

PHOTOS: ELLEN DEWAR  
VIDEO: HUGUES DE ROBILLARD



# TWIN-PROP PARKING



You're shorthanded, with a crowd of greenhorns aboard, and you need to dock. Now! But don't fret. Professional boating instructor \*NED FILES offers a step-by-step guide to singlehandedly sidling up to the outside arm in a twin-engine boat. And JOHN ZAMMIT delivers the good oil from onboard in downtown Docklands...

**Y**ou know the scenario: you've bought the new boat and she's a beauty. When you took delivery, the dealer took you out for a test run and impressed you with the ease of handling and how he brought her straight into the berth. No fuss, no bother.

Since then, you've used the boat a bit and outside of the marina it's all smooth sailing. However, the docking thing just doesn't seem to work. You can drive a motorcar alright, but you've soon worked out that boats, unlike cars, when travelling at slow speed, don't necessarily go in the

direction they're pointed. Even worse, stopping the boat doesn't mean you remain stationary. There is the issue of wind and current and the effect that both have on the boat.

But, of course, you've realised all of that by now, which is precisely why the mere thought of berthing the boat is enough to turn the knuckles white and start the perspiration beading on the brow. And you've also realised that no matter where you decide to berth, you always seem to have an audience watching from the dock.

Well, take a deep breath and relax —

it's really not that difficult once you've grasped the fundamentals. We recently got together with Ned Files from High Tide Boating in Melbourne. Ned is a professional skipper and boating instructor who ran us through some of the basics of singlehandedly docking a twin-engine boat.

With these tips from Ned, plus a bit of practice, you'll soon be docking like a pro. Read about the process of berthing a twin-engine boat, singlehandedly, in an alongside berth at a floating dock in the following pages. And see the accompanying video.



**1**

### DOCKING MADE EASY

Preparation is the key. Giving some thought to the process before you commence means that you can then concentrate on implementation rather than having to make decisions on the run. Of course, you always need to be prepared for unforeseen circumstances that may arise during the exercise, but if you know what you're aiming for then you can take appropriate action.

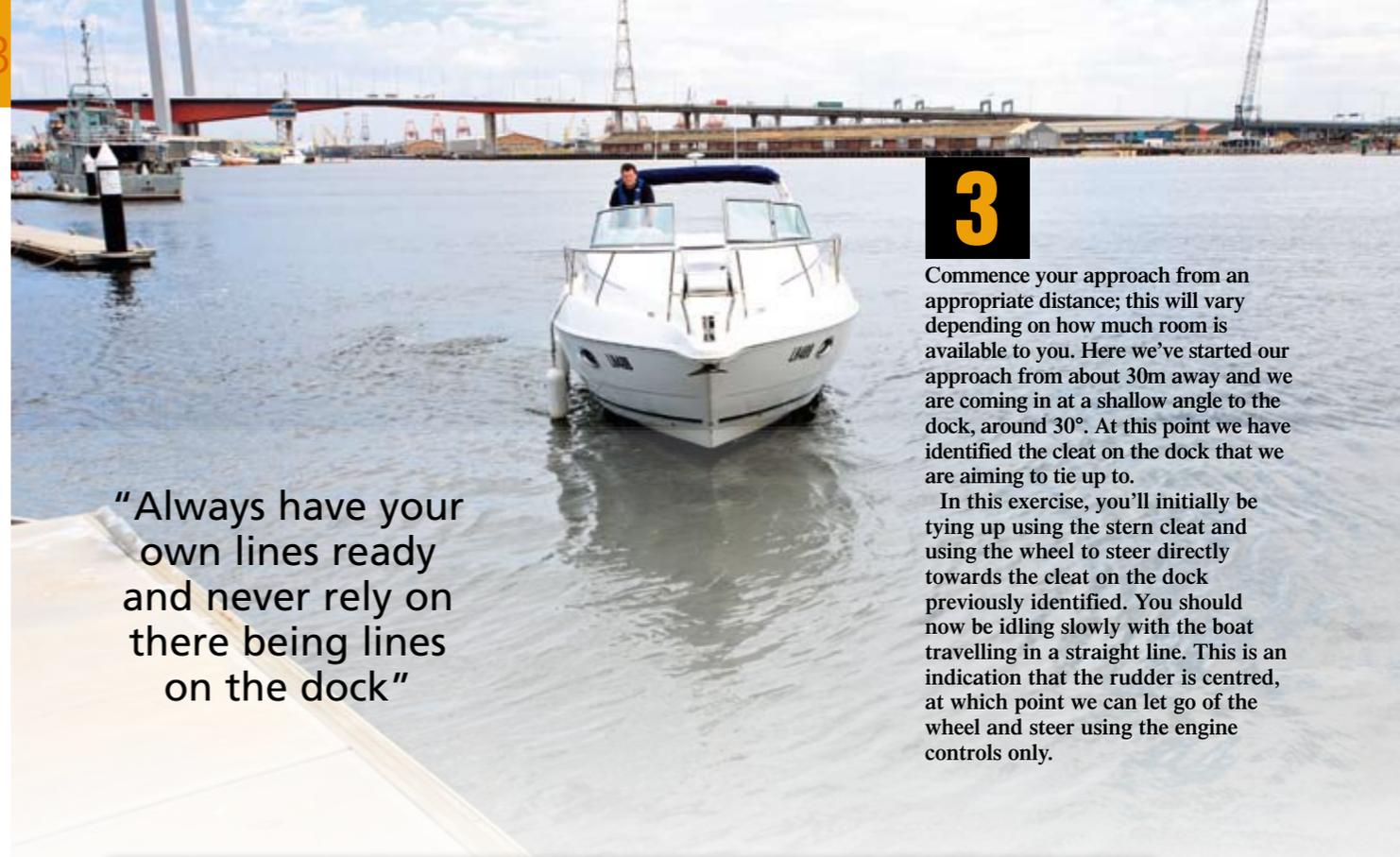
First, look around and be aware of anything that may affect the boat during the process, things like wind direction, any current or tidal run, other vessels in the area, pedestrians on the dock, etc. Make sure everyone on board not involved in the docking procedure is seated or out of way and not impeding your passage from the helm to the cleats and lines.

In terms of wind direction, a small flag flying off the flagstaff on the bow, as well as being decorative, always tells you which way the wind is blowing. When looking for current, watch for water flowing past a buoy/marker or running against the piles on a marina. If a current is running it will give you an indication as to the direction.



**2**

Once you've made your observations ensure your lines are ready and attached to the cleats on the boat. Always have your own lines ready and never rely on there being lines on the dock. Make sure fenders are attached and appropriately placed.



**3**

Commence your approach from an appropriate distance; this will vary depending on how much room is available to you. Here we've started our approach from about 30m away and we are coming in at a shallow angle to the dock, around 30°. At this point we have identified the cleat on the dock that we are aiming to tie up to.

In this exercise, you'll initially be tying up using the stern cleat and using the wheel to steer directly towards the cleat on the dock previously identified. You should now be idling slowly with the boat travelling in a straight line. This is an indication that the rudder is centred, at which point we can let go of the wheel and steer using the engine controls only.

“Always have your own lines ready and never rely on there being lines on the dock”

**4**

At slow speed there is not enough water travelling past the rudder and therefore it becomes ineffective. Using the engine controls we can turn the boat by selectively placing one of the engines in neutral. For example, by placing the port engine in neutral and leaving the starboard engine engaged will cause the boat to turn to port and vice versa. This is a much more effective way to steer a twin-engine boat at slow speed.



**5**

Coming in to tie-up on the starboard side and still heading in a straight line towards the dock at idling speed. Approximately a half-boat length away from the dock, place the port engine in neutral. We already have forward momentum, but with the starboard engine still engaged and the port engine now in neutral the boat swings in a gentle arc to port.



6

As the boat continues to swing gently to port it comes parallel to the dock at which time we can place the starboard engine in neutral. With both engines now disengaged the boat still has some forward momentum and you wait for the rear cleat on our boat to align with the cleat on the dock.



7



Once you are close to the dock, you can make some gentle corrections if necessary. For example, if it looks like you will go past the cleat, you can momentarily engage the port engine in reverse. Or if you lose forward momentum before the cleats are aligned you can momentarily engage the starboard engine forward. Either of these actions will have the effect of moving our stern nearer the dock.

9

Moving back to the helm we engage the starboard engine, which will cause the boat to spring off our stern line and move in towards the dock and be held firmly alongside.



10



Leaving the Starboard engine engaged and the boat held firmly against the dock, you can now safely step off the boat and secure the rest of the lines.

8

Once the vessel is positioned and stationery you can put both engines in neutral and move to the stern. Remaining on board you take your pre-prepared line attached to the stern cleat, cast it over the cleat on the dock and fasten it back to the boat. The boat is now secured to the dock.



11

Once the boat is secured fore and aft, step back aboard, take the holding engine out of gear and switch off all engines.

That's it! Singlehandedly docking a twin-engine boat on an alongside berth or outside arm. It's simple and all you have to do is practice and practice some more to get to know your boat. In a very short time before long, you too will be docking like a pro.

**WATCH THIS SPACE**

This is the first installment in our planned ongoing *Trade-a-Boat* practical demonstration features with expert tuition covering key aspects of boat handling, driving, docking, anchoring, MOB retrieval, and more, in both print and video formats. Check back for the next episode detailing how to park in the confines of a marina or pole berth.

*\*For private boating tuition, contact Ned Files, phone 0419 155 321, email: ned@hightide3000.com.au, or visit www.hightide3000.com.au*

