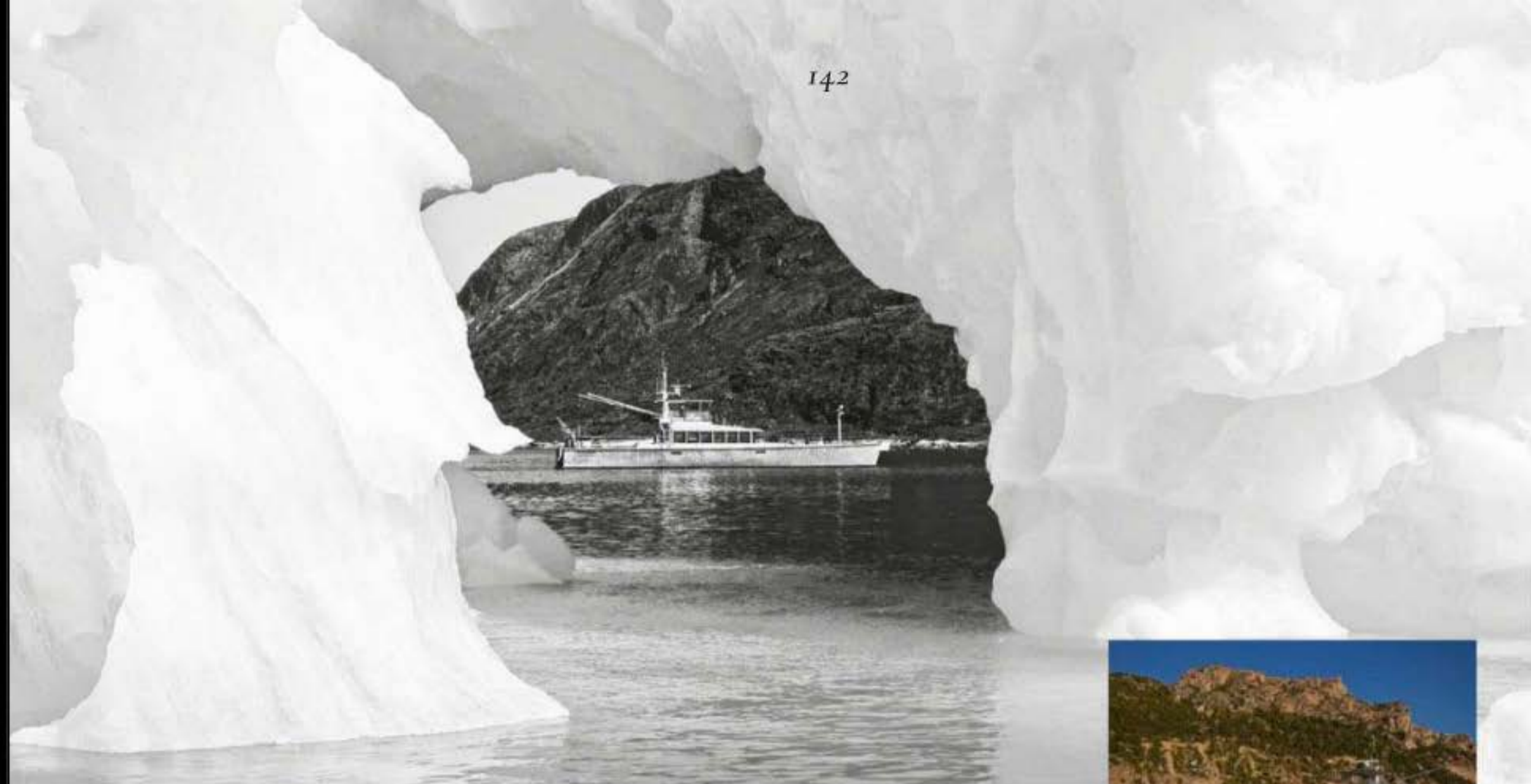




LOOK
WHO
STOLE
THE
FUTURE

*Bill Springer salutes the “disrupters” –
boatbuilders and designers who dare to be
different and still make it work*



STEVE DASHEW

At first glance, Dashew's rugged, raw aluminium cruising yachts couldn't be more different than Peter Johnstone's all-carbon fliers (*see overleaf*). But looks don't tell the whole story: Dashew and Johnstone are cut from the same cloth. Both started in the boat business by building boats for themselves; both have strong, and in some cases controversial, opinions about what makes an ideal yacht. Most importantly, both continue to flout convention with disruptive design.

To Dashew, however, his designs aren't an attempt to upset the status quo. Rather, they just make sense. "Many hundreds of thousands of sea miles have taught us one immutable fact," says Dashew, referring to himself and wife Linda, with whom he has been sailing for more than 40 years. "You have to be mentally and physically comfortable at sea. Otherwise, excuses keep coming up to avoid leaving, and the dream of distant adventure turns into another marina. So what does it take to make the dream a reality? This starts with heavy weather safety, and the ability to recover capsized. Next is the ability to average 230 nautical miles a day – the magic number that, combined with a basic understanding of weather, keeps you safe and comfortable," he says.

How do you achieve this? It's simple, continues Dashew. "A yacht optimised to cross oceans will have a modest beam, relatively fine bows and stern for an easy ride in head seas and when running at speed, and an interior that concentrates living and working areas close to the motion centre. It will also have draught in the area of 1.5 metres, watertight bulkheads, coffer dams around the stabilisers, plenty of machinery access and an electrical system that does not require a genset running 24 hours a day."

Dashew first made waves by designing and building a purposeful offshore cruising sailboat that he and Linda could take around the world, which led to him designing a series of sailboats – and then motor yachts – that have earned an almost fanatical following. He brooks no compromise in the design of his yachts. If it can't cross an ocean safely, it doesn't get built. "We've always designed

and built boats according to a few simple principles that matter to offshore cruisers," he says.

"Safety and self-sufficiency have always been paramount. So every boat we've built has been designed to be able to sustain a hard grounding at full speed with minimal damage. We've also adhered to the rule that safety depends on superior steering control, stability and the ability to handle rough weather."

These rules apply equally to his sailboat designs and the new breed of FPBs (functional power boats) built at New Zealand's Circa Marine. The whole range, running from 19.5 to 35 metres, features the trademark narrow, bare aluminium hull. "What gives us the biggest thrill is the fact that, for the most part, our yachts spend a majority of their lives crossing oceans and at anchor, rather than sitting in marinas," he says. "And of the sailboats for which we have mileage, the average is something like 57,000 miles covered for each, with numerous circumnavigations."

