

SEAFARER 6.3 VOLANTE

Original Story/Pics by Peter Webster

'Your cruising horizons are as wide as the highway with this sleek new 6.0m trailerable sports cruiser from Seafarer. A great boat for day boating, and even better for fishing, concludes Peter Webster.'

Smart. Red. Nice shape. They were the first thoughts filed away under the new 'Seafarer Volante' heading in the 'ole brain box, as I watched Lindsay Fry swing the rig around in the Runaway Bay Marina parking lot, before neatly reversing down the launch ramp.

Nice rig, I thought, and looks good behind Lindsay's new Falcon.

The new Falcon is more than usually significant in this case, as the recent revival of the 'big' Commodore and Falcon series, with powerful 6-cylinder or V-8 engines, has restored the opportunity for many

Aussie families to go back to the idea of towing the family boat behind the family car — as distinct from needing a dedicated tow vehicle (a 4WD, for instance) as well as the family hack.

The Seafarer Volante is an excellent case in point. At 6.30 m LOA, with a

beam of 2.40 m and an overall trailing weight of around 1.6 tonnes, there's no way it could be handled safely by the typical 4-cylinder family car, but hitch it up to one of the new Commodore or Falcon wagons, and it's a different ball game. These new vehicles handle this size craft with ease — and that's including mum, the kids, Spike the dog, the tent, freezer chest and enough



luggage for the mob's three week holiday.

And wouldn't the Seafarer Volante be a nice choice for the job?

Design Notes

The Volante 6.3 is a contemporary version of the classic half-cab style of boat, so loved by Aussie fishermen for the last couple of decades.

It incorporates what many fishos believe is the ultimate setup; a cabin that is big enough to provide decent protection in the event of bad weather, somewhere for a bit of snooze in the afternoon when the sun gets high overhead, and an easily accessible space for the one hundred and one things you need to take along on a decent fishing trip, but don't want under your feet until they are needed.

Family blokes need the protection of the cabin area for the youngsters; many a kid has cut his boating teeth snuggled down on the berth in his car basket, while mum and dad got on with some serious fishing!

There is a proviso to all this though — in a true-blue fishing rig, the amount of space the fisherman is prepared to give over to storage and comfort is strictly limited; about 1 860 mm (6') usually



pulls it up. Beyond this, space 'lost' from the productive cockpit area is seen by most fishermen as too hard to justify. After all, they argue, the boat is being purchased for just one reason . . .

Lindsay Fry's Seafarer team has got it just about perfect with the Volante 6.3 m. In fact, they may have erred a shade too much on the side of the fisherman.

The forward 'bunks' in the Volante are only 1.70 m (57") long, and are sufficiently narrow to preclude them from being described as 'berths', in the traditional sense. OK — they are fine for small folk and youngsters, but six footers planning on camping out overnight best remember to bring along the air mattress to set up in the cockpit.

On the other side of the coin, the cockpit is enormous — it measures no less than 2.870 m from the nominal bulkhead position thru to the transom area. Indeed, there's 1.830 m (6' 0") from the back of the seats to the transom, and as it is the same width (1.830 m), the Volante actually boasts a 3.34 square metre cockpit (36 sq. ft.) behind the seats!

As you can see in the photos, the test rig was beautifully set-up, with swivelling bucket seats mounted on the

optional (\$259) GRP boxes, with drop-down seats (\$202) mounted on the aft face of the box. The Volante is normally supplied with the bucket seats on a standard Reelax pedestal.

Optional non-skid carpet (cabin and cockpit cost \$860) finished off the floor, while long side boxes provided excellent storage for gaff handles, mooring lines and tools.

In the photos, the carpet is sectioned off to match the under floor compartments. These are filled with the optional, \$576, 182 L (40 gallon) fuel tank. It's hard to see anyone running this rig with the piddling 20 L standard issue fuel tank, so this must be considered a mandatory option.

One of the good things about the Seafarer business is the degree of customisation they'll undertake.

The cockpit, for instance, can be raised and made fully self-draining, for an additional \$1,300. For offshore work, the writer wouldn't have it any other way.

Victorian readers have a definite preference for a lock-up cabin — not a problem. It's normally around \$420 extra.

The outboard well is normally set-up for a single, 20" leg outboard, but a

Good structure and shape to this day, with typically timeless Seafarer styling and finish, the 6.3 Volante was all cockpit, with a minimal space in the cabin - so it was - and still is, a terrific bluewater fishing boat.

variety of combinations are possible, including a twin outboard well (for 20" or 25" legs), and a sterndrive.

The Volante is rated for power up to 260 hp, but as our test proved, it doesn't need anything like that for fishermen — it's just a waste of capital (outlaid) and fuel.

Ideally, the boat is best fitted with one of the latest, prop rated 140s from Yamaha, Johnson/Evinrude, or a 135hp Black Max from Mercury. Bigger engines might (possibly) be needed for hefty loads or very serious skiing — but then, in either event, would the Volante be suitable?

One thing that did appeal was the possibility of developing a rig with (say) a single Volvo AQAD 171 - the beautiful little DOHC 16 valve 167 hp stern drive — or alternatively, if you like diesel, and are figuring on covering a lot of miles offshore, the new Mercury lightweight diesel range is definitely worth investigating.