

**BOAT TEST: FORMOSA 550 CENTRE CONSOLE**  
**STORY & PHOTOS: RICK HUCKSTEPP**



# STARTER PACK

Thinking of changing to an alloy plate boat? Rick Huckstepp suggests looking at the entry level Formosa 550 Centre Console where you get plenty of boat for minimal outlay

A priority quest for fishermen is finding a reasonable trailerboat package at a good price, so *Trailer Boat* is excited when we can showcase great boats at affordable prices.

We found one recently that offers itself as a good starter package and won't break the bank. A search of our archives revealed that we tested a Formosa Centre Console 5.4m back in August 2004 with a 75hp two-stroke which retailed for \$23,500.

The Formosa 550 is a run-on model — with quite a few changes since — that we tested out of the Gold Coast Seaway. It has upped the ante on its

predecessor with a 115hp Evinrude E-TEC and retails for just \$36,550!

This boat presents itself as an ideal starter in the alloy boat market. It features the hallmark Formosa keel line which sees the forefoot being sharp on entry and raking up and forwards at an acute angle to the flat surface. This, along with the good flare on the forequarters, equates to a soft ride in chop and dry, due to the water being forced away rather than up in the air. Bar Crusher boats have a similar concept in their forequarters and they enjoy the benefits of this style of design.

The anchor well on this model is



**“OUT OF THE HOLE IT WAS NO SLOUCH EITHER AND JUMPED ONTO THE PLANE QUICKLY WITH ONE PERSON ABOARD”**

open and very wide allowing for large Danforth and wide grappling anchors. The inside is carpet lined which alleviates a lot of metal-to-metal rattles and a fixed chain roller is fitted to the short bowsprit.

The well is an insert rather than formed with a bulkhead across the narrow part of the bow and the drain for the well is a pipe coming from the bottom aft end of the insert across the port side of the hull. While it seems strong, it may be subject to damage from bending if used as a step or struck by objects sliding around on the foredeck.

This foredeck is carpeted marine ply and raised directly in front of the centre console which butts up against it. A hatch is removable and there is stowage

room within, although not water resistant.

The ribs on this boat float against the side sheets and there are flat radius plates under which the deck is tucked before being screwed down to stringers and crossbeams.

#### FOLDAWAY WINDSCREEN

The console consists of a stand-up box section with an angled fascia for the helm and instrumentation, and on top of that a windscreen which is latched and folds down for towing or stowage under a low port.

The top of the windscreen base is flat and there is plenty of room on which to gimbal-mount electronics. As tested, a small Humminbird depthsounder

#### HIGHS

- ✓ Affordability
- ✓ Soft ride in all conditions
- ✓ Plenty of boat for minimal outlay

#### LOWS

- ✗ Care needed with anchor well drainpipe
- ✗ Cable steering needs constant trimming throughout speed range

**Clockwise from main above: The 550 CC features the hallmark Formosa hull designed for a soft ride in all conditions; Helm console has plenty of room for electronics and gauges; There is good stowage under the double helm seat; Battery, deckwash kit and oil bottle fit under the transom bulkhead; Landings are generally soft over swells at speed; One of the I-COMMAND gauges.**

and Lowrance's GPS antenna, which is linked to the I-Command instrumentation for the Evinrude E-TEC engine, was installed here.

A carpeted and fenced shelf inside the module, and another fenced at deck level will hold plenty of gear without it falling out.

The seat module is a box with a double-sized cushioned hatch on top which hinges forward assisted via gas struts. The backrest also rocks fore and aft allowing one to relax facing the rear when on anchor. On the test boat a canvas canopy on aluminium struts provided plenty of shade over the helm area.

Sidepockets on this boat are attached to the ribs and do not extend to the rear. They are wide and deep enough to handle large tackle trays and are angled inwards at their bottoms so the edge does not contact the shins.

Under the transom bulkhead, a raised tray across the beam holds the oil bottle for the two-stroke E-TEC and the cranking battery. Also installed here is a deckwash kit that has the coiled hose sitting in a rack up off the deck. The hoses and wiring under the deck exit through this tray and some pass through the rear sheet to the engine. This bundle could be more neatly secured, as it was a little on the untidy side.



Over the back, Evinrude's 115hp E-TEC is fitted to a transom that has rounded aft corners and checkerplate topside. Sturdy 32mm handrails are installed here as well as around the forequarters.

**AIRBORNE**

There was very little chop within the Broadwater on test day and outside of the Seaway a long swell was running up to 1.8m. Pushing the limits on this boat against the swell, we could get it clear of the water and landings into oncoming swell was generally soft.

The hull tracked straight running along

and with the swell into the Seaway where the waves were pressurising. There was no indication of broaching.

This boat was fitted with a manual cable-steering system and when trimmed correctly it was easy on the arms. It did need to be trimmed constantly throughout its speed range to keep it manageable and this was laborious to say the least. It would be a definite advantage to opt for hydraulic steering on this rig.

Speed wise, the engine wound out to 5000rpm and at WOT gave us 63kmh.

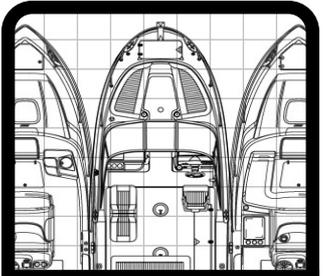
Dropping back to a cruise rpm of 4000 the speedometer registered 40kmh.

Out of the hole it was no slouch either and jumped onto the plane quickly with one person aboard.

With minimal fuel and other payload aboard, this boat was light on the water and would benefit from a couple more bodies and some freight such as iceboxes and the like. We tested this hull with a walkaround cabin on the day and the ride in the heavier boat was much softer in the same conditions.

As tested, this boat has the bare essentials and is ready for some serious dressing.

You will get plenty of boat for minimal outlay with this rig.



FORMOSA 550 CENTRE CONSOLE

**HOW MUCH?**

Price as tested: ..... \$36,550

Options fitted:..... Coloured paint, deckwash, depthsounder, GPS antenna

Priced from: ..... \$35,850

**GENERAL**

Material:..Aluminium 4mm plate bottom, 3mm plate sides

Length: ..... 5.7m

Beam: ..... 2.4m

Weight: .....Approx 550kg

**CAPACITIES**

People: .....7

Fuel:.....150lt

Rec. HP:.....115

Rec. max. HP:.....140

Rec. max. engine weight:..200kg

**ENGINE**

Make/model:Evinrude E-TEC 115

Type:.....Direct injected

V4 two-stroke outboard

Weight: ..... 170kg

Rated HP: .....115

Displacement:.....1726cc

Gearbox ratio:..... 2.25:1

Propeller:..... 19in

**SUPPLIED BY**

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Above left: Sidepockets are wide and deep enough to handle large tackle trays, and angled inwards to avoid contact with shins. Left: The Formosa 550 is no slouch out of the hole and is quick to plane with only one aboard.

