



An excellent example of the early use of cad-cam design and “nestings” by naval architect Jon Kemp’s Oceantech office in Adelaide. This craft, the plate aluminium Runaway 6000, symbolises the cultural shift away from fibreglass boats in the sizes above (approx) 5.5m to plate aluminium, and to pressed aluminium in the sizes under 5.5m.

The Last Decade 2000-2010, In Review

Special report by F&B Editor, Peter Webster

Choosing the most significant trailerboats of the last decade, Y-2000-2010, is one of the most difficult editorial projects we’ve undertaken. From the outset, we should emphasise that we have drawn a definite distinction between the words “best boats” and “significant boats”.

Trying to pick the “best” boats of the decade is virtually impossible, and so utterly subjective, it would be of very dubious value for most readers. For the writer to declare that Brand X was the best boat of the decade would surely deserve either a medal for bravery, or the papers certifying the writer for a padded cell.

This situation is easily reinforced in the ongoing, not to say perennial, debate about the various “Boats Of The Year” awards valiantly put on either by

magazines or industry groupings in most years. Invariably, nobody agrees with the judge’s choice(s), and probably never will.

The biggest problem for judges of these “Boat Of The Year” awards is that it is so incredibly hard to criticise small manufacturers’ products without them getting upset at coming second, fourth or seventh, when all the participants passionately believe their product deserves first place.

There have been some frightful ‘blues’ over the years on this very matter, with manufacturers often angrily withdrawing from the industry Associations and Award programs because they’re so upset at being left out of . . . first place.

And let’s face it, very few people in that situation want to come second or third – especially if the winner is their

strongest competitor.

The dissension it creates in the industry has become so great, Australia has not had an agreed or recognised national Boat Of The Year Awards’ system for a couple of years now.

Nevertheless, in an effort to learn from this unhappy situation and go forward, if we change the wording slightly and refocus our attention on the trailerboats produced in Australia between 2000 and the end of last year, 2010, and select the boats and/or boatbuilders that had the most significant impact on our world of boating, then it does become possible to close in and review some very interesting craft that emerged from the 2000-2010 decade.

It also enables us to contemplate the likely outcome(s) facing an industry that didn’t move forward very much at

all during this past decade - but that is getting ahead of ourselves.

It’s Not About “Best”

What we’ve tried to do in this report is to step aside from the Awards type process, and look more deeply into Australia’s trailerboat manufacturing sector. We have tried to determine which boats have had the most impact on our design, building, fitting out, safety, and seaworthiness standards, **and in no particular order**, determine which of the models have had the most impact in the marketplace.

In this way, we can look at – for example - the enormous Quintrex range of 72 models without identifying any one, two or three particular models and saying they are the “best” in their class, because that’s not really the point.

Of the 72 models in the Quintrex range, the real issue is this: *How many of them were so good, they changed the face of boating in Australia forever?*

How many boats on the market today can truly be said to have contributed significantly to our standards of trailerboat design and construction?

How many boats on the market are built of materials that are new, innovative, safer, stronger, cheaper or faster to build?

Going Back, To Come Forward

By taking this framework and this philosophy, we then went back through 10 years of F&B magazines, right back to issue #55, the magazine we published in January, Y-2000.

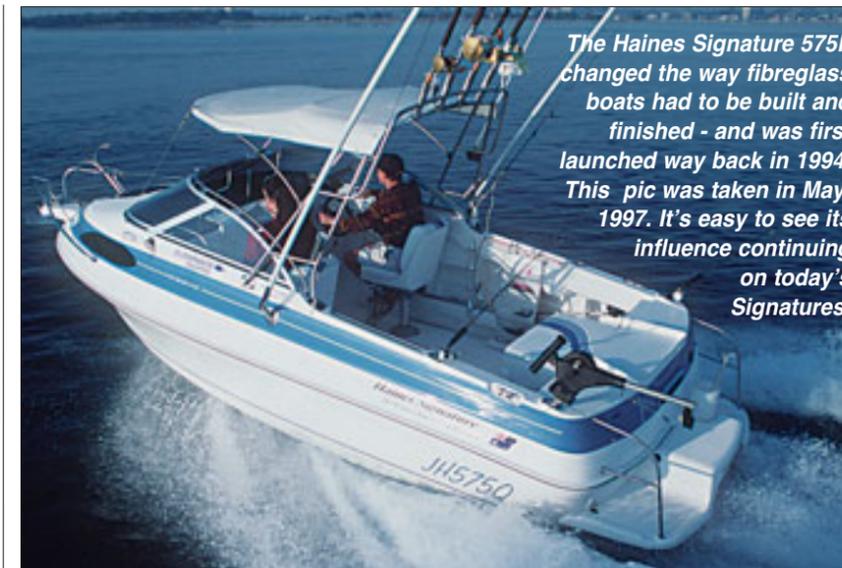
We then went through every single magazine from #55 right up to #172, December 2010.

In that ten year period, the F&B team has formally tested several hundred craft, driven or inspected hundreds of others, and obviously were party to pretty well all of the developments that have taken place in the trailerboat sector in the past decade.

The deeper we delved, the more interesting it became.

Many indicators started to emerge which we were unaware of ourselves. They only become apparent when we went back into this ten year ‘time capsule’ and said: “What happened between this point and that point?” Or “When was that boat launched?”

Viewed in this historic perspective, we were quite surprised to discover



The Haines Signature 575F changed the way fibreglass boats had to be built and finished - and was first launched way back in 1994. This pic was taken in May, 1997. It’s easy to see its influence continuing on today’s Signatures.

many boats and events we started out thinking would be included in our Decade In Review, turned out to be 15 or 18 years old, and thus ineligible for inclusion in the Y-2000-2010 decade.

Or were craft that failed to live up to F&B’s or the market’s expectations. Or were eliminated through performance issues, and so on.

Many Good Boats, But Few Of Note

One of the characteristics that became evident after searching back through 10 years of F&B magazines was that whilst most of our top trailerboat builders offer a big variety of boats to choose from, when you analyse the range carefully and ask yourself “Which of these boats was significantly different or better than the models or its predecessors that had gone before?”, it was disturbing to realise that many of today’s current models were developed way before the last decade. Some can be traced back into the 1990’s.

We hadn’t really taken this onboard when we conceived the idea of a ‘Decade In Review’ because we were thinking more in terms of trying to identify just the boats that were particularly relevant to our design and boat building standards going forward into the *next* decade.

However, it became increasingly apparent that some of the biggest boat builders did very little in the last decade about moving their design and building standards forward to any significant extent compared to the previous decade.

A particularly good example of this

can be found in the Haines Signature range. Whilst they released a lot of new boats during the last decade, none of them really took the brand’s standards much further forward than the standard they had achieved back at the beginning of the 1990’s, with what was then a truly exceptional craft, the original 575F Haines Signature.

This was a boat years ahead of its time. Apart from its popularity with the boating public, it subsequently influenced virtually every other fibreglass boat builder to change his methodology – if only in terms of the introduction of sophisticated hull liners, and (inner) topside mouldings which these days, we just take for granted in fibreglass boats. But I repeat, the 575 Signature had all these features back in 1994, when we first tested the 575 in F&B #3.

Viewed in that perspective, Haines Signature really haven’t had the same “purple patch” they enjoyed in the early 1990’s when they developed a whole bunch of boats that subsequently became industry standards.

So it’s interesting to look at the boats they’ve made in the last decade, including the very new ones such as the 630, 675, 602, (etc) which are all based on the DNA created in their 1993 Signature 575.

It’s also interesting to note that most of the other fibreglass manufacturers – almost without exception – have, or are, suffering from the same issue ie, they are largely repackaging boat types and designs that have hardly changed since they were first developed, sometimes as far back as the 1980’s.

So we found it increasingly difficult