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F&B’s R&M

READERS: Scroll Down To See R&M #2 PREVIEWS

F&B’s Boat Renovations & Makeovers
I had a saleable product on completion of the project. After looking at a V17L I crossed it off the list as they are small. The V19C are a great sized boat, but prices range from 12-15K for ones that still need work and equipped with aging outboards.

Cruise Craft Reef Rangers never seem to come up for sale. I figure that there was not many of them made or that they are good boats held in families for years. It rated in the top ten of Jeff Webster’s Golden Oldies, so I figured it can’t be too bad.

A Reef Ranger 18 which needs work was listed on ebay in October 2005. The boat was located in The Town of 1770 and the owner was very honest and was willing to answer any questions truthfully (not common these days). As it turns out I won the auction and after a 2000km round trip I had the boat home. I got it for the right price – I THINK.

The Project Begins.

I separated the project into five distinct sections.

1. Trailer
2. Hull
3. Floor and interior structure
4. Top decks
5. Roof and fitout

The trailer was fairly straightforward. It towed extremely well so I was reluctant to alter the basic design. I cut it off at the A-frame and used the old frame as a template for new steel fabrication. The trailer’s corrosion resistance is oil filled sub-sections, and the whole lot coated with 92% zinc cold gal paint and top coated with two coats of enamel paint. I know it’s not hot dipped galvanized, but it will last a good number of years with preventative maintenance.

Wiring was concealed to protect from stone damage and LED lights were used. 14” 8 ply light truck tyres were fitted to resist blowouts. A centre walkway was added to help launch and retrieve the rig at the ramp.

Next step was the hull. I stripped the boat completely and tipped it over in the yard for three weeks of sanding, filling, sanding, and just a bit more sanding.

Finally she was ready for painting. Two pack polyurethane was applied.

(Continued Over)
DIY Fibreglass Ice or Fish Box

with Tony Ravenscroft

In the previous sections we covered a wide range of skills, materials and how to use them. To tie all that together it was obvious that we had to make something, and preferably something many readers actually want to make and use. So it was decided an icebox was the go.

However, bear in mind the same techniques are just what you need if you were making a hardtop or a swim platform.

If you were making a hardtop, for example, then it should not take too much imagination to look at the following pages and modify what is on them, to make it and have it look as good as a professional job.

That by the way, is THE point. You can make just about anything you want with fibreglass. The only limits are those imposed by your imagination and how much effort you are prepared to put into the job.

Since it was a while since I have done a job like this I rediscovered just about every mistake you could make and (thankfully) how to fix them as well. I will mark the trail as clearly as I can.

Before we go too far the best advice I can give is to start small. Either make a small box of say 20cm square (I mean just a box, not an icebox like we have here) or perhaps just start with the icebox lid. Build your skills by making mistakes where it doesn’t matter, then launch into the icebox proper.

Fibreglassing is really easy, and so is riding a bike - but how many times did you crash before you made it to the end of the driveway? Finally, re-read the last “Fibreglassing At Home” article before you do too much more.

How To Use This Guide To Build an Icebox

It is not my intention to tell you blow for blow how to build the icebox shown in the photos. Very simply, it may not be the size that you want. What I have attempted to do is to tell you how to design and build a professional looking, double moulded item to your own specification.

Then read this whole piece in total before doing anything towards actual building. Draw some rough sketches and take them to your fibreglass suppliers; the guys behind the counter will be able to then tell you what and how much you need to buy.

This article will provide all you need to have four mouldings off the moulds ready to assemble – and then we’ll assemble them.

Basic Job Description.

The icebox is made of four fibreglass mouldings. An outer shell, an inner liner, a lid and a flat base for the lid. All have a gelcoat finish.

The inner liner was made with two layers of 450gsm chopped strand mat. The lid and outer shell were made with two layers of 450gsm chopped strand mat and a final layer of heavy woven rovings. The outer shell has a reverse flange for added strength in the final assembly.

The lid base was made with two layers of 450gsm chopped strand mat and a third layer added during the final assembly process.

The insulation used was green foam from the fibreglass suppliers. White coolite foam dissolves in seconds upon contact with resin and cannot be used in this particular icebox project.

Step 1

Making the basic mould.

To make this type of mould, you can use just about anything that resin doesn’t stick to. So basically anything that is the shape you want, or can become the shape you want will do. It also helps if you can get it cheap.

I had originally planned to use coated 6mm masonite stiffened with a light timber frame. Then by coincidence where I currently work we made it to the end of the driveway? Finally, re-read the last “Fibreglassing At Home” article before you do too much more.

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...
I'm sure that really did seem like the thing to do. The transom was rotten, it had to be got out somehow, so cut the back off the boat...

Simple. Well it did get the rot out. It wasn’t until later when work had begun on putting it all back together, that the flaws in the plan became apparent.

At this point it became clear to the owner that he had made a pretty big mistake. A phone call to the F&B office led to a suggestion that he call the office. The phone I didn’t quite understand what he had done. I did understand however that he was feeling pretty desperate about it. So in spite of the fact that he was a good two hour drive away he was keen to tow it down to the office led to a suggestion that he call the F&B office. The phone call to the F&B office led to a suggestion that he call the F&B office. The phone I didn’t quite understand what he had done. I did understand however that he was feeling pretty desperate about it. So in spite of the fact that he was a good two hour drive away he was keen to tow it down to me so I could have a look.

One quick glance told the story. He had paid good money for a boat and now, as far as he could see he had reduced it to a worthless wreck.

The good news was that being fibreglass, everything is fixable. Even if there was quite a bit of work involved.

Forgetting the transom for the moment I had a good look around the rest of the boat.

A Haines Hunter V-17C, it is still (in my opinion) one of the best looking half cabs ever built in Australia. And editor PW confirmed it was a lot more than just a pretty boat, being one of the nicest handling and riding boats of the 1970’s-1980’s era. Definitely worth the effort involved to bring it up to standard. Which was just as well, because in spite of what the owner had been led to believe, the rot was more widespread than just the transom.

That’s pretty common though for a fibreglass boat of this age. Nearly all boats of this era have a lot of wood in the internals. While that is not in itself a bad thing, a combination of the wood not being completely encapsulated in fibreglass and holes drilled to bolt on fittings over the years contributed to water getting locked in just about everywhere. We drilled a number of inspection holes and proved that the rot was right through nearly all the internal timber.

While there was a lot of work ahead, this was, and will be again, a great boat. The owner paid very little for it and will only need to spend a couple of thousand more to make it as good as new. Compare that with the price of a new 5.2 m half cab at about $27,000 - $35,000.

It sounds good, doesn’t it? Well it’s a bit of an exaggeration because you can also buy a boat of similar age but without the rot, for a lot less. However, the price difference between even that and the rebuild is still significant, making the rebuild a good option. Problem was, as he had just clearly demonstrated on the back of the boat, he really had no idea how to go about it.

I just couldn’t bring myself to give this bloke some quick instructions and send him on his way. I had just finished a similar project and I never thought I would meet anyone as silly as me.

So I figured we had to stick together. We came up with a five stage plan.

Stage One Repair the transom. I don’t mean the actual replacement that began all this - I mean putting back in the bit that he shouldn’t have cut out.

Stage Two was to replace the transom timber, this was the job he originally started and on the way show him how it should have been done.

Stage Three was to remove all the internal structure which we had determined was also rotten and do some of the preliminary work towards getting that back into the boat.

Stage Four really ran through the first three stages. It was to teach the owner how to fibreglass and a few fibreglass boat building basics. The final stage was to then send him home with a good kick start on the project and see how he progressed now that he has a better idea of what to do and how.

As usual, there is always more than one way to do any job and that includes this one. So this isn’t necessarily the only way this repair could have been done. And of course if you are planning a similar repair yourself getting some advice from a professional shipwright before you start is always a good idea.

F&B’s RAM

1. It did get a lot of strange looks on the highway. The owner knew that there was a bit of rot in the transom when he bought the boat but thought it was only a small patch. He cut it out but found more so just kept on cutting. He admits that he knew that working from the outside was a mistake, but couldn’t see how he was going to get access from the inside. Since he thought he only had a small patch to cut out working from the outside looked like a good idea. But even if the damage had not been so wide spread, you really do have to get at it from the inside. Cutting a hole on the outside (even one smaller than this) will generally lead to a repair that not only looks ugly but is severely compromised in strength.

2. The rot didn’t stop at the transom however. We drilled some inspection holes which you could also look upon as core samples. These showed that just about everywhere there was timber in the boat there was also dry rot. Notice that these were drilled with a hole saw not just a drill bit.

A hole saw gives you a hole big enough to look into and the piece from the hole does really act like a core sample and let’s you have a really close look at the state of the timber. Make the hole the same size as a large screw-in bung fitting and you don’t even have to repair the hole if you find there was no rot. Just fit a bung instead and you then have a permanent inspection port the check for water (etc) later on.

3. Ain’t she pretty! Well I think so, anyway. Still one of the best looking trailerboats ever built in Australia. Notice however that she is off the trailer and sitting flat on her keel on solid, flat ground. You can’t do any type of repair work like this with the boat on the trailer. Even on a relatively small repair the hull can get pushed out of shape by the rollers and skids. As you will see in later photos there really wasn’t much left in the back end of this boat by the time we had finished anyway. There was no way we could have left it on the trailer.

4. This photo was taken after I had sent the owner home to grind and cut for a few days. Most of the internal timber was rotten so it was decided to do a full internal rebuild while the transom was being done. Just be aware that if only the transom was rotten then there would not have been the need to cut out the floor and the structure underneath as has been done here. However, even if that had been the case we would still have taken out about half a metre of floor to give full access to the transom from the inside.

The frame supporting the boat was made before anything was cut out and is needed to preserve the shape of the boat and keep what’s about to be left of the back of the boat solid while we work.

(Continued Over)
of the project far exceeded our expectations and budget, so we thought about it some more, and came up with a figure we could scrape together.

The next day, I went to work and hesitantly made our offer to my workmate. To my surprise, he accepted. The offer was $500, but a down payment of $250 would be sufficient until all the accessories that had been removed from the boat were found, and given to me.

The next challenge was how to get the boat to my house, a job that was made easier by the fact that my workmate had not informed me that he had the trailer for the boat, but it was also in bad repair and in storage at another friend’s house. It was then decided that we would need some help to get the boat up the right way and onto the trailer, and I would come the following weekend with some mates to pick up the boat.

Getting It Home

The day came finally to go and collect the boat, and to my surprise we found the boat sitting on the trailer outside my workmate’s house. Apparently he had decided to visit the hotel across the road from his house and meet some mates, and after a few drinks, they decided that there was enough of them to do the job.

My workmate’s assessment of the trailer proved correct as the trailer was in a very bad condition, but would be good enough for the short trip to my place. After pumping up the tyres and tying down the boat to the trailer, we were on our way.

The Rebuilding Of ‘Dad & Dave’

It all started in 1983, when a workmate said that he and his father had an old 20 foot plywood cabin cruiser that they had started to restore, but the job had become too big for them. I always had an interest in old wooden boats, and so I told my father about the boat and my desire to have a large boat that we could both use to go on fishing trips together.

Finding the address I’d been given, I proceeded to the back yard to find the boat, and I could not believe what I saw. The boat was sticking half out of the shed, upside down and no paint on it. It was obvious the boat would need lots of work to restore it to its former glory.

I went home and told Dad about it, and we decided to go and have another look at it, to see if he thought it could be restored. To my surprise, Dad was very excited about what he saw. He climbed in under the upturned boat to assess its condition. Being a trade qualified painter and decorator, with some carpentry experience Dad was able to spot any rot or other damage the boat may have had. What he found was lots of rot, but a boat that could be repaired with lots of work, effort – and of course, lots of money.

We went home and decided what the boat was worth, what it might cost to fix, and refit it to suit our requirements. The total cost and after a few drinks, they decided that there was enough of them to do the job.

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The next task, once home, was to get the boat and trailer into the backyard, except through the next door neighbour’s backyard. After a short discussion with our friendly neighbour, she gave us permission to the access we needed, providing we took her fishing when we finished the boat. A done deal!

Once we got the boat into the backyard we made a better assessment of the...
years ago to the central coast of NSW, I was fortunate enough to befriend a number of charter operators working out of Terrigal. While working for fishing time, I was able to learn quite a bit about the local area and how to fish in ‘foreign’ waters.

After a couple of years of this, I decided it was time to go it alone, especially as I had by then, acquired a family of four. My wife loves to fish, and we have 2 boys aged 8 and 10 now. We needed a boat that could handle a number of functions, be reasonably towable by a family sedan, be capable of operating offshore up to say 20 nautical miles, and if needs be, pull a water skier.

Again after many months of scouring the newspapers, Trade-A-Boat, reading magazines, visiting boat yards up and down the central NSW coast and Sydney, we found the “Perfect Boat”. A 1988 Haines Signature 1850L powered by a Johnson 140 hp outboard. She came to us at a reasonable price, however most of her life was spent fishing inshore waters, as the danforth anchor had just 30 m of rope, and the rod holders were of the plastic bolt-on type.

I couldn’t imagine what would happen to one of them when a 40 kg yellowfin hit with 8 kg’s of drag on my 24 kg standup rig, however she was clean and at a reasonable price.

As It Was . . .

Finding The Signature
Having been transplanted from the ‘States some 7 years ago to the central coast of NSW, I was fortunate enough to befriend a number of charter operators working out of Terrigal. While working for fishing time, I was able to learn quite a bit about the local area and how to fish in ‘foreign’ waters.

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Robbie’s Up-Scale Tinnie

Like a lot of people, my love of tinnies started out early in my life. I still have fond memories of dad taking my mum, my brother and I out in the old 12’ Brooker that sat atop of a box trailer he had modified to double as a boat trailer.

When I think back on it, to us little kids, a tinny seemed huge, but I dare say it felt the opposite for mum who has the swimming ability of a house brick.

It is thanks to dad that I am so at home modifying and tinkering on boats. This whole caper started back when I was in Year 7, and dad helped me do up my first boat - an 8’ tender I bought off a kid at school.

It was probably better suited to becoming a big flower bed than being restored, but dad got it up and ship shape again and then he would drop me down the lake each morning most weekends after it was done, help me launch, then watch me chugging off into the distance with the little two horse power outboard he got me for it. Then he’d pick me up in the arvo, mostly with a less than impressive catch, but plenty of good memories and a growing level of experience in small boats.

Then in Year 12 for my woodwork project, I converted an old Flying Ant sail boat to a dinghy with a cast deck and storage galore. We built a trailer to suit (read: as I spent the

We all know there are more ways to fit-out a tinny than David Warner can hit runs in 20/20, but Sydney fisho Robbie Newcombe might have set a new course record in detail and onboard efficiency. In this beaut report, he explains how and why he did it...
Way back in the early Seventies, I was employed at the alumina refinery at Gove in the Northern Territory. We shifted there hoping to get ahead financially as the pay rates were significantly better than where I was previously working.

In those days it was a very isolated place, with no TV or radio, except Radio Australia’s Indonesian service which was not very good for checking up on the football scores, so we had to make our own entertainment.

Luckily for me, being a boating and fishing tragic, the area around Gove was an unspoilt paradise for these pastimes. I spent many adventurous times with my great fishing mate John Bell fishing out of his early model 16 foot Quintrex. This boat was seriously hard riding and had a habit of ducking under a following sea and trying to run along the wave with frightening possibilities. After I had earned a bit of money I decided to invest in a bigger, better and safer boat with which we could range farther afield and explore new places and fishing. To this end I purchased a Dehavilland Trojan, a 6.4 metre plate aluminium half cab, which was the biggest alloy boat available then, apart from specially built one-off units which were prohibitively expensive.

As a matter of interest the boat was shipped from Gladstone where I knew the local marine dealer quite well, and the price landed in Gove, with a trailer, was $2,900. John and I began fishing the area and we were just getting the boat set up when I changed jobs, and was soon planning on shifting to the north west of western Australia. The result was that John and I sailed the boat for six hundred miles across the Top End to Darwin, experiencing many hair raising adventures (this epic was recorded in an early F&B and is now in the SEA Library).

My wife and kids came across from Gove to Darwin by plane, and waited until we arrived, and the trailer and car duly came along by barge.

From there, we loaded the boat and all our worldly possessions onto the pack rack on the old HR Holden and into the boat, and set off for Wickham.