

# The Cruise Craft 685: Best With One Engine - Or Two?



This is an interesting report examining the debate, not to say controversy, that surrounds the decision as to whether one engine is sufficient for bluewater fishing - or whether two engines offer better all round performance and a greater margin of safety.

This month, we have not one but two Cruise Craft 685's powered by a single and twin Yamahas of similar total horsepower - to further explore the extremities of this debate. Story & Pics by the F&B team.

**M**uch has been written and said about the big Cruise Craft in recent years, with almost universal acknowledgment that they represent the pinnacle of build quality and finish by Australian boat builders.

There's never too much debate about that because we've all seen the Cruise Craft Explorer series at the Boat Shows, at the launch ramps, wide offshore - and with owners from one side of Australia with happy grins on their faces, you don't have to be Einstein to work out that this has been one of the most successful fishing boats in Australian recreational boating history.

Over the years, we've tested various configurations of the 685 hull, down to the most recent, the examination of the twin Verado powered rig back in 2007 (F&B # 132) when the writer commented that he felt that the twin Verado set-up was actually too heavy for the 685m Cruise Craft hull.

We noted that it felt like the additional weight of these heavy engines was counter-productive to the extent that a single Verado around the 200-225hp mark would have offered virtually identical performance, but with superior handling and balance without so much weight hanging right off the back of the transom.

At the time, we knew the published report was going to be fairly controversial, and indeed, it was. Not that the Nichols' team ever refuted the issue, because deep down, they too agreed with much of the writer's comment.

F&B was not criticising the boat (as

such) which we acknowledged was beautifully built, engineered and fitted out, but we were critical of the final outcome when confronted with twin Verados on the transom.

Well, not only did they take it on the chin, they came back within months, with not one, but TWO 685 Explorers, and basically put it on the F&B team to confirm whether these two craft were superior combinations, with better all round performance and handling than the twin Verado powered model.

Isn't that great? It's so rare today for manufacturers to accept criticism, it's very pleasing to see someone who can - and better still, come back with viable alternatives that will highlight the excellence of their product. This of course, is something of which the Nichols family is intensely proud; they were determined to demonstrate that with alternative power systems, their 685 was the equal of any.

And let me say right up front, what they've done here validates the author's concern with the initial set-up. Both craft were significantly better balanced; neither suffered from the 'pendulum effect' on the transom, and indeed, it proved to be one of the most interesting boat reports we've produced in recent years. Mainly because we had the ultra-rare opportunity of testing virtually identical craft with two totally different power systems from the same engine company - Yamaha outboards.

No matter how you look at it, this is pretty much a boat tester's dream come true. It gives us the opportunity to