



AMM 7.4 Steyr Diesel Sportsfisherman

In recent times, it is increasingly apparent that the plate alloy boat movement is underpinned by just a handful of top rate boat builders, and there's no doubt Brisbane boat builder Barton Thomas is one of them. Year after year, Barton's Australian Master Marine (AMM) piles up the awards and accolades and with very good reason – he is building a truly world class product, and nowhere has this been so evident as in this magnificent new 7.4m diesel Sportfisherman.

It's always something of a highlight to test one of Barton's AMM models, and when we learned that his year 2003, 7.4 m Tournament Fisherman was headed for Runaway Bay as a participant in the 2003 Boat Of The Year Awards, we put our hands up for the opportunity to test the rig whilst it was virtually in our backyard.

Readers will no doubt recall Barton won an award last year in the Custom section for his beautifully finished plate alloy boat that had the punters frothing in the aisles at Sanctuary Cove

and subsequent boat shows. Without a shadow of a doubt, this boat is going to do it all over again.

At the time of writing (April) Barton was committed to displaying the boat at the Sanctuary Cove, Melbourne and Brisbane Boat Shows, but was uncertain whether he could handle the commitment into Sydney, on top of Melbourne before Brisbane.

This is a problem many small boat manufacturers have, especially if they have to continue running their business whilst they are away. AMM is not an exception. Barton is himself one of the

key workers in this small, tightly knit family business.

Design This particular boat is another in the evolution of the AMM 7.0m series, and a boat we've seen in part in years gone by. But like the Volkswagen theory of management, what we're looking at here is not so much any radical change to the big picture, so much as many smaller refinements and running changes that come together and lift this boat to even higher levels of application and finish.

If you'll study the pictures

accompanying this report, note the superb integration of the freezer system, the table ahead of the sterndrive housing, the provision for the dinette, the galley stove and the excellence of the instrument and helmsman's layout – all of these are new, all of them are refinements on Barton's and his client's not inconsiderable experience working these boats in the north and south of Australia.

In one sense, Barton is lucky man. He has a coterie of very happy clients who have purchased quite a few boats from him over the years, and it's interesting to note the influence they have had on the product in that time.

It really is a win, win situation, isn't it?

Barton is learning from the clients exactly what they require in their next round of boats, whilst they are learning from Barton about the latest techniques and construction strategies. So the end product is markedly improved from the one that has gone just a couple of years before.

Sure, in the overall scheme of things it's still a 7.4m tournament wheelhouse cruiser, he has still retained the 2.5m maximum beam (so trailing hassles are eliminated) and he's worked very hard to keep the weight right on the 3.5 tonne limit, at which point, towing becomes extremely problematical.

Up to 3.5 tonnes, any number of the

Fisherman & BOATOWNER Performance Graph

AMM 7.4 Sportsfisherman / Steyr 212 hp Turbo Diesel

R/Min	Fuel Consumption		Performance Data			
	L/ph	G/PH	N.Mpg	Knots	Kms	Range
1,000	2.2	0.48	9.58	4.6	8.5	696
1,400	4.5	0.98	6.12	6.0	11.1	444
2,000	11.7	2.57	2.95	7.6	14.0	216
2,450	15.1	3.30	3.24	10.7	19.8	235
3,000	20.8	4.55	3.91	17.8	32.9	284
3,450	25.1	5.49	4.18	23.0	42.5	305
3,600	32.8	7.18	3.41	24.5	45.3	249
4,000	39.7	8.69	3.16	27.5	50.9	231
4,200 (wot)	48.2	10.55	2.74	29.0	53.7	200

Range: Nautical Miles, Calculated on 95% of the tank's 350L capacity

Readers Please Note: This data was compiled using Steyr man Rob MacIntyre's computer-based extraction from the Steyr's fuel management and engine diagnostic system - a fascinating process. Steyr (Austria) confirmed the data will be accurate (+)(-) 3%.

popular 4WD's (but specifically including the hugely popular Nissan Patrols and Toyota Landcruisers) can legally cope with a 3.5 tonne BMT load.

So it's very important for boat designers to recognise this de facto standard of 3.5 tonnes, unless they want to cast themselves off into really specialist towing territory – and nobody wants to do that anymore.

Most experienced fishermen have long since worked out that towing boats that are too big for the trailer and

the tow vehicle is a nightmare they can live without – and white knuckle driving is not conducive to a good holiday. More particularly, if you take an overweight rig towed by an underpowered vehicle off road as you have to do to reach many of these interesting places around the Gulf or in the Top End of WA or Qld, there's no way in the world the rig is going to make it. Let alone come back.

What many of AMM's clients have realised, is that 3.5 tonnes is the break point - literally. They can engineer

