

>> **Innovision 616 Explorer**

*Punching above its weight*

INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED SAILOR SIMON MINOPRIO HAS CREATED AN IMPRESSIVE NEW STYLE OF POWERBOAT; ONE SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED TO PERFORM WELL IN ROUGH WATER.



**◀** *Clean lines and seats positioned well forward make for a spacious uncluttered cockpit, ideal for fishing.*

**▲** *Cutting cleanly through the waves means a soft ride with virtually no spray at all reaching the windscreens.*

**W**hen one's most common view of yachties is them standing in their cockpit, shaking a fist as we blast by, it is easy to see them as quite a different species of boatie. However, in my experience, there is far more crossover than either "side" would like to admit. For example, although going fast, fishing and pottering around in powerboats is my first love, I have also enjoyed sailing cruising yachts around the Hauraki Gulf, in the Bay of Islands and overseas. So, too, have some of our most well-known powerboat racers. Many yachties also enjoy their powerboating and fishing and some of our most prominent yacht designers have also crafted some very fine powerboats. Top competitive sailor Simon Minoprio is the latest to prove the point. The Auckland racer spent 8 years on the international yacht

racing circuit, winning major regattas all over the world. At the same time, back home, he was a keen fisher and diver, enjoying his time powerboating in local waters. What he didn't enjoy, however, was the ride he often had to endure from the various "tinnies" in which he went out. To his mind, the ride was unnecessarily hard, with too much needless slamming, too little stability and nowhere near enough rough water handling ability. Once he had finished racing on the international circuit, he decided to do something about it. Together with wife, Haylee, he setup Innovision Boats, a company dedicated to building aluminium boats with clean, modern lines that are both super stable and more than comfortable in the rough. Last October, he launched his first model: the Innovision 616 Explorer (the plan is to offer three-model ranges: the hard top Explorer; the soft top Sports and the centre console Active).

**▼** *With no side lockers to get in the way, the cabin is a good place to sit out of the weather.*



**Very different look**  
As those who have seen the 616 Explorer will attest, in the looks' department at least, it is very different to a traditional alloy boat. Its most striking feature is its plumb bow. Rather than receding back sharply from the bowsprit to the waterline in the usual fashion, the Innovision's stem instead drops almost horizontally down to the water. This is a reasonably common design feature in yachts and, like Simon, explains, is an integral part of the Innovision's "super fine" entry: helping the hull cut through the waves, reducing slamming and pitching and, therefore, producing a smoother ride. The Innovision also appears to have very wide shoulders giving the impression, even when viewed on its custom-made double axle trailer, of a large volume boat. Simon says this is all part of another of Innovision's special design features: Hydrodynamic Stability Chines. "This HDSC has two advantages," he says. "When planing in rough conditions



**The grey dash helps to reduce glare and there is plenty of space for a big screen MFD if required.**

**Top class sailor Simon Minoprio is proving that he is also a very fine (and very innovative) aluminium boat designer and builder.**



the chines create hydrodynamic lift. This produces a stable ride and, paired with the plumb bow, greatly reduces broaching motion in even the most challenging of following seas.

"As well, the increased buoyancy in the chines, combined with the boat's flooding keel, maximises the stability at rest." Shortly after we have launched the Innovision from the Takapuna launching ramp, Simon insists we both stand on the same side of the boat to clearly illustrate how little heel there is.

As we head out into the Rangitoto and Motuihe channels, Simon points to the lack of any wipers on the hardtop's large forward facing screen.

"I did install one before we launched the boat," he says. "However, after spending a lot of time in rough water, realised it simply wasn't necessary. So I took it off." With wind and tide both in our favour, we decide to run the speed and fuel tests while the water is relatively calm. Powered by a Yamaha F150 4-stroke outboard, the 616 was planing at 3000rpm, doing 13 knots and covering 1.5 kilometres per litre. At 3500rpm, the speed was 18 knots @ 1.7kph; at 4000rpm, 22 knots @ 1.5kph and at 4500rpm, 26 knots @ 1.4kph. At 5000rpm, we were doing 29 knots @ 1.3kph, at 5500rpm, 31 knots @ 1.1kph and WOT (5800rpm), 34 knots @ 1kph.

These are surprisingly good figures given that the Yamaha F150 is near the bottom of the 616's recommended horsepower range (130-250hp) and that the 616 Explorer is no lightweight. It weighs in, despite a LOA of 6.56m, with a trailerable weight of 1910kg (albeit with a full load of fuel). This is partly because Innovision has used 6mm alloy plate

for the bottom (although this will reduce to 5mm on future models) and 4mm everywhere else.

#### Big volume interior

On our trip down to Motuihe for the photo shoot, it is easy to forget that the 616 has a hull length of just 6.16 metres and a beam of 2.45 metres. It feels (and handles) more like a 7-metre vessel. It is a feeling that is enhanced at anchor off the island's northern beach. From the cabin to the transom, the 616 feels large and roomy; ideal attributes for a family fishing and diving boat.

Although this is Simon's first foray into powerboat design, he clearly felt under no pressure to do things in a conventional way. Not only is the hull shape a departure from accepted norms, so too are some of the design elements on board.

For example, there are no side shelves in the fully-lined cabin. Simon believes these simply get in the way when one wants to sit here out of the elements. With both of us in the cabin, it is clear he has a point; it is certainly very comfortable being able to lean back and talk face to face.

The bunks are also of a good size, with a fill-in squab converting the cabin into one large berth. There is no toilet in this, the first Innovision, but there is clearly enough space between the bunks to accommodate one. There is also, without those side shelves, little dedicated stowage space (the area under the bunks being used for additional buoyancy). There is, however, an open locker on the passenger's side of the forward bulkhead and this proves ideal for stowing things such as car keys, wallets, cellphones and the like. My only reservation is that, because it is effectively out of sight while



**The batteries and fuel filter are easily accessible and nicely protected, and there is space for tackle boxes and the like, too.**

one is in the cockpit, it is also out of mind, meaning it is easy to get halfway to shore or to the car before realising that one has left their keys or wallet behind.

There is also a large Maxwell hatch giving access from the cabin to the foredeck, but I suspect this is more to let in light than to provide access. With a helm-controlled Maxwell RC6 chain/rope windlass installed there is little need to go forward when anchoring (and good handholds on the cabin make it easy to use the side decks if necessary).

Another area where Simon has gone his own way is with the seating. Rather than opting for either a pedestal seat or a king/queen combination, he has gone for a variation on the latter, without the king part. In essence, the two-seating modules are aft-facing seats with padded tops against which one can lean or on which one can sit. If that sounds a bit crazy and unworkable, it isn't. In my experience, most people like to stand while underway, especially if things are a bit lumpy. This arrangement caters for that as well as providing an option for those who prefer to perch. Another advantage is the lack of a space-hungry forward seat, meaning these modules can be placed slightly further forward than would normally be the case, thus freeing up valuable cockpit space.

These seat modules also provide dry stowage for lifejackets, bags and the like, with an open locker high up in the forward face and a bigger one aft under the "queen" seats.

Given that there is likely to be a fair bit of standing under the hardtop, it is just as well there is plenty of headroom, about two metres by my reckoning. There is also plenty of visibility with a large centre panel, a smaller one on each of the quarters and another large open one on each side. Sadly neither of these latter two opens at all and, with no sunroof or other hatches in the hardtop, this area could get quite hot on still summer days, especially

when trolling at low speed.

Simon has broken up the large expanses of alloy with a two-tone paint finish that has the forward bulkhead (including the dash) and the insides of the seats, painted grey and the rest left white. It is attractive and effective, too, with the less reflective grey of the dash a welcome addition on bright, sunny days. The helm station is a relatively simple, practical affair with the three Yamaha digital readouts (Tacho, Speed and Fuel) complemented by a top-mounted Garmin GPSMap 750S. The control for the windlass is also on the dash while a BEP DC panel lives just inside the cabin entrance. A Fusion marine stereo system graces the passenger side of the dash.

Simon has fitted a chequerplate floor throughout the cockpit and added rubber mats in front of both seats for better grip and comfort. Cockpit stowage is in good-sized side lockers; in three underfloor lockers (one each side of the fuel tank and a bigger one further forward, between the seats); in a transom locker; and right aft, under the transom. He points out that each of the underfloor lockers can be insulated for use as a fish bin if required.

At present, the 616 has a 165-litre built-in fuel tank. Those who opt to upsize the engine and/or who plan to fish further afield may wish to install a larger one. Simon is happy to do this, but it is worth noting that a larger tank will impact on the amount of underfloor stowage.

The Innovision 616's transom is an impressive construct for a number of reasons. First, it has been designed in such a way that it is easy to board on one side of the engine and walk easily past the outboard to the other side. Secondly, the boarding platform sits 75mm above the waterline, reducing wave slap and providing a stable base from which to fish or launch oneself into the water. Installation of the Yamaha F150 is also exceptionally neat. The two hydraulic steering cables disappear

into the platform just in front of the access hatch while a sleeve containing all the other connections disappears into a special channel not much further forward.

The raised transom houses the batteries, fuel pump and the like, all well protected, high off the deck and easily accessed through a pair of plastic hatches. On top of the transom module is a stylish bait board and there is a dedicated fish/bait locker built into the transom step.

Other fixtures include a swing down boarding ladder, a six-rod rocket launcher (complete with towing eye) on the hardtop and two-rod holders (set between anti-skid pads on the coamings) per side.

#### Impressive performance

Our trip back to Takapuna gives us an excellent chance to check out Simon's claim's about the Innovision's rough water handling. As those familiar with the Motuihe



**The Innovision's plumb bow, fine entry and distinctive hull shape are designed to cut through the waves, and they work!**





Channel will know, it tends to cut up rough later in the day, especially when the increasing afternoon breeze is at odds with the incoming tide.

With around 20-22 knots of southwesterly, we quickly run into a typical Motuihe Channel chop: confused waves and enough of a mixture of peaks and troughs to make life uncomfortable in a 6-metre tinnie.

Yet it wasn't. Regardless of whether we aimed directly downwind, directly into the breeze or at a variety of angles across, the Innovision 616 tracked smoothly, cut through the waves with a minimum of effort and

landed softly.

Although Simon had stressed the importance of trim on the way out, I found the 616 so forgiving that the trim (especially the fore and aft trim) made very little difference. As long as the tabs were correctly employed to counter the hardtop's windage, it did not seem to matter a whole lot whether the bow was high enough heading downwind or in enough going the other way. It was, in short, a very impressive performance in those conditions for a hull length of just 6.16 metres.

In the more challenging conditions of the



*The Innovision 616 is a very soft-riding, dry vessel.*

homeward trip, the windscreen did not, sadly, stay completely dry. However, there was still no need for a wiper. There were no waves crashing into the windscreen; just spots of wind-driven spray and the Rainex-treated glass dealt easily enough with those. Simon reports that, during his initial cruise over the summer, he encountered an impressive blow of around 30 knots or so. Initially cautious with his new creation, he quickly realised his "rough water" design needed to be properly tested if his claims were to have any validity.

Using his extensive sailing experience, he ran downwind at about 30 degrees in the reasonably large following seas. This is the so-called "broaching angle," the angle at which the stern is most likely to "let go" and allow the boat to lie precariously beam-on to the seas.

He need not have worried. His design performed perfectly, safely running true down the waves, lifting its bow in the troughs and comfortably climbing out the other side.

#### Summary

There is no doubt that Simon Minoprio has made a very impressive debut as an aluminium boat designer and builder. His first model, the Innovision 616 Explorer, has the look and feel of a far larger vessel. It also performs like a boat with a considerably larger waterline than its just over 6 metres. The boat's plumb bow and other hull design characteristics ensure a safe, comfortable ride at virtually every angle to the wind and 616 is both easy to drive and very stable at rest. It is hard to ask for much more.

As a virtual prototype, this first offering is by no means perfect. Simon is already considering some tweaks to the chines (to further improve rough water handling) and is planning to recess the bait board bracket, so it does not jut up when board is not in use. I would suggest adding some form of ventilation for the hardtop to that list. Since displaying this 616 Explorer at the Hutchwilco New Zealand Boat Show in May, Simon has been following up the not inconsiderable amount of interest the boat generated there. Although, as we went to press, there are as yet no further firm orders, there are, he says, a number that are very close. One of the most promising so far is an 8.5-metre version of the Explorer. Regardless of his success in the next few months, I am in no doubt that, in years to come, the Innovision's plumb bow and distinctive appearance will become a common sight on our waterways.

#### TECHNICAL

<b>Make &amp; model:</b>	Innovision 616 Explorer
Manufacturer:	Innovision Boats
Priced from:	\$79,500.00
Price as tested:	\$119,550.00
Type:	Hardtop
Construction:	Alloy: 5mm /4mm
LOA:	6.56m
Beam:	2.45m
Deadrise:	21 degrees
Trailerable weight:	1910kg full fuel
Test Power:	Yamaha F150
Propeller:	16"3 Bld
Power Options:	Outboard Only
HP Range:	130-250hp
Fuel capacity:	165 litres
Trailer:	Alloy.

#### Notable Standard Items on Test Boat:

Hydro-Dynamic Stability Chine's (HDSC), Flooding keel.

#### Notable Options on Test Boat:

Bait board/Custom bait station, Maxwell RC6 capstan winch, Fusion stereo, Garmin GPSMap 750S, trim tabs

#### Contact:

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