

Plate Alloy Boats's 480 DIY Side Console

This is literally the test you have when you're not having a test – because this particular boat is not actually a production craft – this is a one-off, 4.80m Side Console inspired by F&B magazine to be included as a DIY project in the forthcoming, fifth edition of Plate Alloy Boats Of Australia. In order to do that, the DIY project had to be built, to take the step by step photographs – at which point we decided that having gone this far, why not rig the boat and put it through its paces with the F&B test crew?

You have to admit, it was a good idea, because one of the problems with these DIY projects is that so often you really can't get a handle on what you're going to build – whereas in this case, we now know exactly what Plate Alloy Boat's 4.80 Side Console can do.

In some ways, we felt a bit sorry for Plate Alloy's John Pontifex and Michael Postma, because for these two Melbourne based boat builders and ally Kit specialists, having PW and Ruth Cunningham checking their 4.8m kit platey was a bit awkward. Between us, Ruth and the writer have built, or had built at least a dozen or more plate boats, and most of them were on the kit set technique which F&B helped pioneer in recreational plate boat building. Being able to study this Chris Tucker designed 4.8m Side Console was going to be very interesting, a point that wasn't lost on the Melbourne crew at all!

Side Consoles are not new any more. Nor is the concept of a 4.8m

Centre Console or Open plate aluminium boat with a self draining cockpit. Just about every production boat builder in Australia has at least one in his kit bag, and some of the bigger manufacturers have half a dozen different versions of these Open boats at about 100mm intervals.

F&B has been on record for many years as being one of the Quintrex TopEnder and Stacer Nomad's biggest supporters, believing that these craft represent exceptional value for Aussie fishermen. It's no secret that as this issue goes on sale, F&B is expecting its new Quintrex 490 TopEnder to be completed.

So we have a lot of history, respect and belief in this Side Console format, and acknowledged this fact with Plate Alloy's John Pontifex when discussions turned to boats we were going to feature in this latest (Book-5) edition of F&B's very popular Plate Alloy Boats Of Australia series.

In each edition, we've always tried to include a model for the DIY

fraternity, as there are thousands of these folk in Australia who just love doing their own thing and building their own boat as time and finances permit. Hundreds of readers are very good welders; many do it professionally (are boiler makers, etc), or have a best mate, brother or uncle has a suitable shop and the necessary skills to help them build the base metalwork.

For these people, the whole notion of building their own boat is very appealing – especially as it's a very good way of developing a brand new boat for considerably less than the cost of a regular production model.

Buying a boat like this in Kit form from Plate Alloy Boats in Melbourne is very appealing – the Kit costs \$8,700 (plus GST = \$9,570) for the design, advice and support, and yes, that does include the cut-out aluminium itself – all cut to size perfectly within a 1mm accuracy by the sophisticated, computer driven laser-cutters used in the process. And the whole lot is carefully marked and numbered in sequence so it really is a case of picking up the piece marked S-3 and putting up against the bit marked P-3 where S = starboard and P, obviously, = Port.

If you ever assembled Airfix kits of Spitfires, Mustangs and Sabre jets as a kid, you'll be right at home in minutes.

Needless to say, Pontifex's group has honed this process to such an extent, the biggest risk is that you'll spill your coffee over Page 7 of the instructions . . .

The upshot is that for \$9,570 (plus freight to wherever you are) a truck will arrive outside your workshop, farm or house with a big pallet on the back, and basically drop the "Kit" of this boat in the driveway.

This obviously represents a considerable saving on the new cost of a production boat, but more to the point, you get the fun, the frustration, the angst, the joy, and of course the satisfaction – *all of those things* – of building your very own one-off, custom boat.

Why the 4.8 Side Console?

Well, it was no more complicated than knowing that in Book-4, we'd featured an excellent 5.8m Cuddy that was very well received, so for Book-5 we decided we had to either go down a size range, or go up - and with the way everyone's finances are running at the moment in this post GFC era, we thought going up a size

range wasn't very clever. Going down to 4.80m, made a lot more sense.

And so it's worked out – we're very pleased we nominated this craft, as it is literally "right on the money". It's where the majority of Australian fishermen are investing in boats, as Side Consoles in the 4.5-5.2m class are the biggest selling fishing boats in Australia at the moment.

Now it's possible to build this little beauty on your own, in your own time, as finances allow.

Design

As you can see in the accompanying plans, it is essentially a 4.80m Side Console with a 2.0m beam, the depth of 1.1m and a draft of (hull only) 0.23m, with a 15 degree transom deadrise for a working displacement (with a typical 70hp outboard) of 570kg dry, using a 20" length outboard leg.

It's a bit specious to say what the project includes because that is entirely up to the individual.

Suffice to say here, that as it comes from the factory in Cheltenham, Victoria, the aluminium Kit includes all of the materials necessary to build the complete hull

