

# F&B's Small Craft Section

## Quintrex 455 Top Ender



**Introducing another of the growing list of “middle-ground” all-rounders produced by Quintrex, the number one recreational boat builder in Australia. Having studied this 455 very carefully, it’s not hard to see why Quintrex is so far in front of the rest of this very competitive field.**

**A**s most readers will be aware, “Top Enders” is the name given to a range of boats within the overall Quintrex line-up. Top Enders are all open boats, mostly tiller steered, but in the larger models, they are also available with a side console.

The present range of Top Enders includes a 420, 435, 455, 475 and the big 500 model, and we understand there are several more on their way in the soon to be released, 2002-2003 summer line-up.

Top Enders are quite different to other models in the range. They have all been produced to serve a specific purpose, and unusually these days, the name (“Top Ender”) is entirely

appropriate.

In the top end of Australia ie, the part above the Tropic of Capricorn (the line drawn roughly from just above Gladstone QLD across to Carnarvon WA,) there’s a very common style of boating undertaken by fishermen of all persuasions in QLD, NT and WA. Thousands of fisho’s go barra fishing in the rivers and creeks that spill down into the bays and oceans across the top end of Australia.

Commonly, the modus operandi for the trip involves launching at a ramp or river bank as near as possible to the fishing zone. However, getting to the desired hot spot, can often involve a journey of some distance. Specifically, the journey frequently involves crossing open water in areas such as

the Gulf of Carpentaria, the Kimberley coast, or inside the Barrier Reef in both WA and Qld.

The Quintrex Top Enders evolved from the input of many of Australia’s best northern fishermen. They specified a boat that could handle (if necessary) rough bay and river entrance work, and featured terrific stability, a casting platform, a kill tank long enough for mackerel, tiller steering, etc. Over the last couple of years, the Top Enders have continued to be ‘fine tuned’ and have subsequently become some of the biggest selling models in the vast Quintrex range.

Interestingly, although they were originally developed for use in the Top

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End, it didn't take the southern fishos very long to work out that these boats made fabulous fishing boats down south too, and of course, if the opportunity ever arose for them to go up north, well, they had the perfect boat to do it, didn't they?

So why did we choose the 455 to test this month?

Well, there's a little bit of a story attached to that, but the short version is that F&B has expressed more than the usual degree of interest in this particular model. We believe this is just about the perfect size for that classic "cross-over" situation between inshore and offshore work. It's not too big to rule out being used to fish in the mangroves up north, nor is it too small to safely be used offshore on a good day - and it eats bay and river chop on the way to the fishing grounds with unbelievable ease.

We first got the tip on this boat from F&B's Jeff Webster when he had the opportunity of running one of the pre-production Maxi Transom models at the original Quintrex National press day a year or so ago.

Of all the interesting boats released on that day, he felt that the 455 stood out as an exceptional craft - especially as it was packaged on the day with one of our favourite engines, the 60hp Yamaha 4-stroke.

Subsequently, we've followed this boat's progress with interest, although it was hard to get one to test, as Quintrex dealers around Australia mopped up the entire production of this particular model, selling them off the catalogue before they'd arrived in the showroom.

But as luck would have it, last month the Quintrex people were shooting their new 2002-2003 Catalogue, so guess what? They had a 455 Top Ender

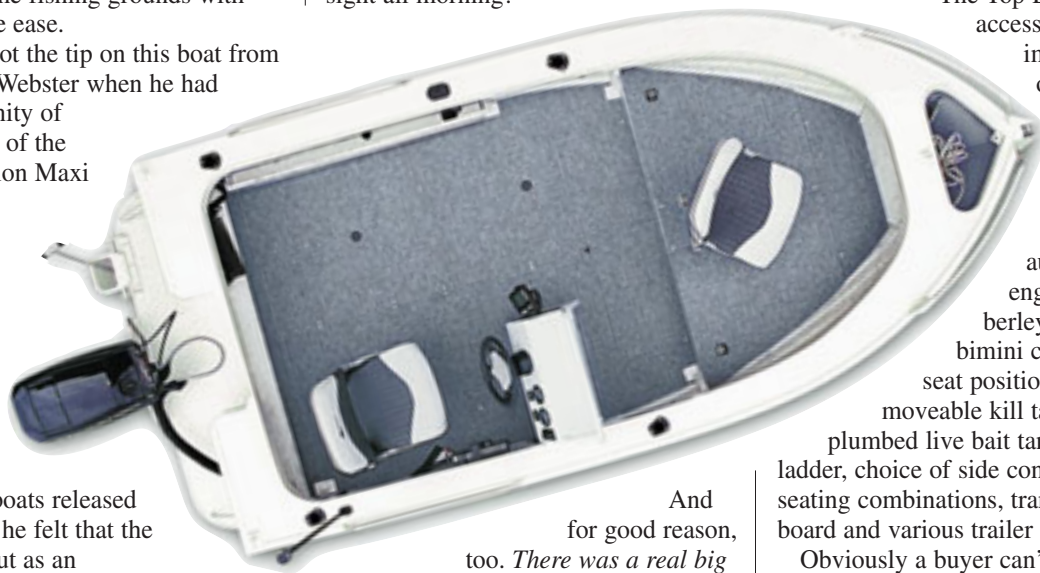
sitting there ready to be photographed with the rest of the fleet, so we put our hand up for the test run with it, and several other Quinnies we've been trying to score.

This particular rig is powered by the Mercury 60hp 4-stroke, again, a near perfect combination of power, weight, economy, reliability and smoothness.

In fact, the only problem we had in the whole situation was trying to convince Quintrex marketing guru Damian Hoyle (and Keeper of the Keys) that "F&B's boat tests *always* take 8 to 9 months to complete, and we'll definitely bring it back, in pristine condition sometime . . . say, around about January or February, maybe March, next year . . . Damian, trust us!"

Well, you can't blame a bloke for trying!

**Design** So concerned was Damian about our test "program" in his rare 455 Top Ender, he actually brought it down to Runaway Bay himself, and I tell you what, he didn't let it out of his sight all morning!



And for good reason, too. *There was a real big chance it wasn't going back . . . !*

This is a terrific fishing boat. It doesn't matter how you stack it up, add it up or measure it, Jeff Webster was quite right - there is a particular magic about this 455 / 60's hp combo that's a little bit hard to explain.

Part of it is to do with the motor and hull size combination, in that the 60/65 hp power band is obviously a perfect match for the hull length. But more than that, I think that the size of the boat, its stability, the high sided freeboard and the enormous amount of fishing space engenders a feeling of solidarity, functional efficiency and

confidence that this boat is really going to get you places and bring you back safely.

Statistically, it measures 4.73m LOA, with the length from the bow to the transom 4.55m. The beam is a generous (but not excessive) 2.03m, with a hull depth of 1.13m. When the boat's on the trailer the whole rig measures 5.80m, so it should just sneak into most garages. The height of the boat on the trailer at 1.45m is a snip - that will stow under many houses in the Top End, and fit into and under most apartment garage doors.

It's designed with a maximum horsepower rating of 60hp, with a minimum of 40hp - but you'd have to be very careful about crew weight and load with a 40 hp.

Quintrex specify a transom weight of 112kg and a maximum of 5 people.

*(Time Out: The weight of a 60 hp Yamaha 4-stroke long shaft @ 20" with remote controls is 115 kg - so we queried Quintrex about this anomaly, and they agreed the 60 Yammy is okay)*

The Top Ender 455 can access the

impressive list of Quintrex (optional) specialist features.

These include an auxiliary engine bracket, berley bucket, a bimini cover, extra seat positions, a moveable kill tank, fully plumbed live bait tank, transom ladder, choice of side consoles, various seating combinations, transom cutting board and various trailer options.

Obviously a buyer can't pluck a boat with all these special features 'off the shelf', but if the buyer is prepared to wait an extra 6-8 weeks, the dealer can order an awesome package through the factory.

As you can see, the Top Ender is a big, roomy, open boat with the new Maxi Transom.

This kicks the engine out of the cockpit and back onto the transom on its own ledge and well. The Maxi transom has been a real success for Quintrex. It has enabled them to deal with the increased weight of the new 4-stroke outboards by providing the necessary increase in buoyancy right