

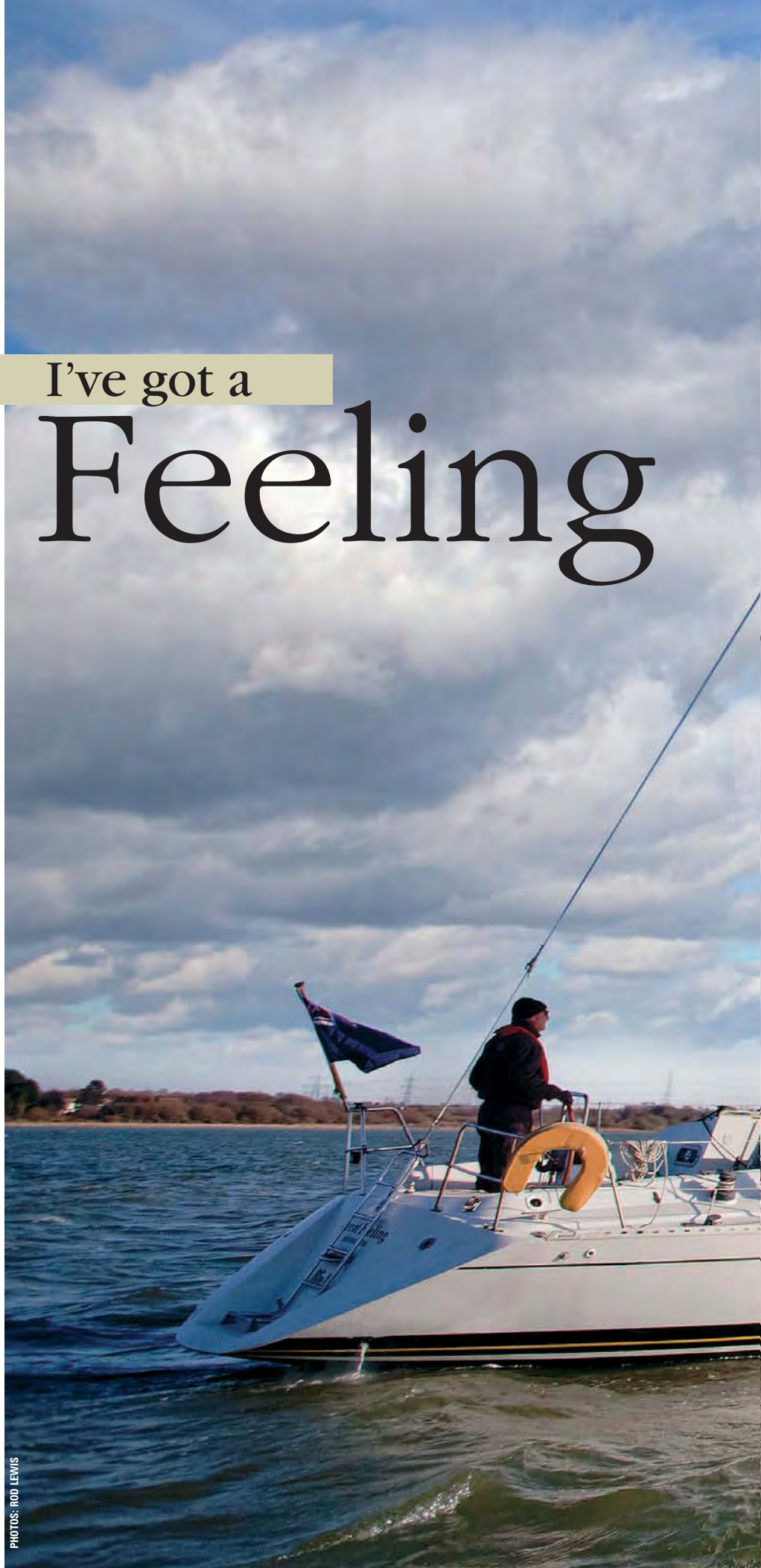
As well as becoming known for their smaller swing keel designs, Kirie's Feeling Yachts range gained a healthy reputation for rapid and modern fin keelers.

Jake Frith puts a late '80s 36 footer to the test.

Back in the December 2012 edition of *Sailing Today* I looked at the Dufour 35, one of the vanguard of high volume large (for those days) French cruisers of the late 1970s. A decade on and the French manufacturers still led the way in balancing performance with spacious accommodation. Meanwhile, the Mediterranean charter business was building a significant market for bright, modern looking, easy to sail cruising yachts, while owners of older, more conservatively designed craft could still be heard loud and clear in their disapproval at boat shows of this new breed of voluminous white plastic 'cruising caravans'. The Kirie Feeling 1090 was a development and extension of Philippe Harle's early '80s Feeling 1040. The 1040, which *ST* tested in December 2008, had been well received due to its modern styling and optional double aft cabin versatility. Thanks to Harle's background in designing race boats, the 1040 also had garnered a reputation for being pretty quick around the cans. The 1090 continued the modern impression thanks to a raised saloon with wraparound look front windows. Even knowing that French designs were leading the way in modernity at the time, I was surprised to learn this 1090 was a 1987 boat. It would not be until the turn of the millennium that stylish deck saloon cruisers became noticeably more popular. Back in 1987 when *Great Feeling* was launched this was the latest new boat in the range. The 1090 continued little modified until 1995 when it was extended and later redeveloped into the Feeling 39. Larger Feelings were produced until recently by Alliaura Marine. Over the years the brand was bought and sold several times and the yachts built in either La Rochelle or Les Sables D'Olonne on the West coast of France.

I've got a

Feeling



PHOTOS: ROD LEWIS





“THERE ARE ENOUGH WINDOWS ALL ROUND TO PROVIDE A REASONABLE LOOKOUT WITH A BIT OF NECK CRANING.”



SALOON

Even with Tim's thick pop studded curtains in place over all the side windows blocking out much of the light, the overwhelming sensation down below is one of light and space. It might seem like a small point now, but Feeling were among the first manufacturers to employ the rather simple concept of brightening up interiors by using lighter veneers. The effect is of course greatly exacerbated by the rather large front facing windows. Headroom was not as excessive as I was expecting given the external styling, but the 6ft 4in (194cm) just forward of the main hatch should prove adequate for most. The vinyl headlining on *Great Feeling* is suffering from the damp and lack of use, and sagging in some areas, but it is of the individual boarded type, so an easier fix than many. Having been on a fore and aft mooring in the Hamble for her whole life, the lack of any dehumidifier action had also led to some delamination of the minor woodwork in the saloon, largely below the windows where running

condensation or leaks have taken their toll in places. The rest of the internal joinery however was holding up very well. Due to her role as quarters for racing crews, *Great Feeling's* locker storage is unusually filled with numbered organising baskets for tidiness and efficiency. The port settee berth base slides out to create a generous double so she sleeps seven comfortably. The double aft cabin version sleeps nine.

NAVIGATION

Unusually for a boat of this era, the Feeling can be sailed to an extent (with remote autopilot) from the forward facing navigation station as there are enough windows all round to provide a reasonable lookout with a bit of neck craning and the set of both sails can also be viewed. The chart table itself is of a generous size 2ft (61cm) deep by 3ft (91cm) wide, and it offers deep chart storage beneath. As there is only a half bulkhead forward of the navigation area there is not a tremendous acreage of space to add a proliferation of modern instruments. Feeling updated



this area on later 1090s with a curved laminated instrument pod at the forward end of the table. There is plenty of oddments storage with drawers in the table pedestal and deep locker space beneath the slatted seat.

AFT CABIN

There were two layouts offered for the 1090; Owner and Charter. The Charter version foregoes the navigation station and massive starboard cockpit cave locker for twin double aft cabins. Being the Owner's layout, *Great Feeling* has a single aft double to port. This is a very usable cabin, with standing and dressing space as well as the 6ft 4in (164cm) long by 5ft 5in wide berth. Quarterberths can be dark and dingy places, but not so on the *Feeling*, which floods the area with light from both cockpit and coachroof windows. Damp had clearly been an issue here though as the carpeted back and sides of the cabin had suffered a little staining. Carpet is not the best interior material for a boat that spends a lot of its time out on a mooring.

HEADS

On the starboard side aft on the Owners version the heads are of a generous size and well out of the way of general traffic. *Great Feeling* has a calorifier mounted aft of the galley so hot showers are available. Considering the boat's lack of use the heads were very clean and dry. Some delamination of the ply under the window suggests a rainwater leak at some point, but the melamine and vinyl lining of the compartment has stood up very well. The shower drain grating is quite deep, so headroom is noticeably less than the equivalent standing area in the opposite quarterberth, though this would only be of concern to those well over 6ft tall.

GALLEY

Trust the French to take cooking aboard a small yacht so seriously. Situated to port aft of the main saloon the galley area is forward facing, giving a pleasant view of the horizon through the double 'windscreens'. Quite a large part of the saloon is given up to the galley, which has

twin round sinks, offering both fresh and salt water, some kind of insulated draining box to starboard that nobody aboard our boat knew quite what to make of, and a deep top opening fridge to port. There is also ample preparation workspace and masses of storage under the coachroof sides. The U-shape of the galley makes it a really easy task to jam yourself in there should the sea state get lively.

FORECABIN

Once again the 'marine' carpet that found favour in the '80s for boat trimming rears its saggy, damp head in the forepeak, but it's nothing that cleaning products and a week with a shore-powered dehumidifier wouldn't sort out. At first measure the berth appears lavishly long at 6ft 6in (198cm), but due to a deck level chain locker the berths continue up to a point at the bows. For that reason the *Feeling* has a 10in (26cm) infill at the head of this berth to make it a comfortable proposition for two. Getting the infill into position however was a feat of manual dexterity. ▀

FEELING 1090



UNDER ENGINE

The Feeling 1090 came with an 28hp Volvo 2003 and *Great Feeling's* was still going strong. The two-bladed fixed prop on a P-bracket was a pretty viceless setup when it came to parking. Tim's usual cruising speed in flat water is 6.5kn at 2500rpm. There is particularly good access to the engine for servicing with two access panels in the aft cabin as well as the usual behind the companionway steps.

COCKPIT

This is not the largest of cockpits for a boat with wheel steering, but gets away with it providing one doesn't mind hopping up onto the seating to get around the wheel. It is an ergonomically sound cockpit with cambered seating and coamings at various levels and a usefully arched helmsman's seat with deep liferaft storage beneath. The reader will have to use their imagination when it comes to visualizing how much better all that teak would look rubbed down and lightly oiled or varnished and with a few minor



repairs of the odd broken or worn slat. The self tailing Lewmar 43 primaries were man enough for the job, although self tailing would also have been nice on the coachroof winches which look after the halyards, kicker, topping lift and outhaul. The starboard cave locker is predictably cavernous given the internal layout and it would benefit from some kind of organizing fiddled shelving within if it isn't to become a jumble at first tack. There is a handy and modern sugar scoop transom on the 1090, great for launching a tender from or recovering a man overboard in settled weather.

DECKS

The moulded-in nonslip, while not being the most aggressive feeling under bare feet provides adequate traction in seaboots wet or dry. The only real hazard in moving forward is the large coachroof windows' sloping, slippery plastic. *Great Feeling* has some small nonslip tapes across these, but it's always going to be a compromise how much light and view the owner wants to block out from the main saloon. The side decks would make for a safer route

forward, and at 20in (50cm) wide, backed up by a substantial aluminium toerail the full length of the boat they provide a surefooted solution. Minor deck mouldings such as the main hatch garage and anchor well lid on this 25 year old model passed the *ST* trampolines test with flying colours indicating no delamination and adequate layup from new. The anchor well lid has a moulded hump to enable it to be closed over a windlass, although this boat had not been fitted with one. The stanchions, pulpit and pushpit all felt solidly mounted and the foredeck itself showed no movement underfoot.

RIG AND SAILS

Unlike some of Tim's racing boats *Great Feeling* has not had a healthy appetite for new Dacron. Indeed in her life she has only had one new mainsail and was still on her original genoa and spinnaker. Tim had gone to Crusader Sails for a four battened main when he was doing a few cruiser races in the boat and admits it's the only racey modification he has performed. There is no getting away from the fact that a 130% overlapping genoa on a 36ft boat

is always going to be quite a handful for a short-handed crew, especially when it comes to short tacking upwind, and Tim admits that if he was keeping the boat for cruising with his wife he would consider a smaller jib, perhaps even a self tacker. Mast and boom were by Francespar and were holding up well. It appears to be a well stayed rig with double spreaders and fore and aft lowers. Many by now would have ditched the gooseneck reefing for deck organisers and coachroof clutches though.

CLOSEHAULED

The F3 breeze and bright sunshine might look balmy on camera but the North in the wind ensured we had to negotiate ice on the pontoons and silliness of hats was not a concern providing they promised to cover the ears. My first impression of the boat was that she was indeed as pacy as I had read of these early fixed keel Feelings. We were soon ploughing a furrow to windward at 40° and 7.3kn through the water. Tim worked the mainsheet when we headed to windward as the boat felt a little overpressed into 18kn (apparent). Providing Tim was on hand to dump

FEELING 1090

power everything stayed on a fairly even keel. I got the impression that she would be a really quick boat in light airs. She is very headsail driven, and will go upwind under genoa alone. At one point we took the main down to put this to the test and achieved 50° T under genoa alone and only half a knot came off our boatspeed! Unsurprisingly Tim, when sailing shorthanded in an unhurried manner, often does so under just genoa.

DOWNWIND

Tim was reluctant to unearth the spinnaker from the cave locker due to its lack of use so we stuck to white sails and bore away onto an easy goosewinged course. In this sheltered sea state she was a cinch to sail dead downwind thanks to her masthead rig and straight set spreaders. She carries a symmetrical spinnaker, which in common with many French designs of this era is rigged with a dip pole.

REACHING

Tim had earlier pointed out as we were heading upwind that the Feeling was at her best on a broad reach. In fact he reported that he had, while simply cruising with his wife, often given fully crewed Sigma 38s a run for their money on this point of sail. 20 minutes later, as if on cue, a fully crewed Sigma 38 hove into view downwind and so we considered that the gauntlet had been thrown down. On a beam reach we did indeed keep pace with the Sigma, although when she hardened up she began to gradually creep away. As a broad reach brought us 8.8kn in 18kn of wind, I was convinced that there wouldn't be a great many cruising boats of the same size showing her a clean transom. ■



THE SPEC

FEELING 1090: PRICE FROM £40K

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| LOA 36ft 6in (11.13m) | Fuel capacity 120l |
| LWL 28ft 8in (8.74m) | Sail Area 807.5 sqft |
| Beam 11ft 8in (3.56m) | Berths 7 or 9 |
| Draught 5ft 8in (1.75m) | Production 1987-1995 |
| Displacement 11,684lbs | Designer Harle & Mortain |
| Water capacity 370l | Builder Kirie Yachts |



ABOUT THE OWNER

Tim Robinson, Vice Commodore of the Royal Southern Yacht Club has owned *Great Feeling* since the early 90s. At that time Tim, now retired, was a senior executive at IBM and owned a Sigma 33. When one of his crew offered *Great Feeling* for sale, Tim jumped at the chance as he wanted a cruiser with spacious accommodation to use as a crew quarters for various racing campaigns. Tim admits to never really getting to cruise or race the boat a great deal, especially now that he has retired to take up his voluntary position at RSnYC. I was amazed to learn that this club has 1600 members, 51 staff and 91 people on committees. Tim now travels the world attending meetings so has placed *Great Feeling* on brokerage with Boatshed Hamble. www.hamble.boatshed.com

VERDICT

With a displacement of 5.3 tonnes on an overall length of just over 11 metres this is a light to medium displacement yacht, and would be fairly average in heft in terms of cruisers available on the market today. It's a matter of opinion whether a boat that needs its mainsheet continually playing in 15-18 knots under full sail to prevent her griping can be considered a pure cruiser though. I'd certainly want to consider designs with a smaller rig for short handed long distance work. Fortunately the 8.8 knots we achieved off the wind in the same conditions underlines her potential as a cruiser racer or fast port hopper. In terms of her quality of build, I would describe her as better than some other European yachts of

her time, but the truth is she was not ageing as well as would be expected of a British Moody, Westerly or Rival of the same era. A lot can be forgiven however when a boat sails as nicely and rapidly as this one.

FOR

- Massive internal volume
- Bright and airy feel below
- Modern looking exterior
- Quick sailer

AGAINST

- Interior woodwork not wearing well and wall carpet in cabins suffers damp
- Big sail area and fairly light displacement can be a handful upwind in a blow.

THE BROKER

The Feeling range has been with us for some time now but has never quite achieved the market penetration of Beneteau and Jeanneau. Indeed the company has suffered just as many other manufacturers have done from the vagaries of the economic ups and downs over the years.

However, they have always been innovative and never shy to explore new ideas and of using a variety of well known French designers.

I have always liked the signature Harle raised coachroof, it looks pretty and gives an obvious advantage with accommodation, natural light via larger windows and protection to the cockpit without looking bulky and ungainly.

“ GOOD PRESENTATION CAN AFFECT THE PRICES ACHIEVED. ”

The 1090 benefits from this design feature and the central part of the interior is exceptionally spacious because of it.

I believe that the Feeling Yachts company were one of the first major production companies to use light coloured 'woods' in the interiors. In the Boat of the Show, Paris 1989, Feeling opted for light ash. This tends to look truly stunning when new and if kept dry. However this wood goes dark, if not black when it gets wet and thus it is imperative to nurture these boats to keep them tidy and maintain values.

Furthermore the large windows which are lovely do allow a lot of sun damage to occur to the wood interiors and again curtains must be kept drawn when leaving the boat to avoid discolouration which can put buyers off.

Checking out the boats being offered currently we can see seven boats throughout Europe and Scandinavia being offered at an average price of £44,082. With a scale running from £34,000 to £53,000 for the newest one.

Looking at our records of reported achieved prices we can see that in the last five years this model averages out at around £36,700 with top prices being around £46,000 and the lowest being £27,000 although we can see this last one subsequently sold two years later for £8,500 more after a full refit and tidy up. Just shows how good presentation can affect the prices achieved.



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THE SURVEYOR



NICK VASS
YACHT SURVEYOR

Nick's company, Omega Yacht Services, has been providing all inclusive surveying services to buyers and sellers of yachts on the south coast of England for 19 years. Nick is an enthusiastic boat owner with close contacts with various owners' associations, providing discounts on his survey rates for members of the RYA. www.omega-yachtservices.co.uk

As a surveyor I am amazed by the number of yachts that came out of France and many of them are a result of Philippe Harle's pencil work. Harle (pronounced Arl) designed many Dufours, Jeanneaus, Jouets, Gibseas, Kelts and Feelings from the early eighties up to his sad death in 1994.

The French trend was, and still is for spacious, comfortable, light displacement 'harbour-yachts' that could be semi-mass-produced so they would be reasonable in price, attractive for families yet sporty, light and good to sail.

The Feeling 1090 is the epitome of that trend which continues today and was made possible by some interesting design features. The unobtrusive, low profile, deck saloon style coachroof allows for large skylight windows that let in oodles of light and yet does not look boxy or at all like the motor

“ ATTRACTIVE FOR FAMILIES YET SPORTY, LIGHT AND GOOD TO SAIL. ”

sailers that were popular from British builders of the time. The Feeling 1090 was offered with a long fin with 4ft 7in draft and a deep fin with 5ft 10in draft.

Access to the engine of the 1090 is good compared to many other boats, and the 1090's Volvo Penta, 2003, 28-hp, three cylinder motor is well proven but they do suffer from several problems related to the cooling system. Firstly, not all 2000 series engines were fresh water cooled and many 2003 engines have conversions where a fresh water heater exchanger was added later. This means raw water cooled engines run cooler and adding a domestic water heater can be problematic. The 2003 oil cooler's water channels get clogged up and the oil cooler corrodes internally. The oil cooler is hard to check for corrosion and difficult to get at so it would normally be advisable to have it removed and checked internally before you buy a yacht with one, as failure of the oil cooler will destroy the rest of the engine. Exhaust elbows can also clog up with corrosion leading to serious over heating. The 2003 was the last Volvo built small diesel before they started using Perkins engines which they painted green.

The headlining material found in Feeling yachts can also fail and might by now have been replaced. This can be an expensive job to do properly.

Structurally, Feeling Yachts fare as well as any other French boat but I have surveyed a few that have had osmosis. Generally, they are well made and do the job admirably.