

Bay's a breeze in any weather

PORT Phillip Bay on her nastiest of days easily sifts out the good boats from the also-rans. The short, sharp chop, with waves snaking in from all angles can make recreational boating anything but a pleasure.

About the worst way of travelling across the Bay, is meeting the sea on the bow quarter. Running directly downhill or uphill is relatively easy, except for the odd time when the crests come too close.

A quarter sea out on the Bay though will thoroughly test out a hull's design strengths and relative flaws.

Just after the boat show finished, I took the new-release Whittley Fleetmaster from the St. Kilda Marina to the Cerberus and back.

It punched into a metre-and-a-half chop all the way down to Black Rock. But instead of the Whittley taking a pounding, it cruised across the ugly water to deliver a superb ride.

With her 20-degree deadrise hull, the Fleetmaster has sufficient vee from the entry to the stern to smooth out the roughest conditions. Certainly in the rough she coped extraordinarily well, riding on top of the swell and parting the water easily.

LIKE the other models in the Whittley line-up, the Fleetmaster boasts ample freeboard with solid hull lines.

The new Fleetmaster is styled along the same successful lines as the bigger 6.6-metre Cruisemaster.

She has a hardtop cabin roof, making the boat family rig which can be used throughout the year both on the Bay or the more docile inland waters.

Internally, the Fleetmaster consists of a semi-open cockpit with full standing head room throughout.

In the main area under the hardtop roof, there is a permanent table which seats four, elevated helm and passenger seat, sealed off head and a rear lounge which converts to a double berth.

Through the lockable companionway doors are conventional vee bunks. Access is also available through here to the deck hardware and external anchor locker.

In typical Whittley style, the Fleetmaster has exceptional storage and well-designed, built-in fea-

Boating

By BOB CARTER

tures. Beneath the helm seat is a stove, while an ice box is under the footrest.

Under the port seat is a hand basin complete with pump-action cold water system.

There is a lot of quality teak timber work throughout the rig, enough to make any owner feel as though he is inside a homely boat and not a cold lump of fibreglass. There is also an extensive amount of carpeting throughout.

The test Fleetmaster was powered by one of Marine Power's V-6 MerCruiser sterndrive engines. The V-6 MerCruiser has been around for a little while, but is beginning to gain acceptance.

IT'S a compact powerplant, which has the appeal of four-stroke torque, quiet operation and power steering.

Certainly on the Fleetmaster, the MerCruiser 205 proved to be an ideal match. Spinning a 387 mm x 381 mm prop, the Fleetmaster planed quickly and cruised effortlessly at 3000 to 3500 rpm.

Flat stick, the tach needle edged to within a whisker of 5000 rpm as the Fleetmaster was pushed really hard into the head-on chop.

Full bore the big boat demolished the Bay's nastiness, delivering an exhilarating ride.

Even with her bulk and comprehensive fit out inside, the heavy Fleetmaster still delivered a spirited performance.

WITH a big reputation to live up to, the Whittley Fleetmaster is right up with the best from the Whittley establishment.

WHITILEY FLEETMASTER

Length — 5.8 m

Beam — 2.489 m

Weight — 900 kg (hull only)

Deadrise — 20 degrees at transom

Fuel — 180 litres sub floor

Engine — 205 MerCruiser: V-6 block; 4.294 litre displacement; bore x stroke 95 mm x 88 mm; compression 9.5:1; gear ratio 1.65:1; weight 365 kg.

Propellor — 387 mm x 381 mm.

Price — \$28,070 as tested including tandem galvanised trailer with brakes.

[Test boat supplied by Whittley Cruisers, 24 Simms Rd., Briar Hill. 3088. Phone 434-4979.]