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Formosa's Latest Centre Cab

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## REVIEW

# Catch A Cab

Fomosa's SRT 550 Centre Cab Classic is a new concept from the trusted Queensland plate alloy manufacturer.

BY DAVE RAE

The SRT 550 Centre Cab Classic is a smart looking mid size fishing boat.









Formosa's SRT 550 Centre Cab Classic is a sleek head turner that exudes a sense of class usually reserved for larger and more expensive vessels. However, don't be deceived because this is a boat that's 5.7 m in length (including the bow roller), and it has not been designed as an indestructible heavy-weather tank, but then what 5.7 m boat is.

Formosa is an established plate boat manufacturer who up until this year produced a wide range of boats with an array of options, which was great, but I expect confusing to some prospective purchasers. So, in order to streamline the experience, Formosa has fused the popular Sea Rod range (and the options available) with the established Tomahawk range to come up with one range, the SRT.

The SRT 550 Centre Cab Classic is a boat that has been designed for stability through a moderate deadrise, reverse chines and the Quad 4 water ballast option (as per the test boat).

Whilst deadrise angles are quoted in most boat specs, I don't think that every prospective owner understands ramifications of one angle over another, or what deadrise means. In short,

bone-jarring in swell or chop. Therefore, the choice of deadrise is always a compromise between comfort and stability.

The moderate deadrise (19°) in the Formosa 550 has been chosen for comfort and stability in calm to moderate conditions – which is exactly what most boat owners require for a fishing or family trip on the water. You'll have to slow down in wilder water, but the ride will be ok when you do. Whilst not suited for ultra-shallow flats, the boat will easily float in knee-deep water.

Stability at rest is further enhanced by the addition of the Quad 4 option that consists of four rectangular (50x150 mm) channels running from the transom forward to the cabin that fill with water once the boat comes to rest. The additional weight of water "in" the hull (with the weight of an average adult), pulls the hull deeper into the water to reduce side to side hull-rock. A circular hole at the front of the channel allows the water to quickly drain as the hull rises above the water just prior to planning, refilling only when the boat stops.

The 150 mm wide reverse chines extruded into the hull further aid in at rest stability

**"I really liked the fully welded side decks, which are not always a given, and the raised foot pegs below the two pedestal seats that provide an anchor point in bumpy conditions."**

the deadrise is the angle between a horizontal plane (say the surface of the water) and the rise of the hull surface above the water. Deadrise is an important determiner on hull stability and the softness of ride in messy water. As deadrise angles increase, so does the ability of a hull to cut through the water as opposed to slapping across the surface. When they do bounce into the air, boats with greater deadrise have a softer (less violent) re-entry, meaning the ride is dryer and more comfortable in swell or wind-generated chop. The downside of greater deadrise is the loss of lateral stability (sideways rocking) at rest i.e. it's harder to stand up without falling over. Boats with minimal deadrise, sit on top of the water and are therefore ideal in extremely shallow stuff, but whilst stable at rest are terribly wet and

but also decrease displacement, enabling the hull to plane at lower speeds and thus reducing fuel consumption each time planning speed is reached. The combination of reverse chines and custom cambered strakes enhance handling increasing traction, breaking water surface tension and minimising aeration. Which also improves prop and sonar electronic performance.

The 550 SRT's hull and side panels are constructed using 4 mm Marine Grade 5052 plate with a dry hull-only weight of 820 kg. The high internal freeboard (660 mm) provides anglers with support and increased safety for small children and the 150 L below floor fuel tank results in an approximate range of 300 km with the motor fitted on the vessel tested i.e. Suzuki 150 HP Lean Burn 4-stroke, which at 3000-4000 rpm runs at 2km/L. Whilst the boat tested was black in colour (not ideal in my opinion i.e. they get hot and small amounts of road dust make them appear dirty), there are many colour options available, even twin-colour choices. The "stickering" of these boats is first class, which is exactly what is required.

I really liked the fully welded side decks, which are not always a given, and the raised foot pegs below the two pedestal seats that provide an anchor point in bumpy conditions. The kill tank



and the bait board/bait tank combo were winners as was the transom door and folding step, providing access for divers and swimmers alike. The windscreen and clear vinyl cover offered protection from the elements with a clear 180° forward view. In calm conditions the vinyl can be unzipped and by standing up the low-slung windscreen allows hull view above the screen when standing.

On flat water the top speed was in excess of 37 knots. It rode well and showed "stickability" during tight turns. In swell the 550 performed well, although it did tend to ride over swell as opposed to push through it. That said, the combined weight of the outboard and hull resulted in minimal water-slap, translating to a comfortable ocean ride in friendly conditions at moderate speed.

The boat we tested was supplied by the North Coast Boating Centre who had fitted a 150 HP Suzuki Lean Burn 4-Stroke Outboard with Suzuki Digital Gauge, Dunbier Twin Axle Trailer

## SPECIFICATIONS

OVERALL LENGTH: 5.7m

BEAM: 2.45m

DEADRISE: 19 degree

WEIGHT (boat only): 820kg

MAX HP: 150

MAX PEOPLE: 6





LEFT: The 150hp Suzuki powers the Centre Cab with ease, plus offer good fuel economy.

BELOW: The 550 can be towed with an average size car.

and 12 months NSW Rego (Boat and Trailer).

Formosa's SRT 550 Centre Cab Classic is a classy and comfortable fishing / family vessel that is ideal for the conditions that most of us head to sea in. With its well-considered layout, there's plenty of room for 2-3 serious anglers or for a larger family out for a day's fun on the water. The only addition I'd make is to take advantage of the Formosa's Tow-Catch option to make loading easier for the one-up angler. Another positive is the "Build Your Own" feature on the Formosa website that allows you to quickly configure your ideal package and get a quote from your local dealer.

The price is economical, and the vessel is within the capabilities of dual cab utes and larger 4WD's. The package tested as provided by the North Coast Boating Centre comes in (with some optional extras and a dual axle Dunbar Trailer) comes in at \$59,990 with the 150 HP Suzuki 4-Stroke or \$54,000 with 140 HP Suzuki 4-Stroke. ■

