



**At a glance** ▶ loa x beam 13.7m x 7.3m ▶ draft 1.2m ▶ displacement 9500kg ▶ cruise speed 8 knots ▶ max speed 16 knots ▶ test engine 2 x 75hp Volvo Saildrives

# Bluewater pedigree

Running in big seas or reaching before a breathless backdrop of blue, the first Lightwave catamaran to find a home in New Zealand proves an impressive performer.

Words **John Martin** Photos **Will Calver/oceanphotography.co.nz**

It's not every day you choose to head out into what could only be considered as grotty weather.

Ross Gibbons, the proud new owner of the Lightwave 45 Grandé *Double Shot* with his wife Gill, had warned me.

"You need to be more careful what you wish for John," he said, as we listened to the forecast on the VHF while sitting in the marina at Gulf Harbour. "Tiri Tiri, peak 43 (knots), average 35, from 050". Not only was it blowing half a gale, but from the north-east to boot.

Our destination was Marsden Cove for the Clash of the Cove boat show, 100km away. It was already 11am and it was looking like the first leg of the trip was going to be hard on the wind. I had said to Ross and Gill when I first spied *Double Shot* that she looked ocean



capable – in fact she had been delivered across the Tasman on her maiden voyage – but was she up to being a live-aboard, long-range cruiser?

The only way to see this isn't by sitting at anchor (even though that's where you spend 90 percent of your time when cruising) but on passage. I asked them if they would be prepared to allow Lyn and I to give her a real test, in other words in some foul weather.

We were joined for the test by

Roger Overell, owner of Lightwave Yachts in Queensland, Australia, and the builder of *Double Shot*. We discussed the various merits of monos versus multi, touching on upwind performance in a seaway as it has been my experience that this is not a cat's strong suit. Roger's reply? "Well, we're about to find out."

*Double Shot* is the fifth Lightwave 45 Grandé off the production line, an evolution of the Lightwave 45 Sport. This boat has more accommodation and a bigger cockpit, so she packs a lot into her 13.7m, and offers a perfect live-aboard platform.

The cockpit on *Double Shot* has full wrap-around covers, which would prove a godsend on this test, and the 'god pod' or steering station – which is raised to give 360-degree views above coachroof level – has full





The Lightwave Grandé benefits from generous spaces below decks and the tasteful colour scheme selected by Gill, making her a perfect liveaboard platform. The cockpit is also large, with backdrops providing protection from the elements. Handrails are recommended in the cockpit and below for ocean passages



*“Does the Lightwave go to windward? Yes she does, very well”*





wrap-around clears.

We motored out of Gulf Harbour and laid a course for the inside of Tiritiri Matangi Island. We decided to hoist the sails in its lee and motored straight into the gusty, almost 40-knot wind to get there. The Gibbons have upgraded the motors from the standard 55hp Volvos to the 75hp powerplant running through sail drives to four-blade Volvo folding props. They were running at about 2200rpm on this day, allowing us to easily motor into the weather at 6.5 knots, only taking spray over the bow occasionally. This speed was dictated by comfort, not capability, as the normal cruise speed is 8.5 knots.

Like many catamarans, the main on *Double Shot* – raised with the assistance of a powered winch – has a full roach and provides much of the power. Prudence dictated a conservative approach and we put both reefs in. The main is designed with just two slots, the second a deep reef that was ideal for the day's conditions.

We bore away and headed for the eastern side of Kawau Island, rolled out the genoa and took off. As we came out of the lee of the island the seaway increased, so for comfort we reduced sail and took a couple of rolls in on the genoa. We were still making 8.5-9 knots at 40° apparent, about 55° true.

By this stage the wind had settled and we were only seeing an occasional gust over 30 knots, the average in the late 20s, the seas 2- 2.5m, many with white tops. Away from the influence of the Tiri Passage they started to lengthen out making the ride more comfortable.

*Double Shot* loved the conditions and never felt tender or overpowered. To clear Kawau we cranked her hard on, brought

her up to 30° apparent and added a tickle of motor for 10 minutes – much easier than throwing in a board.

Does the Lightwave go to windward? Yes she does, very well! We took a couple of green ones over the windward hull and were pressing her hard to see how she behaved, averaging just under 9 knots for this windward beat. For an uphill ocean passage, the tendency would be to dial her back a bit for comfort, aiming for around a 7-knot average.

At Cape Rodney we were able to ease sheets and bear away 20° degrees, taking the rhumb line for Whangarei Heads. As we went further north the wind clocked east, and by Sail Rock we were beam reaching at speeds up to 16 knots after letting the rest of the genoa out. Unbelievably, we were docked at Marsden Cove by 6.30pm, and there was no need to wash the boat down as the rain was doing a great job of ridding the boat of salt.







*“...from our perspective, the Lightwave 45 Grandé is the first production cat that ticks all the boxes”*



Navigation display swivels for easy viewing



Chart table and comms inside the saloon



Good vision ahead from the helm seat



The boat features a raised steering station

### Down below

I went down to the galley twice while we were underway to see how easy it was to work in a seaway. No sweat. I made a cup of tea and didn't spill a drop. Interestingly, the galley stove is not gimbaled and restraining clips were not in use but the kettle still didn't move!

The other big task in this kind of weather is a trip to the heads, and again, it was no problem on *Double Shot*.

The builder advised the Gibbons that

for ocean work they fit handrails in the cockpit, main saloon and at the stairs on both hulls, plus in the heads. The shower screen (in the port head) is next to the head and would not take kindly to someone falling on it, but a full height handrail here would sort it out.

There was little or no flexing of the hulls even when we were pushing it, and the bridgedeck is designed at a height that all but eliminates wave slap. The engineering has been well thought out and

all aspects of the boat have been done well, right down to retaining clips and dips in the wiring throughout.

My only criticism was the steering. For most of the trip we were under the control of the Raymarine Autopilot which tracked the boat beautifully under both compass and wind control. I decided to take the helm entering Whangarei Harbour to see how she felt. The steering is hydraulic, but being used to cable and chain I found it a bit clunky and dead (no feedback).

That said, in the tight confines of Marsden Cove she turned easily. The advantage of having twin motors so far apart was soon apparent as *Double Shot* spun on a dime. Docking her, even in a cross wind, was a breeze.

The big question: is she offshore capable? The short answer is yes. Like all boats, there would be things we'd tinker with but from our perspective, the Lightwave 45 Grandé is the first production cat that ticks all the boxes.

# Lightwave 45 Grandé

technical



## PROS

- Roomy, fast and ocean-capable
- Built to NZ CAT 1
- Good upwind performance

## CONS

- Steering lacks feel
- Needs handholds in cockpit and below

## Lightwave 45 Grandé

► **loa** 13.7m ► **lwl** 11.3m ► **beam** 7.3m ► **mini-keel draft** 1.2m ► **max displacement dwt** 9500kg ► **construction** full foam composite construction, built to NZ CAT 1

► **fuel** 800 litres ► **water** 800 litres ► **holding tank** 80 litres ► **cruising speed** 8 knots ► **maximum speed** 16 knots ► **sails** Quantam ► **main sail** 75m<sup>2</sup>

► **overlapping genoa** 41.5m<sup>2</sup> ► **spinnaker** 154m<sup>2</sup> (if supplied) ► **screacher** 70m<sup>2</sup> ► **length to beam ratio** (for each hull) 11:5:1 ► **sail area to displacement ratio SAD**

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