



**Facing Page:** The vast cockpit and natural stability of cats provides a huge recreational space for fishing or lounging about. Most of the furniture is moveable and this picnic lunch at Fitzroy Island illustrates the cockpit utility and ease of access aft to the water for a swim. **Above (and below)** The tendency of cats to lean outward in a turn is in complete contrast to a mono. I found it very disconcerting to start with and I still have not fully got over the feeling that B5 is going to fall over in a turn at speed. **Below:** This photo illustrates the scalloped bow chine characteristic of Cougar Cats.

# Of CATS . . . and Compromise

Special report for F&B by Don Gilchrist

**W**hen European sailors first ventured into the South Pacific they were stunned to find that widely separated groups like Hawaiians, Tahitians, Cook Islanders and Maori could all talk to one-another in a common language.

This spoke of a recent and rapid spread of Polynesians across the vastness of the Pacific which same enterprise was causing the western explorers of the time more than a few difficulties.

Equally stunning were the navigational skills and ocean sea-craft that enabled them to do it.

Large ocean going catamarans that were seaworthy, fast and able to sail close to the wind were the backbone of the Polynesian diaspora, but change is ponderous in the seafaring world and there was only slow progress in the western understanding of what multi-hulled vessels could do.

Initially it was the speed freaks, as it often is, who began pushing the boundaries. The "Little Americas Cup" for "C" class catamarans at which Australia was very successful, courtesy of a bunch of Victorian cat fanciers. Then came a group of UK performance nuts with a series of

remarkable Proa designs called "Crossbow" which pushed the world sailing speed record to previously unimaginable levels. In the 70s, Frenchman Eric Tabarly brought his performance cruising trimaran "Pen Duick 3" to Australia. They would not let him compete in the Hobart race so he departed Sydney an hour after the race fleet left. He beat the race leaders into Hobart by about a day. By the time the Americans humiliated the Kiwi's huge mono in San Diego with a 60' catamaran the notion of multihulls as serious sea-going vessels was getting some traction in the wider boating community.

