

Fit for purpose

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“...an easy-to-use, no-fuss approach to cruising.”

Awhitu Spirit

The owners of the new 17m Moody DS54 are relishing her space, comfort and sophisticated technology. They're also disarmingly frank about why she appealed to them: they're not as strong and agile as they once were – and this yacht caters for that.

Because I'm not the scoundrel I used to be I won't reveal Jock and Joan Massey's ages, but I will say that the way they're embracing the autumn of their years is inspiring. The Masseys are seasoned sailors and bought their first yacht – a H28 – way back in 1975. In between her and their new DS54 (Deck Saloon) have been numerous boats of various sizes and shapes. The Moody, they insist, is unlike any before. They've named her *Awhitu Spirit* – the Awhitu after their place of residence, and the Spirit, I like to think, for their remarkable joie de vivre. Two issues motivated their purchase: They are patriarch and matriarch of a large, close-knit clan with plenty of grandchildren and, perhaps unusually, the sailing gene has remained active in the DNA of all three generations. To accommodate family sailing holidays, they needed a decent-sized vessel. Secondly, as they no longer have the will or skill to leap – mainsheet



Jock Massey - patriarch of the clan.

in teeth – from one winch to another, they wanted a boat that was easy to control and respectful of their measured approach to sailing. The DS54 proved the perfect fit – and it's easy to see why. Let's begin with the Deck Saloon design. For those unfamiliar with it, a DS configuration has a “raised” saloon on the same level as the cockpit. Which means there is no companionway to descend/ascend. The flow between cockpit and saloon is particularly seamless on this Moody thanks to large ranch-sliders. When retracted they create an open, free-flowing area with a well-appointed galley in the centre functioning as the hub around which chatter, entertainment and food revolves. A DS design also creates another feature which resonated with the Masseys: the high bulwarks along the side decks



Elegant and stylish, the DS54 is a supremely comfortable vessel with an excellent "flow" between cockpit and saloon. The wraparound windows offer panoramic views.



offer safety and security while moving around the yacht. It's worth noting that you don't actually need to move from the Moody's cockpit to sail her – or even from the helms for that matter.

Still, if you do want to go forward – maybe to catch a few rays on the foredeck's expansive sun loungers – the security of those bulwarks is reinforced by sturdy, solid stainless steel handrails. Handrails are in plentiful supply around the vessel – all sensibly positioned.

But it's the sail plan and sail controls that really underscore why the Masseys were drawn to the Moody's easy-to-use, no-fuss approach to cruising.

SAIL CONTROLS

The standard sail plan comprises an in-mast furling mainsail (vertical battens) and two furling headsails – a self-tacking, working jib and a genoa (125% overlap). All three sails are operated by electrical furlers, and unfurling any of them works in tandem with the big Lewmar electric cockpit winches. Unfurling, trimming and reefing the sails happens at either of the helms.

Each of the twin helms has an identical – and very sophisticated – array of instruments and rocker switches. With dedicated switches for the three furlers and the two primary winches, unfurling sails involves a little synchronisation. You match the rate of the unfurling to the speed of the winding winch. Sail control is literally a one-hand, two-finger affair.

If it's not already clear it's worth emphasizing that this boat is all about relaxed and above all comfortable sailing. So, if the weather's cold and miserable, you might be tempted to use the DS54's third "helm" station.

This is at the nav station on the starboard side of the saloon. It's equipped with an electronic throttle for the Moody's 150hp Volvo, another of those glorious Raymarine glass bridge chartplotters and the controls for the Raymarine autopilot. This isn't a helm station in the conventional sense but you can use it to steer the boat manually without having to leave the warmth and comfort of the salon.

I like the two headsail configuration – it's a clever, simple solution catering for different conditions easily and quickly. The





TOP: Electric furlers and a self-tacking jib make for easy sail controls.
 ABOVE: The 150hp Volvo is fitted with twin alternators.
 OPPOSITE: The inflatable lives in a garage under the cockpit.

genoa is ideal for lighter airs and off-the-wind performance, while the self-tacker works a treat for upwind work. Switching between the foresails is all about exercising those fingers.

The winches are within easy reach of the helmsman and because all the lines from the mast feed aft under the deck to a battery of jammers at the primary winches, swapping sheets is simple. Running those lines under the deck also keeps the cockpit clean and uncluttered – and they tail into dedicated bins built into the combing.

Because each helm station carries identical controls, you can operate the sails from either helm. Standing at the wheels presents great views of the action ahead, but in cruise mode you'll probably want to activate the auto-pilot and settle back into the padded bench seats behind the helms. They have reversible backrests – ideal for watching fishing lures.

Another of the easy sail control features worth mentioning are the halyards. All three sails have steel cable halyards – with tensioners fixed to the mast. As with the backstay tensioner they are operated with a winch handle.

This set-up is much neater than having the three halyards leading back to the cockpit (fewer lines to confuse you), and when the yacht's in her berth the tensioners are easily released to help preserve the shape of the sails.

COSY COCKPIT

As you'd expect on a yacht this size, she carries a spacious cockpit with generous settees easily able to accommodate the Massey's extended family. Meals will be a busy affair, and fortunately the large cockpit table unfolds to double its size.

I particularly like the design of the Moody's transom. It contains a large fold-down swim platform (hydraulically controlled), and when fully deployed it lies just above the water. It reveals a large dinghy garage under the cockpit floor – big enough

for *Awhitu Spirit's* 2.85m inflatable tender (partially deflated). More importantly, having the platform low on the water makes it easier to bring the inflatable aboard and into its garage.

But my favourite feature of the DS54's cockpit is the cabin top overhang. Rather than a solid roof it comprises two "arms" – port and starboard. Between them is a fabric Roman blind sliding on tracks. Extended it provides excellent shade and protection – but on balmy, starlit evenings it should be pushed back for romantic al fresco dining. Glorious.

ACCOMMODATION

The DS54 is available in a number of layout variations – this one, the standard option, sports four cabins: three forward with double berths and one aft with twin single beds. Again, a configuration providing maximum versatility for the Massey clan.

Up in the forepeak is the master cabin with its large island bed and ensuite. Just aft are two double cabins sharing a bathroom. The fourth cabin with its two singles is located aft and to port, under the cockpit.

Just forward of this cabin is the third bathroom which functions as a day/guest loo. The bathroom is also fitted with a washing machine. The Moody's equipped with CZone to simplify the independent configuring of lighting, heating and air-conditioning for different areas of the vessel.

Standard DS54s have an enormous storage deck locker just behind the anchor – ideal for fenders, lines and squabs. As an

Battery power

With all her electrical gear – winches, furlers, fridges, freezers, toilets, watermaker, 2500-watt inverter – you'd be correct in assuming *Awhitu Spirit* carries some serious battery power. There are eight 160ah AGM house batteries, as well as an independent engine start battery and dedicated batteries for the 24-volt bow and stern thrusters.

Keeping all of them frisky falls to two alternators – the 150hp Volvo's standard 130-amp unit and a second 180-amp unit running in tandem off the front pulley. In an emergency you could also fire up the 11kVa genset to recharge the batteries.

"she's quite capable of turning in 200 miles-a-day performances."



Chill time on the foredeck sun loungers.

option, though, it can be converted into a cabin with a single berth and toilet – a variation perhaps better suited to a charter boat with hired skipper.

Sleeping quarters are all elegant and plush, but it's difficult to avoid the suspicion that the seamless saloon/galley/cockpit combo is where much of *Awhitu Spirit's* action will play out – and I'd suggest the expansive settees and sofas will host plenty of happy but weary party-goers.

Thanks to wraparound windows and large overhead hatches it's a bright saloon, dominated by a U-shaped settee and its table to port. Those windows provide panoramic views around the vessel.

As suggested earlier, the particularly well-equipped galley is strategically sandwiched between the cockpit and saloon, able to cater for guests in either location with ease because of the single floor level.

The galley is divided across the Moody's considerable beam. Most of the facilities are on the starboard side, featuring the three-burner gas cooker and oven. The expansive bench-top includes a double sink and a top-loading freezer and front-loading fridge.

Opposite is an island with a microwave and a drawer fridge below. Including another drawer "beer" fridge under a cockpit bench, there are, in fact, four fridges on the DS54.

Moody DS 54

- **loa** 17.10m
- **lwl** 15.55m
- **beam** 5.20m
- **draft** 2.65m (standard) 2.25m (option)
- **displacement** 24.5 tonne
- **ballast** 7.0 tonne
- **engine** Volvo D3-150hp
- **fresh water** 810 litres
- **fuel tank** 520 litres
- **CE certificate** A (ocean)
- **mast length** above WL 25.30m
- **Sail area** main 81.5m² **jib** 65m² **genoa** 79m² **gennaker** 200m²
- **rig** I 21.4m, J 6.40m, P 20.70m, E 7.10 m
- **priced from** \$1,475,000
- **design** Dixon Yacht Design
- **available from** Windcraft New Zealand - 09 413 9465, 021 390 045 or visit www.windcraft.co.nz.



PERFORMANCE

In standard trim the DS54 displaces around 24 tonnes and with all the additional accessories fitted to *Awhitu Spirit* she's unlikely to be at the lighter end of the cruisers in her class. For all that though,

she moves along with enthusiasm.

A plumb stem delivers a 15.5m waterline and – together with the 160m² sail plan and 2.65m keel (seven tonne ballast) – it all makes for a happy, comfortable equation. We enjoyed perfect sailing conditions and beam-reaching in 16 - 18 knots the speedo reeled off a consistent nine knots. All very sedate and effortless.

Simple sail control is one thing – close manoeuvring a vessel of this size is another. *Awhitu Spirit* sleeps in a Westhaven berth and easing her into it is a bit like guiding a sword into its scabbard.

With those bulwarks, high freeboard and coachroof there is considerable windage – never an easy proposition when the sou'westerly is shrieking around the marina. Like everything else on the DS54 though, the retractable bow the stern thrusters transform what might be a very tricky operation into a fairly simple one.

The Moody is a sophisticated, superbly-appointed, handsome vessel – designed for the genteel rather than the gung-ho – but quite capable of turning in 200 miles-a-day performances. All with the Massey clan enjoying aperitifs and nibbles in the cockpit. ☐



The cockpit offers plenty of room for the extended Massey clan.