

Ideal as a bay and estuary boat, the versatile Tomahawk will satisfy the fair weather offshore angler.

RIGHT: The roomy console folds down to fit into garages and low carports.



REVIEWED

Weapon of Choice

Formosa's Tomahawk Offshore centre console is a no-nonsense fishing boat capable of exploring rivers, bays and offshore waters. **Greg Finney** reports.

AS I write this boat review (October 2016), rain is pelting down and it's blowing a stiff southerly outside in southern NSW. It's the standard weather most journos experience when the sniff of a boat test is in the air. I would hate to guess how many times I've had a boat test planned that's been blown out or had to be done in atrocious weather conditions. Great conditions to fully test a boat, but horrendous to get good photos.

However, less than a week ago I was in Batemans Bay testing a Formosa 480 Tomahawk Offshore centre console in the most perfect conditions you could imagine. Typical!

The 480 Tomahawk Offshore is the second Formosa I've tested in the past six months for Jason Graham from Aussie Boat Sales ACT/NSW. Jason's been selling a heap of Formosa's from his Canberra and Batemans Bay operations and it's not hard to work out why. Take a great Australian made aluminium hull and fit a super quiet Honda four stroke outboard to the back. Fit it out with an enormous range of well-designed accessories and you have a great product that sells itself. Add Jason's great customer service and marine knowledge and it's no surprise that he's kicking goals and making a lot of NSW boat fishos happy.

Formosa Boats is based in Brisbane and kicked off operations in 1998 making aluminium hulls. The business has grown enormously since those early days and in 2009 they introduced the Tomahawk Series of specialty fishing boats with self-draining decks and a heavier build. The boat I tested was the Tomahawk Offshore centre console model which is specifically designed for serious fishing. The Tomahawk centre console range takes in hulls from 4.55 up to 7 metres in length. The Offshore models are available in 480, 520, 550, 580, 620, 660 and 700. If you can't find a suitable fishing specific hull in that size range, then you're not looking hard enough.

The 480 Tomahawk Offshore has an overall length of 4.95 metres including the bowsprit and a 2.3 metre beam. Bottom and side sheets are 4mm high tensile 5083 plate and the hull weight

is 625kg. That's 125kg heavier than the standard 480 Tomahawk Classic centre console. Maximum horsepower rating is 115 which is a hell of a lot of motor for a 4.8 metre tinny.

Features

Standard features include a long list of goodies that make fishing a lot easier and more enjoyable. A 600mm wide console with folding screen to fit under garage doors. Side pockets, buoyancy foam filled hull, casting deck up front, 80 litre under floor fuel tank, folding dive ladder, 32mm diameter rails, reverse chine hull, fully welded side decks and a heavy duty bow roller with ample anchor well up front. Hydraulic steering is standard along with a twin seat/storage box behind the console with heaps of storage and padded seats. Painted hull is standard as are transom storage boxes and a transom door. Options include an underfloor kill tank, electric motor mount, folding T-top with rod storage, rear lounge and a very well designed bait board come livebait tank at the transom.

That's a pretty exhaustive list of standard accessories and options, all very well designed and neatly fabricated and finished off in the typical Formosa Marine style of workmanship, which is first class.



Despite the calm conditions, the Tomahawk was put through its paces and performed nicely.



Performance

All of those fancy add ons and bling don't count for much out on the water if the hull doesn't perform, but the 480 Tomahawk Offshore performed as well or better than you'd expect. This is an aluminium hull with a 13.5 degree deadrise so it's never going to ride as soft as a 19 or 20 degree 'glass hull but it rides as well as any aluminium hull I've driven and keep in mind I've owned a 4.8 aluminium side console for nearly three years now. In glassed-out conditions I had the opportunity to give it a good blast and work it hard in half a metre of swell rolling into Batemans Bay. It turned on a dime and the 80hp Honda powered it over the few waves we could find with ease. As you can see from the photos we found a bit

of air and it landed softly and threw any spray out wide from that big, deep bow with reverse chines.

Without any wind on the test day, it was hard to judge just how wet the 480 would be with a side and quarter on breeze. It was certainly throwing any spray out wide and I couldn't image that would be a wet boat at all. If you sat in the back corner, you might get damp but from the driving position behind the console you would be dry and out of any cold breeze on a winters morning. One thing I do like about the Formosa is that deep hull depth that lands softly and throws spray out wide.

I was very impressed with the 480 Tomahawk Offshore. The 80hp Honda was very quiet and smooth with enough grunt to get it up and out of the water in good time with great fuel economy.

In the ideal conditions the hull performed like a charm but I'm confident it would handle some chop and rough stuff without any discomfort or getting wet. At 4.8m this rig is ideally suited to large bay and estuary work and more than enough boat to venture outside in most fishable conditions. I'd be more than comfortable going 10 miles out chasing marlin, reds and kings in this boat and knowing that the ride home in 10 or 15 knots of wind wouldn't be unbearable or wet.

The test boat included some trick extras including a Raymarine Dragonfly 7in MFD, a Fusion RA70n marine stereo with two waterproof speakers, Raymarine VHF with aerial, and an upgrade to Garmin GMI digital gauge kit. The fitout by Aussie Boat Sales ACT/NSW was first class with only the best components and quality workmanship. It came with a Redco Tinka TA500 MO aluminium trailer with alloy wheels and spare with cover. The trailer and boat have a custom boat catch system so one person can launch and retrieve with ease.

Boat price as tested is \$52,000 and the Formosa 480 Tomahawk Offshore starts at \$40,500.

More info at: www.aussieboatsalesactnsw.com.au or Formosa at www.formosamarineboats.com.au.



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