



Off the Trailer

# Leader of the pack

A decade of development has resulted in Quintrex's Hornet 500 Trophy evolving into a boat ideal for hardcore fishing or simply a bit of fun on the water.





By Warren Steptoe



Page 50/51: The Quintrex 500 Hornet Trophy doing what it does best – enclosed water lure casting. Note, with someone on the bow casting deck, it still sits nicely level in the water – a significant improvement over earlier models.

Top: The Hornet's lower-set central cockpit may appeal to people with children when compared to imported bass boats.

Right: The new cutaway side console makes extra space available to stow the all-important tackle or ice box.



When introduced over a decade ago, the Quintrex Hornet was as radical a new boat as has ever been brought to us by the Australian boating industry. It looked like a punt from the chines up, but Quintrex's innovative stretch-forming of the bottom sheets allowed a soft-riding, fine forefoot on a hull which reverted, at rest, to a stable, shallow deadrise aft.

It worked – brilliantly – and history records that the Hornet has gone on to become an institution in Australian fishing, spawning a multitude of imitators and practically creating a whole new lure fishing culture.

The 2007 model Hornet 500 Trophy tested here – at five metres, the biggest Hornet Quintrex currently offers – is barely recognisable from the original. It's a nice looking boat, something which realistically couldn't be said of the original, however well it worked as an enclosed water lure fisher. Yet the stretch-formed forefoot flare is still there and although some of its imitators are great boats these days (particularly in terms of interior layouts), the Hornet remains unique among the breed.

Southern Moreton Bay, around the Jumpinpin area, is the perfect place to demonstrate the difference between a Hornet and its peers. The 'Pin, as we locals know only too well, is generally shallow and wide open to persistent strong winds, which routinely develop a nasty surface chop. It's a fishing spot known for inducing teeth-rattling rides in aluminium boats, but as this test proved, not in a five-metre Hornet.

So good was the ride across the usual 'Pin sloop, in fact, that only higher-sided, steeper deadrise (usually fiberglass) hulls, suited to offshore conditions, would surpass it. But, of course, they are completely unsuited to the flat water lure fishing the 500 Hornet Trophy is intended for. As perhaps you'd expect from the largest Hornet hull Quintrex builds, the 400-odd-kilo 500 Hornet Trophy hull is clearly the class of its field, the leader of the pack, however you want to put it.

In terms of its rough water ride – and for that matter, its serviceability as a fishing boat – the only real alternative to our test boat would be a 'bass boat'. These even lower-slung 'glass hulls (usually imported from the US) are currently attracting their own following, albeit largely from the more dedicated lure fishers and, more particularly, a growing band of tournament fishers.

However, our Aussie dedication to aluminium, and the fact that many of our ramps are on the rugged side, typically lacking a convenient beach or pontoon to hold the boat safely while awaiting the trailer, ensures aluminium boats like the Hornets will deservedly remain popular here.

To digress a moment, it's interesting to wonder why none of our Australian fibreglass boat builders have ever offered a serious alternative to the Hornet. Certainly, a GRP hull could more easily be formed (and probably at least as cost effectively, if not more so) into the sophisticated bottom shape which makes Hornet's combination of soft ride and good at-rest stability stand out from the crowd. Perhaps the lack of 'glass alternatives is precisely because aluminium boats tend to deal better with the harsh conditions and battering encountered by many Aussie fishermen.

### KID FRIENDLY

Personally, as a family man with young grandchildren, a major factor in favour of Australian-built boats in the Hornet style, as opposed to the 'bass-type' boats with comparable fishing space, is that our local boats tend to offer a roomier, lower-set cockpit, where the sides of the boat are high enough for some security with youngsters aboard.

That little people should wear PFDs goes without saying, however, there's no way the high-set decks and ultra-low sides of a bass boat are as secure for youngsters as the roomier cockpit in our test boat. Food for thought there if you tend to take a young crew along when you go lure casting...

And while talking family and social boating, let's discuss an aspect of the Hornet, which, I suspect, came as a surprise, even to Quintrex. Anyone who's tried it will agree about how much sheer fun there is to be had by simply zooming around in what was, unapologetically, intended to be a no-holds-barred fishing boat.

In the 500 Hornet Trophy, as with every Hornet model equipped with a side console, you sit low behind a curved, aerodynamic windscreen, with the steering wheel and instrumentation positioned very much like a sports car in front of you. It's undeniably 'sporty' in layout and soon encourages you to discover that running a Hornet between fishing spots can be fun.

Our test boat demonstrated a fine set of manners, not just for a tinnie, but for any boat.



It pointed precisely and could be cranked into turns generating impressive Gs – and just as impressive grins. Which explains why, as the people at Quintrex explained, they know of Hornet buyers who have bought the boat purely on the basis of its 'fun factor'.

Having tested every model throughout the Hornet's evolution, I can confidently say that the 500 Hornet Trophy certainly displays the refinement you'd expect from a decade of development. Over the years, Hornets have gained significant improvements, like roto-moulded stowage liners for drier storage and non-warping aluminium core hatches. The roto-moulded stowage areas in this boat include a

*The new M3 transom is the best so far; the stern casting deck now extends back into each aft corner to significantly expand usable deck space.*

*Our test boat demonstrated a fine set of manners, not just for a tinnie, but for any boat*



generously-sized fish or dry storage compartment at the aft end of the bow casting deck, and a full-size (recirculating) livewell under the aft casting deck – both real assets in any fishing boat.

Quintrex's ongoing commitment to improvement was evident in several other areas of this boat, too. New improved hinges on the hatches will be welcomed by those souls who have lost skin on the older-style hinges when fishing barefoot. Also for 2007, the side console has been

cut away to allow the space beneath to be used for storage. It's a small touch, but a good one as tackle boxes and gear invariably grow in size.

## TRANSOM TRICKS

And then there's Quintrex's new M3 transom. Quintrex was one of the first boat builders to modify its hulls to support the additional weight of four-stroke outboards with its "Maxi" transom and, while that's been generally a good thing, it came at a cost to casting room down aft. The 2007 M3 transom goes a long way towards addressing this by extending the deck back into each aft corner, considerably expanding deck space. An M3 transom is probably as good a compromise between casting deck space and the safety of a full height bulkhead as is possible.

Unfortunately, that can't be said about the lack of rod storage in the test boat. Keen crews now typically carry two or three rods and reels each for a day on the water. They can be worth

*Roto-moulded liners in stowage areas keep gear dry and organised.*




Top: A roto-moulded, recirculating livewell under the stern casting deck is another standard item in the 500 Hornet Trophy.

Above: More than just a fishing boat, Hornet owners can tell you they're also a lot of fun.

a lot of money, so having nowhere to safely store them seems almost unforgivable.

In Quintrex's defence, there is a rod locker on the 500 Hornet Trophy options list. However, this still leaves your precious gear to rattle around unrestrained, and that's just not acceptable to me. They should be securely racked and I don't think that's a lot to ask for in an expensive boat like this.

It might sound like I'm being a little harsh, but there are other boat builders that are guilty in this regard and given the rising cost of tackle, rods and reels these days, it's time the issue was addressed across the board. Meantime, as far as the 500 Hornet Trophy is concerned, a decent rod rack please, Mr Quintrex.

That aside, this is fundamentally a brilliant fishing boat with a class-leading rough water ride, an (otherwise) excellent interior layout and a sheer fun performance factor second to none. I couldn't help but love it! 

#### SPECIFICATIONS: QUINTREX 500 HORNET TROPHY

Construction:	Aluminium
Length:	5.03m
Beam:	2.05m
Weight:	399kg
Fuel:	60lt
Min Power:	70hp
Max Power:	100hp
Flotation:	Basic
Price:	(as tested) \$28,184

#### PERFORMANCE:

Engine:	Mercury 75hp two-stroke
Propeller:	18-inch Mercury Vengeance
Location:	Jumpinpin, Sth Qld
Conditions:	gusty side winds, test conducted in sheltered lee, with light chop and little current
Load:	2 adults, fuel tank half full.

RPM	Speed (in Knots)	Comments
850	2.6	slowest trolling speed
1900	5.6	minimum planing speed
3000	14.1	min. cruising speed range
3500	19.2	
4000	22.7	
4500	25.7	max. cruising speed range
5000	29.9	
5800	33.9	WOT

For further information, visit your nearest Quintrex dealer, or go to: [www.quintrex.com.au](http://www.quintrex.com.au).