

**I**t doesn't really matter whether you go cruising, fishing or general boating in a Whittley Cruisemaster, a big plate alloy boat or a 5.5m cuddy.

But when it comes to staying aboard, be it for a night, a weekend or a week, the boat's effectiveness as an overnight cruiser will ultimately be judged not by what sort of stove is in the galley, or whether it's an outboard or a sterndrive, but how it handles the natural elements.

These are the factors that affect all craft – small, medium and large, aluminium or fibreglass. At some point, every boat is going to be subject to bad weather, heavy rain, summer heat, and of course the insidious effects of air borne and sea borne corrosion.

*Genesis*, a charismatic 7.0m JBS plate alloy cruiser. In many ways, it still stands as the best cruising boat we've developed thus far, whereas *Dusty Rover*, an 8.0m diesel powered Cairns Custom Craft, is the better multi-purpose vessel.

Just for the record, the major difference between the two craft is that *Dusty Rover* is a more capable diesel sportfishing boat - where *Genesis* was built as our first true 'mothership' and cruising boat.

*Genesis* proved you can build a very safe, economical 7.0m cruiser that can withstand just about anything nature throws at it, and do it very comfortably.

But let's take the issues one by one, and consider what we've learned along

Because it had a full length hardtop, we had no less than 9 sections of cover dropping down in seconds, zipping together quickly and clipping onto a raised gunwale.

Not only could the boat go from fully open to completely closed in about 2-3 minutes, it also meant we could raise individual sections of these narrow vertical drops on the leeward side, to get good ventilation back through the covered area even though it was raining quite heavily.

Doing this in a modern boat such as a Mustang, Riviera Haines or Haines Signature Sportsbridge is not easy, and does require an extensive canopy arrangement. Enclosing in the whole cockpit with so-called "camper covers" can prove to be very expensive, too -

## Life Aboard A Small Cruiser - Part One

# Working With Nature

Following the great success of the Whittley 700 Cruisemaster, Haines Signature Sportsbridge and a raft of 6.0-8.0m 'pocket cruisers' from both fibreglass and plate aluminium boat builders, an increasing number of families and fishing crews are opting to spend more time aboard. Few people have had more hands on experience than the F&B team when it comes to living aboard small, medium and large trailerboats. In this, the first of several articles we'll publish in the coming months dealing with life situations aboard, editor Peter Webster explores the fundamental issue - dealing with the natural elements.

Every boat has to deal with these issues.

For people setting out to buy their first craft or their fifth, it doesn't matter. They too, are brought back to taws by the weather; the natural boating environment.

Over the years, the writer has worked, fished and cruised in areas right around Australia, in boats ranging in length from 3.0m-15.0m.

More recently, the F&B team has concentrated at the top end of the trailerboat market, or in the case of *Dusty Rover*, the transportable boat market.

Before we built *Dusty Rover* (F&B's current principal Project Boat) we spent several years working with

the way that you can apply to your own situation.

**Rainy Weather** The secret of dealing with rainy weather is to have covers that drop down at a moment's notice, to provide complete weather protection.

If you are living aboard the cruiser at the time, it becomes apparent very quickly that good ventilation is imperative through the boat.

Sometimes it's possible to roll up the covers on one side to get good ventilation and air through the leeward (sheltered) side, whilst the windward (rainy) (windy) side is left dropped down to provide the necessary shelter.

In *Genesis* we had a brilliant set-up,

so it pays to check this cost carefully before signing on the dotted line.

This is one of these often forgotten issues that rears its head long after the initial costing for the boat is completed. Just when you've finished the budget, to discover you need to spend another five grand on weatherproof covers could well put that Mustang back in the corral.

The other issue to think about with a lot of rain, is the need for extra ventilation.

Just about every production boat in Australia fails dismally in this regard.

Because few of the boatbuilders ever spend any time in their own boats, much less sleep in them overnight, or endure a couple of days aboard during



There are several issues to contemplate here, not least of which is the design principle behind *Dusty Rover's* conventional wheelhouse cruiser layout, compared to (say) the very popular bridgedeck/sterndrive layout favoured by the Mustang-SeaRay-Bayliner set. When it comes to working with the natural elements, this layout (in the writer's opinion) wins hands down. If only because dropping the covers creates a one level 'living area' nearly 8.0 m x 2.0 in size. Observe raised coamings for the covers' clips and posts - truly, the secret of a dry, rain free cockpit.