

Straight Down The Middle

For some time now, pressed aluminium side consoles - especially those in the 4.81m-4.99m LOA class - have remained at the top of the sales leader board in the boating industry. There are many, many reasons why this is so, but time and again, we keep coming up with oft repeated comments about “the perfect size” . . or “affordable outboard” or “fantastic all-rounder” or “I can use it inshore or outside” or it is “so easy to handle” . . We completely agree - that’s why we’ve produced this month’s special supplement to help you choose the best model from Part Two of our Virtual Boat Show.

In the last couple of years, the pressed alloy 4.81m - 4.99m Side Console (open) craft have become one of the biggest selling classes of boats in Australia. There are many reasons for this, not least of which is that they can be produced to a very high standard of finish very quickly and efficiently by the pressed alloy boat builders.

As a result, they are generally considered to be some of the best value boats on the market, and this is reflected in the fact that in this supplement, we have no less than 20 different manufacturers all vying for your business.

So there is a fabulous choice of boats, all of them similar in design and most built with very similar aluminium welding techniques. A couple of them are virtually full plate-ally construction (Darren Brand’s BBB 480, or Col Svensson’s Origin 4800 4x4 are good examples) but by and large, they are all still pressed tinnies in the classic interpretation of aluminium craft with relatively light topsides (3mm usually), the same on the bottom of the boat, and a hull weight in the 450-550kg range.

At first glance, a supplement like this is a little bit overwhelming, because there seems to be so many boats, and they all claim to have unique advantages - and thus deserve your business!

How do you make that purchase decision? What are the criteria you should apply? How do you go about sorting the wheat from the chaff? Which is a nice way of asking: How do you know which is a good boat and which is a not so good boat?

It stands to reason that of the 20 boats we’ve listed here, and in truth, adding in the various alternative models several of the manufacturers have, there are probably about 40 different aluminium side consoles on the market, presenting the consumer with an awesome choice of craft.

Over the next few pages what we’re going to try and do, is walk through our Virtual Boat Show together, and the writer will try and bring to your attention the various aspects of the design of these boats and draw your attention to how they impact on the boat’s performance, handling, ride and application.

It’s a bit like doing a boat test – this is what happens in the real world of boat testing, as every boat we test we put through this very same process.

The difference here is going to be that instead of being out on water, we’re going to do it verbally as we walk down the aisles of our Virtual Boat Show together, with the writer, PW, as your guide and commentator.

From the outset it’s important that we acknowledge a



Wow . . Hey - who needs a chopper? Just fire up the drone - or as in this case, a 'pole' camera! Fabulous shot of the Quintrex 490 Top Ender, arguably the boat that popularised the whole side console class in the beginning, back in the early 2000s. The Top Ender is STILL Top Dog in this, the most intensely competitive boat class in Australia. Quintrex have done a sterling job with this boat, constantly tweaking, tuning, upgrading and re-setting the benchmarks everyone else has to follow.

Research and Notes by the ABM team