



“Would you like fries with that, sir?”

“Err...Not really, but is there a chance of a Mac Boat – just a little one, say a 2.1 metre dinghy?”

“Sir, I suggest you sit down and munch on your Mac Burger, you’re obviously in need of some nourishing tucker.”

What do Mac Boats and McDonalds have in common?

Polyethylene Thermoplastic – no, not in the burger but out in the playground. I imagined an ankle biter romping around in a McDonald’s playground and then, when he becomes a real bloke, romping in his new playground, the ocean, in a Mac Boat.

McDonald’s playgrounds and Mac boats are made from the same virtually indestructible material; polyethylene thermoplastic, and both products are manufactured by Galloway International Ltd in Auckland.

I met the general manager Martyn Jones on the Friday of Labour weekend to pick up the latest addition to their range – a brand new six metre centre console Mac Boat, to trial over the weekend.

How does this polyethylene thermoplastic compare with traditional materials such as wood, aluminium and fibreglass? Does it have any advantages? What is polyethylene anyway, and as a boatie, why should I trust my life in a boat made out of it?

This product has been around along time and various grades are used for an amazing array of products...your wheelie bin, roadside crash barriers, huge water tanks etc. Galloway exports their products globally. The raw material, derived from oil. Colour stabilizers and ultra-violet inhibitors are added to the powder before it is poured into moulds and then into huge rotationally moving ovens that are heated to 260°C. The technology allows the boat hull to be formed as one integral piece, eliminating any hull welds or joins. The process ensures the average thickness of the inner and outer sides are consistent to design requirements, while the hull’s base and high impact areas, such as the bow keel, are suitably thicker. The polyethylene used in Mac Boats is top quality, food grade virgin material and has substantially more strength than other grades of polyethylene.



With a weight of 1300kg, the Mac Millennium was still easy to launch and retrieve.

Besides its inherent strength, polyethylene offer the owner virtually maintenance free boating – no corrosion, rust or rot, no osmosis, no mould growth, no electrolysis corrosion created by your electronic toys, no paintwork to maintain, impervious to corrosive liquids such as battery acid, petrol

etc, guaranteed not to break down in harsh sunlight.

Polyethylene's strength can take an amazing amount of abuse. It will slightly scratch, but this is not a major concern if you provide protection for areas that you think could be damaged. You can fit your own personal fixtures such as tank racks, rocket launchers, etc. Fixtures can be bolted to the sidewalls. Access to nuts and washers is via small access hatches that can be installed in appropriate places.

A solid floor of 17mm thick marine-grade ply provides a very solid surface underfoot while also adding substantial structural strength to the main floor bearers. The floor is ideal for screwing in extra boat fittings as required, and can be covered with polypropylene marine carpet which is great for keeping your feet in one place and comes up good as new with a quick hose-down to remove the blood and guts of the day's activities.

The centre console's sloping dashboard has space to mount motor monitoring gauges and electronic aids. Two large waterproof hinged hatches access the dry storage space under the dash fore and aft. This area is ideal for storing safety equipment, dry clothing etc. These hatches are large enough to give you easy access to the electrical wiring and steering system for maintenance and installation purposes.



The steering system for the centre console boat tested was hydraulic, which is preferred over wire cables due to the tight bends encountered when running the cables via under the floor channel to the Mercury motor. For the cuddy cabin version wire cables are OK as they can be installed on the side of the boat, avoiding sharp bends.

The console has a perspex tinted windscreen to protect the driver from wind and spray. The

top of the windscreen curves forward to scoop air up and over the driver's head. I found the curve to be at my eye level (5'10" – 178cm) when standing and it created distortion. Mac Boats are looking at rectifying this problem. Above the console, held by very solidly constructed frame of stainless steel tubing, is a sun and rain protection canopy. It would act as a sun shade more effectively than rain protection, especially when you're on the move.

In front of the console is a cushion seat wide enough for two. Handrails need to be positioned to provide hold points when taking the boat through moderate to rough sea. A stainless steel bow rail is available as an optional extra which would also be an effective handhold.

In the bow is the storage area for the anchor and its warp. Although adequate, it could be a little larger and deeper. You may consider fitting some protection to the hull to avoid dings from sharp edges of an anchor which may be dumped unceremoniously into the anchor well by crew.

Being a centre console, access to the bow for anchoring and retrieval is excellent. It also allows for far more possibilities to fish from. If you hook up a kingi the ability to be able to move around the boat easily could be the difference between success and failure!

A very substantial white powder coated aluminium bowsprit with internal roller ensures your anchor warp is kept in the right place and away from damaging the hull. The stern area has port and starboard cushioned seats with room under for petrol tanks. An underfloor fuel option is available for carrying 100 litres.

A 90hp EXLPTO Mercury is fitted to a purpose-built white powder coated aluminium portfolio transom. The bracket is bolted to alloy plates that are fixed to inserts moulded into the transom. The bracket also incorporates a large aluminium dry box for holding your battery and if required, oil for your motor. Storage is also available in two parallel running channels either side of the area dedicated for an under floor fuel tank. Both these channels are perfect for scuba tanks. Seats come in a variety of choices. Our Mac had twin padded swivel seats manufactured from polyethylene, mounted on moulded pedestal pods, which also provided dry storage underneath.

The master plan was to go bugging and fishing off the Coromandel town or Tairua. Mac boats are well known for their buoyancy and with a bare boat, two adults and two children, we had little trouble getting up on the plane and cruising at 25 mph at 4200 rpm. With such a light load she tended to point her nose skyward until planing speed was reached, and you could then trim the motor out. With a confused sea, resulting from a 10 knot south westerly chopping up the surface

of the metre- high swells, the Mac tended to bang a little even with her entry vee of 43 degrees. I consider other boats would be the same in the conditions we were in. the polyethylene hull definitely gave a quieter ride than aluminium.

I was keen to chuck some real weight into her to see how she handled. The next day we headed out with three divers, six tanks, and all the gear. With weight stowed forward of the console, she lost her 4reach for the sky attitude and smugly crashed through the seas with less banging. The deep vee and multi-strake hard chine gave us a soft ride. She kept her head straight when coming off the back of running down a wave. These buoyant boats love some weight to get them sitting down into the water.



With the pontoon stern sections she could perform very tight turns. In fact, my mates could hardly believe the cornering at high speeds while having no fear of being unsafe. Stability is synonymous with Mac boats. With two fully kitted divers sitting on her side, she barely lifted her skirt. No need to hang on when divers are moving around the boat. Even without a stern dive ladder fitted, or helpful handgrips, it was easy to climb back on board once you had unloaded your tank and weight

belt.

Mac boats have always been popular with divers because of their stability and ability to carry a lot of weight. You need look no further than some dive schools, commercial fishermen and mussel farmers to realise if you want a boat that can handle relentless punishment and hard work without receiving too many cuddle and kisses, a Mac Boat is hard to beat. Some people are predicting that polyethylene is the future material of boating.

If maintaining your boat is keeping you away from enjoying the pleasures of a McDonald's hamburger with your kids, or spending time with your mates around the barbie on a summer's evening, you should take a Mac Boat for a test drive to experience the difference.

*Edited Version*

