



Passion for perfection



The Dickey Semifly 28 is a rock-solid, retro-styled, award-winning sportfisher with distinctive looks.

NAPIER IS NEW ZEALAND'S ART-DECO CAPITAL AND SO it has spawned a boat with sport-classic, retro styling.

The Dickey Semifly 28 – with its exaggerated sheerline, nearly plumb bow, super-fine entry and three-tier layout – looks unlike any other boat built in New Zealand. Its vaguely retro styling is pleasing to the eye, the build quality and engineering are exemplary, the finish is first-class and the amount of space aboard this trailerable, 8.5m sportfisher is astonishing.

That it's built from aluminium is a revelation, such is the fairness of the hull, the total

absence of visible welds and the abundance of curves and coves that belie its metal heart. The glossy, mirror-smooth Amron PPG paint finish in dark blue would give away any imperfections in such a tall hull, but there are none.

Semifly is an abbreviation of semi-flybridge. The Dickey uses a three-tier layout comprising the cockpit, an open-topped, raised, semi-flybridge, rather like an old bridge-decker or pilothouse design, and a spacious cabin forward. The flybridge is only two steps above

the cockpit, so its occupants are always in touch with what's going on in the most important part of a sportfishing boat, but it is still a distinct zone.

There's room up there, too. Although the flybridge isn't especially deep, the boat's generous 2.8m beam allows plenty of width for a full-size, fully adjustable swivelling helm seat on a gas pedestal and a fore and aft bench seat with ample room for two adults. There's still enough space for clear access through the companionway into the forward cabin. This layout has been achieved without sacrificing the Semifly's wide side decks, which afford excellent access to the foredeck.

Builder Jason Dickey is a keen angler

with fishing experience all over the world. He wanted a practical, workable fishing boat with style and enough comfort for overnight and extended cruises. The Semifly is unashamedly a sportfisher but combines serious fishability with stylishness, a modicum of understated luxury and superb attention to detail, setting it apart from the usual run of Kiwi-built aluminium sportfishers.

An understanding of what's required in a successful sportfisher is apparent in the boat's easy-clean surfaces and Tek-dek covered cockpit. Considering the size of the flybridge and more than generous forward cabin, it's surprisingly spacious. The engine box occupies the centre of the

cockpit, but is low enough not to intrude. A stainless steel pedestal is fixed to the box lid ready to accept the game chair or bait station, though some will prefer the bait station on the transom so any mess drains overboard. Plumbed livebait tanks in the floor at each corner of the cockpit are a good size, but the angles and frames of the hull forming the live well interior would likely take a toll on delicate baitfish.

The cockpit sole is heavily cambered and self-drains through generous scuppers. It works OK, but the scuppers will be recessed into the floor on subsequent boats to better drain the last bit of water. There's no swimstep, though one could be easily fitted, which would please divers.

TOP: A level ride allows the Semifly's plumb bow to cut through the sea.
ABOVE: Builder Jason Dickey.

Wide, Tek-dek-covered coamings feature three stainless steel rodholders per side, plus four across the transom and a seven-position rocket launcher above the bimini top, so there's plenty of rod storage. Gaffs and boat hooks will fit racks built into the gunwale supports, which are nicely coved – there are no sharp corners on the boat – and the junction between cockpit sole, transom, gunwales and flybridge are also coved, so there's no chance of jamming your toes. Toe room is good right around the cockpit.

STORY BY JOHN EICHELSHEIM ■ PHOTOS BY MIKE HUNTER



Stainless steel cleats and other fittings are used here and there, but Dickey has isolated any stainless steel from the alloy hull using Tefgel, a proprietary Teflon coating more commonly employed by superyacht builders.

The superyacht connection is real: Dickey spent several years as an engineer aboard superyachts around the world. His experiences, good and bad – including groundings, breakdowns and storms at sea – shaped his vision for a boat of his own and fed his passion for perfection.

“The salient thing I learned from crewing superyachts is the importance of reliability,” Dickey says. “Mechanical breakdowns and gear failure spoil a voyage for owners and crew. At sea, any failure is potentially dangerous, even fatal. I wanted to build reliability into my boats.”

Good examples of this thinking include the pristine, easy access engine room, painted white so any fluid spill is immediately apparent, and the use of high quality, but expensive, Lifeline hybrid-gel AGM batteries, supplied with five-year warran-

ties. Every aspect of the boat's engineering emphasises quality and the builder has taken care to make the boat easy to live with. Surfaces are easy-clean, Tek-dek doesn't need constant oiling like real teak and whenever there was a choice between good looking and durable, Dickey was opted for durable.

The engine cover includes most of the cockpit sole, hinging on the port side and supported by gas rams. Under the lid the 320hp, 4.2-litre MerCruiser-Cummins turbodiesel sits uncluttered, surrounded by open space. Drive is via a MerCruiser Bravo II leg and the engine breathes through the exterior of the hull via baffles rather than through the engine box, so there's minimal induction noise.

Also easily accessed is the boat's engine-heated hot water system, freshwater and saltwater pumps and the sewage holding tank. The cockpit has fresh and saltwater high-pressure washdowns with hoses long enough to extend all the way forward. The freshwater hose also connects to the engine's cooling system for flush-

The semi-flybridge does wonders for visibility and despite being spread out the gauges and controls are easy to use.

ing at sea; alternatively, flush the engine at the dock or on the trailer using a shore-based freshwater outlet.

The build process was somewhat unusual. As Dickey explains it, the boat was designed in its totality. Marine architect Denis Harjamaa took Dickey's balsa concept model and worked with his requirements for an easily driven, classically styled, large-volume sportfisher.

Before any of the calculations were made, Dickey and Harjamaa knew exactly what was going in and onto the boat – Dickey and his partner Tristin Peterson had already bought all the equipment, right down to the squabs and upholstery. Nothing looks like an add-on or last-minute addition. The finished boat was within a 100kg of the design weight.

Every part of the boat, down to the smallest detail, was designed on computer and the whole boat was CNC-cut so

The Semifly's transition to the plane is smooth, and it will still be semi-planing at speeds as low as 10 knots.

that one side of the boat exactly mirrors the other side. Tolerances are within half a millimetre. Consequently, according to Dickey, every panel fitted perfectly and there was no need to 'pull anything in' to make it fit. The result is an amazingly straight boat with none of the ripples common to most alloy craft. Only a temporary rubbing strip, in aluminium rather than stainless steel, which was unavailable in time for the Hutchwilco New Zealand Boat Show, lets the boat down, though you have to look closely.

Construction is strong. The design calculations allow for stresses and strains of speeds up to 50 knots, although the boat has a maximum speed of around 35 knots. The hull is self-supporting on girders and frames. There's a 10mm vertical keel, two full-length fore and aft girders and two flanged outboard girders that butt against the hull forming a triangulated section.

Underway the Dickey Semifly certainly feels solid and stiff. At three tonnes dry weight, 3.4t on the trailer, it's not exactly a featherweight, but its solidity translates into a comfortable and assured ride.

The transition onto the plane is almost imperceptible and the boat rides level, so that its fine entry and plumb bow can cut through the seas. The well supported hull panels also refuse to boom and we were unable to induce any banging except for the occasional thump turning across the seas as a wave caught the chine. The boat has reasonably wide reverse chines that do a nice job of turning aside spray, though in certain conditions and at certain angles of attack, minimal flare means some water trickles up the boat's sides to find the windscreen or clears.

The boat is a comfortable traveller that feels much larger than 8.5m. At 20 knots and 2600rpm the boat has a range of 305 nautical miles from its 380L fuel tank. Top speed is around 34 knots, though it doesn't feel that fast from the helmsman's elevated position on the bridge. At the other end of the speed range, the boat holds onto the plane at low speeds, making it economical to run in a big sea where speed needs to be reduced for comfort and safety. The boat is still semi-planing at 10 knots.



FROM LEFT: The athwartships cabin and galley; the saloon and forward v-berth cabin; the generously sized bathroom.

The flybridge is a pleasant place from which to watch the world go by. We cruised north up the coast from Napier on a blustery but fine day, stopping to anchor in the shelter of cliffs near Tongoa Beach. The helm position is comfortable, with enough adjustment in the seat to suit any driver. Controls seem well positioned and my initial misgivings about the visibility of engine instruments inset into the eyebrow-shaped binnacle forward of the main instrument panel proved unfounded – they're easy enough to see from the helm seat and don't appear to throw up reflections on the windscreen.

We enjoyed a bite to eat and a hot drink while at anchor, prepared in the good-sized galley down below. The layout in the forward cabin is huge for a boat of this length, accentuated by the Semifly's beam, which is carried well forward. Due to the boat's girder and frame construction, the builders have been able to use the full depth of the hull, lowering the cabin sole almost to the keel and taking advantage of the high sheerline, which affords plenty of headroom.

Wide v-berths wrap around the saloon table in the forward part of the cabin. These provide two comfortable berths and can be offered as a second double berth with an infill.

A good-sized, floor level double berth is located athwartships under the flybridge with access and a hanging locker on the port side, aft of the galley. On the starboard side a really large, fully enclosed head with a high-pressure shower is a luxury not often found on a trailer boat.

The interior décor is comfortable, rather than luxurious, using materials chosen for their utility rather than simply for their looks. Carpets and cloth upholstery are good quality and should be hardwearing, while vinyl headlining and light-coloured laminates on the table and cabin walls help keep the cabin light and should stand up well to the rigours of life at sea.

A nice feature is the space under the v-berths, which are raised on platforms that form part of the boat's structure. We could slide our bags under the platform, where they were out of sight and relatively secure. Fishing rods will also fit under the seat platforms if they're not too long.

The forward hatch gives access to the foredeck, trailerboat-style, but the wide side decks, plenty of handholds and excellent non-slip tread mean most people will be happy to go forward around the outside of the boat. Rails in the middle of the expansive foredeck will support a tender.

The anchor fairlead is built into the bow of the boat and anchoring is usually done remotely from the helm. A hatch in the forward bulkhead opens onto the deep anchor locker – having sufficient fall for the chain was never going to be a problem with this boat's bow profile.

After enjoying the calm of the bay, we upped anchor for the run back to Napier, electing to head out to sea away from the shelter of land. Although there was plenty of wind, which built throughout the morning, we couldn't more than a metre of chop out wide, though there was a bit of a ground swell rolling in.

Nevertheless, there was enough slop to indicate the Dickey Semifly is an assured and comfortable traveller. It was warm and dry inside the boat's canvas bimini top with the clears up. Initially the boat was designed as a hardtop, which may well be an option on subsequent versions. The canvas top and clears do offer a measure of versatility and, because they fold away, make the boat easier to store undercover on the trailer. Dickey is also considering a rigid bimini top.

Driving the boat onto its custom-built, aluminium Alpine trailer looked easy



The 320hp MerCruiser-Cummins turbodiesel resides in an engine room inspired by Dickey's superyacht background.

enough, despite the breeze. The trailer self-centres and polyethylene-covered bunks support the boat on the trailer.

Built by Metalworks Innovation in Tauranga, the beautifully engineered trailer is a fitting companion to the boat. Electric over hydraulic brakes on both axles provide the stopping power and Dickey successfully tows the boat using a Toyota Landcruiser. The Napier-Taupo Road quickly sorts out inadequate towing combinations, but the Dickey Semifly has already been towed to Auckland and back for the Hutchwilco New Zealand Boat Show, where it was awarded Aluminium Fishing Boat Open, Boat of the Show.

The Dickey Semifly 28 is not your run-of-the-mill aluminium sportfisher. At \$335,000 as reviewed, it's not going to be on everyone's shopping list, either, but Dickey is certain there will be enough discerning customers out there wanting something a little out of the ordinary. Neither hard-out sportfisher nor luxury cruiser, the Dickey Semifly is a large-volume, trailerable launch finished to the highest standard – an impressive first effort from a new company. ■■■

SPECIFICATIONS

BOAT	
model	Dickey Semifly 28
designer	Denis Harjamaa
builder	Dickey Boats
construction	aluminium
loa	8.5m
lwl	7.85m
boa	2.8m
deadrise	18° at transom
alloy thickness	4mm to 12mm
horsepower range	250-320hp
engine options	inboard sterndrive
max speed	34kt
fuel capacity	380L
trailerable weight	3,48t
price as tested	\$335,000
packages from	\$295,000
ENGINE	
make	Cummins-MerCruiser
type	4.2L turbodiesel
horsepower	320hp
cylinders	6 inline
max rpm	3900rpm
propeller	21 x 19.75in
price	\$68,928
TRAILER	
manufacturer	Metalworks Innovation (Alpine Trailers)
brakes	electric over hydraulic, both axles
suspension	leaf spring
rollers	bunks
features	all aluminium, LED lights