

# King of the waves



Practicality and unsinkability outweigh the looks department when it comes to Stabicraft fishing boats, as **Paul Tuzson** found out aboard the manufacturer's 829 SC Gill Weekender chasing some big-wave action in Bass Strait

**O**ften when testing a boat, the wish list is a sunny day, smooth water and few people out. That's exactly what we got when we took the Stabicraft 829 SC Gill Weekender for a run. But as a leading rugged-ocean and rough-weather performer, what we were really hoping for the 'Stabi' was some rough'n'nasty stuff to put this unusual looking but highly stable boat through its paces.

So we went out through the notorious heads at the mouth of Victoria's Port Phillip Bay, to the edge of the Bass Strait, looking for this region's renowned big waves. We found huge waves – but with highly-rounded smooth-rolling peaks. That left us to wait instead for a passing ship where we could power over its wake and provide the best test we had all day.

Many will already know that Stabicraft boats are renowned for excellent performance in rough weather. This is not surprising, considering that the basic design was created for serious fishing out of Invercargill. This challenging environment is about 300km closer to the South Pole than the bottom of Tasmania.

## Acquired taste

If you're looking for a glamour boat, then Stabicraft is not it. But if you want you and your family to be comfortable and safe in any weather, then put Stabicraft on the top of your list. They're certainly unusual, yet also purposeful. An acquired taste. You don't need to be out in a Stabicraft for very long in the rough to acquire that taste. In fact, the longer you spend in a Stabicraft, the better looking it gets. Ask professionals, like commercial fishermen or the Coastguard.

The faceted structure around the side of the boat is actually a composite pontoon consisting of a ring of airtight chambers that are partly responsible for the stability and safety of the design.

The other main stabilising feature is the massive stepped chine, which is actually the underside of the pontoon. The results of this construction are immediately apparent on boarding the boat – it hardly rocks. Sure, it's a big boat – but I weigh in at 125kg and step heavily, and there was still less movement than I expected.

And it's a great, roomy fishing platform. After we'd done the shots we stayed out at the heads for a spot of fishing. Another cargo ship went past, and even though we were side-on to its wake, we simply had a bit of a rock and then settled down virtually immediately. It's a very stable fishing platform.

Stationary stability and the ability to cut through rough water are usually conflicting requirements, but not in this boat. The stem from under the bow eye and down around the curve is set at a wave-slicing 42°. Under the boat, just aft of the curve from the bow, the figure reduces to 30° and then flattens out to 22° at the stern.

So the bow is shaped to cut through rough water while the stern gets the boat up onto plane fairly easily. The encircling pontoon increases stability in all situations and the effect of the stepped chine is also often quite apparent.

For a start, any water coming off the hull is redirected downwards, resulting in a very dry ride. Also, the superbly smooth water just before sunset did allow us to whip off some tight turns and check the handling of the boat. Hang on tightly is all we can say.

The Weekender digs in and turns much more sharply than anyone really needs. In fact, in all normal situations the 829 has masses of handling in reserve.

## Peace of mind

The encircling pontoon and another air-filled section in the centre of the hull mean that the 829 (and all Stabicraft) are virtually unsinkable. Even if they're completely swamped, or you leave the bungs out, they don't go down. Also, they have a self-draining deck, but it doesn't have to be as high as those in other boats because of the lack of concern about flooding due to the neutral buoyancy. Even if the draining tube gets a tear in it, the boat won't sink. So, it's safe and stable.

The large deck area of the 829 makes fishing easy, with plenty of room to get around each other without getting in a tangle. There's just one small corner seat at the rear of the cabin. All of the rest is pure fishing.

Two rodholders are fitted into each of the gunwales and another can be found on each side of the well-drained filleting board atop the fully plumbed livebait tank, while there are another eight across the back of the cabin overhang. Each of the storage areas in the side coamings is also long enough to take rods. For getting things done at night, there's a floodlight under the overhang.

Storage in general is worth mentioning – it's everywhere. Every seat pad in the boat (except the helm) lifts up to reveal storage, and some of it is positively cavernous. Even the back pad for the main seat at the table has storage behind it and the floor plates under the raised table mount lift up to reveal yet more. There's also a double cupboard under the sink/stove bench. A 100-litre freshwater tank supplies the sink and the stove runs on methylated spirits. A 45-litre refrigerator completes the galley package.

Even more storage is offered in the bow and in-fills are available to convert the V-berths to one big bed. A Porta-Potti is located under the front squab just behind the anchor well, which is, as you'd expect, equipped with a power winch. We have



## SPECIFICATIONS

(PRICE AS REVIEWED \$199,000)

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| LOA           | 8.95m   |
| BEAM          | 2.40m (external)<br>2.04m (internal)          |
| WEIGHT        | 1970kg (dry)                                  |
| DEADRISE      | 21.5°   |
| HULL MATERIAL | Aluminium, 6mm (hull),<br>4mm (pontoon shell) |
| FUEL          | 380 litres                                    |
| ENGINES       | 2 x Honda BF600, 60°<br>V6 four-stroke        |

## TO OWN THIS BOAT:

|                       | EXAMPLE BASED ON |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Purchase Price of     | \$199,000        |
| Deposit               | \$99,500         |
| Final Balloon Payment | \$25,875         |
| Term                  | 60 months        |
| MONTHLY PAYMENT       | \$1959*          |

**TOYOTA**  
MARINE FINANCE

we'll get you on the water

PHONE 0800 438 226  
www.getaboat.co.nz

STABICRAFT 829 SC

to say that the toilet could be located a little more privately. Apparently the factory realises this and is about to start putting them to the side just in front of the instrument console.

There's a generously sized access hatch to the foredeck with adjustable tension struts. The bowsprit is substantial and fitted with a Sarca 3-4 SS fairlead. Another berth is made available by dropping the galley table down below seat level, adding a couple of bridging squabs to connect the seats on both sides, and folding up an extension to the front port seat.

## Comfortable interior

The entire interior of the cabin from the bow to the bulkhead is completely lined – roof, everything. There's also carpet, and this extends out onto the rear deck. All this makes what could otherwise be a fairly cold aluminium boat into a more welcoming environment. There's also a diesel burning heater/demister fitted to keep the windscreen clear and the interior warm.

As a further aid to seeing where you're going, heavy-duty wipers with washers are standard. The two-piece 6mm glass windscreen is curved



at the outer edges and wraps around to the large flat side windows. These slide open smoothly to admit the breeze. Their size gives a strong outdoor feeling while you're actually well shielded from the elements. As we mentioned earlier, it's a very dry ride because of the stepped chines.

The helm is a pleasant place to be. The high-mounted instrument set comprises a Honda multi-function digital tachometer/trim meter for each engine, a Honda digital speed indicator/fuel management gauge and a Ritchie compass.

These are always close to your line of forward vision and your view of the large flush-mounted Northstar M121 display is unobstructed. The M121 combines radar, sonar, GPS and video input. There is also a Golight Stryker wireless remote-controlled

searchlight rated at 500,000 candlepower.

The helm connects to a Sea Star forward-mount steering system linked to twin, counter-rotating Honda 200 four-stroke engines. This is the maximum power rating for the boat, but it would also run quite nicely with a pair of 150hp units. It's just that the owner likes maximum power.

With these engines top speed was around 50mph (80.5kmh) at 5800 to 6000rpm. Holding revs down to 4500rpm pushed us along at about 35mph (56.3kmh) with good economy. The factory actually recommends twin 150hp units and with these, top speed would be around 44mph (70.8kmh).

The standard option for fuelling the engines is a 380-litre fuel tank buried in the hull. This particular

boat has two of them for long-distance cruising. As a consequence, the under-floor killtank is slightly smaller. A single 500-litre tank and slightly larger killtanks (other than two 380-litre tanks) is one more option.

Overall, Stabicraft seems to have thought of just about everything in producing the 829 SC GIII Weekender. I particularly like the ladder, which is very sturdy and an excellent design for anyone wearing fins. But another important use for a ladder is to simply get in and out of the boat when it's out of the water and trailered. This ladder is up to that task and easily handled my weight.

The overall package, features and general design of the Weekender can handle just about anything. ⚓

