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MULTIHULL REVIEWS

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MODERN MULTIHULLS

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Don't Worry About a Thing

Aquidneck
Custom's *Three*
Little Birds flies like
the wind

by Derek Escher

Let's say you reach a point in life where you have had lots of boats, and now you want one that does what all the others merely promised. A boat that sails

200 miles a day as easily as a young Lab swims across a pond. Say you are more of a "getting there" guy than a "being there" guy. You want to visit a new anchorage every night in a boat that is comfortable, with a fridge and freezer, hot water and nice berths. And, you want the boat to be as small as possible, while skimping on nothing.

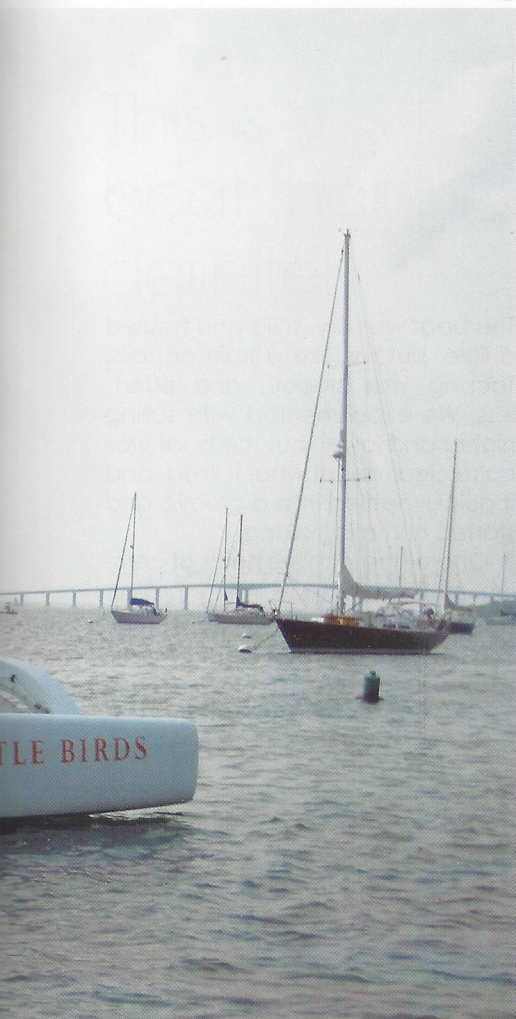
In the music world, "Don't worry, about a thing..." is a line from the famous Bob Marley song "Three Little Birds." In the multihull world, *Three Little Birds* is an 11-meter tri-maran built by Aquidneck Custom Composites (ACC) in Bristol RI, and every little thing on this boat is surely "gonna be all right." The tri was designed by Dave Walworth of MIT and Gold Coast Yachts background, owner Kevin Baxley, and Bill Koffler of ACC. ACC emerged on the multihull radar a few years

back by building several Chris White Atlantic 55s (stretched to 57 feet) that—with all due respect to others who have built that design—are stratospherically impressive.

The attention to detail found at ACC along with the materials, build technique, pedigree and proximity to other Rhode Island luminaries like Hall Spars, has made this one of the best yards on earth to build a high performance yacht. Anything you want, you get.

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

The first thing you notice as the launch pulls up to the boat is that the amas (outside hulls) are huge—the same length and two-thirds the same freeboard as the main hull. These are 200% amas, which by definition means that they support twice the total weight of the boat. In this case, that's something



like 12,000 pounds of floatation for a 6,000-pound boat. It also means that technically, you could fly two hulls a la *BMW Oracle*, but that is a coincidental fact, not a design mandate. In fact, safety and stability are far higher on the list, and nobody recommends sailing the boat that way.

The main hull of the boat is high and powerful looking. Every detail—including the fit and finish—is perfect. This isn't a glossy gel coat boat, but rather an epoxiology masterpiece. Materials such as carbon, S glass, Nomex Honeycomb and Core-Cell foam have been lovingly bagged, resin-infused and double-secret-techniqued into a true work of art. The paint job is pretty cool, too! The big daggerboard stands up forward of the mast and drops easily by hand to eight-foot draft when you are ready to crank upwind.

Ben Hall and the boys at Hall Spars are no strangers to high performance multihulls. They are just off building the rig for the new *Gunboat 90*, and the rig on *Three Little Birds* is everything you would expect. The finish is that classic gloss clearcoat carbon, the fibers always perfectly aligned. The boom is one of those shelf jobs, with a very cool lazy jack system that tucks away when sailing. The mast rotates, and the running rigging, reefing, halyards, sheets and rotator are led back to the cockpit, where they are controlled by six Harken winches. There is a slick little Cunningham as well. Of course *Three Little Birds* carries a roachy main, solent jib, screecher and two chutes—a big one (1300 square feet) and a small one (800 square feet). The sails were built by the Quantum loft in Rhode Island and are exotic, fiber laced material. The rig is supported by shrouds made of 11mm Maffioli Ultra Wire with Dyneema lashings.

The cockpit of the boat comfortably seats four to six people. The combing is cleverly wide enough to walk on, and there are no sharp or awkward hazards to consider, other than those that are self-created.

The mainsheet is continuous, and of course, in our test sail, we managed to pull it all the way through. It does help to jam off the dead end! So much for our team of experts...

The companionway leads into the galley, where there is a big fridge, freezer (Seafrost), two-burner stove and nice sink with hot water. There is a quarter-berth on starboard and a settee/berth forward with a table and seat to port. Next comes the civilized head, with pull-out shower. The big V-berth forward is the de facto owner's cabin, with plenty of room.

Three Little Birds is powered by a Nanni 21hp inboard, which has a high output alternator and provides hot water. The boat also has a nice Garmin 7012 plotter and NKE instruments.

SEA TRIALS

We sailed *Three Little Birds* in 12 to 15 knots of wind. Like all performance trimarans, you can point her really high, but the sweet spot is footed off a little. In the wind we had, the idea was to get the boat going around 9 knots or so. At that speed, we were 30 degrees off the true wind, and sailing was effortless.





The boat was dry, solid and heeled a little, but ran like a train on rails. Tacking was smooth and effortless. We experimented with sailing higher and lower, but the boat was quite clear about what it liked, and it quickly settled into a groove and started humming along.

One of the Achilles heels of cruising multihulls is downwind performance. Not with *Three Little Birds*. We flew the smaller chute and went jibing downwind, and the boat was just flying along. This is a boat that definitely "heats" up, so the sweet spot was between 120 and 150 degrees off, depending on wind pressure. She is relatively easy to jibe, too, as long as the helmsman remembers to pull in the lazy sheet...oops, sorry guys! On a beam reach, this boat will exceed wind speed all the way up into the 20-knot range. You can wind her up and let her go. So far, her top speed is in the low 20s, but a crazy man could certainly exceed that!

A couple more random notes:

1. The boat is detachable (the amas detach from the main hull), although the process is a once-a-year kind of thing. It takes two days to get the boat from all packed up to assembled, rigged and ready. Still, it is doable.

2. The base price for the boat is \$640,000. *Three Little Birds* cost \$750,000.

Three Little Birds is clearly not for everyone. But for a sailor who demands the highest performance, won't compromise on basic comforts, and wants a boat that is manageable size-wise, this is it! Here is a boat that was built to be sailed, with the idea that sailing is the preferred activity in life for the owner, and she has accomplished that beautifully.

For more info, visit Aquidneck Custom Composites (www.aquidneckcustom.com) or Performance Multihulls (www.performance-multihulls.com). ■

This is a
boat that
definitely
"heats" up

THREE LITTLE BIRDS

LOA	41'8"
LWL	35'1"
Draft (board up)	4'0"
Draft (board down)	7'6"
Displ.	6000 lbs.
SA upwind main & jib	842ft
Fuel	17 gal.
Water	55 gal.

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