

HAINES SIGNATURE 640F

The variable deadrise hull, designed by the legendary John Haines, has pushed his Signature brand to the top and kept it there for many years. Signature covers many different boat styles, but those with the 'F' designation are built for fishing. Fitted out in standard guise, they are very well equipped for serious anglers, and in early February I climbed aboard a new 640F with Tim Hearse from Pacific Marine.

This is a big, beefy trailer boat intended for offshore work. In fact, its new owner plans to tow it to Elliston in a couple of months to head out wide and fish around Flinders Island. That's a long run over open water in any trailer boat, but, given reasonable conditions, it's well within the range and capabilities of the 640F.

Quite recently, Signature released this model as a hard top, which will suit the needs (and budgets) of some, but not all. The test boat had been ordered in typical cuddy cabin configuration, with Bimini top and maximum cockpit fishing space. It would be no problem fishing three or four in this boat, whether it be chasing whiting locally, jigging for samson fish out of Coffin Bay or trolling for tuna at Victor Harbor.

Although the 640's layout is pretty typical of most cuddies in its class, the Signature does feature a few nifty design ideas. I really like the clever dash panel that unclips and tilts back easily to reveal all the wiring for switches, gauges and electronic displays. This must be a bonus for those setting the boat up, and also enables ready access to fuses etc. that sometimes need to be reached

HOW MUCH?

Packages start at \$89,990.
As tested - around \$110,000

GENERAL INFO'

Length overall - 6.62m
Beam - 2.43m
Dry weight - 1140kg
Storage height - 2.46m
Approximate towing weight - 2200kg

CAPACITIES

Fuel - 226 litres
HP - 150-225
Load - 1200kgs

SUPPLIED BY

Pacific Marine
6-10 Tapleys Hill Road, Royal Park
Ph: (08) 8444 2444
E: sales@pacificmarine.com.au
W: www.pacificmarine.com.au

quickly and with a minimum of fuss.

Seating for driver and passenger is extremely comfortable, with well-positioned recessed grab rails around the helm and throughout the cockpit. The forward hatch in the cuddy is a decent size, opening out to the port side, and there's ample room in the anchor well for a drum winch if so desired.

Although the cuddy cab offers restricted head room, it would be quite comfortable to sleep in if necessary. The flat cuddy floor (as opposed to the usual twin berths) enables you to stretch out, and the inclusion of deeply upholstered cushions would make for comfortable overnighting.



I like the 640's transom layout, which optimises space and presents a clean, workable fishing area. There's a three quarter width aft settee that folds down easily, and on the port side you'll find a handy rear boarding gate. The fiberglass bait table, which is semi-circular and carries extra rod holders, can be folded up or down as required. Side pockets are included for cockpit storage, and a sizeable sub-deck locker will handle bulkier items that need to be regularly accessed.

Signature recommends outboards of between 150-225hp for the 640 hull, and I was pretty sure the Honda BF200 was going to be a great match.



This engine weighs in at 276 kilos, which is comfortably under the maximum transom capacity of 290kg. It's a four stroke V6 with single overhead cam and programmed fuel injection. This is the same engine we run on the magazine's Bar Crusher 670 XT, and I can tell you it's the sweetest outboard I've ever had anything to do with. It's quick, quiet and about as economical to run as you could hope for.

One thing Haines Signature is famous for is its standard of build and finish, both of which are clearly evident in the 640F. The test boat was presented in striking white with black striping – simple enough, but tasteful and easy to maintain. You can order any of the Signature boats with white or coloured hulls, as well as upholstery to match. The downloadable brochure on the company's website provides plenty of information on colour choice.

I've driven a couple of other Signature 640s in recent times, one of which had been fitted with maximum power (225) and the other with 175hp. I doubt either was as quick off the mark as the test boat with the 200 Honda on the back. This engine/hull combination seems close to perfect, cruising very comfortably over flat water at 26 knots (48kph). Drop the hammer and you're soon pushing up to



That clever dash panel

35 knots (65kph) at 5800rpm, which is about what I'd anticipated at the top end with three on board.

Like most of the Signatures I've driven in recent times, the 640 hull is extremely responsive to trim. We had been treated to a near perfect late summer morning for the test run, enabling some top speed travelling and the opportunity to pull a series of tight turns. The variable deadrise hull hangs

on nicely when thrown into quite radical corners at speed, with zero cavitation and no side slip at all. You just trim in, pull the wheel around and hang on!

I can definitely vouch for the variable deadrise hull in choppy conditions. On a recent trip to the Gold Coast I took the 640 out of the Seaway through a very bumpy stretch of water and was totally impressed by the soft, positive ride. These boats were built for rough water and, with 21 degrees at the transom moving out to 33 degrees at the forefoot, you can feel pretty confident of negotiating sloppy conditions if you happen to get caught out.

Naturally, you'll need a substantial tow vehicle to pull the 640F safely and legally. Something like a mid to large 4WD or one of today's modern diesel utes would do the job easily enough, providing added security on steeper ramps. It's a snack to launch or retrieve on a purpose-built tandem trailer, even single handed if necessary.

There's no doubt that the Haines Signature 640F is up there with the best fishing trailer boats in its class. It's not a budget boat by any means, but as the old saying goes, you really do get what you pay for!



There's plenty of cockpit room aft of the helm



The 640F flies with big horse power on the back



Heaps of space at the helm



Honda's BF200 is the ideal power match

