

JBS 5.2 W



The debate over what constitutes the “perfect” Aussie trailerable fishing boat has raged in pubs and clubs around the country since Adam was a boy . . . here, we look at a new entry in the walk around market from veteran boat builder Cliff Joshua. He has created a configuration, shape and size many fishermen believe is just about perfect, fuelling the debate - fired up by the recent Quintrex Millennium hull launch - all over again. In this special report, Editor Peter Webster explains why.

alkAround

There's not much doubt about that cunning old fox, Cliff Joshua, is there? This 73 year old South African veteran has had an astonishing impact on Australian boat building in the last couple of years.

This feat is perhaps more remarkable, not just because of his age, so much as the speed with which he's grown into the plate alloy market - one of the toughest, most competitive sections of the Australian boat building industry.

There are many reasons for this of course, but not least of which is Cliff's uncanny ability to "read" the market and keep coming up with boat packages the boating public want, at prices people can afford.

Case in point - just check out this new 5.2 Walkaround. Here is a soft riding, incredibly dry 5.2 m fishing boat that is unsinkable, features a self draining cockpit, works off a single axle trailer, runs like a dream with 4-stroke outboards from 75-90 hp, has full walk around capability and is just as happy working wide off the Continental Shelf as it is pulling lures around a mountain lake.

There's enough cabin space to provide shelter for Mum and the kids, the cockpit is superbly designed and ideal for bottom fishing, trolling or casting, and of course there is the forward walk around section to do with what you will.

Wrap all this up in a very well built, strong, plate aluminium package with Cliff Joshua's unique flared forefoot sections, and it's not hard to see why many knowledgeable blokes reckon this is just about as good as it gets.

And the best part? The r/r price for the basic boat (very basic, please note) starts at just \$14,000 ex-Brisbane. A BMT package, ready to fish with a Suzuki 85 hp 2-stroke and Redco Sportsman trailer, gets you on the water for \$27,000.

Design: The 5.2 m Walkaround was designed by this South African born designer and boat builder who did his 'time' to earn his boat builder's "ticket" in Durban (South Africa). After many years of wooden boat building there, he moved his young family to Adelaide, South Australia in the 1970's, where he set up shop as a wooden boat builder.

In later years, he switched across to aluminium construction, applying many of the techniques he learned through his trade as a wooden boat builder, not least of which is his now famous 'strip



planked' flared forefoot.

This technique is as old as the hills in wooden boats, but most aluminium boat builders (especially those involved in mass production) shy away from the method because it requires a very, very highly skilled boilermaker to do it properly, and a standard of quality control that is often not possible with pressed aluminium boats.

Several members of Cliff's family (in and out of the boat building business) are more than a little peeved about the Quintrex publicity concerning the Quintrex Millennium hull's flared bow and forefoot. These are features which Cliff has been building for the last 30 or 40 years! But for the diminutive little boat builder from South Africa, it's all a bit of a nonsense, and he's not too fussed about the competition - whether it's from Quintrex or the contingent of plate aluminium boat builders

surrounding Cliff in Brisbane.

"Peter," he's told me several times, "There's enough work here for all of us - I don't have time to get involved in the petty politics." And I guess when you're 73 years old and working six days a week, 14 hours a day, this comment one suspects, has more than a little truth in it.

Nevertheless, the 5.2 m Walkaround does have a flared forefoot section and this is one of the reasons why the boat is so dry. This set-up works particularly well in short, hard bay chop and

although the skipper has to know how to trim his boat properly to take maximum advantage of it, if you can drive the boat properly, there is a terrific benefit for the skipper and his crew.

For readers just joining us, we have virtually the same hull configuration under F&B's JBS designed and built *Genesis* Project boat, which, although considerably larger and heavier, nevertheless has the same forefoot principle. And it really does work, giving *Genesis* a extremely

soft, dry ride in choppy water with waves up to a metre high.

Of course, when the water gets big enough to start moving the whole boat around, then the forefoot is less advantageous and Cliff's boats revert back to fairly traditional levels of plate aluminium boat performance. From about three quarters amidships aft to the transom, the design of Cliff's boat is very similar to the hull shapes produced by the likes of Sportfish, AMM, Profish, Alufarm, etc.

Cliff actually has several different options in the hull shape depending on where the boat is going to be used. It's quite unusual, but it can be ordered with an 8 degree, 12 degree or 15 degree hull, and the cost doesn't vary from one to the other; it's simply a case of altering the master jig when the hull is tacked together. In this case, we have the 12 degree hull, offering the middle



Various views of the JBS Walkaround . . . at the top left, observe how the water is being turned back and down by a combination of the flared forefoot sections and the external chine. Top right, note the off-floor battery shelf (that's the live bait tank on the port side) and below, the trailer shots reveal the sweet lines and excellent hull finish on this model.

JBS 5.2 Walkaround

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road compromise between good stability for the walk around and a soft dry ride in chop, before hardening up in bigger, open water.

Other hull characteristics include a slightly higher than normal external freeboard, the utilisation of the full (legal) width in the beam (2.5 m) to facilitate the walk around (the cuddy version of this hull is nearly 150 mm [6"] narrower), and the very careful minimisation of the walk around trench.

Cliff hasn't wasted any space here at all - because he's recognised that as you're not going to be able to fish from the trench around the shed, every millimetre extra was wasted. So he's created a passage way that is only just big enough, but one that still enables the crew to go safely through to the foredeck or come aft to the rear cockpit - whilst maintaining a surprisingly large cabin area.

It's very good design, because in a relatively small boat - it's only 5.2 m (17') LOA remember - he's created a boat that has a safe foredeck area for one or two anglers, plus an excellent rear cockpit that is ideal for just about any sort of fishing you care to name, as well as providing a cabin and protected helm station.

This is one of the unsung virtues of

aluminium boat building - with a wall thickness that's commonly only 1.60 - 2.00 mm across, there's no doubt you can get more useable space in a given length and width of aluminium boat than you can in fibreglass.

Cliff Joshua is not only aware of this situation, he's gone to extreme lengths to make use of every single millimetre that he had to work with from the stem to the transom.

The Bow Section: Up in the bow section, the passageway opens out to allow an angler to stand there and fish quite easily. There's a comfortable seat recessed into the "shed" itself. It's just about the perfect possie for bottom fishing, and two blokes could easily stand and cast off the bow.

As you can see in the photographs, the boat is buoyant up front and even with two big blokes standing up there, there is no unsettling loss of buoyancy when the boat is working in a seaway if (for instance) the skipper has to go forward and pull up the anchor. This is probably the safest boat in this size we've ever used at sea in this respect, as there's virtually no "drop down" at all in this hull - even with the author's 105 kg going right forward in quite severe conditions. Full marks to JBS Marine for this one.

As well, the stability around the walk around is excellent - and about 50%

better than the 4.95 m Ally Craft centre cab we tested a few months back.

Where the Ally Craft was significantly tender to the extent of being a bit alarming at times, this model has none of that - you just walk around the side and the boat scarcely moves. Even with two of us walking around, it had hardly any discernible effect. At one point, when three of us stood over along the back side deck there was still a feeling of good security and solidarity - which was both unusual and very reassuring.

I mean, don't get this out of perspective - it's still only a 17 footer and obviously that has limits - but the dynamics are particularly good, and in a "touch and feel" sense, stability is one of the boat's strongest features.

Other design principles we liked included the little cuddy wheel house arrangement, partly constructed by enclosing the bimini off the targa come rod rack. This creates an excellent "wheel house" arrangement that is snug dry and waterproof going forward, although as was pointed out to me recently, to be completely dry it of course needs a drop down curtain off the trailing edge of the rocket launcher too. *Just add money, eh?*

The cabin is unusual in that Cliff decided not to build bunks unless requested. Instead, he's just carpeted the flat floor, pointing out that the berths

F&B's (Subjective) Evaluation

Tinnie JBS 5.2 m Walkaround		Test Date Mar '99									
Rating	Poor	→ Excellent									
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Design/Innovation											
Fishing Aptitude											
"Downhill" Handling											
Ride Softness											
Dryness											
Stability At Rest											
"Seaworthiness"											
Inherent Safety*											
Build Standard											
Helm Comfort											
Finish & Fit-out											
Value For Money											

*Inherent safety is based on the recognition that very few tinnies have the foam floatation necessary to support the boat, let alone the crew and/or motor as well. To score more than 5, a tinny would require foam to full Survey standard, be fitted with a manual bilge pump, a proper outboard well, and have an exceptional levels of stability.

Specifications: JBS 5.2 Walkaround

Name JBS Marine	Berths (Two)
Model 5.2 Walkaround	Weight On Trailer 1,100 kg (est)
Configuration Centre cab	Standard Transom . . . 25" (XL)
Max No of Persons 6	Maximum Power:
Construction Aluminium	- Outboard 90 hp
Centreline Length 5.2 m	- Sterndrive 135 hp
Max Beam 2.5 m	Fuel Capacity 140 L
Deadrise 12°	Water Capacity (opt)
Bottom Thickness 5 mm	Hull Price* Unpainted . . \$14,500
Sides Thickness 4 mm	Hull Price* Painted . . . \$15,300
Hull Weight** (dry) 520 kg	Price* As Tested \$33,800

* All Prices ex Brisbane. Check with your local dealer for regional variations and freight charges. ** Hull weights supplied by the manufacturer unless stated otherwise.

wouldn't have been worth sleeping on anyway, whereas here, you can inflate a double mattress or put down a swag really easily on the flat floor.

Frankly, for adult use (only) I really don't have a problem with this set-up, but I can see why Mums and Dads with toddlers might prefer berths . . . but then, in this set-up it's actually more flexible for them too, because young Johnny can just go and lie down on the floor on a rug, sleeping bag or pillows and lie which ever way suits him best. I think there's a case to leave the berths out and have the flat floor - but if it bothers you, Cliff and the team will happily put conventional berth 'flats' back into the cabin.

As near as we could figure on that basis, the berths would be about 1.5 m

(5'6") long, and there would be enough headroom to sit comfortably out of bad weather.

The Transom Design: The transom set-up is terrific, and pretty much the state of play in aluminium boat building at the moment. There's a full width shelf that runs right across the transom on the inside that carries the battery (to starboard) and the live bait tank to port.

The shelf in between is great for clubs, sinkers, knives, tools, etc. Above that is the standard cutting board come bait tray which I suspect is a tad too high for southern tastes. In any event, it either has to go up or down in height, because at the moment, the Honda engine cover hits the bait board when the motor is in the fully 'up' position.

If the bait board goes up another two inches the motor will tilt forward and clear the bait tray and/or the bait tray needs to come down and go forward to allow the big Honda to fold up into the outboard well properly.

Summing up - what we have here is a big, practical 5.2 m package that's capable of taking three of four blokes to sea to fish very comfortably, or the whole family up the river on a Saturday afternoon, much less handle a serious fishing trip up into the mountains the following weekend.

It's a very versatile, practical hull shape and configuration that lends itself to countless fishing applications.

Performance And Ride: Fitted with the Honda 90 hp, 1.59 litre, 4 cylinder, 4-stroke, the JBS 5.2 and the Honda is a fairly happy marriage.

Because the boat is a pretty big, wide rig, it's heavier than you might first think, and I don't think the boat was over powered - a fact that was reflected in the top speed of just 30 knots or so. Nevertheless, it doesn't really need much more horsepower, but I suspect that a 115 hp 2-stroke would probably offer a better performance profile than the 90 hp Honda - but of course it would use a lot more fuel in the process.

At 15 L/ph at 4,000 revs, the Honda is winning acclaim and friends right around the world as a fuel efficient, environmentally friendly outboard motor that just goes and goes. They are extremely economical, and especially in the fuel range from 1,000-4,500 revs. Over that of course they start using more fuel, but in the critical 3,500-4,500 range it's very hard to beat.

Against this, they're heavier than most 2-strokes (165 kg for this extra long, 25 inch leg) which is a lot more than many of the 2-stroke outboards, but not that far away from the high tech Optimax and Ficht fuel injected outboards.

Ordering a motor for this boat would involve quite a fascinating study of what's available on the market, and I suspect that the OMC Ficht 90 or 115 would be right up there on top of the list.

After that, I'd be seriously tempted to wait for the Optimax 115 hp outboard that's going to lob in the not too distant future . . . but then, you can go across to the 4-stroke world and consider a 100 hp Yamaha, this 90 hp Honda and

JBS 5.2 m Walkaround

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funnily enough, it would still work very well with the Suzuki 75 hp 4-stroke the pundits have called “*the best outboard in the world*”.

Whatever! The punter has a terrific choice today, and the JBS 5.2 Walkaround is one of the few boats that will handle all these different engine combinations with aplomb.

In the *get-up-and-go* department, the Honda certainly had plenty of grunt, although I wasn't entirely rapt in the three bladed 15" propeller fitted for the test. The prop profile suggested that once the boat got above 4,000 revs it was off and running, but it wasn't happy under 4,000 and between 3,000-3,500 r/min was decidedly “iffy”.

If ever there was a case to put a foil on an engine this was it, and I suspect the combination would be 100% improved with the installation of one of Greg Davis' "Hydrofoils" from Sydney - they're the small aluminium ones which we worked so successfully over the years on various Project Boats. If this was my boat, I'd have foils on it within minutes, because I hate feeling that the boat is struggling to stay on plane - but you can't give it enough herbs to keep it on plane because the conditions are too rough to allow you to keep going at that speed. *Catch 22* . . .

In this case, we had a pearler of a day offshore with strong south-easterly winds, a rough bar and quite nasty 2 metre seas that meant you couldn't drive any trailerboat at speeds much more than 12-15 knots - but in this case, the boat was struggling between the rev range and the blade area to hold those sorts of speeds on plane.

Don't take this out of perspective, please - the boat was new, and there hadn't been sufficient time to work up a better prop profile and install the foils. Combined, this would solve the problem.

I don't think readers generally understand what an enormous difference the right propeller can make to a hull and motor combination, and the 4-strokes that we're now seeing in Australia in increasing numbers, are much harder to prop; it seems much harder to pass on their power and torque potential.

Get 'em right and the 4-strokes will stand up and boogie. Get 'em wrong,

and they're lethargic, slow to accelerate and have painfully defined performance perimeters - especially in the middle of the rev range.

We've experienced this now in quite a few boats - and have had to spend considerably more time getting the 4-stroke propellers right than we've had to with 2-strokes. (*Obviously; the 2 strokes have been around for decades. whilst the 4-strokes have only surfaced in the last year or so*).

Performance aside, the handling of the JBS is superb. It's a boat that needs to be driven with a lot of positive trim (down) to make that forefoot work - especially in choppy water. But it wants to do this, as it's a very buoyant forefoot with a lot of lift. The hull easily takes the down force from the outboard, without any side effects such as hogging, or tracking, in the water.

You have to be a bit more circumspect about forcing the bow down like that offshore. It is a better strategy (then) to have the bow nice and buoyant, even if you do get a slightly harder ride. By way of compensation, the boat is sensationally dry and has wonderful "lift" up in the bow and shoulders. So if you do have to come over a big wave, and drop down the face on the other side, the JBS 5.2 is unreal; the big, wide 'spoon' like bow and shoulder sections just lift right back up out of the next wave, maintaining superb steerage and excellent lift or buoyancy. (*Fisho's that have to run bars all the time will love this hull, that's for sure - but remember, the walk around is markedly wider than either of Cliff's 5.2 centre console or cuddy models*).

Overall, the offshore handling is exemplary for a 5.2m craft, and lends itself to very safe, long range offshore performance.

Typically, it's not a fast hull - but you just can't have it both ways. Here, the price of the excellent stability, the uncanny dryness and the very pleasingly soft ride comes around at the expense of some speed - push this boat up over the 20 knot mark offshore and you're going to start rattling your back teeth. It has to be kept down to sensible speeds, working best of all around 14 - 16 knots.

Ideally, I'd like to see the prop geared in such a way that the boat could run all day between 16-18 knots, but we couldn't do it with the three bladed 15" that was fitted to this boat. Well, not without a foil, anyway,

Finish: Apart from the base painting, carpet on the floor, seats and canopies (in other words, the most basic of possible fit-outs) Cliff doesn't want to know about fitting out the boats. He just wants to focus on building the aluminium shell, before handing it over to the customer or dealer for completion.

Its one of the reasons why Cliff is so popular in the trade - all the dealers know he'd prefer they fit 'em out, so in an era of pre-rigging, the dealers welcome Cliff's boats with open arms. It also keeps the price right down - although this can be illusionary. Cliff's pricing structure minimises sales tax and includes bugger all - not even the steering, usually. Buyers need to keep all this in perspective, and sit down with their dealer, grab a calculator, and carefully work out what the total cost will be when it is all finished.

The base finish of the aluminium work is pretty good, but it does vary a bit from boat to boat. I suspect it depends on the pressure they are under to build the boats. For instance, our own *Genesis* is nowhere near as 'straight' as this 5.2 m Walkaround. This particular boat is superbly built - a real showpiece, in fact.

Safety: The JBS 5.2 Walkaround is one of the safest plate aluminium boats on the market because of Cliff Joshua's unique buoyancy chambers that run from the stem right through to the transom.

This is a critical fact in both the boat's structural integrity and its inherent safety, because these giant, air tight buoyancy chambers provide a massive degree of floatation. Even if one side was holed, the buoyancy chamber on the other side would keep the wreckage afloat, or at least awash, until help arrived.

As all of the recent dramas and rescues of small craft at sea have shown, in an emergency, it's vital that the wreckage remains afloat albeit awash perhaps, to provide a survival "platform" for the crew who should never leave the wreckage. Given the increasing use of helicopters in offshore small craft rescues, the issue of purchasing a boat that will stay afloat if rolled, swamped or sunk, has never been so important to offshore fishos.

This boat has a self draining cockpit of the kind that is completely self draining when the boat is going along,

and self draining when the boat is left at anchor or on a mooring, but if you've got a couple of big blokes fishing over the side, then you'll have wet feet for sure in the rear cockpit.

To overcome this problem, JBS has come up with a good solution, and installed four big 50 mm scuppers or bilge bungs across the transom (opened from the inside) so the skipper has the option of screwing out the bungs when the boat is going out (say) over the bar or encounters rough water - or perhaps for the more pragmatic reason that he just wants to wash the boat out of scales and blood. The skipper can do them up again if he wants to have dry feet when the crew's bottom fishing.

I think it's about as practical as you can get in a 17 footer - because the alternative would be to raise the height of the self draining deck to an unacceptably high level - this would reduce internal freeboard and increase the roll moment of the boat in the seaway - and I don't think that's either needed or desirable. This is a good compromise, and it works.

Trailing: With an all up weight of approximately 1.3 tonnes, the JBS 5.2

Walkaround is easily towed by any of the major family sedans let alone 4WD's. This model was on the new Rule trailer, featuring the new fibreglass slipper spring system. We'll be keeping our eye on this rig and monitoring its performance, but first impressions are one of satisfaction with the quietness of the fibreglass spring system.

The package obviously needs brakes - and in this case over-run or 'surge' brakes were fitted pulling on cable actuated marinised disc brakes.

Conclusion: The JBS 5.2 m Walkaround is a terrific addition to the range of plate aluminium fishing boats available in Australia today. Priced from around \$14,000 (base hull) to around \$35,000 depending on the engine and electronics chosen, the 5.2 m Walkaround is an extremely versatile craft that is so well configured, completed and finished that I think there is some real merit describing it as being very, very close to the definitive Aussie fishing boat in 1999.

Building with Cliff's system requires much more buyer involvement than (say) a Pacific Sportfish purchased through a Sportfish dealer. There, much

of the legwork, supervision, packaging and fitting out is carried out by the Sportfish dealer.

However, Cliff's system really appeals to a lot of people. It allow them to literally tailor the boat to their precise requirements - and/or take the boat back to their home town or city to complete the fit-up with their favourite local dealer. This is the most common approach F&B readers are taking with Cliff's boats, although quite a few have Cliff complete the very basic BMT package fit-up in Brisbane, and then fine tune the rig themselves when it arrives back home.

In either case, they end up with an extremely competitive, excellent craft that is right on top of the heap in the world of plate alloy boat building.

(Footnote: Are we impressed? You bet - so much so, we're going to order a 5.5 m model as one of our Y-2000 project boats. The boats are virtually identical, save for the slightly bigger cabin in the 5.5 m, that will allow the boat to be used overnight on trips over a weekend, or out to the islands, etc.)

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