

Pakita

Peter Wright talks about "PAKITA"

For some time I had considered getting a slightly larger boat than the 40 foot custom Woodnutt "Duyfken" I had been running in Cairns for the past 17 years.

I was not prepared to sacrifice maneuverability and fishability but wanted a little more accommodation and the ability to do two or three-night live-aboard trips to get away from total dependency on a mother ship.

A series of meetings in Townsville with Peter O'Brien convinced me that O'Brien Boat's new 43-footer would suit my purposes nicely. We traded ideas about refrigeration systems and controls (I insisted on single lever controls but agreed to compromise on the type, since we were only going to have two helm stations). We ended up convincing each other to accept changes that were eventually better than either of us had arrived at on our own.

We're both pretty hard-headed but we had the Cairns and Townsville fleets on which to draw (and measure) and we could almost always find something in an existing boat that we both liked.

Small things like rod-holder placement and outrigger angles and halyard attachment points made enormous differences in overall efficiency.

I was most concerned about the flybridge, tower, engine room and cockpit. You can put up with a variety of interior layouts but the working areas have to be right. In the end all of these were nothing short of great.

Our live wells and brine box gave us probably the best bait handling set-up in Australia and my deckhands agreed the cockpit was superb. Small custom blocks under the control heads made fighting fish for hours a breeze without straining and the tower is more easily

accessed and comfortable to ride in heavy seas than any Yank tower built in the last five years.

The engine room is easy to access and easy to clean. Paper towels and Wipe-Off kept the raised sole (actually the top of a built-in water tank) clean enough to eat off.

Oil and water checks for the C series Cummins main engines were both inboard and easy to access.

Easy preventative maintenance is one reason we never missed a single day of the 1997 season.

My guests loved the stateroom with its roomy double berth - so did I when we worked from a mother boat and I got to be the honcho. All in all we had good sleeping accommodation for seven and could jam in a couple more in a pinch. And still with two heads and showers.

I preferred not to stay out more than three days, although we did make one extended trip of a full week. Having to fill fuel and water tanks and all the beer, wine, food and gear for a week took just enough off the normally quick-spinning "Pakita's" maneuverability to irritate me. She still handled better than most, but if we had a monster on, I wanted the ultimate.

Coming out of Cooktown we could be anywhere from the bottom of Number Ten Ribbon to Escape Reef in less than two hours, even in a 20kt south-easter.

Three day trips with a night in town getting all clean linen and laundry and running light on fuel was just the ticket. With 2:1 gears the Cummins were veritable misers.

"Pakita" is quite simply a great sea boat and I'd recommend that anyone in the market for a serious fishing boat pick a rough day and check her out with a sea trial.

Peter B Wright