

Haines Hunter V146C

The best small boat we've tested - and very hard to find.

The name "Haines Hunter" needs little introduction to powerboat enthusiasts throughout Australia.

For nearly 15 years, brothers John and Gary Haines, under the paternal eye of father Jack Haines, have etched the family name in a succession of trophies awarded for their countless race victories and placings, in powerboat races along the entire eastern seaboard.

And unlike some of the super-powered, out-and-out race boats specially imported to win the glamorous offshore classic events, the Haines family have always raced — and won — in boats they manufacture for their day to day customers.

Certainly, the race craft are meticulously prepared, stripped of any semblance of consumer padding and comfort, often re-decked and trimmed to adjust for the big loads of fuel and ballast — but down there, where ocean and boat meet at bone-jarring, collision force, that hull is the same Haines Hunter hull being sold at retailers throughout Australia.

Over the years, the Haines' have raced them all — the 12s, 14s, 16s, the famous V-19, and of course, the Formula 233. All these craft have, at one stage or another, been right in there, under the chequered flag.

With fifteen years of hard won success behind them, it is not surprising to find Haines have now developed one of the biggest, most modern boat building plants in

Australia at Wacol, an industrial suburb in Brisbane, Queensland.

This new facility had only just opened in September, when a serious fire broke out, almost wiping out the section of the plant containing all the smaller moulds — the cabin and deck moulds for most of the Haines range.

It was a nasty blow, as it hit just as the plant was gearing up for the traditional peak summer demand. And if you recall, it is only a little over a year ago, when the old Haines Hunter factory was devastated in the Brisbane floods . . . !

However, despite storm and tempest, fire and rain, Haines Hunter is now very much alive and well, and working hard at cutting down the back-log of orders.

Design

The subject of our test this month is one of the few really new boats Haines have released for some time. Measuring 14'6" (4.42m) along the centreline, it has an unusually wide 6'9" (2.06m) beam.

The craft is in the usual half-cabin configuration, with two Vee bunks under the cabin giving enough room for a couple to camp out overnight, or for a couple of adults and say two - or even three - kiddies to sit while cruising along.

Two very basic, fold-away seats are provided for the helmsman and navigator, but otherwise, no further provision for seating is made" in the cockpit - at least, not proper seating, that is. The craft has two completely different areas where fishermen normally tend to gravitate, and in both these areas, provision has been made for a modicum of comfort,

without actually encouraging the fisherman to sit there while cruising along.

Observe the forward edge of the cabin roof has a moulded shape that is well nigh perfect for a fisherman's backside to rest — although it is not a seat.

Similarly, the full width transom well has two super large "step treads" moulded into the leading edge of the well. These aren't seats either, but it sure is a nice place to perch when you are bottom fishing!

A clear hatch window opens out up front to give access to the moulded self-draining anchor locker which has a simple cleat screwed in to secure the anchor. Side windows were fitted to the test boat — but these are an optional fitting— and well worth the extra \$109.

Stowage areas are unusually limited to a smallish locker up forward under the bunkhead, as both side bunks are completely sealed to provide buoyancy. Full length side pockets are fitted adjacent to the cockpit floor.

Design of the hull is in accord with the latest trends both here and overseas, ignoring perhaps the more dramatic Soni Levi hull shapes — those strange looking "delta" shaped boats you'll often see in the overseas magazines.

Gone now is the Ray Hunt inspired straight chine from stem to stern; in its place, the Haines factory has created a much more graceful, curved chine, which sweeps up gently to a point quite high on the stem.

Another notable departure from normal Haines practice, is the replacement of the blunt, almost



**F&B
RETRO
BOAT TEST:**
Unchanged,
as first
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written and
photographed
by Peter
Webster in
1975