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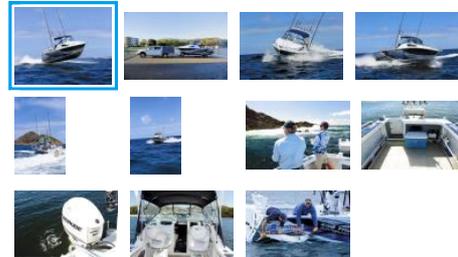
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QUINTREX 690 REVIEW



19 Jul 2013 | As the star of TV's Escape With ET fishing show, this big offshore Quintrex 690 has seen hundreds of fish caught. We sent John Ford to audition for the next series — and to test the boat.

While I was recently out fishing with Michael "Guesty" Guest, Australian rally car driver and presenter on TV's Escape With ET, I found his two mates Mick and Jake glaring at me, and these are a couple of brawny, menacing-looking lads.

We'd been fishing since dawn in the usually productive waters off Port Stephens on the NSW central coast, but we were yet to land a decent fish. As a last resort we had come to Guesty's secret spot on the southern edge of Broughton Island, but we were still to turn a reel.

"We always get snapper here," Jake gruffly informed me.

"You've jinxed us," Mick chimed in, before becoming a bit more ominous. "Let's throw him overboard."

As I was hoping they were joking, my attention was drawn to a flash of silver chasing my lure back to the boat.

"There's fish here," I shouted in desperation.

"Well bloody catch one," they suggested in unison as reels started screaming at all ends of the boat and bonito started landing on the deck.

Following my close shave with a swim home I decided to take a more philosophical approach to the trip. After all, it was Guesty's suggestion that we go fishing in order

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to test his Quintrex 690, so it was the actual process of using the boat that was important, rather than catch itself.

And I believe it takes a certain level of talent and determination in the face of ridicule to see how a boat works as a fishing platform without having to resort to the mundane task of actually catching anything.

It's style, not blood and guts; the method, not the result; it's bloody disappointing, but you just suck it up.

OUTSIDE THE BOX

In many ways, the 690 is a rather significant step outside of Quintrex's comfort zone. It's the manufacturer's first foray into a crowded market of offshore fishing boats, which is largely dominated by heavy-duty platies and well-established fibreglass hulls dedicated to fishing the shelf and beyond.

Quintrex, on the other hand, has traditionally been more directed to inshore and estuary fishing and family runabouts. But over the last year or so, bigger boats in the Quintrex range have been marketed to more serious offshore fisher folk — people like Guesty — who actually catch fish.

In this respect the big Quintrex looks the goods and is an imposing presence on the trailer, with its high windscreen and outrageous wrap sure to attract a lot of attention at the ramp.

From the side, the cabin and cat's eye widows remind me of an Astro Boy-style space ship that gives the design a striking go-fast image and big-boat presence. The straight sheerline gives a hulking impression at rest, and the big-shouldered bow creates generous cabin space for storage and overnight trips.

The 690 has seen Quintrex stretch its Blade hull concept and the sharp entry of the 5mm bottom section is well and truly on show on the trailer.

Lighter 3mm side material is given strength from the press-formed retro clinker folds of the sides. Under the floor, the manufacturer has included a structure it describes as a "milk crate" layout of longitudinal and latitudinal ribs that give strength to the hull.

PILE IT ON

Before we headed off for our frugal fishing day, the Quintrex's big-boat image was put to the test when Guesty, Michael and Jake started loading their gear on board.

Tackle boxes, dozens of rods and, as it turned out, a very optimistic number of lure bags were stored away into the cabin, and there was still plenty of space for food, drinks and wet-weather gear. More rods found their way into slots on the rocket launcher, as well as on the baitboard and along the cockpit coamings.

In retrospect, the sight of us heading across the bay fully-loaded may have sent shockwaves of fear to every fish community within a 50km radius. But despite the lack of fishy action, I can happily report the 690's big cockpit allowed plenty of room for the four of us to drop lines and cast into the distance, and we could have easily mounted a large production number on the big dance floor during the lulls in action.

I particularly liked the layout for fishing action. Wide coamings make decent seats for retying tackle, while at the transom, a big aluminium bait table sits at a good working height and the shelf underneath is a useful storage space for knives and spare tackle. Batteries are protected behind inspection doors, but the oil reservoir remains open to view, which is a good idea that allows you to keep an eye on the level. There is a plumbed live bait tank, while the starboard side is home to an access door leading to a swim platform with a sturdy ladder and a plastic burley bucket.

There were, however, a couple of things I found unusual: single pockets on each side held only two rod racks and seemed more a blank canvas for owners to set up any way they would like; and with a height well out of my reach, the rocket launcher seems to have been designed for people a lot taller than 6ft.

Oddities aside, the security provided in rough conditions by the 77cm side decks was undeniably excellent, as was the stability of the boat at rest. And while the checkerplate floor looks a bit industrial, it does offer very good grip.

With bottom bouncing for snapper ticked off the list, the decision was made to take advantage of the change of tide to tow some lures. The Quintrex again proved a decent platform to drag a spread of lures, and we tested every angle several times as we followed patterns across a fishless ocean until we were giddy.

AT REST

Having fished for some six hours, we decided to break for lunch in the lee of the nearby island. This gave me some time to have a good look around the boat, where I found the cabin to be a great place for a rest on the 2.04m vee berths and standing room in the central well.

Light streams in from two long windows and the opening hatch allows good air circulation. The side coamings continue into the cabin, but I was surprised the space was not utilised as storage, as is usually the case in similar cabin boats. In addition, the stipple-painted aluminium sides, while practical, could be finished a bit more stylishly. A chest-high bulkhead at the helm station and a screen that extends (almost) overhead further add to the boat's imposing feel.

There is room for a Humminbird sounder and a couple of Evinrude I-command gauges on the simple aluminium dash. A three-block switch panel, 12V socket and controls for Volvo Penta trim tabs are housed behind the SeaStar stainless steel wheel. Side-mounted electronic engine controls are well placed, even if they are a bit light for my heavy-handed driving style. (Maybe these electronic controls don't need to be as long as the old mechanical systems because they don't need any added leverage.)

Driver and passengers get side storage pockets and there is a handy passenger glovebox with a transparent lid, plastic cup holders and a passenger grab rail, while recessed holders keep the fire extinguisher and EPIRB handy, but well out of harm's way.

A deep kill tank is situated in the floor between the helm seats with a 160L fuel tank, with a plastic filler on the transom behind it.

While the E-Tec is a notoriously frugal engine, Quintrex might like to consider a bigger tank to extend the range of a boat aimed at offshore fishing.

But there is no rest for the wicked, and we were soon heading north to a patch of shallow water for some afternoon squidding before heading home into a lowering sun and a 15-18kt south-westerly that was contributing to a confused 1m chop that got worse as we approached the entrance to Port Stephens.

In these somewhat trying conditions we ran at a comfortable 18kts (33.3kmh), with trim tabs keeping us on an even keel. There were some occasional bangs as we landed over some of the bigger waves, while any attempts at higher speeds made things uncomfortable for the crew.

Noise from the already quiet motor was well insulated by the high transom, but at around 3500rpm there was a resonance through the hull and its ribbed sides transmitted a familiar tinnie slap into the cockpit.

The 690 proved exemplary and showed no sign of broaching as we ran into a following sea at the entrance, and with the wind across our beam the boat remained dry as spray was sent wide and well aft.

Back in the bay we gave the 250 E-TEC the berries and topped out at 40.8kts (75.6kph) with the boat skimming over the small bay chop. Handling into high-speed turns proved safe and precise but there was some cavitation, which was also evident in aggressive acceleration.

Although the hull weight is specified at 1040kg, the boat feels very buoyant even with four people and a mountain of fishing gear on board. WRAP

With the 690, Quintrex has taken a brave step into a market dominated by some very good specialised offshore plate and fibreglass boats. The company has chosen a path outside the traditionally accepted designs of deep-vee transoms and sharp-flared bows, and has definitely upped the ante within its fleet.

The 690 will find favour among boating families who recognise the value of a big-volume trailerboat that can take the family cruising and also head offshore chasing (and maybe even catching) elusive creatures of the deep.

ON THE PLANE...

- A lot of boat for the money
- Loads of room for fishing and family
- Good stability at rest
- Very good in a following sea

DRAGGING THE CHAIN...

- Some welds a bit rough
- Ride can be a bit harsh

SPECIFICATIONS: QUINTREX 690

HOW MUCH?

Price as tested: \$65,788 (including registration and safety kit)

Options fitted: Vinyl wrap; bimini and envelope cabin kit; front and side clears; deck wash; anchor winch plate on bow; sounder / GPS

Priced from: \$65,788

GENERAL

Type: Fishing monohull

Material: Aluminium 5mm bottom and transom, 3mm topsides

Length: 6.81m

Beam: 2.4m

Weight: 1040kg

Deadrise: N/A

CAPACITIES

People: 8

Rec. HP: 150-250

Max. HP: 250

Fuel: 160L

ENGINE

Make/model: Evinrude E-TEC 250

Type: V6 direct-injection two-stroke

Weight: 238kg

Displacement: 3279cc

Gear ratio: 1.85:1

Propeller: 14.75x19in Viper

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