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ON TEST McConaghy 38 • Corsair 37 • Dock and Go

MCCONAGHY MC38

GET ABOARD THE SOUL TRAIN





JOHN CURNOW JOINS THE MCCONAGHYS TEAM FOR A TEST SAIL ON THEIR NEW ONE-DESIGN RACER.

EVOKING memories and emotions attached to 60s and 70s sports cars is not an easy thing to do. The best of them allowed both art and style into their existence, yet they retained a genuine purity to the ethos that form follows function.

The new MC38OD from McConaghy is one such beast. In fact, she's a lot like the original Lotus Elan, with its low-slung presence and all-curved styling. Even the two-tone paint job of Hull #1 pays more than a little homage to the grand classic.

However, this is about where the comparisons end. Save for one. The MC38OD is all new wave technology; exceptionally powerful and stiff in a way a British sports car does not even know exists! But, and it is a big but, she's also ultra-light, and this is something of which Lotus' Founder, the late Colin Chapman, was a true champion. Indeed, Chapman's favourite mantra and response to many a question was simply, "To add speed, add lightness. Adding power makes you faster on the straights. Subtracting weight makes you faster everywhere."

The soul of this modern classic stems from her heritage. She is all McConaghy, with everything that that entails: attention to detail, high-end build quality, just enough design flair, a soupçon of creativity exuding from everywhere it can, fast and very tough. As in real-world strength.

Not surprisingly, Co-Managing Director of McConaghy, Jono Morris, is a bit of a Colin Chapman fan. "I love this quote, 'Just add lightness.' To me it is what the MC38 and McConaghy Boats is all about, too. The MC38 is a Lotus on the water. You could almost say that we've tried to capture some of Colin Chapman's soul in this project."

DETAILS

Given all of that, just what has gone into the MC38 to make her so special? Well firstly, she's all carbon. Yes, the inboard Diesel is iron and the bulb is lead, but in terms of her overall construction, everything is black.

The MC38 displaces just 3200kg of water and it's probably a good time to remind yourself that this is a 38 foot racer. She is 11.35m long overall with 10.55m of that cutting through at the waterline. There is a 1600kg bulb at the bottom of a 2.8m prepreg carbon foil. She is a very beamy 3.5m across and has a lot of sail hanging from her 16.5m, high modulus carbon stick: Mainsail of 68m², headsail of 33m² and the asymmetric spinnaker of 185m², which most 50 foot cruising boats would be lucky to have.

A lot of people have put their heart and soul into the MC38 and it is this that affords the vessel her true character. None could be happier to see her sailing than McConaghy's joint MDs,

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"THAT WOULD REQUIRE THE MC38 TO BE



Jono Morris and Mark Evans. Since they saw Harry Dunning's original lines for a 36-footer, they have put their reputations and a lot of time and money behind the project.

During the boat test, it was Harry who said, "We have had a lot of great people involved, but really, it is all praise to Jono and Mark for getting us to this point. They've put a lot into it. Jono is here today, working away and people are saying, 'Hey doesn't he have people working for him that can do that', but this is exactly the point. It is theirs. They've taken it to heart and made it a very special boat, which is really exciting for all of us."

Other people integral to the team were Dirk Kramers and Steve Koopman of SDK Structures and Kirst Feddersen of Oracle and Alinghi fame. The former did the boat's engineering and the latter is responsible for the whole rig design, which includes everything down to the halyard locks.

The high modulus carbon mast separates for transport and it, along with the boom and bowsprit, are all McConaghy made. All the tooling for the spars has been built specially for the MC38 to Kirst's specifications. They are all autoclave-cured, and the quality of the mast and its high gloss finish is simply exceptional.

ONE-DESIGN

The concept was always fairly clear; take One Design keelboat racing to a whole new

...LY REPLICABLE, EASILY TRANSPORTABLE AND NOT REQUIRE VAST AMOUNTS OF CREW."



...ed for a whole lot less money. Now apart from performance, that would require the MC38 to be a typical, strong, high-quality McConaghy build that was fully replicable, easily transportable and not require vast amounts of crew. To that end, the brief has certainly been met.

The rules for this owner-regulated class, written by professional rules expert Richard Slater, do however point to a simple and achievable goal. To keep it real, by being cost effective, fast and fun.

There are few options; wheels over tiller, and some modular items like galley and head for those keen enough to take the MC38 to Cat2 offshore events. Custom paint jobs instead of the clear-coated carbon are also available. But in reality the boats are delivered ready to go at the One Design level.

Add to that the sail wardrobe, which consists of mainsail, two jibs and two spinakers from the sail maker of your choice. In the end, it means you can go racing in a real keelboat with an inboard engine and sail drive for something like \$300,000.

REPLICATION

The secret to the price is the fact that the MC38s are no slow boats from China. They come from McConaghy's Zhuhai facility, where the lower overhead and labour costs mean these vessels can be delivered for what

would probably be half the price if they were made in a Western nation.

The other benefit from being constructed in China is their famous reputation for replication. As Mark Evans says, "Our team in China thrives on fully developing a process and then doing it thousands of times. All of the things we have learned at McConaghy as a whole are encased in the products we make here."

McConaghy are able to make one MC38 about every three weeks, which is a good thing, as there are already quite a few orders to get through. Based on the feedback from some prospects who sailed the boat during the demonstrations, that line is going to build even further.

Clearly, the most popular One Design class in this size is the Farr 40, of which there are something like 140 in the world. The MC38 has the Soto 40 and Farr 400 as its nearest competitors. Given that the McConaghy boat has all this soul on offer and accelerates more like an electric car than a diesel powered one, it certainly has all the credentials.

TURN ON AND GO

So that seems very much like a good time to talk about the MC38 as the all-out racer she is. Drawing from the sports car analogy at the start, the MC38 is no fuss. You turn the key and go. The wind gets in your hair and very much like a low-slung sports car, you feel everything that is going on.

You also note the five-degree sheeting angle and that this is a vessel that will go to 20 degrees apparent wind angle. The faintest puff goes straight from wind to acceleration, so if you want to go fast you'll be busy. Really busy, as you carefully move your weight around accordingly, but then that's what makes it a sport. However, on a great Summer's night, there'd be a massive queue to go out for some relaxed twilight racing.

On the day, we were easily able to see mid-sevens while close hauled in a fluke breeze that was just dying to go around to the South. Sitting next to Harry on the rail, he confided that they had eights during some of the earlier demonstrations, when the breeze was a bit more settled.

Tacking is effortless, but yes, it is a fair distance from one rail to the other. However being an uncluttered deck, it is an easy journey both behind the helmsman and ahead of the primaries. With a crank of the backstay as the massive square-topped main

LEFT TO RIGHT

Even in a light breeze, the apparent wind machine gets a bit with the job.

Transverse jib cars and 5 degree sheeting angle. Trimmer's delight.

The 185m2 kit looks big on the boat and provides wonderful speed.

settles in, the boat heels as if to a nominated point and then just scoots off.

Now despite the challenging conditions, not once did I feel the helm had to be grappled with. On the contrary, the balance and poise was marvellous. However, with a boat such as this, the real moment you were waiting for was when the helm went down and the kite went up!

FLYING DOWNHILL

So what a joy that moment and then the ensuing experience were. Regularly and easily, *Cone of Silence* was doing 9s from 12s and when 14 knots would come through, you'd accelerate off to do 11s. It was now that you could see Jono Morris really enjoying himself.

An exceptionally experienced and skilled yachtsman in his own right, he went about the preparations for the launch and gybes with clear and cool precision. These are the very qualifications that have been used to create a deck layout that is so clean and well considered as to allow for sailors of differing skills to get the most from the MC38.

Sets and gybes are easily attended to and the clear deck means you can move about effortlessly, as you use your weight to extract every ounce of the MC38's potential. She definitely can be sailed by anyone prepared to give it a go. Your reward will be pretty much instantaneous.

Taking a moment to come back and sit at the quarter rail as we barrelled down like a train on a country journey, you could tell Jono was excited. A quietly spoken and unassuming sort of fellow, Jono simply said, "It's a lot of fun, isn't it?"

Chatting on a bit further, you got a real sense of the pride that has gone into the boat just from the vibes of all and sundry who were lucky enough to be on board.

Next, Jono would be up, getting things set for the retrieval, so we could go back up and have yet another giggle, as we did it all again. Quite possibly the most wonderful thing to see on the day was how one of the key individuals behind the MC38 got so much out of taking her for spin and showing just what had been achieved to all the interested parties assembled on board. *



CAPTION: Sleek proportions and paint job certain the same look a