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DUAL PERSONALITY

When you absolutely, positively know what you want, then you'll know that this is the right boat for you. It will not suit everyone, but for those in the market for a big runabout, then the Buccaneer 635 Esprite Dual Console is right on the money.

BY BARRY THOMPSON

When I rolled up the driveway with the 635 Esprite on the back of the Nissan Patrol, my kids raced out to give the boat a customary once-over.

"This is the bestest boat you've ever had home", said my seven year old. Wow! some statement from a kid that has been boating since he was only a few weeks old. Over the next three weeks I was to have a number of occasions to put his exuberant statement to the test. Initially the idea was to take the boat away to Hahei, on the Coromandel Peninsula for Labour Weekend, make a few trips to the Mercury Islands and generally learn all I could about the boat in four days. What a joke!

It rained and it blew and it rained and it blew some more. Stuck in a camping ground with a dozen kids is no fun when it's raining, so it didn't take much prompting from a few mates to brave the elements and give the boat a run.

It wasn't so much the 25 knot winds or big Mercury Bay swells

that concerned me, I was confident the boat would handle that okay, it was the cold wet miserable weather that made you wonder why you were doing it.

for scallops and bugs around Mercury Bay. With five aboard, 300 litres of fuel and Line 7 wet weather forecasts for all aboard, the 635 made short work of the sea.

long steep swells with breaking crests, the boat had plenty of tab to hold a level attitude. It was a good boat to drive aboard the swells and in the hollow sea, the full bodied hull shape holds it up. Because the same 21 deg hull as the Buccaneer 2008 Billfisher underwater sections have two strakes per side with a double chine arrangement and a wide ski plank down the keel. The inner strakes flare off about a metre from the stern and the portable overhang extends upwards from the bottom adding bouyancy at rest, yet being well out of the water when underway. To Buccaneer credit, the 2008 Billfisher and the bigger 237 Billfisher have a solid reputation for rough water boating.

For those of you who still believe open bow boats are potentially dangerous in the rough water, (especially a following sea)



After launching at Cooks Beach we headed across Mercury Bay to dive

Opposite: The ruined cement works on the Mahurangi River makes a contrasting backdrop.

Right: The layout is designed to suit divers, fishermen and family boaties.





then the 635 Esprite should alleviate those fears. Dipping the nose would be extremely unlikely. Even at rest when anchoring in a 2m swell (and my weight as far forward as I could get), the bow never looked like clipping into the next wave.

As a diving/fishing boat the layout of the 635 Esprite is exceptional and it's obvious that it has been conceived by someone who knows what's needed. Things like a dive bottle locker, kill tank, walk-through transom, removable rear seat, clip in carpet, antiskid self draining cockpit floor and deck wash, were part of the overall package.

With the first trip being a serious diving expedition (which proved successful), the 635 Esprite was given full marks by my diving mates, although they wouldn't let me put the canopy up to keep out the rain. A self draining cockpit takes care of any

excessive rain or water aboard, something that is uncommon in most bowriders and a real plus in a boat like this.

A few weeks later I got the 635 Esprite back on the water and this time it was a moderate Auckland Harbour chop and the mirror smooth waters of the Mahurangi River. Expedition Two was a family

day and on the river we took the opportunity to tow a tube and kneeboard. With a full compliment of family and friends aboard, the speedo nudged around to 50mph @ 5600 rpm. Trimmed out you can get the hull riding right up on the ski plank, although I feel this flat keel section does have a counter effect in the rough water with the occasional harsh re-entry, especially with a belly full of fuel.

Across the short chop, we sat on 40 mph and whilst the ride was comfortable, again I found the tabs excellent to balance the boat in the quartering sea to make it even better. Built to maximum beam, the hull is dry and very stable (both at rest and underway) and hangs on tight in the turns.

I also found that I was having to sit down more than usual to drive, as the seat was too far forward to be comfortable when standing. This is no reflection on the boat as the seat base had been set up to suit the owner and didn't have the standard sliding adjustable base.

A special feature of the boat is the compound curved Taylor glass windscreen, a first for a NZ manufacturer and something that adds a lot to the pleasing soft lines of the 635 Esprite.

One of the interesting things about open bow boats is that most of them don't like too much weight forward, and tend to run bowdown at speed. In the case of the 635 Esprite, you can still get the boat trimmed well with two adults forward.

DUAL PERSONALITY

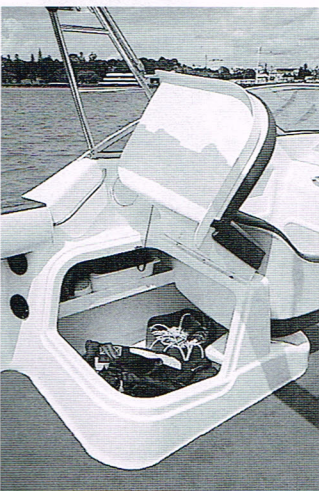
The Buccaneer 635 Esprite is a dual console boat with a dual personality. It's been designed as a versatile boat to cater especially for the fisherman and meet their exacting demands, for the diver who requires space and a non-nonsense layout and for the family man who wants all the comforts and a high standard of appointments. The 635 Esprite certainly achieves all of that....and more.

It's also a damn good looking boat and one that attracts attention both on and off the trailer. Talking of the trailer, the boat was sitting on one of the new DMW Custom Series trailers, complete with painted frames, mag wheel, walkboard and stepped guards.

Designer, Gerry Gerrand, MD of Buccaneer Pleasurecraft Ltd, set out not to design just another bow rider, but rather an all purpose, full bodied, bluewater runabout. He knew he was catering for a selective market, but with Buccaneer that's never been a prerequisite of any new model. The release a few years ago of their Billfisher walkaround series opened the industry's eyes and subsequently has opened many more chequebooks. Gerrand doesn't refer to his boat as a bow-rider, rather a dual console runabout with an open forward area. Whatever, the open bow and wide cockpit makes for a very full and useable boat inside.

Essentially the boat is built with an internal liner which incorporates everything from the seat mouldings, twin consoles, kill tank, deck and stern area. This makes for very easy cleaning after a day's boating, with well designed recesses and channels to feed all the waste water into the self draining system. The cockpit self drains both whilst underway and at rest and any excess water that may get through to the bilge is automatically pumped out.

Forward, the open bow seating area includes storage under the removable squabs and thick side padding for added comfort. The high coamings offer safety for passengers and they also have a stainless deck rail for extra security. The deep anchor locker holds plenty of ground tackle and there is room for an electric capstan with knee operated switch. An all automatic system operated from the helm



Top: The open bow is deep with plenty of space.

Above: Massive storage is available under the seat.

would be a nice addition.

The dual consoles of the 635 Esprite are both cavernous storage areas that compliment the massive forward underfloor locker. Along with a small starboard side locker, two more underfloor areas and the port seat base, this boat is over-subscribed with storage areas. Although the port console is reasonably plain (handrail for the passenger), the helm station opposite is designed to be used. In our test boat, it came complete with an Apelco Chartplotter/GPS, Apelco fishfinder, VHF, stereo system and the usual array of instruments (Yamaha dual dials), switches and a compass.

One of the special features of the 635 Esprite is the moulded port seat which incorporates a large forward bucket and a smaller rear facing side seat. Based on the same design as found in the 720 Series, the rear seat swings up to reveal a copious storage area. Personally I'd like to see this on both sides, but the underfloor kill tank locker makes it impossible.

There's no side shelves, with the internal liner taken right out to the hull extremities, giving maximum space inside. Rods are held in special rod racks, or in the case of the test boat in a very fancy optional fold down rocket launcher. While the overhead rod rack looked great I found it too low and got in the way when fishing. It also holds the canopy in a zip-out sock.

We had a massive 300 litres in the underfloor fuel tank (250 litres is standard) and still space in the rear locker for two tote tanks. The range of the boat with this sort of fuel capacity is extensive and portrays the reality of blue water boating. Your battery and oil tanks are neatly stowed under the aft deck and there's even more storage in and around this area. Nothing has been left unused. The rear twin bin seat is held in place with a couple of snap clips (as is the carpet), so you can leave it at home when fishing or use it to stow more gear when boating with the family. Set over on the starboard side, means when walking through the open transom to port you don't stand on a seat cushion.

AHEAD OF ITS TIME

The Buccaneer 635 Esprite dual console is probably the nearest I

have seen to a new big runabout. It's a market that most leading manufacturers have stayed well away from and probably for good reason. The volume of sales will never be equal with a similar sized cabin boat, but then there are those that don't want to be closed in, just as there are those who would never consider a bow rider or runabout.

As a bluewater runabout (bowrider for the purists) it is exceptional. It's styling is very American and a lot of the ideas have obviously come from understanding why the Yanks make more bowriders than any other single brand of large runabout. But it is very kiwi and incorporates the finest attributes for the 'kiwi bloke' who doesn't want the frills. For those boating in the colder climes a removeable wind protection screen between the consoles would be a good addition.

The 635 Esprite Dual Console is the sort of boat I see being ideally suited to those that do their boating in places like Auckland,



Pauanui or Lake Taupo, when staying out overnight is never usually a prerequisite. In a boat this size. It's a big boat that needs big power and a big vehicle to tow it. With all that in mind I would love to have one on my backyard this year.

Lightly laden the 635 topped 47 knots.

BUCCANEER 635 ESPRITE DUAL CONSOLE

HULL

Model:	635 Esprite Dual Console
Price:	\$29775
Price as Tested:	\$59000
Designer:	Gerry Gerrand
Material:	grp
Type:	open bow runabout
LOA:	6.76m
Hull Length:	6.32m
Beam:	2.42m
Hull Configuration:	deep vee
Deadrise at Transom:	21 deg
Trailerable Weight:	1530 kg
Engine Capacity:	115 - 200
Power Options:	outboard only
Fuel Capacity:	300 litres
Cockpit LOA:	1.80m
Cuddy LOA:	2.50m

PERFORMANCE AND FUEL

3000 rpm @ 20 knots (23 mph) @ 25.8 lph
3500 rpm @ 25 knots (29 mph) @ 28.4 lph
4000 rpm @ 29.5 knots (34 mph) @ 32.6 lph
4500 rpm @ 35.5 knots (41 mph) @ 40.0 lph
5000 rpm @ 39 knots (45 mph) @ 48.7 lph
5500 rpm @ 43.5 knots (50 mph) @ 63.6 lph
5900 rpm @ 46.8 knots (54 mph) @ 77.8 lph

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

deck hardware, self draining cockpit, foldaway ladder, bowrail, two stainless steel rod holders, five So-Pac hatches, Taylor curved glass screen, BEP wiring harness, navigation lights, bilge pump, polyurethane foam in hull, 250 litre fuel tank with sight glass and sender unit, twin helm seats with drivers side slider, mechanical steering.

OPTIONS ON TEST BOAT

Apelco GPS/Plotter, Apelco VHF, Apelco Fishfinder, stainless steel rocket launcher, trim tabs, bow cover, ski pole, hydraulic steering, wash-down pump and cockpit carpet.

ENGINE

Make:	Yamaha
HP:	200
Model:	Saltwater series
Cylinder Type:	V6
Max RPM:	5600
Propeller:	19"
Retail Price:	\$18567

TRAILER

Make:	DMW
Model:	Custom Series
Braked:	Single axle
Suspension:	Duratorque
Rollers:	multi roller
Features:	mag wheels, rounded guards with steps, hot dip galvanised painted frame, walkboard and submersible lights.
Price:	\$6705 (basic trailer before customised extras)

MANUFACTURER

Buccaneer Pleasurecraft Ltd, 21 Foreman Road, Hamilton, Ph 0-7-8497129, Fax 0-7-8497389.

BOAT SUPPLIED BY

Buccaneer Pleasurecraft Ltd.

COMPETITORS

Bayliner 2050 Capri, Rinker 212 Captiva, Sea Nymph 604 Hustler, Steadecraft 600, Wellcraft Eclipse 2000S.