

Cherokee is ideal for the family

The Sydney International Boat Show, open until Wednesday, will be an excellent opportunity for boating enthusiasts to catch up on all that is new and exciting in boating.

One of the more interesting craft in the family, take-home category, which most of us are interested in buying, is the Cherokee 5.3m sports runabout.

The five to five and half metre size range has to be the most competitive area of the boating market since it is the ideal size for getting the classic Mum, Dad and two kids family on the water.

While many of the boats in this category try very hard on price they so often end up looking so much alike it is hard to tell them apart.

What is refreshingly different about the Victorian-built Cherokee is the original styling as well as being above the ordinary in terms of finish and interior comfort.

Whittley Cruisers of Victoria build the Cherokee as an up-market, up-priced runabout for those who want a trailer boat with a lot of class.

Whittley is noted for its luxury trailerable cruisers and with the



Cherokee the company has put the same level of luxury and refinement into a small day runabout.

The interior of this 5.3-metre by 2.15-metre boat is literally more like the interior of a luxury car than your average runabout.

The whole boat is set low to the water and up forward you sit down into thickly padded seats with a wrap-around, low profile fibreglass windscreen and cockpit coaming keeping you protected from the wind and spray.

The boat is tastefully finished with wall-to-wall floor carpet, moulded fibreglass interior panels and upholstery finished

with vinyl and an outdoor-grade velour.

The low-slung lines of the Cherokee, with its unusual looking side panel windows and raised coaming "wings" aft of the screen, give the boat a distinctive styling which ensures it will never be mistaken for any other craft.

Maybe not everyone will go for the rather futuristic styling of the Cherokee but I am sure no one will disagree that the boat is both very well finished and exceedingly comfortably appointed.

Priced at around \$17 000 the Cherokee is certainly above average in price terms, but for this sort of money you get a boat which not only looks superior to most boats its size but also performs very well too.

Essentially designed as an in-shore luxury, ski-cum-family touring boat the Cherokee is equally at home in both roles.

The moderate Vee hull with downturned chines and aerodynamic declivity performs remarkably well with single outboards in the 120 to 140hp range.

The combination of low centre-of-effort, broad beam at chine level and moderate Vee ensures this 5.3 metre gets up quickly on to the plane. The boat is in fact not particularly light being very solidly built in hand-laid fibreglass, but its low profile

shape and good aerodynamics helps it perform very well at speed.

Last year I first tested the Cherokee with a single 1985 model Johnson 120hp motor. At the time I thought the performance was very good and certainly good enough for recreational skiing with a top of 64km/h recorded.

Recently I had the pleasure of running a new model Cherokee fitted up with a new 1986 Johnson V-4, 140hp motor.

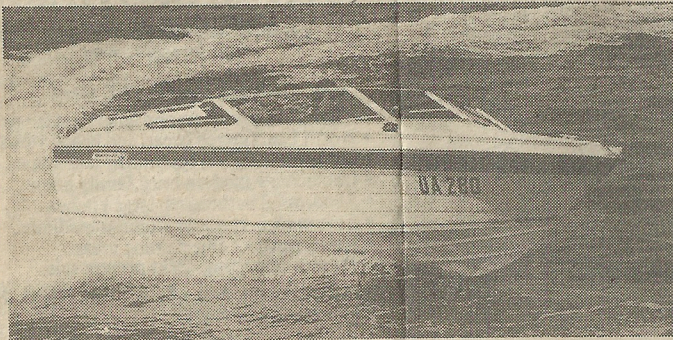
Interestingly, the bigger engine did not make the boat squat any more than it had with the smaller motor and it certainly sparked up the performance with a top speed of 84km/h.

Most noticeable was the smoothness and comfort of the ride at speed. Certainly one could name a number of better boats for skiing, but if you want a combination of skiing plus a good all-rounder for choppy as well as smooth water this is the boat.

Some of the many excellent features on this boat include a lock-up glovebox, transom boarding/swimming ladder and not four but six really comfortable padded seats.

What is more, there really is room in the boat for six people so the seats are not there just for decoration.

SPECIFICATIONS: Length 5.3m; width 2.15m; hull form, moderate vee; motor range 75-175hp single; price as tested with single axle trailer, instruments, canopy, 140hp motor, \$17 950; available from: Mr Boats, Collaroy Beach.



Whittley Cherokee 5.3 ... original in styling.