

Horizon 4.3/ Honda 50 Vee Bow Combo



We'd like to introduce the hardest working vee bow fishing rig in Oz - *bar none* ! You have to feel some sympathy for this Horizon/Honda combo. Its owner, F&B's Damon Olsen, works on the concept that the boat's principle mission in life is to keep his feet dry as he pursues the perfect cast in some very shallow creeks and drains . . before he heads offshore! It's a BIG ask, we can tell you . . . but this combo *really* works.

After using the only recently named 'Fortescue' for nearly six months, and having used it everywhere from the wilds of Fitzroy Reef to the top end of the Noosa everglades, we thought it appropriate to let everyone else in on just how good this little tinnie has been.

The sole design criteria initially was for the boat to be used as a flat water fishing platform for up to three people to lure and fly cast from. The other issue was that the boat was to be used in our more northern estuaries, where there are often very shallow conditions encountered. Thus, we needed a very shallow draft boat capable of fishing

three people throwing lures at the snags. This seems a fairly simple decision to be able to make, but if you read the initial report on this boat (F&B# 45), there are several choices to be made along the way.

However, the real question we are trying to address here is how the boat has performed out in the field, and how it has met the design criteria. Possibly the best way to do this is to discuss the boat in a couple of the situations it has been exposed to in the last six months.

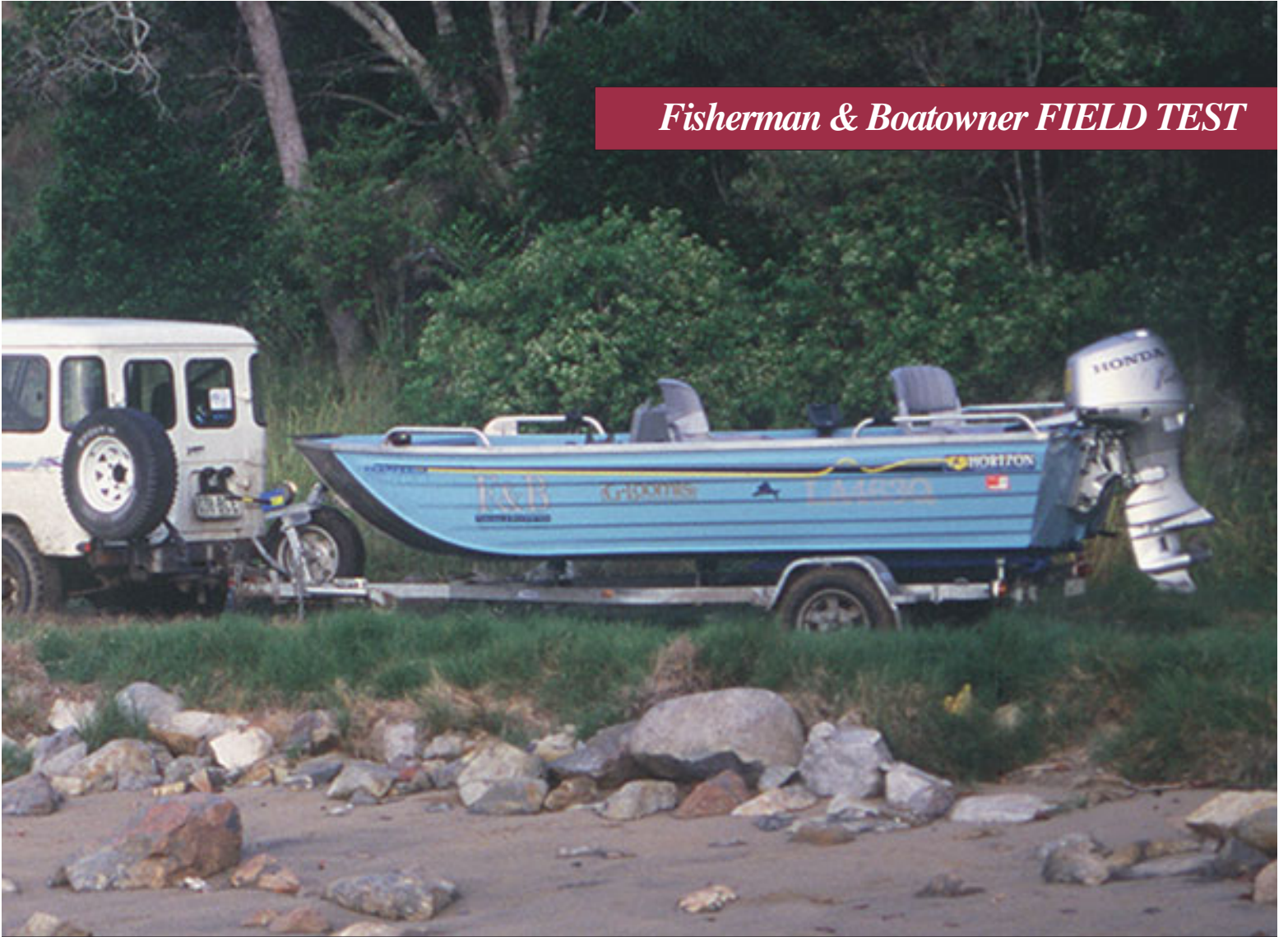
Fitzroy Reef

On this trip the tinnie was towed behind our big boat, the Kevlecat 7.2 m, out to Fitzroy Reef so we could have a go at casting lures around the

coral lagoons for sweetlip and trout. This was not the sort of caper any of us had in mind when designing the boat, but it did prove to be highly successful.

The tinnie was very easy to tow behind the Kevlecat at 13-15 knots, and we never had any real incidents towing the boat in the open ocean. While fishing at places like Fitzroy and Boulton reef, Fortescue proved to be a very stable platform from which to drift and cast lures from. The weather was not terribly kind to us with 15-25 knots of south easterly for the whole trip, which created quite a chop in the large lagoon environment. This wind chop showed us for the first time that when you take a boat designed for flat

Fisherman & Boatowner FIELD TEST





water use 35 miles out to sea, it is very wet and it bangs hard. However the stability of the boat was truly fantastic in all conditions. With three of us standing up and casting lures there was never a time that any of us really lost balance. The main things we learned from the trip were that:

- *Fortescue* is an extremely stable fishing platform, probably the most stable tinnie at rest that the author has ever been in.

- In rough weather the boat is wet and gives a very predictable ride for a tinnie with this type of hull. By this I mean that you can usually find a speed in choppy conditions that isn't too wet and gives a reasonable ride, but it is still a flat bottom tinnie.

- The Honda is extremely fuel efficient. We only used 60 litres for a week's fishing, which didn't even drain the main 70 litre tank.

Middle Creek: This time we had a chance to take *Fortescue* to an estuary on the central Queensland coast and do some serious jack fishing at the right time of year (late November).

The plan was to use Ben Thrower's 4WD to tow the tinnie in the creek and camp there for about 4-5 days.

With Middle Creek being such a

shallow creek and with such large tidal influences, it let us use the tinnie in the exact environment for which it was designed. The shallow draft capabilities of the boat were vital to our fishing success, as was the Minn Kota bow mount electric. We learned from this experience that:

- *Fortescue* is capable of floating in 3-4 inches (no kidding, as long as the sand isn't coming out of the water, this thing will still float) if the crew gets out and wades with the boat

- At full speed on the plane, the boat can traverse water as shallow as 8-10 inches. Many times we set off at full speed to get across a sand bank where it seemed there was no chance of crossing and usually made it across. You certainly notice the passengers hang on a lot tighter when doing 30kn with the sand clearly visible over the side!!

- The Minn Kota electric motor was used constantly, but sparingly, for the whole trip and we didn't manage to flatten the pair of 75 amp/hour Century batteries. This was very impressive, as we had expected to run out of batteries after about three and a half days. Instead we only used about one and a half batteries for five days. Now, don't get this the wrong way, I have

In its element . . . behind a 4WD, off road, and straight into the creek - in this case, near Eurimbula Creek near 1770, ready for a hot session lure fishing for mangrove jack !

managed to flatten a single battery in a day's fishing on the Burrum River, running the electric near flat out due to very strong tides. Just be aware that it is possible to fish effectively and conserve battery power in calmer conditions.

- The Redco trailer with 14 inch wheels was up to the task of traversing the quite bad stretch of road into Middle Creek.

These trips give some idea as to the broader design issues of the boat, however there are many more finer details which are worth discussing further.

Rod and General Storage

Fortescue has a 9" fly rod locker which was designed to store three fly rods safely. So far this locker has been an absolute success, allowing us to store expensive rods fully set up and ready to cast, while keeping them safe from breakage. We have found that it is quite safe to put the fly rods in the

locker before leaving home and leave them in there for the whole road trip without a problem.

Other rod storage for baitcasters and spin rods is via the clip in holders screwed onto the ribs on the starboard side of the inside of the hull. This allows safe storage for 4 baitcasters or spin rods, and keeps unused rods neatly out of the way, giving a nice clear deck. So far we have found that this storage is quite adequate for all the fishing we have done.

Storage for other items on the boat is also excellent. There are two hatches on the casting deck which provide ample storage underneath for soft tackle boxes and all sorts of other tackle. There is also storage on top of the fuel tank which runs across the back of the casting platform.

The lid simply lifts off to provide storage for the all important life jackets and landing net. It is great to be able to fit a standard landing net and three life jackets neatly under the floor and out of the way.

The storage underneath the back casting platform allows for the rear battery, a cutting board, a soft Plano tackle box and the other 251 Honda fuel tank to be carried.

The fly rod locker also acts as great storage for items such as pliers, tackle back and other quick access items which are commonly used throughout the course of a day's fishing.

The esky for the day's fishing and other tackle boxes are easily stored on the floor between the forward and rear casting platforms leaving two clear, uncluttered areas from which to cast from.

Other Design Issues: The placement and size of the electric motor required to power such a craft needed to be very carefully thought out when designing *Fortescue*.

The 42lb bow mount Minn Kota has proven to be easily capable of maneuvering the boat in all but the absolute strongest of tides. The foot pedal on the motor and auto pilot functions are absolutely invaluable when casting lures and flies at snags. The autopilot function really allows for the driver to leave the motor be for 2-3 minutes and concentrate on casting, rather than have to be adjusting the motor every 10 seconds. Once you have used one of these motors, there is no going back !



The placement of the motor has been superb, pulling the boat from nearly dead centre allows the autopilot function to work to its optimum, and saves battery power in the long run. Minn Kota's quick release bracket is also a great item, allowing the motor to be quickly removed and taken aft should you have to cross rough water.

The batteries on the boat have already been discussed, but it is just worth reinforcing that a pair of 75 amp/hr batteries is just about the ultimate for this electric motor.

Seating in the boat is provided via a pair of folding pedestal chairs with swivel bases. These Russ Hare chairs are excellent, and the positioning nearly perfect. The bases are screwed into aluminium supports built under the floor, and everything has proven to be quite strong even for fairly large people to sit in.

The only thing I would change about the seating is to add another fitting in the floor in the aft port quarter to allow

Layout of the Horizon is superb, the Horizon's many cupboards providing stacks of fly-rod safe storage, and nearly 100 litres of fuel.

the passenger to move aft for a better ride in rough stuff, and so the boat goes quicker in the flat stuff.

The only other design feature worth mentioning is the addition of a foil to the back of the boat.

With the weight of the Honda four stroke down the back, the boat had a tendency to porpoise at top speed on flat water. However, the foil has completely solved the problem, allowing us to go flat out on flat water without problems.

Summary: There really isn't a lot more to tell about this boat. It has completely achieved what it was designed for, and more. As far as a boat for fishing flat water estuaries on the central and northern Australian coast, I believe this boat is without equal in the production boat market. The combination of a hull with amazing stability, which travels across frighteningly shallow water at speed, and the efficient Honda motor make this craft truly impressive.

PW asked me to think of things I would change on this boat, and the only one was the additional seating posy aft - which just goes to show how good this boat really is. In my eyes, *Fortescue* is the perfect flat water fishing machine.

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