

DARE TO DUAL

This unique dual console boat from Formosa's Sea Rod range has loads of innovative features for the fisho and family boater



By James Hill

DESPITE the name hint of the mysterious Far East, Formosa is a dinky-die Aussie plate alloy brand. In fact, Formosa is one of our most successful "home-brands" built strong and robust in Queensland since 1998.

Recently I caught up with one of the new Formosa models - the Sea Rod 580 Dual Console. True to the Formosa heritage she's a plate alloy boat with all the good features we've come to expect from the company that builds the Tomahawk and Sea Rod brands. Specifically this boat targets freshwater, estuaries and coastal inshore sport fishing, with a dash of offshore capacity as well.

It's typical of the Formosa story this one came

about as a collaboration with one its dealers, Aussie Boat Sales ACT/NSW.

Aussie Boat Sales CEO Jason Graham, is based in Canberra and whilst he sells a heck of a lot of Formosa craft he saw a need for a boat which would really suit sport and fly fishing on places like the Snowy Alpine lakes. At the same time it would need to be suitable for coastal waters as many inland angler take holidays on the coast.

In effect this is a lake fishing boat re-imaged for Aussie conditions with higher sides and a more powerful, deep Vee hull that can handle rough water.

Being a Sea Rod she also features automatic water-ballast that enhances stability when you are fishing.

The water ballast fills the chambers in the bottom from transom openings once the boat is stopped, or moving slowly. This makes for a super

stable craft just at the time you need it. It also makes possible a high almost deck-level bow casting platform.

There's also a casting deck aft so two fishermen can be flicking lures and flies away to their heart's content.

With comfortable console seats either side the Sea Rod 580 Dual Console is very user-friendly for fishing with your mate, or that afternoon coffee cruise with the wife.

The elevated casting deck provides a better vision below the water and is ideal for going after trout, bass, flathead, kings and the like.

The deep sides and protected cockpit also makes the Formosa safe for operating in coastal waters and estuaries. Also the bow casting deck is purposely made big enough to roll out a seven-foot Swag and sleep aboard overnight. That might

**COCKWISE FROM LEFT:**

The unique design makes for a very versatile boat.

The Sea Rod package on the trailer can be towed by the average family sedan or ute.

The dual console offers plenty of protection from the elements, while allowing plenty of space for fishing and fun.



sound like "living dangerously" until you step aboard and feel the stability of the Sea Rod. Note that the carpeted casting deck is recessed below the side gunwales. It sure beats sleeping ashore in the wet sand at night!

This model certainly opens up lots of fishing opportunities from inland fisho and would be brilliant for coastal bass tournaments.

The hull actually measures 6m from bow roller to transom and has a big beam of 2.45m. lot of freeboard plus good grip on the water thanks to the 18.5 degree deep-Vee bottom.

Access aboard is easy via a walk-way with fold down alloy steps, landing platform and transom door.

The rear cockpit bulkhead is actually a bi-fold so you can access the cockpit via a door, or an open casting deck.

Built to the Classic specs this model doesn't have a self-draining cockpit floor, however any water drains off into the bilge where it's removed by an electric bilge pump.

Construction is impressive with marine grade 4mm plate alloy bottom and topsides. This is backed by big box-section frames and longitudinal hull strengtheners. The ballast tubes also add a lot to the hull's rigidity and strength. With four longitudinal chambers the ballast water stays put even if you move from side to side.

The cockpit floor is marine plywood over welded framing and neatly finished with an oil-sealed carpeted floor. The latter is to protect the plywood so it's less likely to rot.

Foam-filing in the hull makes for a very safe and quiet riding boat.

Like all Formosas the Sea Rod is backed by a

three-year hull warranty with one year on accessory parts. The Honda's seven-year warranty is another bonus.

WATER TEST

With rain and wind about it wasn't the most friendly day for testing yet it gave me the chance to see how good this boat was in typical coastal bay and estuary conditions.

I didn't need to go far to find some quite bumpy water and here the 580 Sea Rod shone - slicing freely through the rough stuff and providing a pretty nice ride.

You certainly appreciate having the dual consoles when it's a breezy cold day! It's particularly nice too with high, vertical windscreens blocking out the wind and spray.

Out on the open water I opened up the big

Honda 150hp and it pushed us quickly to a comfortable cruise speed around 30 knots. Top end dialed in at 36 knots, plenty fast enough for us to get to any fishing spot around the bay.

Most notably is the 580s ability to handle rough water - and be quite settled when stopped side-on to the waves and breeze. In this respect she's quite at home fishing in coastal estuary waters.

The big Sea Rod also turns beautifully at speed, sliding out just enough to give you a nice bank into the turn but not enough to lose propeller grip.

The 580 Dual Console is rated up to 175hp power but this test session proved the 150hp is a nice match unless you were really needing to cover big distances. It's the motor to go for!

This is the new generation Honda VTEC and apart from being awesomely powerful its remarkably smooth and quiet.

Blast mode kicks in at 3500rpm and this really gets her flying on the plane.

GPS speeds were as follows:

- 3500rpm 17 knots
- 4500rpm 20 knots
- 5000rpm 28 knots
- 5500rpm 34 knots
- WOT 36 knots

These figures are impressive and are backed by fairly thrifty fuel usage thanks to this new generation of four-stroke. Best fuel-for-distance should be achieved cruising within 20 -28 knots.

Also good to note the generous-capacity 150-litre in-floor fuel tankage will suit a day, or

even a weekend of fishing. Our test boat was also equipped with dual house batteries, dual electric motor batteries, and fuel line filter.

The business end of the Sea Rod 580 starts with a stubby anchor sprit and anchor roller. The anchor locker is incorporated into the large casting deck along with two huge stowage lockers for fishing gear. There's also a large baffled tank towards the back for live bait and/or live-catches.

You might notice there's zilch rails on this boat - the reason being is to keep the deck as clean as possible so no lures or flies are snagged. You can also order one of those bum-rest seats you slot into the deck - including up near the bow so you can operate the electric motor by foot control.

Cleverly, the cockpit space between the casting deck and the consoles is big enough drop in an electric Waeco 40-litre fridge on one side and a 40-litre Esky on the other.

The Fridge can run off the same dual battery power as the electric Minn Kota trolling motor.

At the helm you get a nice, soft-grip steering wheel and a sloped dash area to take sounder. Our test boat was fitted with a Garmin maps-included GPS Chart-plotter/fish finder, VHF radio and Fusion sound system. A passenger glove box has two fold-out drink holders plus overhead bimini makes for a more enjoyable day out.

VERDICT

Australian fishos today are demanding strong, solid boats that will stand up to many years of service and be fuss-free to maintain. That's why

SPECIFICATIONS

CONSTRUCTION: Aluminum

LENGTH OVERALL: 6m

BEAM: 2.45m

HULL WEIGHT: 820kg approx

RATED POWER: 175hp

TRANSOM SHAFT LENGTH: EXL

FUEL TANKAGE: 150 Litres

BMT TRAILER WEIGHT: 1650kg

RPP: As tested with Tinka Classic dual-axle alloy trailer, spare wheel, Honda 150ph VTEC four-stroke, Garmin fish-finder/GPS chartplotter, Garmin VHF radio, Fusion entertainment sound system, deluxe bimini, Tangerine topsides and inshore safety pack. Price \$65,000.

they are paying a little more for quality plate alloy boats like Formosa. For this reason the new Formosa 580 Dual Console is sure to be impress and be another top seller.

Sydney buyers will now be able to view Formosa models like this one as Aussie Boat Sales newly opened centre at Cromer on the Northern Beaches. ●

Boat supplied by Aussie Boat Sales ACT/NSW ph 0433 531 226; sales@aussieboatsalesactnsw.com.au. More info at at www.formosamarineboats.com.au.



Formosa's dual console Sea Rod is one of the more innovative boat releases of 2018.