

Ocean Cylinder 6400

Honda 130 Combo

Unquestionably one of the oddest looking boats we've tested in recent years, this Brisbane built plate alloy boat is turning heads wherever it goes and has attracted the attention of more professional fishing guides in Australia than any boat in recent memory. This month, editor Peter Webster takes a more searching look at what makes this boat so special.

When we published the first report on the Ocean Cylinder Centre Console (in F&B # 51) a couple of months back, we had no warning of the avalanche of phone calls, faxes and e-mails we were destined to receive in the weeks following the magazine's release around Australia.

From a simple 2 page report, the builders, Queensland Ships, were absolutely swept off their feet answering the phones and dealing with the host of quotation requests that came in from every corner of Australia.

Initially, we'd only gone for a quick run in the Ocean Cylinder 6400 centre console, and as we knew Queensland Ships were building a cuddy cabin version we promised to revisit the concept when the cuddy was completed.

And here it is. Probably the oddest looking boat I've tested in quite a few years, but a boat with a charisma and

appeal quite unlike anything I can recall in a near 30 year career of testing boats.

I'm inclined to think that what's got everybody going is the combination of features that the Ocean Cylinder concept allows.

There are hundreds of plate alloy boats built in Australia, from approx 50 busy plate alloy boat builders. None of them, however, have anything close to the specifications of this Ocean Cylinder. Nor can any of them claim to come within a coo-ee of the inherent safety and seaworthiness of this astonishing boat.

Why is it so? What is it that makes it so special?

Basically, I think the Ocean Cylinder has touched a very exposed nerve shared by boat owners and operators who work in either very remote areas, in dangerous locations or in commercial environments where safety and stability are paramount.

There is no safer monohull made in Australia than the Ocean Cylinder. No monohull, be it fibreglass or aluminium, offers the combination of such extraordinary stability, total unsinkability and rough water handling ability combined with the working efficiency of just one engine.

We believe that's why this boat has touched so many commercial and semi commercial operators ie professional fishing guides, dive charter operators, water taxis, eco tour operators, etc. All of these people now have to meet increasingly complex legal requirements for their boats to operate with paying customers onboard. All have to meet increasingly difficult stability levels and safety standards.

The Ocean Cylinder 6400 fills all of these requirements to a "Tee" - and on top of that, it's a bloody good boat in its own right.

Design: The Ocean Cylinder series

consists of a number of craft from 6.4 m through to, well, as big as you want! However, for most operators, maximum interest lies in the 5.0 m- 9.0 m range and within that group, most interest is most closely focussed on the size of craft that you can operate with a single 4-stroke outboard, a diesel sterndrive or diesel jet.

The magic word here is "single".

Whilst Australia builds the best power catamarans in the world, in both aluminium and fibreglass, each requires a dual engine installation with the attendant increased capital cost to purchase, install, maintain and operate - and importantly, with a fuel bill that could be double a craft that can operate with just one engine. On top of that, a cat trailer is considerably more expensive and much harder to tow.

Here, at 6.4 m LOA, and a maximum beam of 2.45 m (1.97 inside the coamings) and using a regular deep vee trailer, the Ocean Cylinder 6400 offers

a very practical single engine alternative to the power cats.

Queensland Ships' production manager Col Svensson is clearly fascinated by the potential of the craft. As Col explained to the writer, "I think it is the cleverest design concept for an aluminium boat I've seen. Here is an aluminium hull that overcomes the traditional problem of needing to run a really deep vee to get a soft ride in choppy water, but without the inherent instability a deep vee usually creates in aluminium. Better still, the stability is dramatically boosted at rest, but as the tubes are not really running in the water when the boat is moving along, there is very little, if any additional drag. I think that is really good design".

And so it has proven. The Ocean Cylinder's half tubes running around three quarters of the boat, in fact only become submerged when the boat settles at rest or at very slow (off

plane) speeds. Even so, it's mostly only the stern sections of the half tubes that go into the water in any sort of depth.

In this way, the Cylinder has a free running, ultra safe hull that is amazingly soft riding - and not through some whacko, techno development. It's basically just an extremely deeply "veed" constant deadrise hull, with an exceptional 23 degrees of deadrise - an unheard of deadrise for a plate aluminium boat.

By way of comparison, F&B's new 8.0 m deep vee cruiser from Cairns Custom Craft is itself an astonishing 18 degrees - but the proviso there from designer Marcel Maujean was that we had to have more than half a tonne of Yanmar/MerCruiser diesel sterndrive sitting right on the tuck to keep this exceptionally bouyant alloy hull safely snugged down in the water.

So to have 23 degrees on a constant deadrise through from the forefoot area is an amazing characteristic for a plate

Fisherman & Boatowner FIELD TEST

