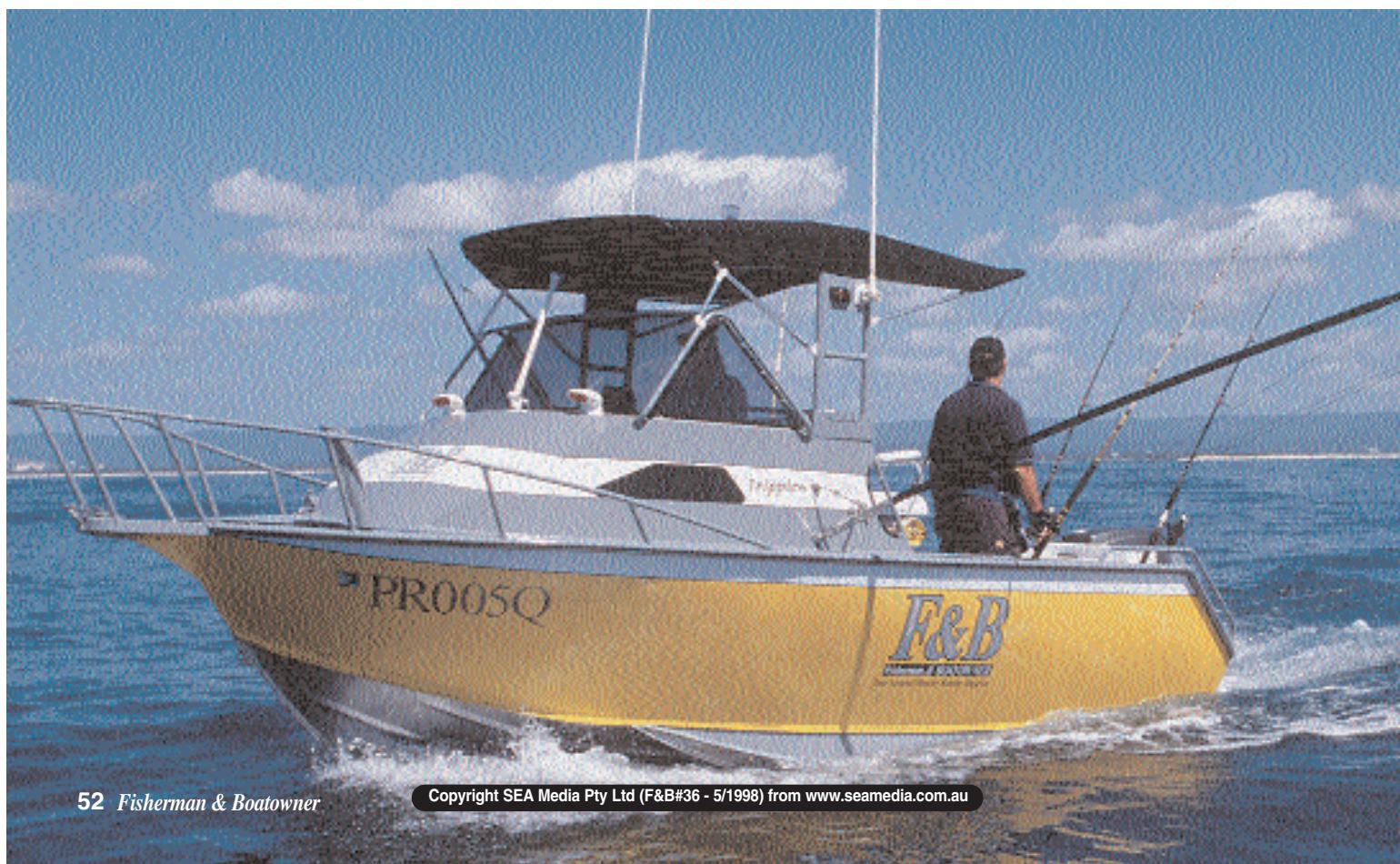




For a 5.5.m boat, the Stessl Tri has a particularly good 'stance' and is remarkably dry. The cockpit is very sheltered for the crew, and the coamings are a near perfect 700 mm high, so it all feels good, even in pretty rugged conditions. Craft Covers' bimini is superb, and simply unzips (in seconds) when the rig is readied for the highway. Dorade vents keep the cabin fresh and free from mould, but the stalk mount for the Furuno 1610 GPS broke off - so we re-fixed it to the base; it works perfectly.



'Tripples'

F&B's prototype 5.5m Stessl Tri

Conceived back in October 1996, the bright yellow F&B Stessl Tri Project Boat has been one of the most complex, challenging and interesting Project Boats we've developed thus far. The motivation behind it was simple; to develop a fully featured, high performance offshore sportfishing boat that weighed less than two tonnes, was powered by a single engine and could be launched on a dewy lawn. As we reveal in the next few pages, the Project has been a considerable, albeit time consuming, success.

This Stessl 5.5 m Tri has had a somewhat torturous development program. Firstly, the building program stretched over a period of some 12 months, and was then followed by a fitting out and sea trial period of another 6 months.

From the point when we originally decided to proceed with the Tri (as a result of the prototype's highly successful sea trials we conducted with the Stessl factory back in 1996) several other project boats have been commenced, trialed and concluded!

In truth, and with the advantage of hindsight, we all jumped in a bit quickly. It transpired there was a vast difference between the initial 4.6 m lightweight centre console shell we initially tested, and the considerably heavier 5.5 m production cuddy we subsequently built.

The key to the whole issue was weight, and as our 5.5 m Tri cuddy weighed considerably more than the prototype centre console, its perfor-

mance was initially very disappointing. So it went back to the factory to have the winglets modified, a process that subsequently went on for several months.

Concurrently, the Stessl factory was working flat-out developing other models, which were also having teething problems because of the varying hydrodynamics involved.

Finally, late last year a pattern emerged concerning the final shape, length and width (read "displacement") of the winglets and the final Stessl Tri

production models started to emerge.

The latest Stessl Trihulls now have a completely different hull pressing, and the normal excellent Stessl standard of finish, but it is (now) just too hard to cut off and re-weld the new pressed spsons onto *Tripples*' much re-welded chine:topsides extrusion.

We're not too fussed though - we're more interested in getting a strong boat than necessarily a pretty one, although the name *Tripples* (a "Tri with ripples") subsequently caused much good natured banter on the waterfront and around the campsites!

Design Brief: The whole point of the Stessl Tri development program by Alf Stessl and his son Tim, has been to develop a pressed aluminium boat with a considerably softer ride from a very, very deeply veed centre hull.

Alloy designers and boat builders have known for years that in order to get a soft ride, all one has to do is drop in a very deep vee hull bottom. However, without

