

# YELLOWFIN

## *rides again*

With a heritage stretching back several decades, the Yellowfin range of plate-aluminium fishing boats has been reborn under the banner of Australia's largest alloy boat builder, Telwater. Warren Steptoe discovers that the new breed is better than ever.

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Without even getting its bottom wet, this boat comes to us as an encouraging sign of better times ahead. Deeply impacted by the economic crisis, Australia's boating industry has been suffering mightily for some time at the hands of subterranean buyer confidence.

Regardless of how real the crisis may, or may not, have been, history showed a severe retraction in boat sales. 'For lease' signs on previously thriving marine retail premises and the submersion of boat-building companies big and small was plain to see.

One of the biggest boat-building companies in the southern hemisphere wouldn't release a range of all-new, niche-market targeted offshore fishing boats in the mere hope boat sales have turned the corner. No, at the recent release of their new Yellowfin range, Telwater MD Paul Phelan beamingly acknowledged a definite upswing in demand.

Telwater, for readers who don't know, is the parent company for well-known brands Quintrex, Stacer, Savage – and Yellowfin. If their other brands don't have much penetration into bluewater fishing, everyone knows of Telwater's stable as market leaders in recreational trailer boats. With the new Yellowfins this extends into the bluewater scene with three new

hulls of 5.7 and 6.2 metres, plus the one of interest to bluewater anglers, a 6.7 metre in cuddy-cabin and centre-console configurations.

Time to prompt the memory of *BlueWater* readers who've been around long enough to remember the original Yellowfins.

Yellowfin actually boasts a lengthy bloodline stretching back to the early 1980s when sport and game fisherman Wayne Osborne went shopping for a trailerable bluewater fishing boat. Disillusioned with what was on offer at the time, he decided to build his own boats under the brand name Yellowfin.

Since then, Yellowfin boats always have been specifically designed for offshore and bluewater fishing, with some models clearly dedicated to sport and game fishing. They've always been built from so called 'plate' aluminium – mainly because it was (and still is) the most cost-efficient material from which to custom build largish trailer boats.

In its early years Yellowfin had something of a chequered history, so let's fast forward to Yellowfin ending up dissolved into Quintrex, as it was over a decade ago. Meanwhile the brand had lost the hard edge of innovation Wayne Osborne had established and it faded into obscurity.

### A NEW LEASE ON LIFE

Having fished with Wayne and Yellowfin Sales Manager Bob

Carruthers quite a bit in the early days, I've always been sad about this. They were great boats, brilliant in their era. So no apologies are on offer for the excitement I'm sure will become apparent as I tell you about the reborn Yellowfins, and specifically the 6.7-metre cabin model tested for this issue.

As I said before, plate-aluminium boats became popular largely due to the relative ease with which a hull could be custom built to suit individual customers. This brought a multitude of boutique plate boat builders into the industry, many of whom were (unfortunately) among the early casualties when our financial crisis struck.

It's important now to be aware that Yellowfin's parent company, Telwater, strictly maintains separate identities for each of its marques. However, the fact remains that the sheer size of their operation affords certain economies of scale, cross-pollination of engineering expertise and, last but not least, marketing expertise.

They've spotted a gap in the market left by the demise of so many plate boat builders and set out to plug it. Instead of custom building though, they've elected to go with set centre-console and cuddy-cabin configurations, relying on their experience in customer satisfaction to get them 'right' enough to sell.

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Perhaps this is a contradiction to preconceived expectations of plate boats' desirability being tied to custom interiors, and it certainly puts getting the interiors 'right' enough to sell right on the line. They've taken this even further by supplying Yellowfin boats with extensive standard feature inventories and fairly short options lists.

So to the obvious question, what did I think of a Yellowfin 6700 Cabin circa 2009?

Well, I've spent several hours off the Gold Coast twice now in new Yellowfins and can happily report the 6.7-metre cabin model tested here is an entirely relevant, trailerable, bluewater sport and gamefisher. Indeed it gladdens my heart to see the new boats continue a tradition established so long ago and since lost.

#### **EVEN BETTER THAN THE ORIGINAL**

One thing that has moved with the times though is the hull. Early Yellowfins were typical plate boats

in that they could be brutal to their occupants, *very* brutal if driven unsympathetically. This boat is a very definite improvement on that, and in fact proved to be up there with the very best plate-aluminium hulls I've tested.

You sense a qualification there? There needs to be one.

Despite having stretch-forming technology (used in Quintrex and Stacer boats) available to them, Telwater build the Yellowfins with more or less standard plate construction methods.

A grid system of stringers and ribs belowdecks and sensibly wide top decks deliver formidable structural integrity to both the cabin model and a centre console I've also tested. There's never the slightest hint of a squeak, graunch or groan, whether driven with a sensible, sensitive hand on the throttle or the kind of posing for the shooters stuff that inevitably goes on when the boating press assemble.

It's exactly the kind of awesome strength and ability to shrug off bad ramps and bad roads while being

trailerred that people considering a plate-aluminium boat for bluewater fishing will be looking for.

To be bluntly honest, anyone who describes *any* locally built plate-aluminium hull as soft riding has either never been for a ride in a GRP composite American hull the same size, or is telling fibs. Having set that straight, when driven with commonsense, the 6700 Cabin Yellowfin delivered a more than acceptable ride across the average offshore conditions encountered on the two days I ventured off the Gold Coast.

Put the hammer down too far and sure, you can bounce this boat out of the water and land it hard. Ease back some and it'll get you there in comfort enough. And I have to say also there were several times when I glanced at the speedo and was pleasantly surprised at how fast we were actually travelling.

In a nutshell, as a boat tester who gets in and out of a lot of trailerboats in any given year, I've had the living heck beaten out of me by some of the highest-





profile plate-aluminium hulls on the market, usually while they were being driven by overenthusiastic sales folk demonstrating their 'soft' ride. Some prove remarkably better than their peers, and it's right in among the very best of the genre that I'll place the 6700 Yellowfin hull.

### A NEW HULL DESIGN

The new Yellowfin hull has fairly sharply raked bows and a 20-degree deadrise at the stern sloping up to downturned chines. The outboard is mounted on a central pod, the bottom of which sits 5cm or so above the bottom sheet, and which is integrated into the transom exterior, with a small exterior boarding deck each side.

No mention has been made of optional twin-motor installations at this stage and I suspect this is something Yellowfin may have to deal with in future.

From the transom's exterior decks, the hull sides undercut towards the chine. Wind chop did sometimes 'blow back' spray as it slopped beneath this while we were drift fishing.

As for at-rest stability, I'm told my 60-odd kilos are no test of how any boat sits in the water, so I'll report no disconcerting movement underfoot at all with some far heftier boat journos moving about aboard during a Yellowfin press day.

An outstanding feature that almost went unnoticed while the boating press put several new Yellowfins through their paces was that never once in two days (i.e.: the press day and my test day) did I notice water on the deck.

Deck height in 6.7-metre hulls comes up against an undeniable compromise. If set high enough to self-drain without water running into the aft corners when someone

heavy's standing there, the boat becomes wobbly. However, if set low enough for good at-rest stability, and when someone heavy stands in an aft corner, water runs on to the deck.

When I went investigating I found the dry deck in the Yellowfins can be attributed to a pair of bespoke valves tucked away under the transom. The deck drains off into a big gutter across the inside of the aft bulkhead and thence into these valves, which obviously do a great job of preventing water flowing back inboard. If unimportant perhaps in the overall scheme of things, this is an industry first that shouldn't go unacknowledged.

Hydraulic steering is (thankfully) on Yellowfin's standard equipment list and the hull steers confidently at both planing and trolling speeds. Before moving away from the hull's on-water performance, yet another notable aspect is how effortlessly it moves from displacement to planing speeds. It's actually quite difficult to discern precisely when the hull begins planing somewhere below six knots, so gentle is the transition. Both the centre-console and cabin 6700 Yellowfin models I tested were powered by 200hp Mercury Optimax high-pressure, direct-injected two-stroke outboards, and the mid-range torque they deliver worked in well with the hull's low planing speed to make travel offshore both more comfortable for passengers and easy work for the helmsperson.

After easing back on the throttle to crest a steep swell you don't need to give the 6700 Yellowfin hull a big handful of throttle to get it moving again and this, plus silky-smooth transition to a planing attitude, no doubt contributes considerably towards the high marks the hull earns offshore (and especially to



it being so notable among plate-aluminium peers).

The 6.7-metre model Yellowfin is rated to a 225hp maximum, and about that I should say the test boat proved remarkably well balanced with 200hp out back. It seems you'd need to be operating a 6700 Yellowfin Cabin very heavily laden to need more power than the 200 on test.

### YOUR CHOICE OF EQUIPMENT

Interestingly, the new Yellowfins *don't* come prepackaged with certain brand outboards, electronics, or even important ancillary fittings such as deck washes and trim tabs. I think that's a good thing in the market segment these boats join, because potential owners will probably be experienced people with their own definite preferences in such equipment.

It's a savvy piece of thinking, if seemingly one at odds in some ways with the set interior configurations offered. Which brings us to the interior, and here we have a damn fine job of setting out a boat for people who, post economic crisis, may still harbour preconceptions about custom building as an attribute of the plate-aluminium genre.

The 6700 Cabin's cockpit offers a chequerplate deck and big storage pockets below wide side decks.

"This is a bluewater fishing rig that fits comfortably among the leaders in its class."

## SPEC CHECK



### YELLOWFIN 6700 CABIN

#### PRICE AS TESTED

\$74,027

#### PRICED FROM

Price quoted is ex-Brisbane, the addition of freight, plus differing registration and on-water costs will vary Yellowfin prices elsewhere.

#### OPTIONS FITTED

Mercury Optimax 200hp, Smartcraft Gauges, two-tone paint, Yellowfin aluminium trailer, safety gear, Bimini top, front and side-clears, VHF marine radio.

#### GENERAL

Material: Aluminium 'plate' 4mm topsides & 5mm bottom  
Hull Type: Monohull  
Length: 6.80 metres  
Beam: 2.40 metres  
Draft: n/s  
Deadrise: 20 degrees (at transom)  
Weight: 980kg (hull only)  
BMT Towing Weight: Approx 2 tonnes

#### CAPACITIES

Maximum Rated Power: 225hp  
Maximum Engine Weight: n/s  
People: 7  
Fuel: 250 litres  
Water: n/a

#### ENGINE

Make/model: Mercury Optimax 200XL OPTI  
Type: Direct-injected 2-stroke V6  
Rated hp: 200hp  
Displacement: 3032cc  
No. cylinders: 6  
Weight: 225kg  
Gearbox ratio: 1.75:1  
Propeller used for test: Mercury Mirage Plus, s/s 3-blade, 18-inch pitch

#### SUPPLIED BY

Springwood Marine  
Pacific H'way, Springwood, Qld  
Ph (07) 3884 7250  
For full Dealer List see  
[www.yellowfinboats.com.au](http://www.yellowfinboats.com.au)

Savvy marketing or no, these new Yellowfins will sink or swim on buyers being happy with their interiors. While on-water performance offshore leaves nothing to be desired, what about the interior then?

### INTERIOR LAYOUT

An incredibly difficult aspect that designers of a boat like this face is that everybody has their own notions about how a bluewater fishing boat should be laid out. Satisfying such a particular clientele can be a nightmare. I guess not everyone will agree with me about how good the Yellowfin interior is, but that is the nature of the game.

As a boat tester I've developed a whinge list over time against which few test boats escape criticism. Neither did this one.

Having a 135-litre drained-overboard fish pit set into the deck in the centre of the cockpit is good, but few bluewater anglers don't like to bring home a wahoo, dolphinfish or tuna for the table and, with that in mind, the one in our test Yellowfin is a bit short to fit them in.

Personally, being a Queenslander with an occasional penchant for barefoot fishing, I'd opt for the (optional) carpeted deck over the chequerplate underfoot here. Speaking of secure footing, here's a hint for bluewater anglers who habitually wear traditional deck shoes. Wet Adventure footwear, sold at outdoor stores and some boating retailers, is excellent on chequerplate and other similarly hard decks.

Apart from those gripes I was very much at home in the Yellowfin. Wide side decks overhang big pockets along each side. The central work bench only needs a knife slot to be perfect. To starboard a transom door and flip-up boarding ladder are both standard equipment, as is a (spilling overboard) 65-litre live well to port in the aft bulkhead.

Ten rods can be racked up between the overhead rocket launcher and workbench, and with four side deck rod holders this boat just about has rod storage covered for all, bar folk (like our editor) who will overflow them however many are available.

I think most Yellowfin owners would fit a small clip-on curtain to hide the batteries, fuel filter and etceteras mounted centrally in the aft bulkhead. Similarly it's hard to imagine setting a 6700 Cabin Yellowfin up without fitting clears between the windscreen and Bimini top.

### HELM AND CABIN

Inside, the cabin is very basic, with carpeted stowage bins each side and painted metal elsewhere. A hardtop option is still being looked at while, the Bimini top seen here is already an option.

Inside, the helm area will offer complete spray protection if clears are added, and I crossed a regular off my whinge list once satisfied that both the helm and passenger are well catered for and secured by an appropriately placed grab bar. To my mind, a properly sited grab bar is a critical aspect of offshore travel in any trailerboat. If you regularly carry more than

two aboard this boat though, you'll have to add extra seating.

Outrigger plates in the side decks come standard, as does a reinforced anchor winch mount. Armchair bucket helm and passenger seats atop stowage lockers with EPIRB and extinguisher lockers built in are also standard, as are twin batteries, an isolator switching and a quality fuel filter.

The options list is short. The Bimini seen here, the two-tone paint seen here, two stainless rod holders, and a VHF radio are it for our test boat. Personally, I'd consider trim tabs and a deck wash as essentials alongside the necessary electronics when budgeting.

With a quality trailer underneath, the Yellowfin 6700 cabin becomes precisely what bluewater anglers who might buy one are looking for – a highly mobile yet entirely practical means to get to hotspots that are inaccessible any other way. With an all-up towing weight of around two tonnes, it requires a big 4WD or small truck to tow. Although, so too does every other trailerable boat that's a realistic proposition for bluewater fishing.

As a 6.7-metre fishing boat for people without this need for mobility, I think the 6700 Yellowfin Cabin deserves consideration regardless of preconceived notions or bias regarding 'glass or plate aluminium. In any terms, this is a bluewater fishing rig that fits comfortably among the leaders in its class. 📌

The 135-litre fish pit drains overboard, but it's a little short for some species.



### HIGHLIGHTS

Ride and handling offshore among leaders in class.

Dry, self-draining deck.

Berley bucket, 250-litre fuel tank, 65-litre livewell, 135-litre drained o'board fish pit, transom door, boarding ladder, rocket launcher, transom workbench, hydraulic steering, outrigger mounting plates, twin batteries and isolator switch are all standard equipment.