



The recent economic climate in Australia has been very favourable toward the American built boat buyer. The price of the Aussie dollar, which reached almost 80 cents against the US\$ at one stage, and still sits at around 76 cents to the US\$ today, has led to a massive influx of boats onto our market. Inevitably, this will lead to this year's boat show circuit being 'flooded' with many previously unseen American built craft, and a big increase in the ranges of boats already established in Australia.

This is great news for the consumer, who is now provided with many boats to choose from when purchasing new. The choices are plenty; bowrider; centre cabin; centre console; cabin boat; deck boat; all types of craft are available from the new manufacturers.

Left: This sweet little Seaswirl bow rider is a real gem at \$33,900 complete with trailer, regos, etc.

Below: Isn't this something else? At issue is not whether Australians can build something as good as this - but the sad fact *that we don't*.

Sure, there are the major players, Bayliner, Sea Ray, Maxum, Four Winns, Wellcraft, Trophy and Regal, but the past twelve months or so has seen a huge number of "New Kids on the Block", adding to these already solid manufacturers.

The new contenders likely to be seen at this year's boat show circuit include manufacturers of sports cruisers such as Glastron, Larson, Cobolt, Crownline, Doral, and Chaparral, meanwhile representing the fishing fraternity are Seaswirl, Campion, Hydra-Sports, Pro-Line, Tracker and Nitro Marine. The manufacturers are all very well respected in their respective countries who have selected Australia as a suitable market for their product.

The confusion that must be felt by many prospective purchasers has led to this article, a comparison between the brands available, comparing apples with apples, to make the facts a lot clearer for you, the consumer.

The Rundown – The Main Players

Of the major players, no others have previously been represented more in

the Australian market than Bayliner. Currently boasting ten dealers within Australia, the Bayliner brand has been available here for nearly 30 years. Bayliner today is probably the best-known American manufacturer within Australia.

The company today is owned by the Brunswick Corporation, owners of Mercury outboards, Mercruiser inboards and sterndrives, Quicksilver accessories and a host of other marine interests including the Navman range of fishfinders and instruments.

Manufacturing a number of different styles of boats for over 46 years, Bayliner are widely known in Australia for their bowrider and pocket sport cruiser range, but Bayliner also produce deck boats, as well as the Trophy range of sports fishing craft, centre consoles, walkarounds and cabin boats.

Another old salt in the Australian industry is Sea Ray. With dealers in Australia for over 19 years, their range of bow riders and cabin cruisers have always been their most popular boats within Australia.

Again owned by the Brunswick

The U.S. Boat Invasion:

Clear and **P**leasant **S**trangers

For Australians wandering through the capital city Boat Shows between July and October, the overwhelming impact is going to concern the vast array of imported boats from America. Strange brands of boats we've previously only seen in the glossy US boating magazines, will be everywhere, and of the brands Aussies do know about (Bayliner, SeaRay, Four Winns, etc) one could be forgiven for thinking they've taken over the local GRP boatbuilding industry.

What makes it all so controversial is the plain ungarnished truth: Most of these imports represent terrific value for money, most are light years ahead of the local products; most are superbly built and finished. And nowhere is this more evident than in the top U.S. fishing boats. Most are embarrassingly better value for money.

Darren Shiel & PW Report.

