



Race Week

HAMILTON





# Festival of sail

## – Audi Hamilton Island Race Week 2007

Fashion parades, parties galore, tennis tournaments and fast cars. Hamilton Island had it all – even yacht racing – at this year's sail classic.

By Lulu Roseman  
Photography:  
Andrea Francolini  
Lulu Roseman  
Mark Bradley



After 24 years, Audi Hamilton Island Race Week has cemented itself in the psyche of sailors, who are not only looking for respite from the southern winter chill, but a fantastic week of competitive sailing and marathon partying. Run from August 17 to 25, this year's celebration of sail boasted a record fleet of 217 yachts spread across eight divisions.

Club Marine CEO and publisher, Mark Bradley, kicked off festivities by welcoming crews to the massive Club Marine Welcome street party in Hamilton Island's Marina Village. Fireworks exploded over the marina, flamethrowers

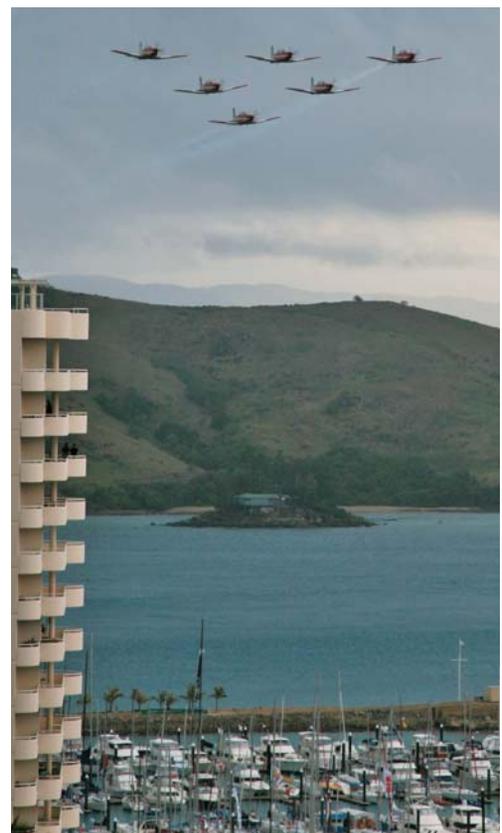
performed and legendary Aussie band, Hoodoo Gurus rocked the crowd until late. Bradley then whizzed over to co-host the Club Marine Yacht Owner's Cocktail Party with Island proprietor Bob Oatley and his family, held at the exclusive new Qualia resort.

The influence of the Oatley family is now readily apparent as they continue to transform Hamilton Island into one of the world's great yachting playgrounds. One example is the new Great Barrier Reef Yacht Club, with Commodore Iain Murray at the helm, which is scheduled to open next August in time for AHIRW 2008.

With Audi on board as the new naming rights sponsor, the prize pool is now the richest of any regatta series in Australia, attracting some of the most competitive yachts and crews. From the new race committee, headed-up by Dennis Thompson, to the friendly staff, great weather and sensational social schedule, the island atmosphere buzzed all week long.

## ACTION STATIONS

The grand prix yachts were stacked with America's Cup talent happy to sail on boats that exceeded 12 knots. Former Rolex Sydney Hobart











winner, Karl Kwok arrived from Hong Kong with his new weapon, *Beau Geste* looking for a challenge. The diverse cruising fleet, comprising of both hardcore and champagne sailors, flexed their competitive muscles in readiness.

Designed to keep everyone on their toes, the courses were made up of long passage races, dual windward/leewards and shorter around-the-island races for the cruising divisions. The Dent Passage start line was a spectator's dream.

The first three days of racing were exciting, exhilarating, wet, windy and, for some, totally heartbreaking. There was plenty of carnage on the race course, with a major casualty in the Lindeman Island Race on the first day. During the pre-start of IRC, Steven David's *Wild Joe* hooked the transom of Leslie Green's Swan 60 *Ginger*, causing her bow to skew into *Hardy's Secret Men's Business*, which was then pushed into Stephen Mackay's *Cabernet Sauvignon*.

A devastated Geoff Boettcher, owner of *Hardy's Secret Mens Business*, was forced to withdraw after only 15 minutes of racing. The boat suffered tears to both sides of its hull, damaged rod rigging, mainsail and a stanchion.

"We've had majors. Once we have Club Marine assess the extent of the damage, we'll put a repair program in place," Boettcher said.

The Reichel/Pugh 46 was later trucked to Hart Marine in Melbourne, while David, Green and other skippers offered Boettcher and his crew rides for the remaining races.

Rob Hanna also had his regatta cut short when he discovered his new Rogers 46, *Shogun* had a mast problem that could not be easily repaired. It was bittersweet considering he was forced to abandon the Fastnet Race at Cowes in the UK due to a delayed start caused by excessive weather conditions, to make it back to Australia in time for this regatta.

*Wild Oats X* crossed the line first, ahead of *Wild Joe* (later disqualified by protest), followed by *Yendys*.

Crews donned wet weather gear on the second day as a south-easterly built to 18-20 knots. While *Wild Oats X*, *Wild Joe* and *Yendys* dominated the pointy end from TP52's *Wot Yot* and *Quest*, there was plenty of action further back in the fleet. *Living Doll* trawled a spinnaker underwater, blew out a heavy weather kite and busted their vang, while *Pretty Woman* shredded



a kite and both *Ginger* and *You're Hired* had a few close calls.

The Premier IRC, Performance Racing, Cruiser/Racer IRC and three cruising divisions set off in a moderate to fresh south-easterly breeze on two different courses round the Whitsunday Islands. The fast spinnaker start in Dent Passage saw several in the cruising divisions struggle to pull up in the fast downwind conditions before the gun had fired.

## PERFORMANCE

Geoff Fogarty's *Team Avalon* went on to win the Performance Racing division from Peter Goldsworthy's Volvo 60, *George Gregan Foundation*. Colin and Gladys Woods's *Pretty Fly II* climbed over the rest of the Premier IRC division and in the Cruiser Racer IRC division, Mark Griffith's *Raging Bull* pipped Anthony Dunn's *Equinox*. Graham Jones's *Escape* took out the Club Marine Cruising division 1, while *Magnolia* smoked *Pyrenees* in Cruising division 2. In the non-spinnaker division, Dave Short's *Pro Beat Passion* was victorious.

The heavens opened and the rain bucketed down all night in preparation for the following day's action. The Great Barrier Reef Yacht Club cocktail party, originally to be held in a marquee on the construction site, was moved to the Crown Lager Bar in the Audi Village, where Sandy Oatley hosted guests and villa owners. Others



descended on The Comedy Club at Bohemes Nightclub for a few laughs.

The Club Marine Edward Island Race, sailed over a new course this year, saw the fleet headed southwards to Coppersmith Rock, north to Edward Island and then around Surprise Rock before returning to Hamilton Island. At 60 nautical miles, it was the week's longest race.

*Wild Oats X* set a new race record, crossing the line first in 5 hours 11 minutes 27 seconds. The 20-knot south-sou'easter conditions helped Bob Oatley's 66 foot Reichel/Pugh reach speeds of 24 knots. Handicap honours went to *Quantum Racing* ahead of *Wild Joe* and *Wild Oats X*.

The cruising divisions enjoyed a more relaxed day on the 18 nautical mile Short Around Islands Course. Winners included Graham Smith's



## WHALE OF A TIME

Whale watching was a welcome distraction during Race Week, especially when, halfway through the regatta, two whales and their calves joined the fleet.

Competitors and spectators were treated to a visual spectacle as the whales romped playfully through the Whitsunday Passage.

One of the whales fed her calf, while another gave birth, distracting many crews in the IRC Racing division during Race 5.

The presence of the humpback whales on the scenic island course, where winds ranged from five to 12 knots, made up for what could have been a very slow and frustrating afternoon.

During the final day's racing, several whales were spotted playing around the race course. It was an impressive sight as yachts set their kites against the brilliant blue sky. With wall-to-wall spinnakers for the best part of an hour, spectators were treated to a multi-coloured sail display as humpback whales played among the fleet.



*Scaramouche*, Tony Bates' Northshore 370, *Viva La Vita* and David Berry's *Escapade*.

## NO REST

After some pretty heavy-duty yacht racing, the lay day was welcomed, although instead of taking it easy, many crew took advantage of the host of activities and events on offer. The jam-packed schedule had something for everyone.

The return of brilliant sunshine was the perfect excuse for many to put in some hard yards around the main pool, with its famous swim-up cocktail bar.

Around 200 guests joined Bob Oatley, daughter Nicki and Collette Dinnigan at the sold-out UBS Moët & Chandon Lunch at Qualia's Long Pavilion, where the champagne flowed. At the Beach House, guests enjoyed a five-course Long Lunch.

Tennis ace, Todd Woodbridge, with the help of sister-in-law, Nicole Bradke, hosted two mixed tennis clinics, while former Australian Rugby League captain, Gordon Tallis shared his footy tips with the kids. From Beach Olympics to cooking your own BBQ, a windsurfing regatta, The Great Turtle Chase, outrigger canoe races and jet-ski rides; there was something for everyone.

Like the Audi Drive Challenge, which attracted more than 200 skippers and crew at Hamilton Island airport. Racer Brad Jones, Audi's motorsport ambassador, put sailors through their paces on a course designed to test skill and accuracy. The sailing results from the regatta are combined with the Audi Drive Challenge results to determine who wins the keys to the Audi A4 Avant prize car.

And for those who couldn't keep away from the water, the Club Marine Hobie Cat Regatta at Catseye Beach offered some light relief (see box).

Musto CEO, David Oliver invited skippers and crews to Bohemes Balcony Bar for a drink. "It was great to get all our loyal customers together in the one room and thank them for their wonderful support," Oliver said.



## FASHION TAKES CENTRE STAGE

Guests were treated to some serious glamour when fashion designer and Audi Ambassador, Collette Dinnigan, unveiled her Cruise 07-08 collection to a VIP crowd in The Long Pavilion at the stunning new Qualia resort.

Gorgeous models sashayed down the catwalk in a collection of perky swimwear, sleek silk tops and short shorts teamed with sheer blouses. Glittering sequined mini-dresses and shimmering body-hugging gowns were teamed with towering heels and signature frocks, featuring intricate beading and exquisite attention to detail.

The collection also featured stunning pieces in a special signature Australiana print, featuring wattle, frangipani, kookaburras and iconic Australian vintage stamps that showcased the colour and style of the lazy days of summer.

While Dinnigan's designs may not be appropriate crew wear, they are certain to grab plenty of attention off the water.

The who's who of the yachting fraternity donned their party threads to mingle with the likes of A-listers



Zali Steggall, Sandra Sully, Todd Woodbridge, Jamie Durie and Audi's Jeorg Hoffman and Geoff Lindsay.

The crowd feasted on sushi, duck crepes, beef carpaccio and oyster shooters, all washed down with Mumm champagne.



Matilda Bay chief brewer and Gordon Tallis hosted a sold-out Matilda Bay Dinner at the Steakhouse, confirming that beer, beef and biff is the way to a man's heart.

## LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

The live entertainment kicked on in the Marina Village, with the Jimmy Buffet Tribute Band, Urban Playboys and Captain Spalding taking to the main stage.

## CLUB MARINE HOBIES

Brilliant sunshine and light, 10 knot breezes created the perfect conditions for the Club Marine Hobie Cat Regatta at Catseye Beach during lay day.

With two three-day Hamilton Island holiday packages and \$2000 worth of Club Marine insurance up for grabs, competition was ferocious.



The fleet was made up of 18 entries that included crew members from some of the fastest yachts at AHIRW. Divided into three heats, each two-man crew pushed off from the beach determined to put up a good challenge.

It was back to serious business on Wednesday, when racing resumed. *Wild Oats X* clocked up another line honours victory after duelling with *Wild Joe*, helmed by America's Cup sailor, Adam Beashel, while the humpback whales again stole the limelight.

*Yendys* scored its first handicap win of the series, beating *You're Hired*, which picked a winner off Pentecost Island and led *Wild Oats X* and *Wild Joe* at one stage. Third was Bob Steel's TP52 *Quest*.

Premier IRC division raced a 21 nautical mile course around the islands, with John Meadowcraft's Marten 49 *Carerra* beating Ross Trembath's *Secret Mens Business #1* (Geoff Boettcher's previous boat), with Dean Harrigan's *Playstation 3* finding form in the light sou'easterly breeze to finish third.

The Cruiser Racer IRC division had its course shortened at Pine Island as the breeze faded and the tide turned. Mark Griffith's *Raging Bull* sailed a brilliant race to pip Anthony Dunn's *Equinox* and Jenny King and Murray Owen's *Mahligai*. While the rest of the fleet was sent on a passage race,

Heat one saw the *Wild Joe* team just smoke the young dudes on *Real Yachting Adventures*, while the second race went to *Wild Thing*, followed by *Swish*. *Quantum Racing* narrowly pipped *Yendys* in the final heat.

The final was nail-biting for the assembled crowd on the beach as the two leading boats approached the finish line neck and neck. Running the last few metres to the beach, Steve McConaghy and Scooter, of *Quantum Racing*, proved just too good for *Wild Thing*.

"It was great fun. We read the currents beautifully and got a sensational right hand shift," Steve McConaghy said.

"Foot steering is the way to go," added Scooter.

Final Results, Club Marine Hobie Cat Regatta: 1 Quantum Racing, 2 Wild Thing, 3 Swish, 4 Wild Joe, 5 Real Yachting Adventures, 6 Yendys.







the Performance Racing division enjoyed two windward/leeward races. Guy and Clark Holbert's Mumm 30 *Rumbo* outpaced the rest of the fleet, scoring two wins while Alex Douglas' *Synergy* also featured twice in the top three, scoring a third in race one and a second in race two.

Starting on a different 17 nautical mile course in Dent Passage, the cruising divisions saw Stephen Keal's *Fish Frenzy* chalk up a win in Division 1. In Division 2, Tony Bates's *Viva La Vita* scored its third win to position it at the top of the leader board and Division 3 was won by David Berry's *Escapade*. In the Non Spinnaker division, Terence Herbert's *True Colours* provisionally took the win.

## BEACH PARTY

For most crews, the morning's hive of dockside activity centred on stocking up with plenty of food and beverages for the cruise out to Whitehaven for the Fun Day Beach Party (See *Wacky Whitehaven*).

The racing was left to IRC Racing and Performance Racing divisions, who hit the water for the 16 nautical mile course they shared with a mother humpback whale and her calf, which kept leaping out of the water.

*Wild Oats* got the gun ahead of *Wild Joe*. The handicap went to Geoff Ross, who skippered *Yendys* himself after helmsman, Sean Kirkjian had to hot-foot it back to Sydney for a wedding.

"It was a beautiful day's sailing... just like in the brochures," commented Ross.

In the Performance Racing division, Stephen Hunter's Hick 31 *Zutem* won on handicap ahead of Geoff Lavis' UBS *Wild Thing*.

The fun and free-spirited atmosphere wasn't limited to Whitehaven as crews returning to the





marina were kept entertained by live bands that kept partygoers dancing until late.

## DOWN TO THE WIRE

With only two days of racing left, it was looking like the pressure would keep up down to the wire, especially in the two IRC leeward/windward races, which saw all attention focused on the *Yendys* crew.

## WACKY WHITEHAVEN

A flotilla of several hundred boats made its way out to the pristine white silica sand of Whitehaven Beach for the one party of the week that should never be missed. As one of the largest and most popular social events during Race Week, sailors were joined by locals and backpackers from the mainland to celebrate on some of the squeakiest, whitest sand in the world.

Only IRC Racing and Performance Racing divisions participated in the 16 nautical mile race sailed in the light east south-easterly conditions. *Wild Oats X* crossed the line ahead of *Wild Joe*, while *Yendys* took the handicap honours from Geoff Morgan and Andrew Banks' *You're Hired*. In third place was Michael Hiatt's Melbourne-based *Cookson 50*, *Living Doll*.

Many yachts from the other six divisions headed over to one of Australia's most famous beaches, to enjoy their second lay day soaking up the sun.

There were bars, live bands, beach volleyball, BBQ lunches and a tug-of-war competition. Many beachgoers paid special attention to their attire, where accessories ranged from cute to kooky and sexy to silly. Others were just downright wacky.

An air show performed by Edge Aerobatic and Pip Borrmann entertained the crowd with their skywriting, loops and freefalling manoeuvres, causing a few nail-biting moments.

A third consecutive handicap win was followed by the team's worst result of the series; a seventh place in the second race behind *Wild Joe*, which won handicap honours ahead of *Wild Oats X* and *You're Hired*.

With Bob Oatley's *Wild Oats X* snapping at his heels with an unbeaten line honours record, Ross's quest for victory was under serious threat.

Top standings in the three Cruising Divisions were more spread out, with *Scaramouche* a clear 10 points ahead of second-placed *Escape* in Cruising Division 1. *Viva La Vita* looked strong in first place, four points ahead of nearest rival, *Magnolia*.

In Cruising Division 3, point score leader, *Escapade* collected its third consecutive handicap win, putting it 9 points clear of *Morning Mist*.

In the Non Spinnaker Division, Terence Herbert's *True Colours* was leading Bryan Hudson's *Catalyst* by four points.

## FINAL SHOWDOWN

The entire fleet lined up for the 23 nautical mile UBS South Molle/Daydream Island Race.



Some crews chose the self-catering option and hosted mini-parties aboard their yachts, while others boat-hopped around or rafted up with friends.

VIP guests aboard several of the multi-million dollar luxury motor launches, including those aboard the *MV Fantasea Ammuri*, preferred to sip their bubbles and watch the antics from afar.

The 4:00pm curfew sent many scrambling for their tenders a little worse for wear, with several boats not making it back to Hamilton Island until after dark.





## QUALIA QUALITY

The new Qualia Resort is setting a new standard in luxury serviced accommodation on Hamilton Island. The name has Latin origins meaning "a collection of sensory experiences".

Positioned at the secluded northern tip of the island on over 30 acres, Qualia consists of 60 hillside pavilions, with half featuring private plunge pools. The location takes advantage of the daytime sun and to-die-for sunset and sunrise views across the Coral Sea.

Set among eucalyptus trees, the design is distinctly Australian across the pavilions and landscaped grounds, where locally sourced timbers and stone are featured.

Guests can expect only the finest facilities, including a gym complete with a personal trainer; two serene pools, a library, private dining room, two restaurants and a bar.

Head Chef, Stephane Rio and his team serve world-class innovative cuisine, together with the finest wines. Romantic beachside dining is also available.

One of the truly memorable experiences is a visit to Spa Qualia, which has an extensive range of treatments available.

With its own definitive style and sense of tranquility, Qualia affords a sense of timelessness that allows guests to discover world-class indulgence in a place of rare natural beauty and all the space needed to unwind, according to the management.

Rates start at \$1400 per night, including all meals, non-alcoholic beverages, non-motorised water sports and exclusive use of an electric buggy.

For the ultimate indulgence, the larger Beach House features a full-sized pool, extensive entertaining areas and a separate guest pavilion from \$3000 per night.



The strong current and tricky winds kept things interesting on the start line and on the final stretch swung around, favouring the smaller boats.

All *Yendys* had to do was defeat *Wild Oats X* on corrected time in order to take the series. And that's exactly what it did; even though it placed 15th, it trounced *Wild Oats X* by four places, with *Wild Joe* finishing third.

On his win, Geoff Ross, owner of *Yendys*, said it was incredibly satisfying to ultimately win a very intense battle that went right down to the wire.

"We raised the team and boat to a new level over a very hard-fought regatta. *Wild Oats* were great competitors, who sailed extremely well. Bob Oatley and his crew were waiting for us at the dock to congratulate us in the true Australian spirit when we came in," Ross said.

"With more time and thorough attention to a myriad of details, the team has brought the boat to a new level and it is actually going quicker in all conditions – other than heavy upwind, where it has always been great – than at the Rolex Regatta last December."

## WE'LL RETURN

Ross and the *Yendys* crew plan to return in 2008 to defend their title.

"The location is just fantastic and it's a great event. We all thoroughly enjoyed ourselves," he added.



Hosted by comedian Vince Sorrenti, the dazzling prize-giving held at the Convention Centre saw Audi Australia's managing director, Joerg Hofmann, in a giving mood. First up, he handed the keys of an Audi Q7 3.6 FSI Quattro SUV over to Rod Jones and his crew of *Alegria*, an Archambault 35 from Mooloolaba, for winning the first-ever Audi IRC Australian Championship.

"This is sensational. The team's worked really hard. While the car is a great end result, it's very special to win the Audi IRC Championship, especially as it's the first one and there's been such great sponsorship from Audi," Jones said.

Along with this regatta, yachts must enter at least three of the four events that make up the Championship, including Skandia Geelong Week, Sydney Harbour Regatta and the Audi Sydney Gold Coast Yacht Race to be eligible.

*Viva La Vita*, owned and skippered by Tony Bates from Middle Harbour Yacht Club, won the Audi Drive Challenge and an Audi A4 Avant. The winner of the Cruising Division 2 said his Northshore 370 performed well in the conditions and the whole crew loved the relaxed atmosphere.

"This is a reflection of the location and the good spirit of the sport and the event. It is a real feature of this regatta being on an island so that all the sailors can race and socialise together," he said.

As for the car, it will replace his old one: "Three of my crew are already driving Audis, so now I can join them. It will be used to benefit my entire crew and take pride of place in our club's car park." 

## AUDI HAMILTON ISLAND RACE WEEK 2007 FINAL RESULTS

**IRC Racing:** 1 Yendys, 2 Wild Oats X, 3 Wild Joe.

**Premier IRC:** 1 Espresso Forte, 2 Carrera, 3 Balance.

**CR IRC:** 1 Raging Bull, 2 Equinox, 3 Arajilla.

**Performance Racing:** 1 George Gregan Foundation, 2 Second Time Around, 3 Wallop.

**Club Marine Cruising Division 1:** 1 Scaramouche, 2 Escape, 3 The Oceanic Hustler.

**Club Marine Cruising Division 2:** 1 Viva La Vita, 2 Magnolia, 3 Farrago.

**Club Marine Cruising Division 3:** 1 Escapade, 2 Morning Mist, 3 Meltemi.

**Non Spinnaker:** 1 True Colours, 2 Catalyst, 3 Mim.

