below.

Perhaps one of the most compelling arguments for a deck saloon design is the amount of room it frees up in the hull for storage and access. Aboard the DS54, that volume is positively cavernous – so much so, that you can climb down into the engine room and into the cockpit locker. Everywhere you look there are cabinets, drawers and lockers. In fact, the only concern with respect to storage is in how much weight you might end up adding to the boat's hefty 24 tonnes of displacement after a few years of cruising. Programming the occasional race into the annual sailing calendar should at least provide an excuse to de-clutter periodically!

DOWN BELOW

The sleeping quarters, too, are about style and convenience. The owner's cabin forward is a place of retreat as much as a berth. Filled with light from the full-length skylight – the forward part of which is also a breeze-catching hatch – the interior elegantly matches lighting, fabrics and cabinetry. The cabin also offers a smart en suite and a small reading or work desk below the TV, as well as a large storage space below the bunk. The only minor quibble with this very appealing cabin would be the absence of full-height hanging space in the robe, which could be expected of a yacht whose owners might occasionally want to dress up when going ashore.

The compromise of the deck saloon configuration is most evident in the port forward cabin where the floor of the saloon forms a very low deckhead covering much of the berth. That

said, there is plenty of light in the cabin and the layout still leaves ample room in which to relax on the berth and watch the TV on the aft bulkhead. Strangely, while the cabin opposite is smaller, the less intrusive deckhead imbues a greater sense of space there.

A rear stairway on the port side, just inside the sliding doors to the cockpit, leads to a quarter berth and a small head and wash basin (with shower attachment) for day use, the space also containing a washing machine. The separation of the two stairways make this area ideal for children or crew who can move in and out of the cockpit without disturbing anyone in the forward cabins or the saloon. It also offers a wet area for hanging and drying sailing gear.

EFFORTLESS SAILING

Up on deck it's all about relaxation and effortless enjoyment. Indeed, non-sailing guests aboard modern yachts might well wonder what skill is required to sail in these days of push-button handling and the DS54 seems to strengthen their

Sails appear, disappear and get trimmed without apparently any visible action ...



case. Sails appear, disappear and get trimmed without apparently any visible action and the boat even seems to drive itself when there is no one at the helm.

Moody has this issue down pat! Everything at deck level is designed for ease of use, economy of movement and minimum effort. The DS54 can be sailed very readily two-up – sailing solo is a breeze, too – with electronic winches and instrumentation all falling easily to hand for the helmsman and away from the lounge area of the cockpit. Even the headsails no longer need unfurling manually, with two electronic furlers managing the setting and stowing with a push of a button, also saving considerable loads on the forestay.

However, Peter Hrones of Windcraft, which distributes Moody yachts in Australia, and who co-designed the DS54, says that they decided to abandon reversible winches for the sail controls as the sails simply did not provide enough load for them to work effectively. So, heaven forbid, you still have to ease the sails manually on the DS54.

If the endless configuration options for the yacht's cockpit are to be believed then there must surely be some designers at Dixon Yacht Design that spent the bulk of their childhood playing with transformer toys. There seem to be so many clever options of seat, table and cushion arrangements that one can imagine an owner scratching their head and asking themselves "now,

... the instrumentation panel at each helm position ... would do justice to the bridge of the Enterprise

how did I do that last time?" Fortunately, there's an owner's manual.

And if you have ever arrived home after a day's sailing and had that niggling and persistent feeling that you just might have flicked a couple of switches in the wrong direction as you left the boat in haste, then the DS54's C-Bus system has the answer. Among many other functions, the

programmable C-Bus panel allows a simple set-and-forget for arrival and departure – ‘On Board’, click; ‘Off Board’ click – a great touch that swiftly puts an end to nights of anxious tossing and turning at home.

SETTING THE SAILS

In a patchy 12 to 15 knot nor’easter we left the dock with the help of the very efficient bow and stern thrusters and headed down Pittwater for the open sea off Lion Island. The 146kW Volvo engine pushed us along at a business-like eight knots at 2000rpm. Had we needed more grunt or had we been in a hurry to get somewhere, the turbo kicks in at 2100rpm and the yacht could reach a top speed under power of 9.5 knots.

As it was, we were in no hurry whatsoever and soon changed mode from engine to sail with an effortless segue. Pressing the controls on the helmsman’s instrument panel unfurled the vertically battened mainsail from the mast (Windcraft have been testing an in-boom furler built by Southern Spars) and the genoa from its furler, both of which were easily trimmed by using the ubiquitous first finger digit at the electronic winches just forward of the twin steering positions.

In no time, the DS54 settled into a steady rhythm as we rode over the long swell off Barrenjoey Headland, with sheets just eased. This yacht is no lightweight, but the helm felt firm and responsive as we built to 8.5 knots of boat speed in 14 knots of breeze, a speed that could rise to an impressive 12 knots at a 140-degree true wind angle in 25 knots of breeze with the spinnaker set, according to the design velocity prediction diagrams.

Below: The DS54’s deck saloon design frees up space in the hull, including in the engine room.



Standing at the helm position gives a clear line of sight forward over the cabin top (Peter Hrones indicated that he and the design team had spent some time trying to get this clearance height right) and when seated, the helmsman can choose to look forward through the deck saloon or sit to one side and view along the side decks. Such is the amount of glazing in the deck saloon that forward visibility is no more compromised by its presence than it would be by a large dodger on any other yacht ... and with a good deal more shelter than any dodger provides, too.

Perhaps the most impressive part of the helmsman’s domain is the instrumentation panel at each helm position, which would do justice to the bridge of the *Enterprise*. Aside from the aforementioned sail controls, the panels contain Raymarine’s i70 multifunction displays and

gS125 GPS chartplotters. The flick of a finger on the screen changes the display, with the clear illumination and crisp graphics reading strongly in the brightest of sunlight. Captain Kirk would have to be happy with this set-up.

So there you have it, a very impressive yacht that is at once home, work station, entertainment venue and recreation, all to be enjoyed at the press of a button. And while this review is all drawn from a few hours aboard the boat, a truer test of the DS54’s qualities will be had in a month’s time, as two of her sister yachts are racing to Hobart.

It’s intriguing to look back on the 50 years of design evolution that has brought us to this point and to ponder what might lie ahead in the next 50.

As Spock would say: “Fascinating!” 

SPECIFICATIONS: MOODY DS54	
Hull length (LOA):	17.1m
Hull length (LWL):	15.55m
Beam:	5.2m
Draft:	2.65m (standard) 2.25m (option)
Total sail area:	160.5sq m
Displacement:	24.5t
Mast height:	25.3m
Water capacity:	800lt
Fuel capacity:	520lt
Engine:	Volvo D3-110 78kW/150hp
Cabins/berths:	4/8 (9 with crew berth)
Price from:	\$1,295,000
Price with factory-fitted options:	\$1,683,697
Designer:	Dixon Yacht Design
For more information, contact Team Windcraft, tel: (02) 9979 1709 or go to: windcraft.com.au.	

