

You can't judge a book by its cover nor can you gauge a Grand Banks by its fetching lines. The spirited new 41 Heritage EU has cutting-edge Zeus pod-drive technology and a fully infused hull. TONY MACKAY is whisked to hitherto new heights of pleasure boating

# a wolf

in sheep's clothing

It is extremely unlikely that you will ever hear the owner of a Grand Banks utter the word disappointed. From the moment you step aboard a world of clever design, superb craftsmanship and refined luxury awaits your pleasure. And what a pleasure it is — a feast for the senses and a relaxing and elegant mood of comfort and convenience which other builders have always been desperate to emulate.

The first Grand Banks (GB) evolved from a prototype designed by Kenneth Smith in 1962 and built in 1964 as the now famous 36ft Spray, a traditionally styled cruiser with design elements from the American northeast coastal ports. Built by American Marine in Hong Kong,

originally in timber, Grand Banks very quickly established a reputation for quality and classic styling, with popular models in 32, 36 and 42 feet being the lifeblood of the business.

Moving to Singapore in 1973, and expanding to Malaysia in 1995, the range was manufactured in fibreglass to a very high standard of traditional excellence. American Marine founder Bob Livingston was quick to listen to his buyers and owners' needs and criticisms. Consequently, the range of boats has made a progressive and intelligent evolution in the last 50 years. They have been copied

by many other builders, but never bettered. It is heritage indeed.

In those days, the cruising speeds were usually in the seven to 10 knots range, which was all very well during the fuel crisis of the 1970s. However, with the emergence of affluence, many buyers wanted better

performance. No one is immune to the thrill of power and speed and while the old hulls were able to get on the plane and move reasonably well, they required considerable horsepower and pushed a lot of water doing it. It never quite suited the look.

But with the new Heritage 41 and 47 models, all that has dramatically changed. And while the 41EU tested here, with a fully resin-infused hull, is the baby in the Heritage range, it's a big little yacht that can really go places.

## ALL HAIL ZEUS

Our test boat came swishing down the bay at 20kts, sitting perfectly, a neat little wave being tucked away from the bow, with a minimum of wash given the speed. She moved like no other Grand Banks I had seen before. For the photographic session we left the Southport seaway on a rolling short swell and the GB whooshed along like a little pocket rocket. She swerved and turned, roared up waves and zipped about with the agility that would make many sportscruisers sit up and stare.

Flashing in through the bar over the bumpy sea, there was not even the slightest hint of poor tracking or broaching. I couldn't wait to get aboard and find out exactly what had happened





## HIGHS

- Very high build-quality from an experienced and respected yard
- A whole new world of performance and handling compared to previous models
- Cummins Zeus drive a winner
- Huge volume and storage for a 41-foot boat
- Classic styling won't date
- Top spec engineering and electronics
- Great layout

## LOWS

- Really hard to find fault actually
- Cockpit on the smaller side (you may prefer the 47 if you need the room)
- High-end price, but well worth it
- Not much else frankly

since my last GB adventure. Suffice it to say, there has been a lot of water under the flying bridge and the 41 Heritage EU now sports the latest in cutting-edge pod drives.

Zeus may be the Greek King of the Gods and god of the sky and thunder, but the new Zeus pod-drive system from Cummins MerCruiser is the King of Manoeuvring. The rear-facing pod-drive system, mounted in a tunnel, has twin contra-rotating props and a built-in trim tab. Each pod is independently steerable and the system is computer controlled for maximum efficiency. Engine exhaust is vented through the prop hubs, which virtually eliminates the smoke and

fumes that follow many conventionally exhausted cruisers.

Naturally, there are lots of efficiencies that come from the pod-drive system, but the two most important are the huge gains in internal hull space and the remarkable ease of handling. Quite frankly, it is idiot proof. As the pods are rigidly mounted through the hull, the engines are set level and have no torque forces pushing through them. Vibration levels are wonderfully low.

The Cummins QSB 5.9lt six-cylinder diesel engines hitched to the Zeus drives, each rated at 425hp, are located under the cockpit in the lazarette, and the GB installation was superbly conceived and executed. Everything was gloss white, including the Onan 9kVa generator mounted forward and with easy access for those inevitable impeller changes.

Dual Racor fuel filters with pressure gauges feed the engines from the amidships mounted rotomoulded plastic wing fuel tanks, offering a total capacity of 1893 litres. They have clear sight gauges and the moulded tanks take full advantage of the hull shape and space, further boosting the servicing room.

No trim tabs are needed with Zeus as

the engine pods are tuned to the hull's performance and automatically adjust to optimise the boat's running angle. There is no sensation of going over the hump, she just moves forward, gains speed and slips onto the plane. Very impressive.

## HIGH-TECH HERITAGE

However, the really impressive part comes in the handling of the boat and for this I was most anxious to shove the helmsman out of the way and take charge. The lower helm station is a mostly electronic affair, very pleasing to look at and intelligently laid out. Our happy little Cummins fellows, doing all the work aft, report their condition through SmartCraft VesselView monitoring systems, offering revs, temps and pressures, fuel consumption and loads more key data, in a variety of display formats.

Engines are activated by Cummins SmartStart buttons, which are simply pressed and all the cranking to fire-up stage is done automatically. Onboard electrics are controlled by an E-Plex touch-panel system, which does away with the usual sea of confusing buttons and switches, leaving

**Clockwise from left: The Grand Banks 41 Heritage EU has a prominent teak transom and swim platform that highlights the marque's former heritage on an otherwise modern GRP exterior; Comfortable and teak-topped stairs lead through the see-through hatch to the flybridge; Up top, cabin roof has a forward sunlounge for fairweather cruising and teak-lined bulwarks are capped with sturdy stainless steel side and bowrails.**

an easy-to-operate bank for essential items. Various high-spec Raymarine navigation and communication equipment guide to wherever you want to go with confidence and reliability, and as we have all seen that stuff before, I was desperate to get my mitts on the throttles and joystick control for Zeus.

The Cummins electronic throttles are at once attractive and purposeful, with buttons to activate the station, synchronise the motors, set for troll speed and warm up. But the exciting part is the joystick that allows you to move the boat forward, backwards and sideways, or by twisting the knob, spin the boat on itself.

Thanks to the hard work being done by the computer and the Zeus drives, the 41 Heritage EU was ridiculously easy to command. One can simply motor up to a wharf and push the joystick sideways and whoosh, you come alongside with sufficient dexterity to make a professional skipper blanch. And none of those awful bowthruster noises that indicate the fact we may be cheating.

Next, step out of the very convenient side helm door, pass a line to a dock attendant

and hop off in a blaze of glory, keeping a poker face, mind you. No one would be immune to the safety and convenience of this remarkable system, not to mention the silencing of fearful crew or shrew-like wives who usually await the skipper's abysmal efforts at handling his pride and joy. As they say "a piece of cake".

But wait, there's more. A little device called the Precision Pilot Pad is secretly in control of all this and should you wish to stand off the wharf to attend to lines and fenders, a press of the Skyhook button and our faithful computer takes a reading from the GPS and the Zeus drives will automatically hold the boat on station, with the exact same heading, while you go about your business. It was all quite sensational. This pad also controls the operations of the autopilot and it is delightfully easy to operate. (See [www.tradeboat.com.au](http://www.tradeboat.com.au) for our video presentation on the wonderful Zeus drives).

## STATIC APPEAL

Having anchored — and in an effort to overcome the excitement of it all — I

finally managed to relax and resume the contemplation of all the usual Grand Banks' refinements and luxury goodies. Boarding from the teak swim platform and admiring the varnished transom, a very clever transom door opens with an integrated step for comfortable access.

The laid teak cockpit has a large centre hatch for access to the engine compartment while two side hatches reveal storage lockers for fenders and lines. A proper stairway to the flybridge has additional storage and a manual release for the fire-fighting system. The cockpit is not huge, but will adequately seat six for lunch or more for twilight drinks, and has the great advantage of a full-width hardtop for weather protection. This could be easily enclosed with clears in inclement weather.

A large sliding twin-pane glass door of sturdy and weatherproof proportions opens to reveal the huge saloon, which has a convertible yacht table and L-shaped sofa to port, and a large settee to starboard which will be quickly snaffled for an afternoon nap (one's book having fallen from grasp and onto the teak and holly floor). Those



**Opposite, far left: Tradition meets New Age at the helm where electronic displays and controls dominate the teak dash cabinet. Left: Twin doors open to the for'ard master stateroom with island bed. Opposite below left: The whole interior of the Grand Banks is panelled in teak and beadings are to a superior standard. Below: Stylish head has a separate shower stall with teak-topped seat. Insets, left to right: Socialise or sightsee cooking at the bright galley; Portside guest cabin has a twin-share bunk.**

who can remain awake may wish to avail themselves of the contents of a top-loading cocktail cabinet, a feature very close to my heart.

The whole interior is panelled in teak, and the trims and beadings are to a superior standard. A teak ceiling pelmet attractively conceals the air-conditioning outlets and there are no ugly grille vents to be seen.

Forward to port, the galley is a very stylish yet low-key affair which more closely resembles furniture than a working space. Lids cover the sink and cook top and cunning storage features abound. The Miele Combi oven is the biggest giveaway.

Opposite is the helm chair with a dedicated crockery cupboard underneath. The portside dash top conceals cutlery and utensil storage. A sneaky pullout rack displays the contents of the hidden corner cupboard, eliminating the need for kneeling on the floor and peering in with a torch. Our budding chef is connected with the guests and skipper and has superb picture windows through which to admire the passing scenery.

Those who wish to cruise farther afield will always be on the hunt for storage opportunities and another sensation is about to be revealed. With the engines aft, a large oblong hatch in the middle of the saloon floor opens to reveal a massive central section of the hull, which has a retractable stainless steel and teak ladder. Down we go and into the voluminous workshop, laundry, pantry, storage area. One could engage the services of a cunning Swedish storage guru to fit the space out in an optimum way. As the GB hulls are all lined, there are no yucky bilge smells to spoil this hidden treasure.

### SLEEPING BEAUTY

Meanwhile, back in the saloon, with a gentle breeze wafting in through the opening centre windscreen, a companionway leads forward to the guest cabin to port that has a twin-share bunk which converts to a queen bed, the foot end of the bunks partially going under the saloon floor. To starboard is a spacious head and separate shower stall which even incorporates a seat for safe showering underway.

Twin doors allow access to the master cabin or the companionway. The master cabin is forward and has a queen-sized island bed and plenty of hanging space and drawers. The hull lining is teak strips and

the effect is very pleasing and comfortable. Both cabins have generous opening portholes which are cleverly bevelled on the outside to keep the rain out. Three large hatches allow more serious natural ventilation from above as well as allowing natural light inside. Nothing is gloomy or dreary or stuffy.

What is amazing about all this is the space. GB Yachts CEO, Rob Livingston said: "Boaters will be amazed and impressed by what we have been able to accomplish in a 41ft vessel. With less space required for the engineroom, accommodations and living areas are what



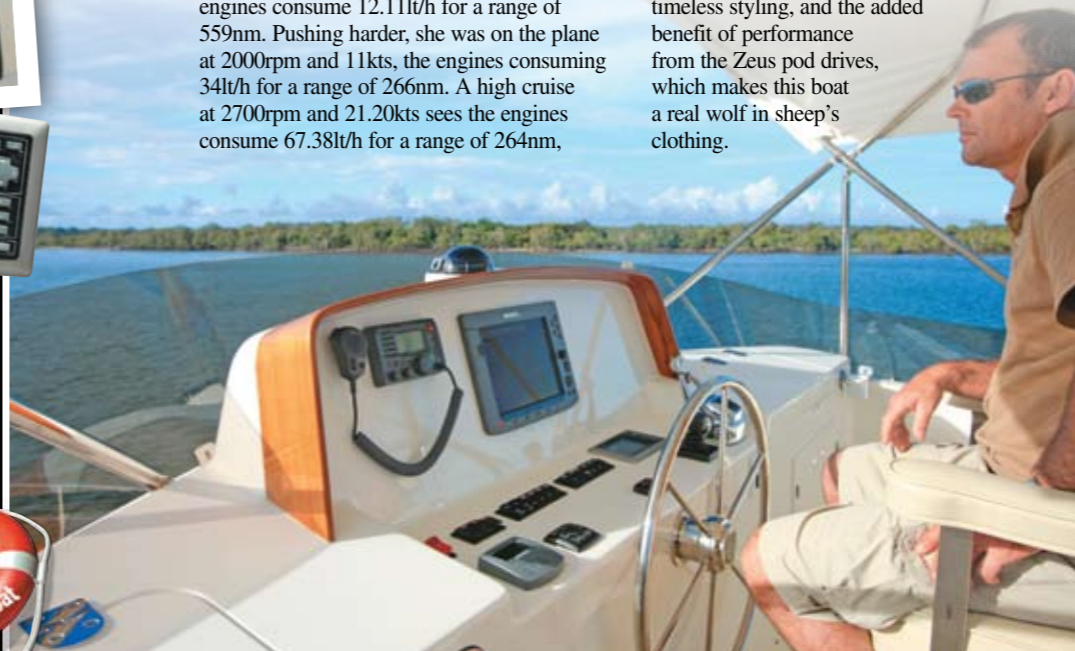
## GRAND BANKS IN AUSTRALIA

When *Trade-a-Boat* tested the Grand Banks 41 Heritage EU on the Gold Coast, Riviera was still the local agent for the yacht maker. Riviera took over the distributorship in 2007. But as you no doubt know, Riviera went into receivership and then administration a few weeks later in May.

*Trade-a-Boat* was subsequently told that Grand Banks doesn't want to be associated with a company in receivership. And why would you?

"We've been around a long time; we're a publically listed company in Singapore, with zero debt and a sizeable cash balance. All of this is available in the company's annual report and on the internet via the Singapore Exchange," says Hank Compton (above), the Grand Banks spokesperson Down Under.

*Trade-a-Boat* has known Hank, Mr Grand Banks in Australia, for some time now. We value his product knowledge, respect his integrity and on behalf of existing and prospective Grand Banks owners, are thrilled to be able to put Hank forward as the contact for future GB inquiries in Australia, at least in the near term until a future agent is appointed.



## WHAT IS ZEUS?

It's Cummins MerCruiser Diesel's (CMD) answer to Volvo Penta's IPS, but which you might hear was developed concurrently, or even before the Swedish maker's technology, after 15 years of R&D. Whatever the time frame, Zeus works wonders. Its steerable pod-drive system, with fly-by-wire steering, reduces drag and all the associated weight of shafts, running gear and engineering. In fact, CMD claims 30 per cent improved fuel economy, 15 per cent faster cruise speeds and 15 per cent faster top speed.

Zeus can be coupled to CMD engines (top) from the QSB 5.9lt 350 to 480hp engines, QSC 8.3lt 550 to 600hp, and the QSM11s from 670 to 715hp. The pods can be installed in twin, triple and quad configurations. As for cost, the Zeus pod system is said to be about 10 per cent more expensive than a shaft setup with bigger engines and bowthruster.

But the big difference between CMD's Zeus and Volvo Penta's IPS is that the former's drives have rear-facing contra-rotating propellers mounted in tunnels to reduce draft and moreover, improve acceleration. The

Duoprops on Volvo Penta's IPS face forward and there are no tunnels. Depending on who you ask, this is the basis for a variety of claims and counter claims. Zeus also has an integrated programmable trim tabs system and an exhaust idle bypass to prevent the shuddering and gurgling at idle.

At this stage, *Trade-a-Boat* has only tested the Grand Banks 41 Heritage EU with the Zeus drives, so performance comparisons with IPS are a way off. However, what we can say is that the acceleration with the Grand Banks was just outstanding. Furthermore, the technology is totally intuitive, with a joystick (right middle) docking device for close-quarters manoeuvring and best of all, an integrated autopilot called Precision Pilot that includes a wonderful Skyhook feature (right small inset).

*Trade-a-Boat* put Skyhook to the test on the inside of South Stradbroke Island, where the tide was running at 1.5kts and there was a 10-knot sea breeze. We moseyed into shore, pointed the bow at a kids' playground on the shore, and pressed the Skyhook button.

Dah-dah. The boat kept its position and heading or the direction the bow is pointing, with the engines engaging automatically to keep the boat in the zone. In practical applications, Skyhook will come in handy for everything from checking the crab pots, to preparing your boat for docking when shorthanded, through to fishing applications where you want to hover over a reef system or hot mark.

See [www.tradeaboat.com.au](http://www.tradeaboat.com.au) for our exclusive Zeus video presentation and the on-water test of the Grand Banks 43 Heritage EU.



you would expect from a much larger boat. There is really nothing else like it in her size.' He is not wrong.

## GB CRUISING

With the sun shining and the Gold Coast waterways free from traffic, we were ready to put the GB 41 through her paces. And why not start from the very generous flybridge? The access is via a comfortable stairway with teak treads and two stainless steel handrails, and then through a well executed sliding hatch of Plexiglass and stainless steel.

Up top, the dinghy sits aft and is lifted with an electric davit onto its cradle. A folding mast carries navigation lights and is aft of the very attractive bimini that covers the seating and helm area. The dash panel is a most attractive section with a varnished teak sunhood set behind the Perspex windshield. Storage cupboards access the air-conditioning system which is mounted in the forward section of the bridge.

A single helm chair gives the skipper an unrestricted view of the proceedings and guests seated on the L-shaped lounge or opposite settee will not retard his or her visibility. The seats are all properly made with recesses below that drain for weatherproof storage of lifejackets. A varnished teak grille table awaits a tray of selected drinks and nautical nibbles or perhaps a sunset dinner with a splash of champagne.

A large freestanding cupboard is perfect for positioning a generous BBQ and offers excellent storage underneath for sundry equipment. Sturdy handrails are everywhere and contribute to a feeling of safety and security.

In the helm seat and with a deft push of the throttles, the twin Cummins come alive. According to the official figures supplied by our good friends at Grand Banks, at 1400rpm and 8.70kts displacement cruise speed, the engines consume 12.1lt/h for a range of 559nm. Pushing harder, she was on the plane at 2000rpm and 11kts, the engines consuming 34lt/h for a range of 266nm. A high cruise at 2700rpm and 21.20kts sees the engines consume 67.38lt/h for a range of 264nm,

which means you may as well get this boat up on the plane than barely planing. Top speed is 24.80kts, says Grand Banks, and the boat did feel and look speedy. The best range and speed combination was 17kts and 276nm, a well-favoured speed by knowledgeable skippers for years.

All of this is achieved without fuss or fandango. The wash is sleek, the hull feels efficient and there is no feeling of bogging the stern in as with the old GB classic models. This is a tank-tested modified deep-vee hull and she just zips along like a sporty gamefishing boat. The steering was also a delight in every respect.

Mooring or anchoring is a breeze with remote windlass controls. If at the lower helm, a side door gives swift access to deal with lines and fenders. A stainless steel bowsprit with twin rollers looks stout and capable, and all around the boat, beautifully designed and engineered fairleads will secure her in the worst of conditions. Walk around the non-skid sidedecks and you will find well-positioned handrails and superb stainless steel portholes in the trunk cabin. The main saloon windows are sealed and make cleaning a breeze while enhancing the view.

Further testimony to her seaworthiness comes from the fact the new owners took delivery in Melbourne and with their great confidence and respect for Grand Banks, engaged a delivery skipper to help with the navigation. They filled her up with fuel and goodies and headed north.

Jimmy Thorn, a well-known delivery skipper, was very impressed with the GB 41 during the trip. "It handled beautifully," said Thorn, "quite unlike the old GBs from years ago." Clearly these new models have benefitted from the Grand Banks association with C. Raymond Hunt, the legendary designer who styled their Eastbay range.

Purchasers can look forward to years of reliable service, classic and timeless styling, and the added benefit of performance from the Zeus pod drives, which makes this boat a real wolf in sheep's clothing.

## Grand Banks 41 Heritage EU

### PRICE AS TESTED

\$1.4 million as a fully optioned boat with QSB 5.9lt CMD 425hp common rail diesel engines with Zeus pod drives, full electronics, davit, tender, and loads more

### GENERAL

Material: ..... Resin infused GRP hull and superstructure  
Type:..... Modified deep-vee with twin tunnels  
Length overall: ..... 14.05m  
Beam: ..... 4.77m  
Draft:..... 1.1m  
Weight: ..... 17,047kg

### CAPACITIES

Berths:..... 4 to 5 (depending on layout)  
Fuel:..... 1893lt  
Water:..... 738lt  
Holding tank: ..... 193lt

### ENGINE

Make/model: ..... 2 x Cummins QSB 5.9  
Displacement:..... 5.9lt  
Rated HP:..... 425  
Max. RPM:..... 3000  
Gearbox make/ratio:..... Zeus 3500/2.06:1  
Props: ..... Zeus pod drives with duoprops

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Website: [www.grandbanks.com](http://www.grandbanks.com)

Opposite main: Conservative her looks may be, but the Grand Banks 41 Heritage EU ticks with the latest in engineering and electronics. Left: Teak sunhood highlights the dash at the spacious upper helm where the views are grand.