



Crafty Kiwi



it was awarded the prestigious Overall Boat of the Show award

comfort. But overall it's a boat that will appeal to family and fishing expeditions, with sleeping for six, separate bathroom, full galley and large cockpit space, with curved sports fisher transom."

The boat is all-alloy from the hull right through to the topsides. When I first stepped aboard, I couldn't help notice the exceptional finish of the white topsides, which I mistakenly assumed were GRP, until Dickey happily corrected me. Not many builders can get alloy to look like GRP, but Dickey certainly can.

Structural rigidity is fundamental to Dickey Boats and the company constructs its hulls using its own spaceframe system, which consists of full interlocking ring frames, stringers, girders and longitudinal beams. Once complete, the 6mm aluminum hull is built around it.

PLUMB BOW

On the water, you get full appreciation of the hull shape and how it has been designed to perform. A relatively plumb bow has always been a feature on Dickey Boats, combined with a fine entry – it works to maximise waterline length, slice through the rough stuff and deliver a soft ride.

Once aboard the 950 Custom you soon realise it is big on comfort and fishing and that there is hardly a bolt or rivet that has not been touched by the Dickey talent for innovation.

The large and roomy cockpit is beautifully finished with Dek-King flooring and features LED lighting underneath the coamings for night-time illumination. Tuna tubes are located underneath the bait station and are integral with the livebait tank.

At the centre of the cockpit it's hard to miss the massive cooler located above the engine compartment, which houses the 370hp Volvo Penta D6 engine. Despite its bulk, the large cooler can be removed quickly and replaced with a custom game chair, if larger species are on the cards.

EASE OF SERVICE

The powerplant sits tidily inside the massive engine bay. Special attention has been given to the installation of the engine, with ease of service foremost in the design process. Dickey Boats goes as far as to install checkerplate walkways throughout the engine bay for ease of access and there is even a custom toolbox fitted for those small DIY jobs around the boat.

A relatively plumb bow has always been a feature on Dickey Boats, combined with a fine entry – it works to maximise waterline length, slice through the rough stuff and to deliver a soft ride. Photo by Bruce Jenkins.

This award-winning aluminium cruiser is packed with innovation and thoughtful design.

Not having sampled any of Dickey Boats' products before, I was keen to finally have an opportunity to see what all the fuss was about when I was invited to test its new 950 Custom. After all, this was a vessel that had so impressed judges at this year's Hutchwilco NZ Boat Show that it was awarded the prestigious Overall Boat of the Show award.

Based on the North Island's east coast in the city of Napier, Dickey Boats production output currently runs at around 10 boats a year, with a typical build time of five months. In its short history the company has produced vessels that have found their way all over the world and the business is now poised to expand production with a view to growing into the Australian market.

Dickey Boats has three ranges: Launches, which are around 9m-plus; the Sport Range, which is predominantly trailerboats from 7.5m to 9.5m, and its soon-to-be-released Custom Projects range, which is everything that doesn't fit into the previous two.

The 950 Custom is a little bit hard to define because it really sits in between the Launch and Sport Ranges. It has all the characteristics of a large trailerboat, and with the right trailer and vehicle can be trailered, yet it has all the traits internally of a well-appointed launch/cruiser, which was exactly the design brief.

"We've utilised the same hull design as our Custom 900, but incorporated much of the design parameters of one of our launches," says Jason Dickey, the man behind Dickey Boats.

"The owner of this one wanted a big, comfortable boat primarily for fishing, and that he could stay out on for a few days in relative



Feeding the Volvo Penta D6 are twin linked fuel tanks with a whopping 900lt fuel capacity, which was specified by the owner for extended trips away and long-range cruising.

CLEVER CLEANER

One really neat feature I liked is the automatic handwash. Simply lean over the port side of the

cockpit, push the button located on top of the coaming, and a stream of fresh water will spout from the side of the boat for 10 seconds – a great and quick way to wash your hands without getting fishy fingers everywhere.

Stepping into the main saloon, large bi-fold doors open up the whole area, making those inside feel part of the action out in the cockpit.

To port there is a table with comfortable bench seating either side. The backrest of the forward seat moves aft, so passengers can be seated facing forward when underway.

At the well-appointed helm, two large Garmin displays are the centrepieces of the dash. One really cutting-edge feature of the wheelhouse area is the CZone technology fitted as a standard feature.

IN THE ZONE

CZone intelligent technology incorporates full vessel integration and automation with the boater's chartplotter. Essentially, it eliminates the need for individual switches and panels throughout the boat, with everything instead controlled from one of the navigation displays at the helm, or via an iPad. The user gains a whole new level of digital control over the boat while at the helm, with lighting, power monitoring, tank monitoring and much more at their fingertips.



Top: The interior layout is light and airy, designed to make those in the saloon area part of the action in the cockpit. Photo by Bruce Jenkins.

Above: Cruising on Auckland Harbour, the cockpit is big and spacious.

Right: The over-the-side handwash is a great feature.



The vessel can have a number of pre-programmed settings, including cruise mode, game-fishing mode, in which all the relative livebait tanks and pumps will turn on, or night mode, in which the vessel's lighting will activate.

Forward in the cabin area, there is bunk-style sleeping for four, as well as a well-appointed kitchenette to port. Below and further forward is an all-in-one, self-contained toilet and shower unit. More sleeping can be found back up in the main saloon by dropping down the dining table, providing space for an extra two and bringing the total sleeping space to a cosy six persons.

Having spent half a day with Jason aboard the Custom 950, it soon became apparent that Dickey Boats is not an aluminum boat builder – it is a boat builder that just chooses to use aluminium. And with the amount of technology used in the design process, each boat is more like a ship than a traditional Australasian alloy boat.

CUSTOMER FIRST

What did capture my attention after speaking at length with Jason is that, although the boats are all customised to some extent, the customer leaves with not only a feeling of having something that is uniquely theirs, but that after-sales support will carry on well into the future.

All of the design parameters unique to that boat are kept on file, should the owner or future owners ever need factory support. Dickey Boats

has the ability to fabricate a large amount of parts in-house to ensure quality control and the availability of parts into the future.

The Dickey 950 Custom is an extremely versatile boat, catering equally for offshore fishing or family cruising. It provides everything needed for either and, with its extremely solid build and craftsman-like construction, it's one of the best semi-production boats that I've come across.

The Hutchwilco judges chose well. 

SPECIFICATIONS: DICKEY 950 CUSTOM

Type:	Custom monohull
Construction:	Aluminium
LOA:	10.2m
Beam:	2.85m
Weight:	4000kg
Power:	Volvo Penta D6 370
Power options:	Inboard sterndrive 320-370hp
Fuel capacity:	900lt
Water capacity:	120lt
Priced from:	Approx NZ\$375,000 plus taxes

For more information contact Dickey Boats, tel +64 6 834 1310, email: info@dickeyboats.com or go to: dickeyboats.com.

PREMIUM *xtra*

Subscribers please note: For additional content or video footage go to: clubmarine.com.au.

The new Custom 950 has been built as an ultimate fishing machine. Photo by Bruce Jenkins.