

SEA JAY

6.8 'Preda King'

Centre Console

Report by F&B Editor, Peter Webster, Pics by John Cullen

Following the closure of some well known plate ally boat builders (including WA's Trailcraft and Fisher Boats in Qld) an opportunity has arisen for other manufacturers to step into the breach. With exquisite timing, one of Australia's most highly regarded family boat building companies, the Glass family's Sea Jay operation in Bundaberg Qld, has announced a new series of heavy duty plate aluminium boats that will be welcomed by the fishing fraternity. Last month we had the opportunity of working closely with the Yamaha team to produce a very interesting – and timely – report on one of the first of their new platies.

This is an interesting development, coming as it does hard on the heels of some disappointing closures of some very good manufacturers in Australia. These have left many people wondering if and how the gap they left behind would be closed.

Trailcraft were very large volume builders at one stage, and reached out right across Australia with an aggressive marketing stance and a very tough range of plate ally boats that were popular with fishermen from Darwin to Tasmania.

Similarly, Fisher Boats had cut out a reputation as one of the most innovative plate boat builders around, whilst Fisher's eutectic welding process and construction quality was admired by their opposition, let alone their customers.

But as the real estate signs prophesy "Life Moves" and it has, with one of the most popular boating families on the eastern seaboard stepping up to the mark with a new range of plate aluminium boats to join their traditional line-up – and it's a big one, too – of plate and pressed boats.

Starting in 1989, Col and Janelle Glass have fought the good fight through the 1990s to cut out a very loyal market share – against, at times, almost overwhelming odds. In their early days, they were constantly battling the 'big boys' and having to deal with regular price dumping, dealer swamping and all the usual sorts of trade problems that beset small

manufacturers trying to build a better product.

But the Glass family is very well known and respected in the Bundaberg region, and the locals knew their home grown product was, in almost every case, better than an "Import", and in true bush fashion, the local fishermen stood behind the Sea Jay brand, and this intense loyalty began to gather momentum. And the rest, as they say is history.

Today, Sea Jay have a terrific reputation as builders of a long lasting, commonsense, quality product and the range extends from dinghies right through to this craft, the powerful 6.8m Preda-King.

They've actually built plate boats before, and we've often discussed with them the possibility of them maintaining a separate plate range to sit alongside their pressed boats. But they've quite shrewdly stayed away from the extraordinary competition that besets the plate alloy sector, preferring to stay in their own world, with a simple mix of pressed (small stuff) pressed plate (medium) and pure plate aluminium construction (big, as here) without growing beyond their natural market within 1,000km radius of home in Bundaberg.

From time to time, usually as things went quiet, they'd push out some excellent pure-plate craft, and they've always been snapped up by the fishing fraternity in Queensland.

They're not as well known further south, for the simple reason that most



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