

Since 1995, F&B magazine has purchased and operated no less than 18 different project boats with a total value of just over a million dollars. Fibreglass and aluminium boats, monos, tris and cats, ranging in length from 3.0m – 9.0m



Above & Below: Two outstanding aluminium fishing boats - the 3.0 m Horizon, and the beautifully finished, Jon Kemp designed ADM Runaway 6000.

F&B's Project Boat Program: A Mid-term Report

LOA, this extraordinary, \$1.125 million dollar program has given the editorial team the opportunity of developing a truly unique perspective about Australian boat manufacturing standards. In this special report, Editor Peter Webster takes a look back at the boats that have come and gone, the boats still here, and contemplates the state of Australian recreational boat building.



As most readers are aware, one of the main reasons F&B has maintained such an extensive boat development program has been to overcome the legal ramifications of writing critical reports about Australian boat manufacturers' products.

This is a very thinly skinned "industry", and as each month passes, it is getting harder, not easier, to express an opinion about Australian boating product. By maintaining this extensive project boat development program, we've been able to purchase and use a wide range of boats and engines, and develop first hand our own conclusions about the relative merits of the different products. More to the point perhaps, we are then able to review the products as we find them, as we are then writing about products we actually own.

Of course, the fact that the writer and Ruth Cunningham (publisher) are avowed boat junkies is beside the point, although it must be conceded that having purchased 18 boats in six years does suggest our boating "habit" has become more than just a little addictive!

Whatever, it's certainly true we love boats and boating, and over the past 6-7 years, we've been privileged to experience first hand a wonderful range of boats, motors, trailers and electronics.

But in any program, there comes a time when it is appropriate to step back and assess the program's application and success, and contemplate what it is - or isn't - achieving for F&B readers.

Apart from the 18 boats we've owned and operated in the last six years, the writer had already owned about 30 boats in the period 1965-1992, ranging in size from 2.6 m inflatables through to the big, twin screw 15.0m game boat, *Tracey J(5)*.

History aside, it's the boats of the past 5-7 years that occupy our minds today. History provides us with experience and knowledge, whilst the more recent crop of boats provides us with its application and perspective.

In that sense, what have been the highs and the lows of this six year program?

Has the world of boating moved forward? Are boats significantly better today than they were 10 years ago? Do they perform better, and/or live up to the manufacturer's claims?

To answer these questions, we need only look at the project boats F&B has assembled over the past six years or so. Wherever possible, we deliberately chose just about everything 'new' that mattered, be it a GPS system, a four-stroke engine, or a boat building technique.

As you would expect, armed with the wisdom of hindsight, a retrospective analysis of 18 often controversial boats invariably throws up a handful of boats that 'stood out from the crowd', let alone the associated outboards and allied products.

No Duds From the outset, and for the benefit of readers who may have only recently picked up on F&B, we should explain right up front that we don't bother with duds, shonky product and wherever possible, boat builders without some prior history.

We have neither the time nor the money to waste on product that is going nowhere, or isn't going to contribute to our reader's knowledge or 'need to know' purchase information.

If there is controversy in our selection process, it invariably stems from our refusal to work with people who won't or can't work with F&B without imposing their own terms and conditions as to what we can write, compare or test.

That has certainly affected a number of products that might otherwise have been selected for review, or purchased for our Project Boat program.

Stand-outs There's not a lot of doubt that 4 or 5 boats stand head and shoulders above the rest of F&B's Project Boats – not so much in terms of their boating ability perhaps, but as much for the contribution they made to our general knowledge.

These boats include the diminutive but brilliant 4.3m JBS side console *Red Ink*, and the charismatic, albeit old fashioned, 7.2m JBS plate alloy cruiser, *Genesis*.

Others of special significance included the 7.02 m Haines Signature *Take Two* and in the same genre, the

incredibly weird and wonderful Ocean Cylinder 7300.

On top of the heap is *Dusty Rover*, the 8.0m diesel Cairns Custom Craft Sports cruiser currently working for the magazine and based in north Queensland. This is the 'pinnacle' of F&B's project boat fleet, but so it should be, too.

Costing something in the order of \$220,000 to develop, the whole package – 8.0 m CCC cruiser, Yanmar diesel engineering, MerCruiser's tough Bravo 11 sterndrive leg, the high-tech. CCC alloy AL-KO trailer, Stessl 3.4 dory (etc) the *Dusty Rover* Project isn't a 'boat' so much as the evolution of an entire 'mother-shiping' system.

Other Boats Along the way though, many other boats came and went with varying degrees of success.

For example, we really struggled with the **Stessl Trihull** known as *Tripples* – so named because it was a "tri" with many "ripples" along the sponsons from being re-welded so many times! True story.



This boat generated enormous interest around Australia, with readers everywhere clamouring to know more about the combination of cat-like ride and stability working with monohull efficiency.

It took about five 'goes' to get the wings on the side of this tri working efficiently over an agonising 12 month gestation period – but in the end, Alf Stessl nailed it, and the Stessl Tri has gone on to become one of the biggest selling model types in the Stessl range.

Tripples was a very good example of how project boat development benefits the consumer. By the time we had licked the problems on *Tripples*, the public was off and running with fully sorted and developed boats. Would we do it again? You bet – there is a tangible benefit in the trihull concept, as we noted again in the GRP Lifestyle 6.7m recently tested in F&B # 70.

Trihulls do work, they usually have terrific stability and if the air can

exhaust through the tunnel properly, then you can get a magically soft ride, too – and all from one central, fuel efficient engine.

The cluster of 5.2 and 5.8 JBS Walkarounds were a delight to work with through 1997-2001. While most of F&B's project boats are sold almost the day they are advertised, with the JBS boats, we had people 'putting their hands up' before they were even advertised for sale!



That gives you some idea of the popularity of veteran Cliff Joshua's strip "plank" flared bow concept, and the 'no frills' approach he's taken to his boat building and finishing.

Cliff Joshua has never claimed he builds the world's best finished plate boats. His attitude has always been that plate aluminium boats lean towards the commercial edge of fishing boat construction and finish.

Cliff reckons if his customers want to pile on the "bog" and pretty them up with a \$5,000 paint job, he's happy to spend their money. But left to his own devices, Cliff doesn't bother with bog in the topsides, and apart from a couple of layers of good quality urethane paint, what you see is pretty much what's under the skin.

The various programs we've undertaken with Cliff have all demonstrated the validity of his "flared bow" concept, and we've been able to confirm on numerous occasions that there is a genuine benefit in his charismatic, convex forefoot shape.

F&B publisher and camera boat skipper Ruth Cunningham's favourite boat has always been the bright yellow **Cairns Custom Craft 5700** cat, powered by two of the old style VRO Evinrude 2-stroke outboards. The outboards were old technology, but the cat was – and still is – a beauty. We used ours for 18 months, using the cat as our main camera platform after *Take Two* was sold.

We also did several field trips in it, and they were very successful. In the end though, the basic centre console



format meant it was very exposed for the camera equipment and crew, and if the wind was up, it was 'wet as' offshore in the chop.

Subsequently, and mainly because we (and fishing journalist Warren Steptoe who also purchased this CCC 5700 cat) had various "sessions" with Cairns Custom Craft designer, Marcel Maujean, the hull shape was completely revised with a modified sheerline and freeboard dimensions, in a slightly longer boat.

Were we impressed? You bet - Cairns Custom Craft is about to start building a second one (a 'sheltered' console, this time) later this month, for delivery later in the year.

On a commercial level, just about every plate alloy builder in Australia followed the development of the Jonathon Kemp designed **Runaway 7500** plate alloy sportsfisherman, built for F&B by the talented ADM Marine team here on the Gold Coast.



The ADM team then followed through with the **Runaway 6000**, surely one of the most beautifully built plate alloy boats ever produced in Australia. Both of these fine craft were developed from plasma cut "kits" (a misnomer if ever there was one) created by Jon Kemp and his partner Clinton Rhodes, plasma cut by Tubemakers in Perth, WA, and then shipped across to the Gold Coast.

These two projects revealed the full potential of this new plasma cut "kit" process, but didn't really apply to the DIY consumer - so leading naval architect Phil Curren was engaged to produce a genuine, Do-It-Yourself kit program for F&B readers - the now infamous **4.85 Curran** DIY plate alloy fishing boat.



Boy - didn't this project upset a lot of people! We actually managed to upset both fibreglass *and* alloy boat builders, both sides believing F&B had no right to be promoting the notion that our readers just might like the option of building a boat at home, for themselves. And as the project demonstrated, it became very obvious that it was entirely feasible to build one of these marvellous 4.85 m platie in your garage at home - not to mention a whole range of smaller and larger boats

that Phil Curran's CDM design service offers the public.

If reader votes were counted, the **Horizon "Beachie"** program would almost certainly win the "Most Popular" project category. The interest this fairly conventional pressed aluminium boat created around Australia was phenomenal.

Let's now take a closer look at some of the stand-out boats, and contemplate why they have emerged from the ruck over the years, against some intense competition.

4.3m JBS *Red Ink*

This is one of our all-time favourite boats, and a model we will build again.

An astonishing small boat, the little 4.3 m *Red Ink* has seaworthiness that totally blew us away. I well remember one day off the Gold Coast in post cyclonic seas, laughing like a demented fool as the little boat bustled up and down ginormous waves, before steaming back in through the breaking, white-water bar like a surf boat. And the damn thing was barely 15' long!

Later, we had to chastise fishing editor Damon Olsen and his mates severely after they'd taken *Red Ink* away for a 10-day fishing expedition on Fraser Island - but they didn't stop at Fraser, did they?

No way - this gung-ho lot lit out for the wahoo on Gardiner Banks, about 20 miles to the north, seriously in the middle of nowhere!

Although we carried on like stunned mullets when we found out where they'd been, we could all understand why they did it - such was the inherent



seaworthiness and sea kindness of this remarkable little boat.

All of us would have quite happily taken it anywhere the fuel range allowed.

It stood as stark testament to a very fundamental issue: you don't always need a big boat to be seaworthy and safe.

With Cliff Joshua's full length buoyancy tanks on either side of the hull, a genuine self-draining cockpit and rugged plate aluminium construction, this truly was - and is - an exceptional craft.

Downside ? The finish was pretty ordinary, the side console, transom battery shelf and live bait tank poorly designed.

But the forthcoming MK11 version is going to be pretty damn special . . .

(Footnote: Cliff's been in and out of hospital for some serious surgery last month - we'd like to take this opportunity to wish him a full and complete recovery ASAP! Mind you, we suspect they're gonna have to chain 'im down to get him to rest up - so to his long suffering wife Lillian, we say "Give him heaps !" We need the old bugger to keep all the plate builders half his age, on their toes)

The Haines Signature 7.02m Take Two

This beautifully built 7.02 m Haines Signature Walkaround was an extremely useful boat.

We used it for everything.

For nearly two years, it shouldered the responsibility of about 90% of the marine photography in Australia as at the stage (1996-97) Sea Media, the publisher of F&B magazine, was deeply involved in the production of brochures and marine photography for just about everybody in southern Queensland.

As well, we were using the boat as a sportsfishing platform, equipment



research centre, and we were taking it away as a cruising boat to places as far distant as the Town of 1770 and Hinchinbrook Island.

Our first trip to Hinchinbrook was in *Take Two*, when we circumnavigated the whole island in this very seaworthy and economical craft.

It was our first working experience of Hainsey's "variable deadrise" hull, and confirmed the concept has real merit - especially in rough seas.

One of the first boats in Australia powered by twin Honda 90 4-strokes, it was largely the success of this installation that led to the Honda 90's becoming established as the "pigeon pair" of the industry for most of the latter part of the 1990's.

Hundreds of pairs of engines were sold, replicating the safety, reliability and performance we had pioneered with *Take Two's* brace of Honda 90's. A very fast boat, *Take Two* would run up to 35 knots easily, enjoyed a superb self draining cockpit, and outstanding fibreglass tooling.

Downside ? The cabin. It was too small to sleep in or use for much of anything, and the wheelhouse was annoyingly 150 mm too narrow. Later GRP walkarounds learned how to open the cabin out under the trench for more space, but in the end, the plate alloy boats blitzed the GRP models because they only had three or four millimetre "thick" sides.

All the fibreglass walkarounds (Allison, Haines Hunter, Cruise Craft, etc) have had to deal with wall and coaming thicknesses between 100 - 200 mm thick, and the free space difference is overwhelmingly in favour of the alloy boats.

7.2m JBS Genesis

So much has been written about *Genesis* that I won't bore readers with another dissertation on the subject.

However, for readers who may have joined F&B in recent times, let's summarise the project like this - *Genesis* was the result of a careful study into the methodology of creating a trailerable, liveaboard cruiser that could take two people away from 'civilisation' to fish remote, virgin fishing areas for periods of up to a week.

Genesis was also the boat where we matured the idea of taking a smaller fishing boat with the 'big' boat, a concept first mooted on *Take Two*.

It was on *Genesis* that we experimented with the concept of carrying a fishing dory on the roof of *Genesis* itself ie, it was the first of our true "mothership" developments.

What a wonderful boat it has proven to be - for ourselves, and later, for John and Barbara Wicks, the current owners of the boat. Since purchasing *Genesis* several years ago, they have used it all over northern Australia from the Gulf country to the coast.

This boat proved beyond a shadow of a doubt it was entirely feasible to build a trailerboat that could easily and comfortably accommodate two people for long periods of time, and handle all of the requirements put before any coastal passage making cruiser.

Powered (again) by twin 90 hp Honda 4-strokes, this was the boat that also proved you could run hot water systems off these Honda engines, and although the semi-portable, 12 volt freezing system failed in the tropics, it nevertheless proved to be ideal for a weekend cruiser.

Weighing 3.25-3.5 tonnes on a Tinka

tandem axle trailer, *Genesis* also had the best storm covers (by Craft Covers here on the Gold Coast) for tropical rain conditions we've yet developed.

Downside ? The 12v freezer didn't work as well as we'd hoped (it was the 12 volt ice-chest type with a small condenser unit on the side) and the range of the boat wasn't enough for what we (then) discovered we could do !

With hindsight, we'd have twin 90's again (or a single 200-225 hp 4-stroke), double the fuel tank size (200 up to 400 litres), use the latest wide beam JBS hull to better carry the extra weight of fuel and boat, and install a freezer with 150 mm wall thickness, using BLA's Isotherm freezer system.

The Ocean Cylinder 7.3

What a buzz this boat has caused in Australia. Anyone who has ever seen it admits it's jaw-dropping stuff. "Funny looking", "charismatic", "odd", "strange", "weird" – whatever the adjective, it probably fits the Ocean Cylinder.



But it works – hell, this is one awesome plate aluminium boat with the deepest transom deadrise ("vee") of any production platey in the country. It's fast, it's soft, it's dry – it's one hell of a boat.

Obviously, it's perfect for SAR applications such as the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard, VMR, Volunteer Coastal Patrol, Harbours and Marine, etc.

Unsinkable, unbreakable, unshakeable – if that brown stuff hits the fan, then you'd best make sure you're in an Ocean Cylinder - true story.

Down side ? Mainly the loss of space in the cockpit - the side cylinders take up about 20% of the available space, but the advantages easily outweigh this relatively small disadvantage.

We still reckon they are losing

valuable hull efficiency with the fancy cylinder "tails" (at the transom) which create a sort of 'pickle fork' effect around the transom. However, we're on our own here, as the architects disagree. So the transom stays as it is.

Cairns Custom Craft 8.0 m *Dusty Rover*

The *Dusty Rover* project is truly a 'work in progress' so it is far too early for retrospective views about something we've only just got on top of, equipment wise.

The fundamentals are great, but we're talking more about sensible evolution here than we are about anything 'revolutionary'.

Dusty Rover is a composite of concepts (a long-range, trailerable "mothership" and fish cruising boat) technologies (Yanmar 300 hp lightweight diesel, sophisticated electronics and U-TEC refrigeration) and proven performance (Cairns Custom Craft has built dozens of these plate alloy hulls already) so the upshot is a program more about specifics than 'big picture' stuff.

Having said that, however, one very noticeable 'big picture' observation has already emerged. If ever there was evidence needed that some plate alloy boats have now passed fibreglass standards of seaworthiness and seakindliness, this remarkable 8.0 m CCC/Yanmar combination certainly provides it.

Ten years ago, that would have been unthinkable.

Downside ? As things have transpired, *Dusty's* nearly too big to trailer but we've just taken delivery of the new alloy trailer (see Project Logbook, F&B #73) so the jury's still out on the practicalities of that issue.



Just about all the other issues (freezer efficiency, ventilation, etc) have all been sorted out.

What's needed now, is a nice, three month fishing cruise around the 'Gulf' - just to make sure we haven't forgotten anything . . .

Quintrex 455 Hornet Wildfish

Another 'work in progress' and again, far too early to be objective about it in the sense of looking back with hindsight. Operated by F&B's Fishing editor Damon Olsen, the Yamaha 60 hp 4-stroke powered Hornet Wildfisher has knocked Damon's socks right off - and has had the same effect on all who have fished aboard this very unusual craft. Damon is just in love with it, pure and simple.

Apart from wishing it was fitted with 2 x 225 hp Yamaha 4-strokes instead of the 1 x 60 hp Yammy Quintrex allow, he's as happy as a pig in the proverbial.



Product Retrospective

Looking back over the program these past six years, it's interesting to observe how relatively few matters have emerged to 'shake the tree'.

Even when we are aided by the wisdom of hindsight, it is difficult to identify all that much that has come out of the past (say) decade, to suggest that our boating world is actually

moving forward.

For the record, the writer would nominate the development of the GPS navigation systems as the biggest, single marine development of the past decade.

Running a close second would be the advent of the popularised 4-stroke outboard, keeping in mind that Honda 4-stroke outboards have actually been around for several decades.

However, the F&B Project Boat program has been almost entirely based on the use of 4-stroke outboards, for the self-evident reason that we wanted to develop our own experience with these new engines, and form our own conclusions.

We're mighty glad we did.

The amount of mis-information, rumour-mongering and just plain lying that has been put in front of the boating consumer about 4-stroke outboards, is of nearly criminal proportions.

F&B has now purchased and used the Honda 2, 15, 30, 50, 90 and 130 hp 4-stroke outboards for *hundreds* of hours. They have all been outstanding engines with unparalleled reliability, economy, smoothness and efficiency.

Not one has ever faltered.

Not one has had a hint of "rust".

Not one has used ANY oil whatsoever beyond the normal service intervals. (*And that is bugger-all*).

They do use at least 33-40% **LESS** fuel than comparable 2-strokes, although on average, we'd put it closer to 50% **LESS**.

And we have pages of objective, factual data to prove it.

Currently, we are trialling a series of Yamaha 4-strokes, including the superb 115 and several 60 hp 4-strokes, an engine we believe is probably the best outboard in this class ever built.

If the Project Boat program has achieved just one thing, it is this - neither the writer or Ruth Cunningham would ever go back to a 'normal' 2-stroke outboard.

The new Hella LCD trailer lights are also one of the most significant inventions of the past decade, especially if its widespread application is taken into account. As a trailer boat owner who has lost, drowned, crunched and smashed probably 50-60 sets of so-called 'waterproof lights' over the years, I am a bit biased on this subject in Hella's favour!

Another product that comes to mind includes Australia's own HyDrive

hydraulic steering. Thanks to superb engineering and clever, aggressive packaging from this Adelaide based exporter, the cost of hydraulic steering has dropped to such an extent just about every trailerboat owner can now afford to have this markedly superior steering in their boat, a system that not so long ago was considered only applicable to larger cruisers.

Boats, With Hindsight Nevertheless, there has not been very much innovation in the world of boat building in recent years.

Although Quintrex has revolutionised the marketing of boats (as true 'turn key' packages), only their Hornet Wildfish series is truly innovative - excepting, of course, for



their overall development of the "millennium" hull shape. But this is primarily a very skilful re-use of the aluminium rolling technique originally developed by Quintrex many moons ago for the distinctive flared shoulders so loved by traditional Quinnie owners of the Seaman, CruiseAbout or LazeAbout eras.

There is also the point that WA pressed tinnie builder Dogget Boats used a similar rolling technique in the 1960's - whilst veteran JBS builder Cliff Joshua cheekily points out that Quintrex has only just managed to copy what he's been doing for years - building alloy boats with a concave forefoot. "It's about time they caught up!" he exclaimed recently. "I've been building boats like that since aluminium was first used in boats - and before that, in plywood and before that, timber!"

In the world of GRP boats, there has been very little real development of any substance. Variable deadrise hulls are not new in the overall sense, as

naval architects have used the principle for decades. Twin hulls too, have been around since the early 1970s, and by and large, have remained faithful to their original designs.

The Quintrex Philosophy Eighteen project boats, 6-7 years and a million dollars later, it has become evident that mono-hulled fibreglass boat builders can do a lot more than they have.

Perhaps the strongest indictment of our Australian industry is that so few boat builders - especially in fibreglass - use naval architects to even assist or check their designs, let alone cut them loose with a brief and a budget.

Conversely, the fact that plate alloy boats have leaped ahead so dramatically in recent years in terms of design, performance and handling, is largely due to the growing use of formally trained naval architects in that sector.

Architects and engineers of the calibre of Phil Curran, Marcel Maujean, Gaven Mair, Jonathon Kemp, Clinton Rhodes, Stephens & Gravlev, Stuart Ballantyne, Brian Poole etc have made a profound impact on the design, engineering and performance of plate alloy boats in the past decade.

Whilst many GRP (fibreglass) builders have vastly experienced boat builders and designers heading up their toolmaking, many of them now seem to be missing the vital 'feel' for consumer demand that allowed them to become national brands in the first place.

The staggering growth of Quintrex over the past 4-5 years is due to the vision and courage of its owners, Paul Phelan and Bruce Shepherd.

It is widely believed that the formal national survey of consumer attitudes to boat buying, conducted by Quintrex in 1997, led to a total change of direction by the entire Quintrex organisation.

The mindset of nearly 40 years of building Quintrex *as a raw product the dealers finished*, was thrown out.

Instead, Quintrex started building what the surveys showed the boating public wanted.

Five years ago, Quintrex started building a completely finished product they supplied to their dealers as a total package. It included a pre-rigged engine, depth sounder, radio, carpet, soft-top - the lot.

"Turn-key" boating had finally

arrived.

Consumers can *now* walk into a Quintrex dealer's showroom, and buy a boat just like they buy a car.

Completely finished.

To say that this philosophy has been successful is possibly the understatement of the year. It is reported (SMH 2/4/02) that the combined Quintrex Stacer output this year will exceed 13,000 units.

Quintrex is now achieving a phenomenal 60-70% of the entire recreational market, something that hasn't happened since the grand old days of Brooker and de Havilland tinnies in the early 1960's.

Project Boat Philosophy

Our project boats have provided us with a fascinating insight into the world of boat building. They have unquestionably enhanced our knowledge of this most complex subject called "boat building".

In an overview sense, it seems that we're not going to see too many revolutionary "break-throughs" in the future.

Overall mono-hull design, so changed by America's Raymond C Hunt and Associates "deep-vee" designs in the early 1960s, has settled right down, with most designers content to 'tweak' the shapes, rather than offer anything substantially new.

Material technology, be it GRP (fibreglass) or aluminium has also stabilised over this past decade.

Plate alloy design has come further, pro-rata, than GRP, but mainly because it was a long way behind GRP in the first place.

The latest plate alloy designs are vastly different and infinitely more sophisticated to those we could access during the 1970's and 1980's.

Powerful computers are now used to calculate complex curvy shapes, and then used to drive plasma cutters to pre-cut the "nestings" for the latest alloy boats with one millimetre accuracy.

There seems to be no limit (beyond the mechanical size of the plasma cutting table) to

the size or complexity of the boats involved. Plasma cutting has finally allowed plate alloy builders to build with 100% repeatable accuracy, the same boat, over and over again.

No-one in Australia has taken full advantage of this ground-breaking technology yet, but it is only a matter of time before we see true production building of plate alloy boats with the volumetric advantage once the exclusive domain of the GRP builders.

But in the end, it primarily means that sheet and plate alloy has just caught up with fibreglass, and now has the technical ability to stay with, and in some cases, even lead the quality of hull design in the future.

Fibreglass In The Future Our project boat experience, contrary to what you might have thought, has actually led us to believe that in the end, fibreglass still remains a long way ahead of plate or pressed aluminium as the preferred material for recreational boat-building.

Boat building in GRP takes a fraction of the time it takes to build in aluminium. The colour (even if it is white) is 'built-in' forever; it doesn't corrode and is (pro-rata) considerably stronger than aluminium.



But that is of little consequence to the 'average Aussie boating consumer'. As far as they are concerned, aluminium boats handle the bumps and scrapes of a varied boating life better than fibreglass.

The pressed alloy boats are usually lighter and need less horsepower for good all round performance. And these days, they not only perform well, they are starting to look quite stylish too.

Conversely, most boat buyers believe that with a handful of exceptions, the fibreglass sector has been locked in a 1970's time warp. They cannot see enough 'touch and feel' benefits to encourage them to buy new GRP boats instead of a secondhand, so-called "classic" that might well be 20 years old!

Until the fibreglass boat builders are prepared to step into the 21st century, and deliver boats more closely aligned to what the consumers believe they need, the aluminium sector will continue to dominate new boat recreational sales in the foreseeable future.

F&B

Of all the Project boats we've had built, the last JBS 5.2, the one we built for the Chazan family in Ingham, QLD, was perhaps the most outstanding of them all. It is a terrific, 2 berth walkaround family fishing cruising package. It only needed a single axle trailer (a Ruhle Platinum) runs superbly with a silky smooth Honda 90 4-stroke - this is truly close to the definitive Aussie family trailerboat.