

# Horizon's 455 "Easy Fisher" Runabout



We might be having a global financial crisis, and sales of just about everything have gone pear shaped, but for one small, determined family boat building company, in Burleigh Heads on the Gold Coast, there's no way they're going to let such mere details derail their efforts to launch a brand new range of recession busting tinnies. The F&B team reports. . .

The new range is called the Easy Fisher Series and comprises of no less than 15 extremely practical, economical (to buy and run) pressed tinnies where the emphasis is on hard wearing, practical value as distinct from soft and spoofy finishes.

The guts of the boat is still much the same, but a whole raft of new techniques have been introduced in the building process to make them faster to assemble, quicker to finish, and easier to despatch out the door of the factory.

In this part of the boat building world, a saving of even 10 hours in the construction time translates to a competitive edge – and according to Horizon's Bob James, they're done quite a lot better than that.

From the layman's point of view, it's almost impossible to pick the difference, unless you stand their "normal" models alongside this new Easy Fisher range.

Last month, we organised two of the craft for a morning on the Tweed River and of the two, this 445 Runabout and the other, a 525 Open tiller steered fishing boat, we chose this one for the December issue and will run the more utilitarian fishing boat in February.

The new Easy Fisher Series are targeted at entry level, first time boat buyers, retirees wanting to spend the least amount on the best boating package that will last them for years, and all are deliberately packaged with sufficient horsepower to make them work really well, but avoiding the excesses that can quickly lead to pages being torn out of your cheque book.

Case in point is this quite pretty little forward steer runabout, which was powered with an entry level Yamaha 40hp 2-stroke CV outboard – one of the cheapest of the Yamaha range but one that enjoys a great reputation for longevity and its frugal performance.

It promised to be an interesting morning.

## Design

The Runabout is quite interesting because it features all the traditional elements of a runabout ie, two swivelling forward seats for the skipper and his mate, a nice big flat cockpit area in the middle and unusually in this day and age, a full width wide thwart that is sort of a quasi additional transom but a very good spot for 2 or 3 kids or other passengers.



All jokes aside (see sequence leading to this shot on the next page) this is what safe family boating is about - note how all the blokes are all down aft, helping Robbie clamber back in, and check the excellent stability and freeboard - and this in a 4.5m runabout. Mark you, the optional ladder would have been helpful!

In its standard form it easily seats 5 people, and they will be quite comfortable, too.

The design of the transom is quite different, because Bob has created a half height, full width transom which is designed so that the tiller steered 40 and 50hp engines now on the market, can all be utilised successfully without the tiller arm tripping over the outboard well.

Now, as it happened, the Runabout was fitted with power trim and tilt anyway, but it's still a very practical, safe set-up for inshore boating with the family.

Other features of this new hull series include the decision by the factory to supply all the necessary handrails as standard equipment in a process that's designed to cut down the argy-bargy between dealers and the factory. Bob James' brief is to get these boats packaged as close to the mark as he can, so there is less overheads being lost in liaison with dealers and their

customers.

The writer suspects that Bob's many years of building the Savage Tropical Series for the Melbourne based multinational had a lot to do with this, because it's quite a recognition and change from older practice where boat builders traditionally built the minimum level boat - and then the dealers chose the options that they wanted. This means that just about every boat ever built is different, and that's what Bob James was trying to avoid.

In specific terms, it's quite a useful size this boat, being 4.45m overall with a beam of 2.20m and a hull depth of 1.16m. It only weighs 280kg as a bare bones boat, so it's pretty easily driven with a 40hp outboard which is the recommended model. It will take up to a 60hp but the factory reckons you're just wasting money both in fuel and purchase price. The bottom sheet is of 3mm pressed aluminium, the sides are 2mm and outboard notes define a