

# SEAJAY's 4.5 'Nomad Elite'

Bundaberg, home of Australia's classic rum, is also the base for growing pressed alloy boat builder, Sea Jay. The company is now building a range of boats to rival the big guys. Jeff Webster recently tested the latest, and very impressive barra punt.

**L**ike many manufacturers of pressed alloy tinnies and barra boats, Qld's Sea Jay boats has grown substantially in recent years. The boom in freshwater and impoundment fishing, as well as increasing interest in luring for bream and flathead in our estuaries and harbours, is resulting in a corresponding growth in small boats sales. Never has the small tinnie and barra boat market been so buoyant.

Sea Jay, like many of its competitors, has capitalised on this new found interest in small boats, by introducing a range of new models. The latest is the 4.5 m Nomad Elite.

**Design** The Nomads represent just a small part of Sea Jay's small tinnie and v-nose punt boats. In fact, Sea Jay has the biggest, most varying range of punts and dinghies available.

In addition to the new Nomads - which have the distinctive rounded

bow shape first developed by Quintrex - Sea Jay has two other ranges of v-nose boats, as well as a series of traditional square bow punts. The intention behind the diversity of models is to provide buyers with a style of craft for every possible fishing and boating application.

Within the Nomad range, there are also several models available. You can choose from 3.9 m, 4.2, and 4.5 m lengths with standard, deluxe and "Elite" fitout. The basic boats have just twin cross thwarts with the option for a bow casting deck. The deluxe models have added features - including a flat floor, forward casting deck, wide side deck extrusions and twin lift out pedestal seats. The Elite series adds a rear casting platform and a side console with forward steering and controls.

The 4.5 m Nomad Elite is the flagship model, and it compares favourably with competitors from all of the big brands. The interior fitout is first class. Up forward is a split

anchor well, large casting deck (830 mm long x 1.75 m wide) and short bow rails.

A hatch in the centre of the casting deck opens up to reveal a reasonable size storage space for safety gear. This space isn't as large as in some competitor craft because Sea Jay has filled the side areas of the casting deck with block foam - in a commendable effort to increase the buoyancy of the boat should it become submerged. Foam is also packed in under the centre cockpit floor, beside the 60 litre underfloor fuel tank.

Two lift out, upholstered chairs are standard with the Sea Jay, and these can be slotted into four positions around the boat - including the slot before the helm console. Additional chairs are optional.

The centre cockpit area, between the bow and stern fishing platforms, is a useful size at 2.29 m long x 1.65 m wide. The top of the coaming is 492 mm above the floor - or around knee height, so you can lean into the coamings at a pinch while fishing.

The extruded side decks (or coamings) are 160 mm wide, and this is plenty wide enough to install flush mount rod holders. These flat side decks are also quite comfy to sit on, and the boat is easily stable enough to allow you to do so without feeling uncomfortable.

Partial and full length side rails are also available as an option - should you want to fit rail mount rod holders. Most small boat anglers are favouring this style of rod holder now because they can be moved around to face just about any angle. Further, the holders (and therefore your fishing rods) can be angled horizontally out from the boat, and this is essential for slow trolling deep diving lures.

The helm console, situated against the side coaming to starboard, is a simple two shelf unit of medium size. However, it is topped with a short windscreen and a very attractive moulded fibreglass dash. This fascia has ample space for engine instruments, and there is provision above the dash for an LCD depth sounder. The whole system here works pretty well; the steering wheel and throttle are nicely positioned, and the padded helm chair is comfortable.



Despite the choppy conditions, the Sea Jay handled very well, and had a surprisingly good ride. The only time it became really hard riding was driving straight into the chop too fast. Similarly, if you drove too fast with the wind and waves on the forward quarter it was seriously wet - but no more so than any other barra-type boat ( or any small boat for that matter).

