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By David Lockwood

‘Singing in the Rain’

GENESIS 400 Targa

Enter the Kiwi-built Genesis Targa 400, an all-weather sports cruiser that knows no off-season...

New Zealand's South Island, Melbourne's Port Phillip Bay, South Australia's St Vincent Gulf and even Sydney's glorious harbour mightn't seem like ideal places for getting wet in winter. Yet this is your fate aboard many a sports cruiser. Add a hardtop, however, and you get that magic quality - protection - quick as that.

With a hardtop and airconditioning, plus two giant sliding overhead hatches acting as sunroofs, the Kiwi-built Genesis 400 Targa is an all-weather sports cruiser. It has a low profile hull that doesn't skate alarmingly on the wind and isn't shunted off-line by waves. In fact, the weight and windage advantage leads to efficient offshore cruising.

Under the hardtop you'll find single-level seating, amenities for outdoor dining and touring, and comfort in stormy seas. With this all rounder there need be no such thing as an off-season.

As luck would have it, bad weather threatened the boat test comfort of this salty sod. Regardless, the Genesis Targa 400 arrived on cue at 7.30am at the jetty as dark clouds descended, a brisk wind sprung-up from the south and rain loomed overhead. No worries, we have protection, remember.

Distinguished by its sleek lines, a hardtop trailing a radar arch, and a sculptured foredeck with uniquely down-turned edges, the Genesis Targa 400 offered a sanctuary from the storm. The fact there were no other boats mad enough to head out on this wet morning speaks volumes for its user-friendliness.

So, too, the twin Volvo diesel engines with vee-drives, the indoor and outdoor cockpits, and the ease with which the boat can be put away at the end of the day. With few attachments exposed to the weather, the Targa doesn't need to be looked after with kid gloves.

Suffice to say, it didn't take long to warm to this sports cruiser. A tender at the transom pointed to its touring ability and already the owners, who hadn't owned a boat before, had voyaged to Pittwater. More distant destinations and long-range ocean passages are possible in the Genesis Targa 400, which seems tailor made for cruising the South Pacific come rain, hail or shine.

Kiwi Connection

Across the Tasman, Kiwi boaties know the Genesis badge as intimately as we know Riviera. In 1988, the company built the fastest diesel-powered cruiser in NZ. Since then it has taken out a plethora of industry accolades and titles, including the Around New Zealand Speed Record in 1994 and the fastest diesel-powered cruiser in NZ in 1995.

Like a lot of Kiwi boat builders, Genesis makes composite hulls using foam-sandwich techniques. This reduces weight and allows for smaller engines than might be required on a

solid-glass boat. The building method also lends itself to curvaceous mouldings, as evidenced within this boat.

In fact, the standard of finish of the Genesis Targa 400 is really quite impressive. Unlike some Kiwi boats, which seem to be a little dated, the Targa 400 is a contemporary craft with modern finishes, quality fabrics, designer fittings and some neat engineering touches such as the battery isolating system.

The Targa 400 is the company's latest model, a derivation of its 40ft flybridge boat, and two are soon to be shipped to the US. Genesis says it is designed for serious Bluewater cruising. It is, however, very much a social and family boat.

Deck Design

The twin Volvos are accessed through two big hatches that form the cockpit sole. Another hatch under the cockpit dinette grants access to the water and fuel tanks and the gearboxes, which are forward of the blocks because they are vee drives. Lift the engine lids when you are cruising and you can't help but notice how effective the sound-proofing is.

The Lombardini 8kVa generator lies aft of the engines, as far away from the accommodation as possible, assuring a peaceful night below decks. Two marlin doors open out to the teak transom with extended boarding platform. In the middle of the transom is an amenities centre. The twin doors encourage you to use the transom platform as an extension of the cockpit.

You need to stand outside the cockpit on the boarding platform to use the gas barbecue, sink with hot water, soap dispenser and handheld shower.

But as you are facing back into the boat you can talk to your guests while flipping the snags or grilling those lobster tails. Speaking of which, dive gear, bait and fishing tackle can be kept in the two wet lockers built into the boarding platform, as the lockers drain overboard.

Meanwhile, high gunwales with padded coamings make the cockpit a safe pace for the kiddies when you close the transom doors. Padded side-pockets with legs that lock in place lift up to form extra seating. In better weather, these seats in the sun might be great places to kick back and watch the tykes take a dip or dangle a line for a fish dinner.

All the gelcoat on the Targa 400 is a lovely shade of off-white, so the decks are kind on the eye.

Storage exists in three hatches on the forward side of the amenities centre, to the sides of the cockpit, and in side pockets which cut back under the decks. These are long enough to store boat hooks and fishing rods. There is also a dedicated shore-power locker with cut-out for the lead and a rope locker for mooring lines.

The oars and outboard for the RIB, which was secured to the transom with one of those stainless braces, were stowed in the aft end of the engine room. I noted the outboard was screwed to one of the engine bearers or longitudinal hull stiffeners, a simple solution to stop it shifting about at sea.

A moulded step on the starboard side of the cockpit leads to the side decks and eventually the foredeck. I noted stylish cleats which double as fairleads, four rod holders on the decks and handy grab rails to aid your passage forward. There's provision for a sun pad on the bow between the two stainless ground rails.

The bow rail itself seems sturdy and was fitted with optional fender baskets. A moulded bowsprit, fairleads and a central horn cleat are all through-bolted. The windlass is concealed in the rope locker, along with its electric motor which, exposed to saltwater, was already showing signs of corrosion.

While the non-skid on the decks grips your soles, the down-turned edging of the foredeck and angled bow rail make leaning overboard to grab a mooring line, for instance, kind of awkward. On the upside, however, those down-turned decks will quickly shed green water.

Undercover Parking

I set the anchor from the undercover helm station, using the chain counter as a guide, and set about enjoying the undercover lounging space. The heavens opened, so we shut the overhead sunroofs and enjoyed the sanctuary of the Targa 400.

The Genesis people are to be commended for their excellent utilisation of undercover space. The enclosed cockpit is also surrounded by armourplate glass windows that at once protect and open up the enclosure. Aside from the twin sunroofs are sliding side windows for fresh air. These are so easy to open they must be on ball-bearing rollers.

While I found airconditioning ducts at foot level - and you can add an aft curtain to keep the manufactured air inside - I'd like to see ducts below the windscreen like demisters in a car. When the Targa 400 first arrived its windscreen was foggy and vision was reduced until it cleared some time later.

Soft-touch headliner panels, plush seating and a series of moulded units with facilities right along the port side provided plenty of reason to stay anchored. I found an icemaker, fridge, cutting board, battery switches, sink with hot and cold water, drink holder racks and a hatch ahead of the co-pilot for holding personal effects.

About the decks you will find handy stainless grab rails, teak planking underfoot and there was a neat skylight in the dash, casting natural light down below. Seating includes a big U-shaped lounge around a dinette and a two-person helm seat to starboard. Headroom under the hardtop is at least 185cm, though it decreases forward of the helm seat.



Carbon – Fibre Dash

As far as helm stations go, the Targa 400's is an impressive bit of work. Carbon-fibre dash panels set the contemporary tone, which is repeated with carbon appearing here and there throughout the boat. There is plenty of room for flush mounting electronics and radios on the big dash and the hardtop ensures you get a brilliant readout from colour screens.

The sports wheel with carbon fibre insert, twin Volvo electronic shifts, switch panels and buttons for the Bennet trim tabs all fall to hand. This particular Targa 400, the

first in the country, was fitted with everything you need for night or day coastal cruising. It had a Raytheon L760 sounder/plotter, RL70C radar and ST7000 autopilot, VHF and more.

A remote control for the Clarion stereo and CD stacker, which was linked to subwoofers, lets you arc up the volume on your favourite tracks. A chartholder ahead of the wheel inspires confidence when cruising foreign waters.

The boat was a breeze to drive seated, with wipers removing the rain, though it needs a retractable seat bolster so you have more room when driving on your legs in rough water.

Refuge Below

A moulded staircase leads down to a simple, light and airy layout with neutral tones and nice mouldings. The interior will appeal to everyone and offend no-one. The timber on the galley floor is a rustic oak. It has a lovely grain and is suitable for high-wear areas.



Overhead timber-fronted lockers with high-gloss walnut veneers provide more storage. The only problem with the overhead hatches was they opened after travelling offshore. Genesis has since fixed this by replacing the locking mechanisms in the lockers.

Headroom below decks is at least 1.85m in most areas, tapering to less than that in the bow and, of course, in the aft cabin. Still, the feeling is one of spaciousness and the open-plan layout gains something from the skylight, wide companionway, portholes and light-coloured wall and ceiling liners and carpet.

To starboard are the control panels behind a door and the television and video on a ledge behind the lounge. This lounge fronts a dinette and can seat at least five for dinner. It also converts to a double berth should you need it. There are no doors separating the cabins, but pleated privacy curtains serve this purpose.

The moulded galley to port is close enough to the companionway to allow you to hand food outdoors. There is also a good deal of Granicoat bench space for preparing lunch, a dedicated rubbish receptacle behind a cupboard door, 75lt fridge, chest freezer, convection microwave, two-burner electric hob, and drawers for pots, pans, appliances and cutlery.

The power switches have stainless facias, while the twin sinks are square in shape. Personally, I prefer rounded sinks so you can stack plates for someone else to wash back at the dock. A grog cabinet alongside the lounge, near the entrance to the master cabin, and glass and crockery storage in a return alongside the galley, are nice touches.

Roomy Lodgings

Genesis went for vee-drives in its 400 Targa so, they say, you can locate the generator and motors aft and optimise internal volume in the saloon and especially the aft cabin. The latter is certainly a roomy lodge, with a spacious dressing area and two-person lounge near the entrance.

Opening portholes, as well as airconditioning, ensure plenty of ventilation over the twin single bunks. Mated together, they create a double berth for a couple. You can swing your clobber in a hanging locker and place personals in overhead lockers. A towel or dirty washing bin, stainless reading lights and soft-touch Novasuede walls are obliging.

You can see right through to the master cabin in the bow when you first step inside, before the pleated curtain separating it from the saloon is drawn across. From the offset double bed you can glimpse the television, though you won't see if Tiger Woods sinks a match-winning putt.

The master cabin comes with four overhead lockers, a trick hatch with carbon-fibre trim and stainless designer down lights, mirror backed bed head and a cupboard with two shelves. There is room below the bed to fit a bowthruuster unit, though the boat is inherently manoeuvrable under shaft drive alone.

Last but not least, the Targa 400's bathroom is a beautifully moulded unit with twin overhead storage lockers, a moulded vanity with a circular sink, towel rails and glass holders, a big mirror and a Raritan electric toilet. The shower isn't quite tall enough to stand under and wash your hair without crouching, but any more internal volume would sacrifice the boat's stability and ride.

Up Anchor and Away

I raised the anchor with a push of the button after restarting the Volvos. They seem like clean-running motors, with more steam than diesel fumes emanating from the exhaust ports in the transom corners. The EDC controls provide fingertip handling and, for whatever reason, I find I drive best with these Volvo shifts.

You can shift the boat in tight clockwise or anti-clockwise circles, back it up without the boarding platform digging under water, and do everything that is called for in a tight parking

situation. The boat's turning circle isn't as tight as some imported sports cruisers with props set in the tunnels.

The twin 260hp Volvos have a lot of mumble down low and before you know it the hull is planing. The transition - even without tabs in - is nice and level and your view isn't obstructed when seated at the internal helm. With the tabs half down, you can maintain a level planing attitude right down to 2500rpm and 12kt.

Optimum cruising speed was 22kt at 3400rpm, with top end 28kt at nearly 4000rpm. This is a pleasant clip for long range offshore work, allowing you to take in the view, cover the sea miles smartly, and not have your fillings shaken loose.

In fact, I was mightily impressed by the seaworthiness, smoothness and the balance of the Kiwi 40ft hull. What's more, not a drop of saltwater landed on the windscreen despite a solid ground swell and southwest wind. The flare forward obviously works a treat.

You could fit bigger engines to the Targa 400 and derive, say, 32kt top end, which is the going rate for most luxury 40-footers these days. Twin 350hp Yanmars will give just such a speed or you can get 35kt with twin 420hp Yanmars. However, the twin 260hp engines are just fine with a light load. The Supercharger helps bottom-end after which the turbo takes over.

No Raincheck Required

While I would like to see more standing room at the helm, the boat was comfortably driven seated offshore... Which says something considering the adverse conditions. Ordinarily, I'd have taken a rain-check and missed out on the adventure. As it was, I parked the boat with aplomb and trundled off home as happy as Fred Astaire singing in the rain.

Highs

Kiwi exchange rate means more for your dollar. Finish is first class, amenities are overflowing and you get protection for all-weather boating. An adept boat for everything from passage-making to entertaining to family touring. Handling offshore and about the marina was terrific.

Lows

Cupboards fell open (though this has been fixed), windscreen needs airconditioning ducts, foredeck slopes outwards, big turning circle. Not so comfortable driving standing.

Website: www.boatpoint.com.au