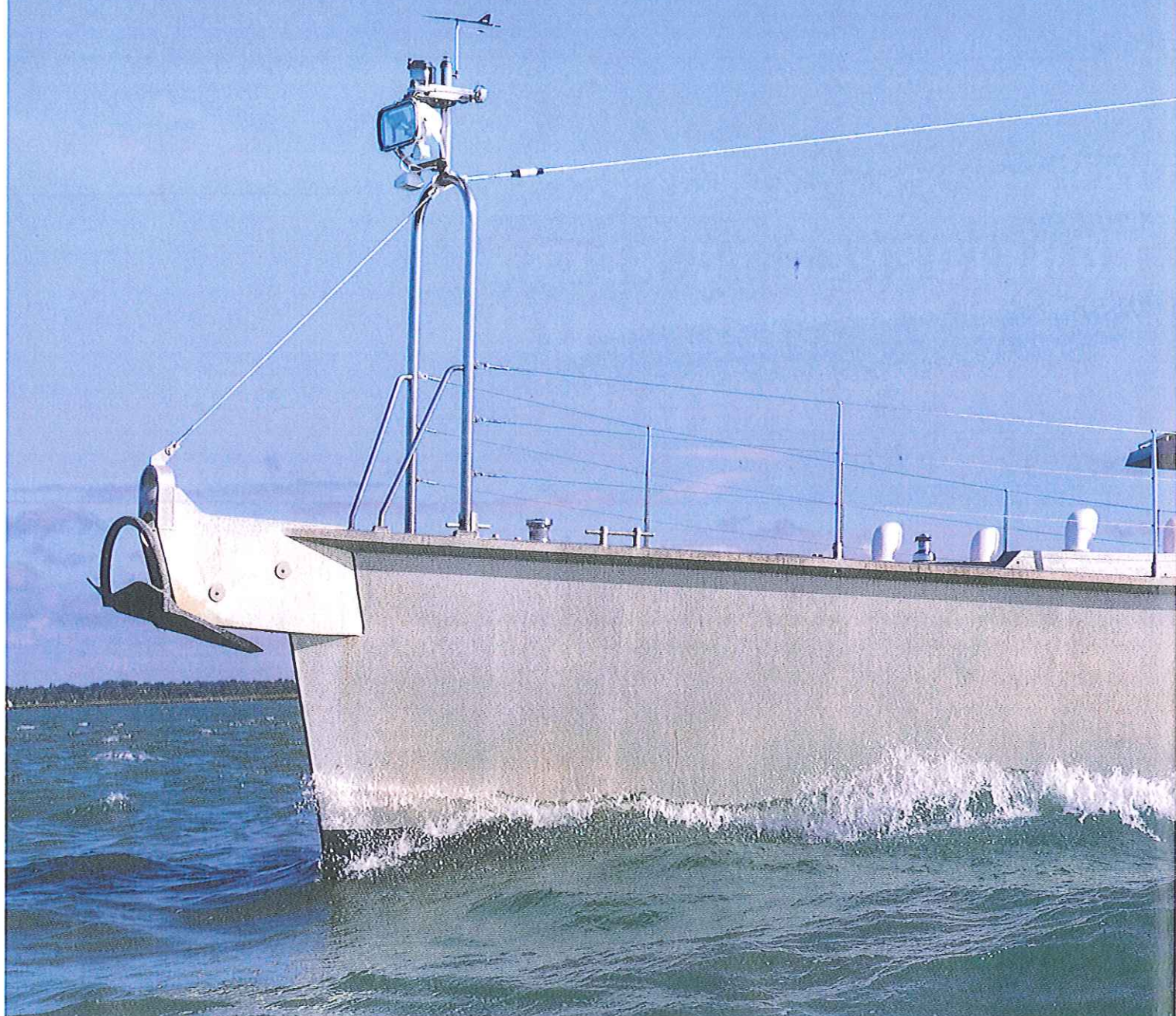


# FPB 64

A feat of formidable function to cross oceans on, get beneath  
its austere skin and the FPB 64 has a soul like no other

Text: **Dave Marsh** Photos: **Lester McCarthy**





Shortly after we picked up an abandoned rowing skiff drifting in the English Channel (an unexpected side show to the two-way Channel crossing that we were using as our *MBY* boat test on the FPB 64) the boat's owner Peter Watson mentioned that, during his 12,000 mile delivery trip from the builder's base in New Zealand to *Grey Wolf's* home in Guernsey, he had been hailed and asked to identify which navy his battleship grey aluminium boat formed a part of. It's easy to see why – the aptly named *Grey Wolf* firmly refuses to comply with the contemporary aesthetic, which on the modern powerboat frequently sees function as wholly subservient to form.

However, although at first sight the FPB 64 represents the polar opposite of that idea, there is beauty of a different sort in this ultra long-distance cruising boat, it just takes a couple of days on board to really appreciate. FPB 64 is designed by legendary long-distance sailor and

explorer Steve Dashew, using his own aluminium 83ft *Windhorse* as a sort of prototype test bed and melting pot for his countless ideas (see *MBY* June 2009). With 250,000 miles of cruising behind them, Steve and his wife Linda know no bounds when it comes to intrepid voyaging, and yet paradoxically I've heard Steve described as the most risk-averse sailor ever. The result is that every part of FPB 64 is designed for the worst case scenario, for the worst possible weather you're ever likely to encounter, however bold your cruising ambitions.

Take the stabilisers, for instance. They are over-specified to the point where the boat is designed to sit on the fins and dry out. Yet despite their obvious strength, the inboard mechanisms that drive the fins live inside watertight compartments. So in the almost improbable event of a stabiliser being struck hard enough by a passing container to tear the aluminium hull shell, the FPB 64 would stay watertight. That's

something I've not encountered on any boat of any stripe. Equally impressive are the windows in the deck saloon. Steve wanted FPB 64 to be able to recover successfully from a capsize or a serious roll so the toughened glass windows are a remarkable 19mm thick. That also makes them invulnerable to the pounding they receive when solid green water crashes over the bow, and funnels its way aft to the deck saloon.

## THE GREAT ROOM

It's all very well designing for marine Armageddon but even survivalists want to enjoy life along the way. After the highly functional but bare aesthetic of the outside, the lovely warmth of the inside comes as a surprise, as does the layout. On board what most of us would regard as the FPB 64's closest long-distance cruising rivals – the trawler yachts from the likes of Nordhavn, Grand Banks, Fleming and Outer Reef – the typical main deck layout comprises a lower saloon and galley, with a raised or completely separate pilothouse forward. In contrast, the FPB





*Every part is designed for the worse case scenario, for the worst possible weather you're likely to encounter*

64's single level, all-in-one arrangement could well have been stolen from one of the current genre of galley-up planing powerboats such as the Prestige line. Well, stolen were it not for the fact that Steve utilised this very layout on *Windhorse* way back in 2005.

Although the advantages of this arrangement are evident on many boats, having spent two long days cruising on board *Grey Wolf*, I feel they reach their apotheosis on the FPB 64. That's principally to do with the size of the windows and the underlying geometry of the boat. By keeping the sheer relatively flat and the wave-piercing bow low, the helmsman gets a terrific view out without the inconvenience of the usual steps up to the helm position. There is a small blind spot aft, on the centreline where the steps to the flybridge live, but otherwise this amazing view out is a key benefit for everybody on board. I've driven tiny enclosed boats like the Paragon 25 and the XO 270 that are a match for the FPB 64 in this regard, but no other boat this size comes close. Even armed to the teeth with AIS and radars and chartplotters, crossing the end of the busy traffic separation lanes as we approached Alderney felt so much safer simply because the view out was so extraordinarily good.

FPB have dubbed the deck saloon 'The Great Room'. It achieves its greatness not just because of its size but because it's such a sociable, safe, enjoyable and practical place to spend time. Single level living allows the crew to keep a safe lookout while they carry on with all their other activities; cooking, eating, reading, passage planning and so on. Safety first comes in the form of overhead and waist level handrails, extra grippy rubber flooring, and the biggest fiddles this side of a Ponzi scheme. Forward of the Great Room lies the owner's ensuite cabin, an elongated room with generous amounts of stowage. Aft lies a passageway office, another much smaller ensuite double cabin, and a tiny crew cabin adjacent to the engine room.

## CROSS CHANNEL HOP

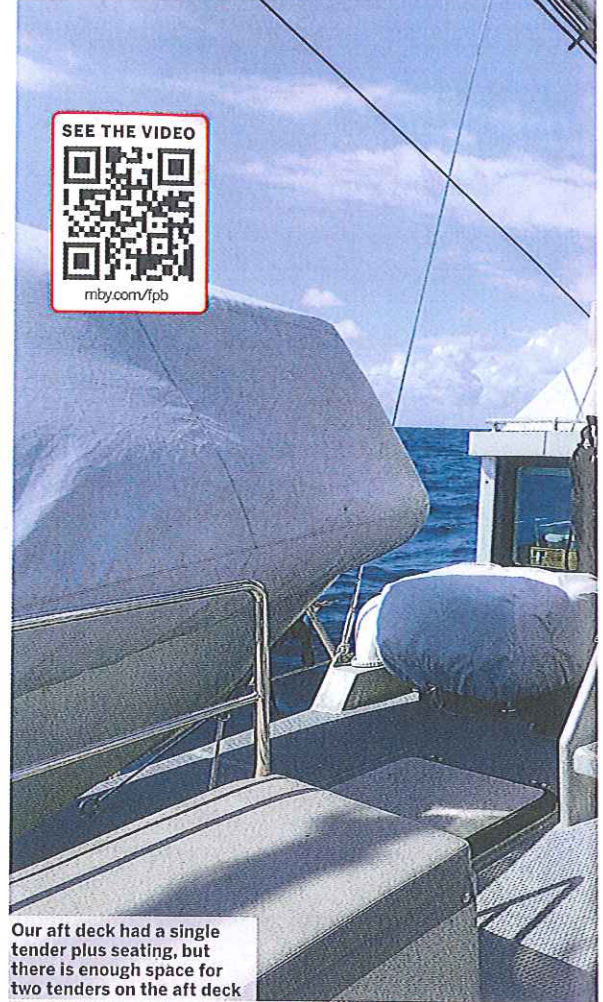
Putting the remarkable engineering and construction to one side, the fit and finish (visible and behind the scenes) is fine, but it's certainly not up there with Fleming or Grand Banks. It's sturdy and serviceable, which is what you'd expect given the nature of the FPB 54, and items like the custom-made fridge/freezer impress with their robust and doubtless very expensive construction. Nevertheless, I reckon there will be potential buyers who, asked to part with almost twice the cash that

Nordhavn want for their 63, would appreciate a little more finesse.

Looking at the slender shape of the FPB 64, it's clearly influenced by Steve's years of cruising on his big, powerful sailing boats. Its shape is more sailboat than powerboat, and it's designed to pierce the waves rather than skip over the top. And that's very much what it did during our double Channel crossing, out from Berthon's marina to Alderney and back again. Unsurprisingly, it has an unusual motion for a powerboat, more akin to the bigger sailing boats I've cruised aboard, even though *Grey Wolf* is fitted with stabilisers instead of the ballast keel that Steve designed *Windhorse* with.

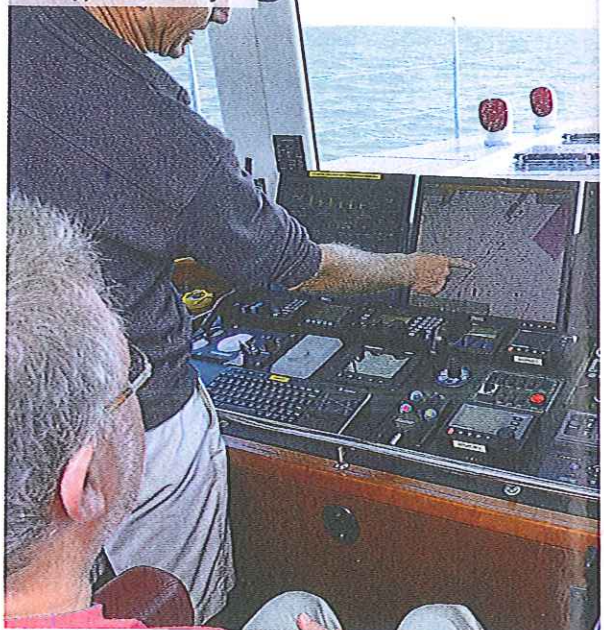
In my opinion, it is the single most important thing a potential buyer needs to experience. Stabilisers and autopilots can be fine tuned, and Peter had set up his boat with what could unscientifically be described as the 'soft' settings. This allowed *Grey Wolf* to move around instead of rigidly fighting every wave we encountered, typically two to three metres high with the very occasional four metre peak. After only a few hours on board, perhaps thanks to my sailing boat background, my body settled into a symbiotic rhythm with the boat and I only occasionally noticed the movement. But I suspect that, just like power cats, the unusual motion will not suit every single owner.

However, for those in tune with this boat it's a joy because the words slam and crash, or even bump, are not in this boat's vocabulary. Whatever it encounters it just hooovers up in an indestructible, unrelenting Terminator-like way. There's another crucial joy to be had from the FPB 64. Although this is outwardly a displacement cruiser, capable of just 11 knots flat out with its single 236hp John Deere diesel, its slender bow and notably flat sections aft also allow it to surf at amazing speeds. On the way back from New Zealand, the Berthon apprentices who accompanied Peter competed to see who could achieve the fastest surfing speed above 20 knots! A thrill doubtless denied to Nordhavn owners. The other monumental differences between a Nordhavn and the FPB 64 are fuel consumption and range. Cruising at 9 knots, the albeit roughly 60% heavier Nordhavn 63 gets less than 1mpg, whereas the FPB 64 is achieving over 3mpg. Stir in 74% greater fuel capacity, and even with a 20% safety margin the FPB 64 has an astonishing 7,000+ mile range at that speed. It's indicative of the serious intent of the FPB 64 that our double Channel crossing counted as no more than a short hop.



Our aft deck had a single tender plus seating, but there is enough space for two tenders on the aft deck

Skipper Glenn Harman and I discuss AIS ship movements as we approach Alderney



Although there's a covering rug, the owner's cabin sports rubber flooring beneath for the ultimate grip at sea



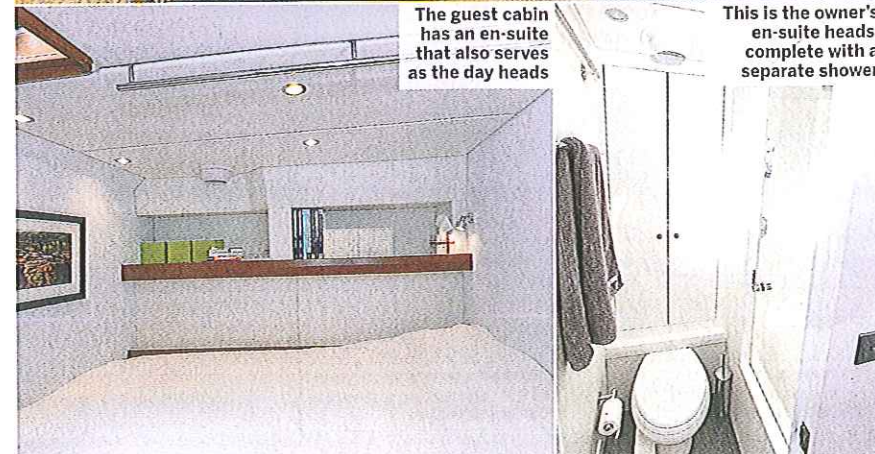




A flexible space, the 'Great Room' is where you'd spend all your time, be that eating, navigating or relaxing



The huge galley would not be out of place on a boat half as big again



The guest cabin has an en-suite that also serves as the day heads

This is the owner's en-suite heads, complete with a separate shower



## A CLOSER LOOK WITH DAVE MARSH

### WINDOWS

The toughened glass windows are 19mm thick, in anticipation of the worst case capsize scenario that Steve wanted the FPB 64 to be able to recover from.



### FLYBRIDGE

It may look austere but thanks to the FPB 64's gentle motion through the water, the flybridge is a remarkably comfortable place to while away the time.



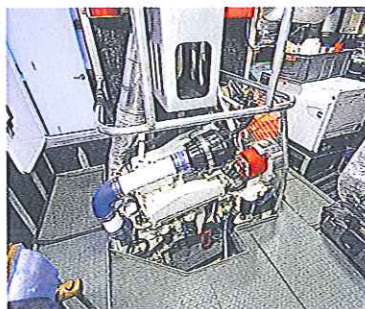
### WATERTIGHT COMPARTMENTS

The FPB 64 is divided into a number of watertight compartments. One of these comprises the huge forward lazarette shown here.



### THE ENGINE ROOM

Rather than hide wiring and plumbing, it's left fully exposed so that servicing is as easy as possible. All it takes is this single 236hp John Deere engine to push the 41-tonne FPB 64 at its hull speed.



## THE RIVALS

### NORDHAVN 63

Price from £1.1m ex VAT

Philosophically poles apart but similar unbreakable design for ocean crossings.

**BUY THE TEST**

[mby.com/nord63](http://mby.com/nord63)

### AQUASTAR 65

Price from £1.9m ex VAT

Not really in the same world-girdling club as the FPB 64, but still a terrific long-distance cruiser.

**BUY THE TEST**

[mby.com/aqua65](http://mby.com/aqua65)





✚ Larger FPB may have a proper crane to launch the tender, but on the FPB 64 the tender is launched using this manual system



✚ The aluminium is left unpainted to keep maintenance to a minimum, but this aesthetic will not suit everyone

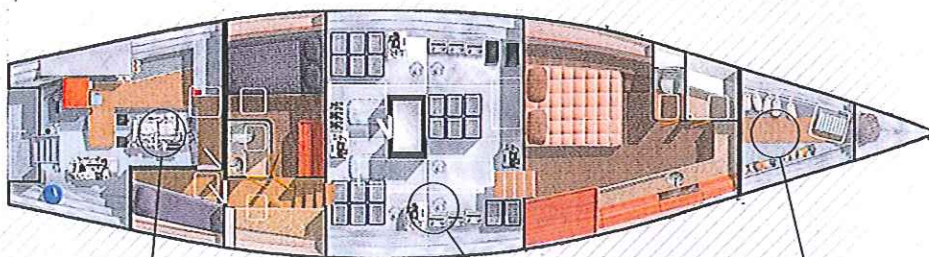


✚ In many places the Lloyds Special Service Rule scantlings have been further increased, e.g. 12mm hull plating in place of the recommended 8mm (a threefold increase in stiffness)

## THE DATA

LENGTH OVERALL 64ft 11in (19.79m)

BEAM 17ft 9in (5.42m)



Engine room is as far as possible from the Great Room and owner's cabin, which is good for noise levels

There's a colossal storage area amidships – adding weight here leaves the trim largely unaffected

The owner's suite is very roomy, but the huge forward lazarette is equally impressive

**FUEL CAPACITY**  
2,816 imp gal (12,800 litres)  
**WATER CAPACITY**  
1,496 imp gal (6,800 litres)  
**DRAUGHT**  
4ft 6in (1.37m)  
**AIR DRAUGHT**  
25ft 9in (7.85m)  
**DESIGNER**  
Steve Dashew  
**CLASSIFICATION**  
Lloyds Special Service Rule  
**FULL DISPLACEMENT**  
41 tonnes (full fuel & water & stores)



*The amazing view out is a key benefit for everybody on board, and no other boat this size comes close*

## VERDICT

Verdict implies critical judgement, a tricky thing to do when a boat brings along its own unique frame of reference. Superficially, the FPB 64 might be considered as an alternative to the long-distance trawlers. And it could well be used and cruised in the same way as, say, a Nordhavn or a Fleming owner might undertake their passage-making. Scratch the surface, though, and the FPB 64 reveals itself as a different breed of boat, with a different way of fulfilling its vocation.

Quite why it's named FPB is a mystery. FPB is the unromantic acronym for Functional Power Boat, and yet beneath its starkly

functional aluminium skin, it has so much personality and character. And if you possess even a shred of engineering appreciation, there's real beauty to be found on board, albeit of an industrial nature. Certainly, during the two days on board, it got under my skin like few other boats. The morning after the test, I just wanted to climb back on board and set sail. If for no other reason than the whims of aesthetic appeal, I don't think there will be many who feel the same way. But for those that do, there just won't be any other boat for you. **MBY**

Contact Berthon International. Tel: +44 (0)1590 679222 Web: [www.berthon.co.uk](http://www.berthon.co.uk)  
Web: <http://setsail.com>

## THE HELM VIEW

For once, the navigation screens are large enough to render conventional paper charts all but redundant

Thanks to the low bow, the view through the toughened glass windows is outstanding

Instead of a wheel, this jog dial is used for low-speed berthing manoeuvres

There's a great deal of redundancy built into FPB 64; two completely separate autopilot systems, for example

No conventional wheel as standard, but there's a socket for an emergency wheel, one of only four ways to steer

## PERFORMANCE

**ENGINES** Single John Deere 6068TFM M3  
236hp @ 2,400rpm. 6-cylinder 6.8 litre diesel

## FUEL BURN FIGURES

	1,400	1,500	1,600	1,800	2,100	2,366
1	8.2	8.6	9.1	9.7	10.5	11.0
	10.2	11.8	13.5	18.9	38.8	46.6
	2.24	2.60	2.97	4.16	8.53	10.25
	3.65	3.31	3.06	2.33	1.23	1.07
1	8,234	7,465	6,904	5,257	2,772	2,418

n knots. GPH & MPG figures use imperial gallons. Range in nautical miles allows for a 20% reserve. Calculated figures based on FPB test data, your figures may vary considerably. All prices exclude UK projected figures based on 100% fuel + 100% water + full cruising including tender and liferafts

## THE COSTS & OPTIONS

**PRICE FROM APPROX** £2.1 million (single 236hp)  
**PRICE AS TESTED APPROX** £2.1 million (single 236hp)  
Based on £1.00 = US\$ 1.67 and £1.00 = NZ\$ 1.98

Yanmar 100hp wing engine	£42,929
Flybridge enclosures inc. screens	£2,525
Two 320W solar panels	£2,020
Custom chocks for tender	£909
UV steriliser for water maker	£758
Built in ships safe	£758
2-level saloon table	£3,030
Additional electronics	POA
Pilothouse raised 2in (50mm)	£5,050

POA = Options on test boat

BOAT REPORT  
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