

Surtees 575 Pro Fisher

purpose built for salt-fly

It took brothers Jeremy Coombes and Al Brown 12 months to find a boat that suited their needs, before settling on a Surtees 575 Pro Fisher. Grant Dixon spent a morning fishing with the boys, checking out what they and Surtees had created...

Jeremy and Al are keen lure fishers, including soft-baits, jigs and top water, but salt-fly fishing in particular. Consequently, their boating needs were quite specific, with their vessel having to: provide a stable casting platform; have topsides that were as low-profile and fly-fishing friendly as possible (with nothing to catch fly-lines on); and incorporate a layout allowing them to follow hooked fish around. They also needed a boat that would get them to the grounds quickly and in relative comfort, possess a good fuel range for multi-day trips away, and be easy to tow.

Jeremy was the 'project manager,' and as the guys knew Surtees Boat's head honcho Adam Dyck well, the die was cast.

"We didn't start out with any specific brand in mind, just a list of

features we wanted incorporated in the boat. The team at Surtees took on board the project with enthusiasm and we developed a great rapport with them," says Jeremy.

The result was *Chum Bucket*, a 5.75m centre-console powered by a Honda 100hp four-stroke outboard. Both men are in the restaurant business, and the boat's name is a tongue-in-cheek reference to the name of the eatery in the popular kid's television programme *Spongebob Squarepants*, based on a fictional underwater world.

In a bid to keep the boat as 'clean' as possible, they elected not to include a bimini top.

"We will fish a summer without one and see how we go. There is no substitute for a decent hat to provide shade," Al reckons.

The forward casting deck is slightly raised, with two large '90 percent dry' storage areas beneath it. SeaDek is prominent throughout the boat, providing not only good grip, but excellent comfort for any angler standing and casting for long periods.

"We asked Surtees about SeaDek on the casting platform; they ran with the idea and, as a result, we have the full topsides covered. We absolutely love it. As well as being comfortable underfoot, it quietsens the boat down – ideal when stalking fish in the shallows," explained Al.





Top left: The forward casting platform is raised, with semi-dry storage lockers underneath, and covered in SeaDek for great grip, good looks and noise suppression.



Right: Jeremy puts the forward casting platform to good use.



The Surtees 575 Pro Fisher is powered by a Honda BF 100hp four-stroke, making for a quiet ride with plenty of range.



The small anchor locker, minus capstan, and diminutive fairlead were all part of the plan to keep the boat as fly-fishing friendly as possible.



The cleats recess when not required – one less thing to catch a fly line on.

The bulkhead forward of the casting platform provides one of only two totally waterproof compartments on board, making it ideal for items such as keys, phones and wallets – or anything else that needs to remain dry. The other, larger space is beneath the helm seat, where extra clothing and lifejackets go.

In keeping with the ‘clean lines’ approach, the fairlead is as small as is practical, with a reasonable-sized anchor locker located in the foredeck behind it. There is no anchor capstan to catch any loose line, and the micro-rails are more hand-holds than anything else.

The boys saw an electric motor as essential for their style of angling. Their Minn Kota Riptide 80 unit interfaces with a Humminbird Helix 9 chart-plotter/sounder to provide several useful features, such as the ability to ‘anchor’ the boat in one spot or run

along a predetermined path or contour line. It also assists greatly when ‘stealth mode’ is required.

The Minn Kota is powered by two deep-cycle batteries located in the centre-console’s base. These are not charged by the Honda, so must be topped up at the end of each trip from a battery charger on mains supply. This electric motor is perhaps the only obtrusive element to the casting area, but interference with casting is minimised when it is deployed.

Four retractable cleats are placed strategically around the gunwales, useful for berthing as well as attaching a drogue off either stern quarter.

There is plenty of rod storage aboard. Long shelves run either side of the cockpit, with the port ones being long enough to hold the boys’ favourite Epic salt-fly rods. There are holders set into



the gunwales, as well as three across the back of the transom bait-board. Surtees has come up with a three-rod sliding holder that clips over the side of the cockpit shelving. While this is a great idea, currently the angle of the rods is inboard, making them difficult to walk past, especially for a bigger person. A slight alteration should see this sorted.

The centre console has a decent sized screen that offers some protection from the elements while underway. Surtees has created a unique net holder on the port side of the console that stores out of the way, yet easily accessible when needed.

As well as the Humminbird sounder/plotter, the console is home to a Garmin VHF and two engine-monitoring gauges, along with a switch panel. It is all cleanly laid out and user-friendly. SeaStar hydraulic steering is another upgrade that helps make helming *Chum Bucket* easier.

A modest chillybin sits in one stern quarter of the cockpit's chequerplated floor, and a 1300mm-long kill tank runs longitudinally under the floor. (This space was originally only 700mm long, but Jeremy had the hull framing modified to double this length to accommodate a decent kingfish.)

A small sump at the stern houses the bilge pump. Above it, set into the transom, is a large storage space for batteries, the wash-down pump and hoses. This is raised above the deck to keep the batteries as safe as possible, with further protection provided by a hinged door.

A live-bait tank beneath the starboard-side transom step-through adds another string to the angler's bow. A dive ladder is located on the port side, attached to a small swimstep. A berley dispenser is set on the starboard side.

At the business end is a Honda BF 100hp four-stroke outboard,



The well-laid-out centre console, with the Humminbird Helix 9 sounder/plotter taking centre stage.

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fuelled via a 100-litre underfloor tank.

Jeremy says they chose Honda as several of the charter boats he has fished aboard have them, with their skippers singing the brand's praises.

"The motor is proving very economical and quiet, and having a decent amount of fuel on board gives us plenty of range."

Jeremy says they wanted to create a Kiwi version of an American sport-fishing 'flats' boat, sans a rear poling platform, and believe they have achieved that.



The hull framing was altered to allow for a 1.3m-long kill tank under the cockpit floor.



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- 1 While lure fishing is Al and Jeremy's forte, there will be times when the live-bait tank should come in handy.
- 2 There is plenty of good storage space beneath the forward casting platform.
- 3 The starting and house batteries are safely stowed in their own enclosed transom locker, along with the wash-down pump.
- 4 The Minn Kota Riptide 80 electric motor enables the boys' to sneak up stealthily on their prey, especially in shallow water.

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Left: Working out how to store a net in an open boat can be difficult – Surtees created this net holder, located on the side of the centre console.



Right: The ability to walk right around the boat while following hard-running fish is a big feature of the Surtees 575 Pro Fisher.

The boat's white-painted hull is nicely set off with black graphics. Much of the inside is not painted, the boys going instead for a hard-wearing Nyalic protective coating that also makes the cockpit easy to keep clean.

The rig is towed on an Epic trailer: a single axle, un-braked model with wobble rollers and the Surtees Quick Hitch system.

It is not only the new owners who have been impressed by the Surtees. The Pro Fisher also caught the eye of the judges at the recent Hutchwilco New Zealand Boat Show, winning the Fishing Boat Under Six Metres division, something Al and Jeremy are justifiably proud of, given how closely they have worked with Surtees on the project.

