

They say 'you can't always get what you want' – but happily that proved incorrect for the owners of this new custom-built Upfold Elite sports sedan.

SMART *lady*





review

Upfold Elite 13.2m Sports Sedan

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he 13.2m *Virago* was built by long-time Bill Upfold collaborator Scott Lane Boat Builders – it’s the 11th Upfold design Lane has completed (and for Upfold himself, this is boat number 70).

Launched just before Easter, she has everything her owners wanted. While the underwater lines are based on Upfold’s tried-and-tested formula, the cockpit and interior feature a new, custom layout.

“I basically started with a clean sheet of paper – or rather a clear screen,” says Upfold. “The main thing the owners wanted was three cabins: a master forward, then a decent-size double in the guest cabin and two bunk beds in another cabin. So I had to squeeze all that into a 13.2m boat but still retain a sense of generous room inside.”

Upfold cleverly achieved this by splitting up the ‘bathroom’ elements, putting the head and sink in its own compartment to port, forward of the guest cabin, and having a shower cubicle opposite it, forward of the bunkroom. This generated privacy for all the cabins and allowed Upfold to utilise the space under the raised front of the saloon to fit in all the berths.

The saloon layout too is also different to other Elites: the seating area is along the port side, in an L-shape around an ingenious table set-up which can be divided into two sections for easy access or combined with an infill to create a single large dining surface. The colour scheme’s light and classic, with cream upholstery offset by the warm black bean timber with an oiled rather than high-gloss finish. Darker accents are provided by wenge timber, and on the floor is grey sisal-look Kindu, hard-wearing but soft underfoot.

Facing it, aft of the large helm station with its raised double seat, the galley is ranged – galley-style – along the starboard cabin side, providing plenty of space for two people to prepare food or clean up. Benchtops are Beige Island Hi Macs solid-surface with a very cool Anthracite Black sink and Blanco pull-out mixer tap – it wouldn’t be out of place in any high-spec domestic kitchen.

A domestic-sized, stainless steel fridge with iced-water dispenser sits at the back of the seating area to port, and the galley area opens directly to the cockpit thanks to a



ABOVE That beautifully-flared bow offers masses of space in the forepeak cabin.

TOP & RIGHT The finishes are flawless – great attention to detail.

push-button electric window, which slides down into the aft cabin bulkhead when indoor-outdoor flow is required.

With its raised seating area, the saloon provides great views through large windows, which have minimal mullions. Blinds are concealed beneath stylish timber-finished pelmets. The TV pops up out of the cabinetry behind the galley bench when required and disappears when it isn't.

Throughout the boat there are multiple well-thought-out storage solutions, from a wine-drawer underneath the elevated dining area (every boat should have one!) to a sliding pantry and the pull-out vertical rod-storage locker, built into the aft wall of the saloon – testament to the boat's careful design and custom nature. Lane prides himself on finding clever uses for every precious little bit of space – “there are lots of places boatbuilders and designers can find to put things.”



Light enters through two large retractable sunroofs above the dining area and helm station. This second sunroof also means the driver can stand with his head exposed at the elevated helm, to gain greater visibility when anchoring and mooring. This raised helm seat also provides excellent visibility when under power.

The clear-finish carbon dash hosts two Simrad 12-inch multifunction high-res EVO 3 displays for navigation and other data, and can also be used to display the 'anchor cam'. Two small screens built into the cabin roof provide a handy heads-up display of vital stats when motoring. The electronic package, including the Simrad radar, through-hull transducer, sounder, VHF and autopilot, and the full suite of Navionics charting for New Zealand, was custom-designed and installed by Advance Trident – again, to give the owners exactly what they wanted.

Throttle controls are at hand to the right of the small, sporty wheel, and controls for the bow and stern thrusters and tabs to the left. A second set of throttle and thruster controls are built into the rear coaming in the cockpit, for easy short-handed docking.

Out here in the cockpit, forward to starboard is an L-shaped seating area around a timber lattice-top table, with pale denim blue squabs. The outboard for the tender is stored upright under this seating.

There's teak on the cockpit floor and bulwarks, added

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ABOVE Propulsion comes from a single 600hp Cummins diesel – fuel consumption is modest.

OPPOSITE Spacious, comfortable, sleek – a happy cruising equation.

at the request of the owners, for durability and practicality – it provides better grip when kids are jumping from them. The cockpit is partly sheltered with a solid roof – a SureShade ATF (automated-teleframe) sun-shade telescopes out at the push of a button to complete the coverage.

To port, under a hinged cover, is the barbecue, handy to the fridge through the large sliding glass door which leads through into the saloon; another sink with a pull-out tap; a built-in freezer unit; and a cleverly concealed rubbish bin.

There are two large lazarette storage areas under the cockpit floor, with access to the fuel tanks and batteries, and the centre of the transom slides open for easy access to the boarding platform or to pull the tender right up into the cockpit for storage. *Virago* is well-equipped for longer cruises; due to the boat's generous volume, there's plenty of room for fuel (1,100 litres) and fresh water (800 litres).

Heading forward from the cockpit is easy, down generous side decks with solid stainless rails, and there's plenty of room on the ample bow for a double sunbed with a lifting back, and a large anchor locker forward.

From the outside, *Virago* is subtly different to many of Upfold's other launches; the owners specified a pearly pale grey colour for the topsides, with a further touch of personalisation in the bright metallic Imperial Blue toerail.

Another owner preference can be seen in the exterior styling on the cabintop; one of the owners didn't like Upfold's



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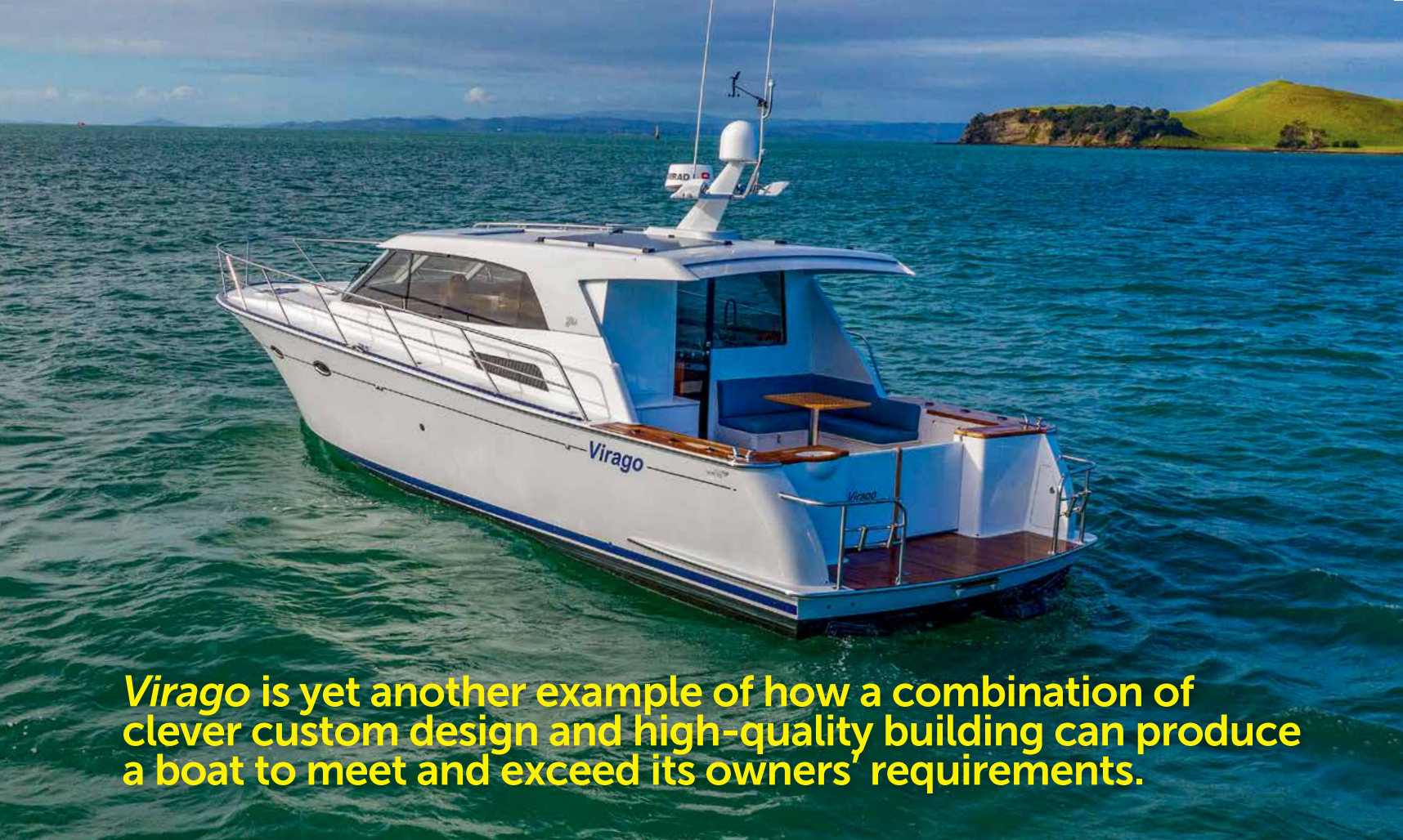
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Virago is yet another example of how a combination of clever custom design and high-quality building can produce a boat to meet and exceed its owners' requirements.

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traditional foil-style radar-arch, so *Virago* sports a small mast instead to support the necessary electronics, including a satellite TV antenna. Doing away with the arch also created more space for solar panels, which Lane has carefully disguised from the side view, so the boat's profile is not disrupted. There's a roof-rack up on top of the cabin too, so the ubiquitous paddleboards can be safely stowed out of the way.

But it's not all about looks: as with more and more powerboat owners, these were after fuel efficiency. *Virago* has a single engine set-up: a 600hp Cummins, with the shaft running aft through a tunnel built into the underside of the hull, to reduce its angle and increase efficiency in the drive train. The immaculately finished engine room – you could eat dinner off the floor, should you so desire – is accessed through the rear wall of the bunkroom, making for ease of access and maintenance.

“In this size of boat, having a single engine is becoming increasingly common,” Upfold says. “Not only is it more efficient but with one large engine maintenance costs are cut in half as well.”

Virago has bow and stern thrusters to emulate the manoeuvrability of a twin-screw setup, as demonstrated by



ABOVE Coffee and brownies, anyone?

BELOW LEFT The discreetly-positioned but accessible BBQ.



the easy way Lane drives her in and out of her marina berth at Auckland's Pine Harbour.

SEA TIME

We head out down the marina channel, then open her up and head for our camera-boat rendezvous off Browns Island. *Virago* cruises comfortably at around 19 knots at 2,400rpm, which Upfold has calculated uses around 3.9 litres of fuel per nautical mile. Flat-tack she can do around 27–28 knots at just over 3,000rpm, using 4.4 litres per nautical mile.

“At lower speeds, once the boat is on the plane there is very little change in the fuel consumption figures – running at anywhere between 11 and 24 knots there is only 0.6 of a litre per nautical mile difference,” Upfold notes.

The boat handles smoothly as we do donuts for the photographer and his drone, its angle of heel constantly adjusted by the Zipwake 600mm fully-automatic trim system, also from ATL. While the system still needs a little more calibration, you can both feel and see (on a small screen) the tabs working away to even out the heel even as we challenge it to

some quite tight turns. When we are powering along on the plane in a straight line the tabs are constantly tweaking the ride to make it as smooth and even as possible. They can be programmed through the rev and speed range to adjust the angle of the hull and as the boat comes up onto the plane.

Donuts completed, we anchor up in Islington Bay for further photographs before heading back to base. It's a straight-line power back to Pine Harbour, so we set the autopilot and let the electronics do the work and enjoy the comforts of the cabin.

Virago is yet another example of how a combination of clever custom design and high-quality building can produce a boat to meet and exceed its owners' requirements. A tried-and-tested hull shape and the ingenious use of interior volume has resulted in a sports sedan which remains a moderate size but still offers plenty of accommodation, and the performance and fuel efficiency to make cruising comfortable for both crew and the bank account.

Sometimes, you can get what you want. **BNZ**



Upfold Elite 13.2m Sports Sedan

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HIGHLIGHTS

Clever interior layout, utilises space efficiently

Frugal fuel consumption

Excellent agility with bow and stern thrusters

Craftsmanship and high-spec finish

SPECIFICATIONS

loa 13.2m

beam 4.45m

draft 1m

engine 600hp Cummins shaft-drive

fuel capacity 1,100 litres

water capacity 800 litres

cruising speed 19 knots

max speed 28 knots

WATCH IT

