



EBONY AND IVORY

Is Whittle's Sea Legend 2600 the ultimate pairing of fishing practicality and head-turning style?

Could be, writes John Willis.

ON THE
WATER

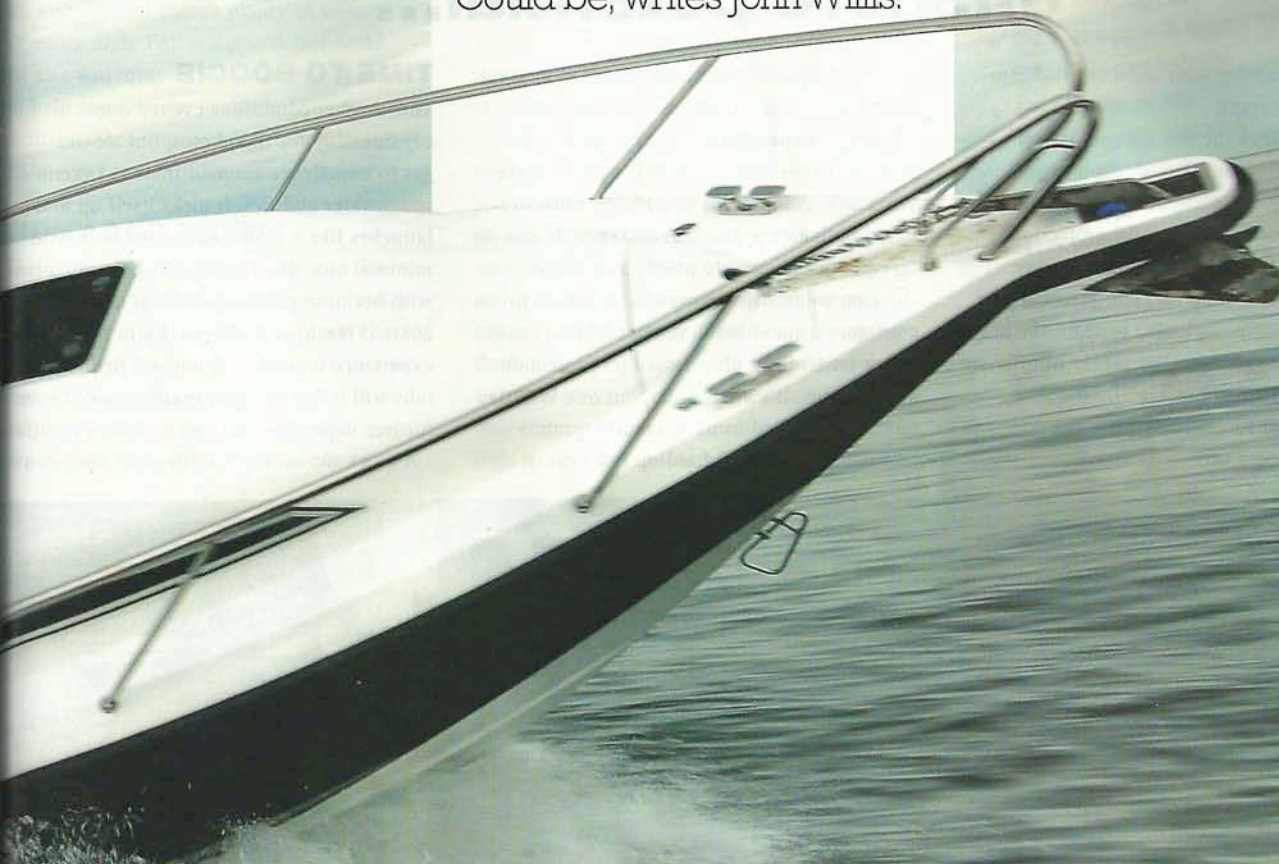


WEATHER
CONDITIONS

Wind: 10-15kts, dropping to calm

Sea: 1.5m confused chop, dropping to small swell

Photos: Stuart Grant



SEE THE
VIDEO
trailerboat.com.au

Whittley has produced some of Australia's finest offerings over its long history, but the brand has truly excelled with the new Sea Legend 2600. This beautifully presented package, tested here with optional hardtop in place, is qualified for far more than just fishing. It's a complete boating ensemble that will thrill the whole family, as

This is Whittley's biggest Sea Legend, with an overall length of 7.74m, or nearly 25ft in the old scale. It's surpassed in size only by the flagship of the Whittley range, the Cruiser 2800. It has a long hull with a deep 23° deadrise and a maximum beam of 2.46m, making it legally towable without wide load restrictions, while it has a maximum payload of 765kg. With the heaviest outboard option and trailer, the Sea Legend hardtop has a BMT

While the extra 220kg is a lot of weight and windage to have high on a deep-vee hull (enough to make any package a little tender), when you fly out of the hole its benefits spring to the fore, the hardtop cossetting you in a protective cocoon. We had a rather cold, blustery morning for this boat test and I was very happy to be snug and warm in this big, comfortable layout.

“...beneath the Sea Legend's classy exterior lies plenty of offshore potential...”

well as anyone else with saltwater flowing through their veins.

Fishos will love the Sea Legend. It has a comfortable layout that will suit a wide variety of anglers, particularly the southern bottom bouncers who look for protection from cold and windy conditions one day, then the blistering summer sun the next. But don't be fooled by its looks: beneath the Sea Legend's classy exterior lies plenty of offshore potential, and when powered by the new 300hp Yamaha four-stroke it has the power to knock your socks off!

weight of approximately 3000kg. An optional lighter aluminium trailer is also available.

Whittley expanded its range of products beyond the cruiser and skiboat market some years ago, going on to developing saltwater-based hulls in the Sea Legend range. It was faced with the age-old problem of length vs beam vs deadrise vs weight vs height to configure a smooth-riding boat with ocean-going credentials, plus passenger protection and comfort. It's a tall order, but one Whittley has accomplished in no uncertain terms – and the new optional hardtop is a beauty.

TIME TO BOOGIE

The weather conditions evened out considerably for the photos, but we did get to experience some of the Sea Legend's roughwater abilities. It picks itself up and launches like a rocket out of the hole with minimal bow lift. The big girl is on the plane with her nose pointing down at around 20kts (37kmh) at 3500rpm. Extra time and experience with the engine and Bennett trim tabs will refine this low cruising speed even further, depending on load and sea conditions.

A quick tap on the throttles will send you



humming along nicely at a comfortable and economical 31kts (57.4kmh) at 4500rpm, where the tremendous power of the big Yammie is still to be unleashed. Then, as soon as you hit 5000rpm, the story becomes clear. This big machine is like all high-powered deep-vees – she just wants to get up and boogie at a grunty 35kts (65kmh). From here the fun really starts, powering evenly all the way up to a thrilling wide open throttle speed of 43.5kts (80.5kmh) at 6100rpm. That's the old 50mph with three passengers onboard – really humping for a trailerable boat this big!

Typically, she's a little weight sensitive when up and rolling at such high speeds, and that's understandable given that big, long and deep hull, and the fact there's plenty of weight carried up high. Full water and fuel tanks, as well as a full array of offshore fishing gear, will help stabilise the package. The trim tab operation takes time to fully master, but they will be a great aid to this sizeable hull.

EBONY AND IVORY

The layout and finish is exceptional. To quote Sir Paul McCartney, "ebony and ivory live together in perfect harmony", and the minimal silver and black graphics emphasise the craft's modern, flowing lines. The solid safety-glass shell of the hardtop looks out over the long bow, with access to the latter

from either the narrow side-walkways or the Perspex cabin hatch. The moulded bowsprit is well designed for its plough anchor and Lewmar electric winch combination while the bow is safely enclosed and highlighted with a stainless-steel split bowrail.

I love the helm and cockpit design; in fact, I really liked the whole interior. The integrated seating units are terrific. They give a good seating position with well upholstered, swivelling seats, as well as a huge amount of storage. The winning feature for me, however, concerns the comfortable, rear-facing seats – where you can happily while away the hours waiting for that elusive snapper, gummy or gamefish. These seats are quite practical for many forms of fishing and contribute to a low centre of gravity for the angler entrusted with watching the lure pattern, and they're big enough to store a couple of Esky-style coolers or large tackle boxes.

The helm position is understandably high, but very comfortable for a bloke of my size. If you're vertically challenged you may have a little trouble reaching the footrests, but that's easily overcome. The dashboard layout is good and provides the operator with a full display of easily accessible information. You won't quite flush-fit a 12in sounder/GPS, but I found the Garmin 750s to be of exceptional quality and easy to read. The communications are mounted high in the hardtop. There is minimal glare on

the instruments and all-round vision, enhanced by the high seating, is excellent. The passenger position is equally good, with a suitably-placed Jesus bar for additional security.

SPACIOUS LAYOUT

You can fish with three or four active anglers and still have room for the crew. The deck space and cockpit layout is equal to any of the world's best trailerable gamefishers. Under



TRAILERBOAT RATES THE WHITTLEY SEA LEGEND SL2600 HARDTOP

- 🔵🔵🔵🔵🔵 Fishability
- 🔵🔵🔵🔵🔵 Innovation
- 🔵🔵🔵🔵🔵 Design and layout
- 🔵🔵🔵🔵🔵 Quality of finish
- 🔵🔵🔵🔵🔵 Handling and ride
- 🔵🔵🔵🔵🔵 Stability at rest
- 🔵🔵🔵🔵🔵 Ergonomics
- 🔵🔵🔵🔵🔵 Standard equipment
- 🔵🔵🔵🔵🔵 Value for money
- 🔵🔵🔵🔵🔵 X-Factor
- 🔵🔵🔵🔵🔵 OVERALL

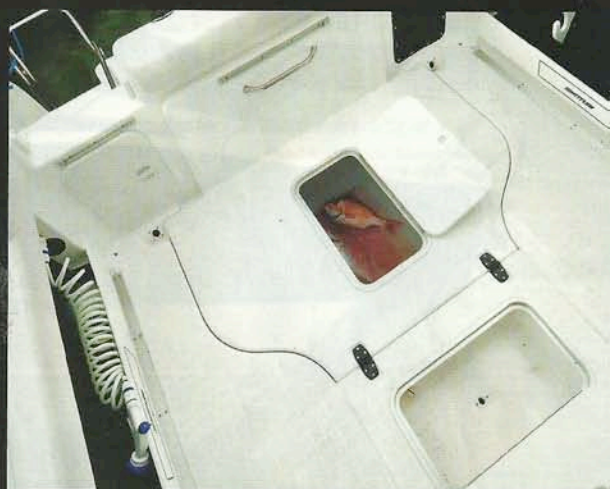
PERFORMANCE

- 12.5kts (23.2kmh) @ 3000rpm (on the plane)
- 19.5kts (36.1kmh) @ 3500rpm (bow comes down, trimmed evenly)
- 26kts (48.2kmh) @ 4000rpm (the combination doesn't like this speed)
- 30.8kts (57.0kmh) @ 4500rpm (feeling heaps better)
- 35.3kts (65.4kmh) @ 5000rpm (motor sounds great and the package loves to boogie)
- 39kts (72.2kmh) @ 5500rpm (loads of grunt and more to come)
- 43.5kts (80.6kmh) @ 6100rpm (WOT at the old 50mph — yee-ha!)

Far left: The super comfy rear-facing seats are a real winner. Great for keeping a leisurely eye on those rods.

Middle: The immaculate deck and layout will keep the whole family happy — and hold its own against a world class gamefisher. With an optional hardtop and 300hp four-stroke Yammie this BMT package weighed in at around 3000kg. That's a fair bit of boat to tow — but geez it's nice!

Below: The result of sitting around comfortably waiting for the bite. The SL2600 Hardtop will happily accommodate three or four active anglers with plenty of room left for the crew.



the non-skid floor there is a killtank / cooler as well as separate access to the bilge. You can also get to the bilge via a smaller hatch where a fishbox is stored as a killtank – most ingenious, Mr Whittley.

The recessed sidepockets have gaff and boat hook holders to the port side and a detachable pressurised deckwash to the starboard, and they provide both storage and toeholds. The walk-up-style transom has a boarding recess each side as well as hatches to retain the batteries, switchgear and other plumbing, and there's a plumbed livebait tank to the port side. A lift-out rear lounge is available for those with a multi-purpose boat in mind, but it wasn't fitted to our test boat as the boys had taken the opportunity to do some snapper fishing before we got there – with some success, I might add.


The Sea Legend 2600 is a comfortable boat to work in, with uncluttered deck areas, spacious helm positions and a generous companionway to the extremely well-appointed cabin. The doorway itself has a timber finish and is lockable, but it's just a little rattly in the rough and tough. When inside the cabin you could be excused if you thought you were on one of Whittley's famous cruisers. The full galley and separate pump-out toilet / shower cubicle are supplied by the freshwater tank and hot water service. There's also a convertible vee-berth, sink, slide-out stainless-steel stove and Engel fridge. This all works well, with a really nicely engineered lift-up table for entertaining. There's plenty of storage as well as shelf space, and even a Fusion LCD television to keep the kids entertained, both

large and small. The internal mouldings, work surfaces, head lining and upholstery quality is right up there with the best.

You won't be left wanting for features, either. Spotlights, docking lights, deck lights and cockpit, coaming and cabin lights are all tin-wired for longevity, as is the loom. There are stainless grabrails and cleats wherever you look, including rails on top of the hardtop which also supports the rocket launcher. Refreshment holders, cool storage, flush-mount tackle boxes, stainless ladders, boarding platforms, Fusion sound system, freshwater tanks, Icom VHF radio and a full set of travel covers are just some of the premium items on offer.

Whittley generally mates the package to a full drive-on, tandem-axle Whittley Mackay trailer. The Sea Legend is available in a range of power options, including two- and four-stroke outboards, as well as petrol and now diesel sterndrives.

THE WRAP

With or without the optional hardtop, the Whittley Sea Legend 2600 is a most impressive unit. It combines some of the latest offshore fishing ideals with attractive, modern design and the traditional Whittley ensemble of creature comforts. Speaking to me of the process involved in purchasing any new boat, young Alan Whittley quoted his famous grandfather, saying, "It's always the wife that makes the decision." That's true enough in most cases, but I can think of a good many keen male fishos who would bend over backwards to own the Sea Legend 2600. 

WHITTELEY SEA LEGEND SL2600 HARDTOP



HOW MUCH?

Price as tested: Around \$149,999
 Options fitted: Aluminium trailer upgrade, fibreglass hardtop, full-length hard glass with sliding side-windows, Garmin unit, electric winch with rope and chain, rear deckwash, 19in Fusion DVD screen, VHF upgrade, baitboard, electric hot water system, remote control spotlight, electric toilet and holding tank, rear carpet
 Priced from: \$120,000

GENERAL

Type: Deep-vee monohull
 Material: Fibreglass
 Length (overall): 7.74m
 Beam: 2.46m
 Weight (empty): 1695kg
 Deadrise: 23°

CAPACITIES

People: 8
 Rec. HP: 250-350
 Max. HP: 350
 Fuel: 250lt (350lt option available)
 Water: 100lt

ENGINE

Make/model: Yamaha F300B
 Type: 24-valve, DOHC with VCT Direct Action 60° V6
 Weight: 253kg
 Displacement: 4169cc
 Gear ratio: 1.75:1

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