

# Haines Signature 542 F

It's not easy to improve Australia's biggest selling 5.5 metre class fibreglass half cab, but Haines Signature have decided to introduce an upgrade to their incredibly popular 540 Series, with first deliveries to dealers slated for April this year. Fitted with one of Australia's first installations of the brilliant Yamaha 115 hp EFI 4-stroke outboard, this combination has lifted the benchmark for Australian small craft standards one more notch . . . Peter Webster reports.

The Haines Signature 540 F in a relatively short space of time, is achieving near legendary status. Adventurer Hans Tholstrup has had a lot to do with it, of course, taking one of these stock standard 17 footers from Darwin all the way through to Japan in the most convincing demonstration of this hull's inherent seaworthiness we'll ever see.

But throughout Australia, hundreds of 540 F's are winning heaps of praise from contented owners who have discovered a boat that for once, delivered on the promise made in the advertising blurb.

What sets the 540 F apart from most is its singularly clever packaging. As the advertising claims, it's big enough to take offshore with some degree of comfort and safety, runs beautifully on a 90 hp engine but handles up to 135 with ease, and will take a family of up to 5 or 6 people away for the weekend barbecue up the river in style - all this, and it lives happily on a single axle trailer. That means you're not wasting money on that critical second (or "tandem") axle set-up (a saving of thousands) and further, you don't need to go into hyper expensive V-6 outboard country (*saving many more thousands of \$\$\$\$!*). And despite all these very practical and noteworthy features, it's a hell of a good boat offshore or inshore.

Developed from the really old (now) Signature 530 F, itself one of the most popular boats ever made in fibreglass in Australia, the 540 took the old 530's awesomely soft ride in choppy water, but gave it the stability the 530 didn't have - well, not like it is now in the 540 F.

All in all, the 530/540 has undergone an evolutionary period of nearly 10 years, and with hundreds and hundreds of boats sold around Australia, there has obviously been a great deal of feedback from the Haines Signature dealers across Australia.

Right up front, let's make it clear that the **540 F** will continue for years to come. It is one of the two biggest selling boats in the Haines Signature range (the 520 Bowrider is the other) and there is no chance the 540 F will be dropped in the foreseeable future.

Instead, the factory has listened to their dealers and customers and decided it was preferable to introduce an additional model rather than change

the formula on the model that was working so well.

You can hardly blame them for this strategy - getting a boat so right as the 540 F can take a lifetime, *so if it ain't broke, don't fix it!*

Design Changes: Where the 542 F varies from the 540 is mainly to do with up market features. Now "up market" is a trendy way of saying that it costs more, and that's the truth. Most of these additional features all cost more money, so you can see why the factory was keen to leave the essential integrity of the 540 F alone and develop another model with these more expensive, "deluxe" features.

In all there are 12 changes between the two models, the 542 F having the following features you can't get on the original 540 F.

They include:

1. Toughened glass windscreen (an optional extra)
2. Moulded side lockers with rod racks
3. Moulded Plano tackle box locker on either side of the gunwale mouldings
4. Slightly wider chine flats for even greater stability
5. Modified cabin entry for better access
6. Lift-up GRP dash for servicing #7
7. Covered electrical wiring looms behind dash
8. Increased cabin headroom
9. Standard woodgrain dash and switch panels
10. 4 x SS rod holders
11. Standard 100 L poethylene fuel tank
12. Fitted and wired bilge pump

As you can see, the changes do not change the basic integrity or genius of the 540 hull, so much as dress it up and make it a slightly more sophisticated looking craft that is even easier to clean, and has a number of important user friendly features not found in the base model.

The weight goes up about 90 kgs, and you can tell that a little bit in the performance of the craft. Ironically the weight's not coming from where you might think - most of it is in the toughened glass windscreen. These things weigh a lot, and account for most of the increased weight.

As a package, it's a very svelte unit. As you can see in the photographs, it's beautifully finished. The new moulded side lockers look fantastic and apart from being super easy to clean out with a hose or just wipe down with a

## Yamaha's F115A

The new F115A four stroke, 16 valve DOHC Direct-Action in line 4 cylinder engine takes Yamaha into the larger horsepower category for the first time with a motor that is light, powerful, and economical to operate.

The F115A powerhead was derived from the F100A, which accounts for its compact profile. The powerhead derives its power output through additional displacement (1741 cc), and the introduction of a new EFI system. This is the first Yamaha 4-stroke engine to benefit from the EFI system, which provides higher output power, improved fuel economy, cleaner exhaust and quiet, stable low speed idling.

The high precision EFI system uses an air intake system located at the front of the engine which contributes to low end to mid range torque. Optimal combustion is assured through a series of sensors and the Engine Control Module (ECM), controlling ignition timing and the amount of fuel injected in a highly atomised form.

The lower unit and bracket are taken from the proven Yamaha two stroke V4 design for a lighter, slimmer profile with proven dependability.

The F115A weighs 185 kg in the long version, and 189.5 kg in the extra long model. This is a clear 43 kg and 42.5 kg lighter than existing 4-stroke 115 HP engines. Equally important to note is the fact that it is just 18 kg and 18.5 kg heavier than the equivalent Yamaha 115C 2-stroke motors.

Special attention has been given to the quietness and low vibration characteristics of this engine. Contributing to this is the stable combustion associated with the EFI system, and outstanding mechanical balance of the engine. At low speeds the lack of noise and exhaust is especially apparent, as is the quiet running at idle through an idle speed controller and idle noise reduction system.

Sophisticated extras include an assured cranking system, 25 amps alternator, negative power tilt and trim, power tilt and trim switch on the bottom cowling, and a freshwater flushing device.