

# Formosa 550 Centre Console



It's not often you truly get to test a boat when doing a boat test, but that was exactly the situation Team Fishing Monthly found themselves in at the recent Port Hinchinbrook Fishing Classic in September.

The boat, supplied by The Tinnie Shack at Mission Beach (07 4088 6125) was rigged with a 135hp Honda 4-stroke outboard and all electronics

were Garmin and included a depth sounder, radio and a GPS mapping unit. I'd love to tell you how the boat towed, but Dean Grieve from The Tinnie Shack bought the rig down to Port Hinchinbrook and parked it at our allotted berth before we even arrived at Cardwell! Now that's service.

When we arrived we met up with Dean and he took us through the operation of the boat. The Formosa was set up neatly with the centre console sporting all the gauges and electronics in an easy to observe location. The motor information and speed were

set to the port of the centre console, the steering wheel set in the middle and the throttle sat neatly on the starboard side. This set up allowed a skipper to either take control of the helm or have someone else sitting beside them on the padded seat. For us it was easy to sit two up on this seat and have the other two anglers taking it easy on the fold out, full-length rear seat. Four up, this rig proved a very easy fishing rig for the type of fishing we did over the four day fishing trip – sorry I meant boat test!

### DESIGN FEATURES

One of the first things

you will notice when looking at a Formosa boat is the extra design features and attention to detail Formosa have with their craft. Some of the extra design features we found appealed to us included fully welded side decks that were not stitched. This feature alone is worth noting because the Formosa is designed to take on offshore waters and strength in all welds is needed for this sometimes-punishing environment. Add to this that the welded side decks offer greater hull rigidity, give easy clean decks and better paint longevity and Formosa appear to have the right end in sight when they weld up their rigs.

The 550CC had 4mm bottoms and 3mm sides, which is always appreciated



Under the driver's seat was an excellent storage compartment that kept all our tackle and bags safe and dry until they were needed. Safety equipment like PFDs, EPIRB and flares could be stored here within easy reach if an emergency arose.



Day One and Team Fishing Monthly head off through Port Hinchinbrook. The Formosa 550CC proved a very fishy boat.



### STRUCTURAL FEATURES

- Welded Floor Structure
- Longitudinal Structure
- Aluminium Anchor Well
- Bow Sprit and Roller
  - Fully Welded Side Decks
- Centre Console
- Folding Screen
- 32mm Rail Tubing
- Side Pockets
- Casting Deck with Storage
- Sounder Bracket
- Fully Carpeted Floor
  - Fuel Tank and Fuel Gauge
  - Painted Hull Graphics
- Four-way Switch Panel
  - Navigation Lights
  - Anchor Lights
  - Bilge Pump
  - Rod Holders (4)
  - Drink Holders (2)
    - Battery Box
  - Folding Ladder (optional)
- Transom Door (optional)
- Baitboard (optional)
- Two-tone Painted Hull (optional)

The dash set up was simple, clean and effective. Everything you needed was within sight and reach of the skipper.

when you're trying to make your way through the wakes of 50-80 foot game boats at full tilt. The extra thick hull of a Formosa, offers the strength value and smoother ride offered in plate models while still keeping a family friendly design found in pressed models.

A nice touch was that the centre console, anchor well and dash were all made from aluminium. Formosa make no bones about the fact that they endeavour to manufacture as much of their boats from the same material as possible. And of course all of these areas receive the same attention to

welding detail that the side decks receive.

The hull structure in a Formosa boat is welded to the bottom sheets and reinforced with longitudinal hull strengtheners. The advantage of this process is increased hull strength and consistency in hull shape – resulting in better performance and a more solid ride. Couple this with internal transom welds and the rig is almost over engineered.

One area we all enjoyed was the carpeted floor. I've been in plenty of boats where you're slipping and sliding all

Cont... PAGE 127



Back at the mooring the 550CC Formosa looks the part for any tropical sportfishing boat.

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From PAGE 126 ◀

over the place after a few fish hit the decks and this just does not happen when carpet is used. Oil sealed carpet floors are used in the Formosa range and the advantage of using carpeted ply wood floor is that you can get a lower hull weight (less HP required), easy underfloor access and the cost of boat manufacturer is considerably less. This is why plywood floors are the most popular choice of flooring for pressed style boats. However unlike aluminium, plywood



The 135hp Honda got the Formosa 550CC up and humming at 34 knots and had us cruising between 18 and 28 knots depending on the weather.



Gerg Livingstone getting a work out from a GT on the front deck. The higher sides were appreciated when it came time to fight some serious fish. — a forbearer of future floor damage. To improve the longevity of their plywood floors, before carpeting Formosa seal all surfaces with a deep treat application to minimize the possibility of mildew growth

much like the Gold Coast on an average Saturday, the Formosa came through the mess without us getting wet, which was amazing. Sure it took some experienced boat



The cool bin fitted up front was easy to move in and out of the boat. Tie down was simplicity with two bungey cords holding the cool bin secure in all conditions.

driving and you wouldn't hit these converging boat swells at speed, but with a little bit of sense and boat driving skill, the Formosa is a very seaworthy craft.

**ON THE WATER**

Day one of our competition fishing started with a sail past that saw all 50 boats in the tournament line up, negotiate the speed zones and then hit the after burners. Travis Davies was driving the Formosa and he lives on the Gold Coast and is well accustomed to the big swells thrown up by massive boats moving fast. He got the Formosa up on the plane, eased off a little and zig zagged through the wash zone without putting a

drop of water inside the boat. As much as his driving was impressive, it did show just what the 550CC was capable of in poor conditions.

Once we were through the messy wash zone, Travis opened up the 135hp Honda to see how the Formosa

would travel. There was the slightest of swell coming through – about a foot – and Travis trimmed out the boat and had it running at 24 knots without any hull slap or undue rocking and rolling. The motor was ticking over at just over 4300rpm at this speed.



As we had an hour to get to our fishing grounds, we did a few tests with the rig on the way to familiarize ourselves with how the boat handled. Travis threw the boat into some tight turns at 15 knots and 20 knots and the boat rode through the swell well. It did get a little bumpy up at 20 knots, but in day-to-day use you wouldn't be doing the turns Travis was doing at 20 knots. We also slowed down to 10 knots and had a troll for 15 minutes to see if we could get a mackerel or tuna. The Honda handled the speed well

Cont... PAGE 128 ▶

# Alloy Plate Boat HEADQUARTERS

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...From PAGE 127 ◀

and we were all able to move around the boat comfortably at this speed attending to rigs and lure spreads. And we were lucky enough to bag a longtail tuna of about 7kg too!

After we rounded Sandy Cape near Eva Island, the swell was another foot higher and the comfortable cruising speed dropped back to about 18 knots.

We arrived at Spot X and did some stability testing with four blokes over 90kg. We all rushed over to one side and the Formosa rolled to that side as you would expect. We calculated there was over 400kg of humans on one side of the boat with nothing on the other side, and while we were leaning over, we didn't look like taking on water or falling out and we all felt safe on the one side of the boat. This proved beneficial because when someone hooked a decent fish we all sticky beaked over the same side, as you do.

Casting lures and poppers from the big front deck was great. We had a cool bin fitted to the front, which took up a little room, but two anglers could easily fish from the front. The cool bin in the tropics is mandatory. It held ice, drinks and food and was secured by two bungy cords.

The aft deck was massive. Behind the driver's seat was a big working area that allowed three anglers to fish easily. We



The rear seat was easy to pop up for travelling and had a few optional extras on this rig too that intruded on the space available, but not so much that fishing became a problem.

These optional extras included a baitboard with four rod holders, a hard T-top with rocket launchers and a kill pen underneath the fold out seat. All the extras proved their worth over the four days we used the boat, none more so than the bait board over the motor. This was a very handy flat space to store lures, knives, used tackle and live baits as well as providing space for four more rods. The T-top was a Godsend in the afternoon when all you wanted to do was get out of the sun.

The last two days of the tournament were bad weather wise with 20-30 knot winds keeping us inside Hinchinbrook Channel.

This was great for the boat testing part as we could really open

## SPECIFICATIONS

**Model:** 550CC  
**Electronics:** Garmin  
**Power:** 135hp Honda  
**Overall length:** 5.65m  
**Beam:** 2.40m  
**Weight:** 540kg  
**Floor from Gunwale:** 700mm  
**Sides:** 3mm  
**Bottoms:** 4mm  
**Transom:** Extra Long Shaft  
**Max Horsepower:** 140  
**Deadrise (degrees):** 15  
**Max Passengers:** 7  
**Price As Tested:** \$43,000

up the Honda and see what we could get out of it.

In the flat, protected Channel water we got the boat up to 34knots with four anglers, all their tackle and



store out of the way when fishing room was needed.

150L of fuel. That's a heavy load considering how much tackle we carry around. The boat handled trim well and you could squeeze an extra couple of knots out of the rig by trimming the Honda just right. In the calm water we cruised effortlessly at 28 knots, slicing through small boat chop and wind ruffled water without even noticing. In fact we commented that the boat almost drove itself.

## OVERALL

We were lucky to test this rig in a variety of environments and conditions. It gave us a true indication of how this boat actually performed for anglers. Four up it proved a great rig for offshore fishing with soft plastics, poppers, trolled lures and live baits. Some great fish came over the side of the Formosa and from an angler's point of view you can't ask for much more than a boat that gets you to and from some great fishing

loaned to us by The Tinnie Shack at Mission Beach (www.thetinnieshack.com.au). You can contact Carla or Dean to find out more about their range of Formosa Boats on 07 4088 6125. The team is professional, courteous and always willing to make sure you get the right boat for your needs.

If you want to know more about the Formosa range, log onto www.formosamarineboats.com.au for the full details of their range. You can also check out www.hondampe.com.au to have a look at their range of 4-stroke outboards.

I'd like to thank Carla and Dean, and the entire team at The Tinnie Shack for their help. Without their hard work before the tournament (sorry I meant boat test) we never would have had the chance to get on the water.

in comfort. One of the boys even fell asleep on the way home from Missionary Bay in 25 knots and a tailing sea. I was driving and I didn't make it easy for him to sleep, but the Formosa smoothed out the bumps and proved a great rig when the wind was behind you.

The Formosa 550CC was expertly fitted out and kindly



The optional bait board is mandatory if you're serious about this being a fishing rig. It offers extra rod storage, a bait board and live well capabilities.

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