

Icon 54 Weaponry

Lucky number seven

By Siana Clifford



Extrême fishing. It's the ultimate adventure sport: man against the elements, miles away from the nearest land with only you and your boat to rely on in pursuit of the perfect catch. In circumstances like this even the most skilled game fisher needs to know they have the best equipment at hand and Formula Cruisers have certainly fulfilled this brief with their newest build, *Weaponry*.

The specification sheet on this 54-foot vessel is impressive to say the least and reads like a wish-list. In fact it started out as a wish list. *Weaponry*, the seventh build in the Icon 54 series by Formula Cruisers, has been wholly customised to its owner's very high specifications.

Weaponry's owner saw an Icon 54 for the first time at the 2008 Sanctuary Cove boat show and was immediately drawn to its distinctive 'Carolina' sheer, flared bow, large beam and the overall volume of the boat. Looking for a boat specifically for game-fishing and charter work, the owner approached Formula Cruisers to see if they could fulfil his list of requirements and customise the boat to make it better suited for these purposes. Already happy with Formula's reputation, 26 years of production history and the company's confidence that they could produce what he wanted to the highest standard and quality of finish, the deal was sealed after a sea trial in Auckland harbour, where the owner was so impressed with the performance, stability and strength of the boat that the contract for the build to begin was signed within a week.

Now *Weaponry* is just about ready for delivery but I was lucky enough to grab a sneak preview before it sets off for future home port in New South Wales.

The first thing that strikes you about *Weaponry* as you approach it from the dock is its impressive height – it towers about nine metres above the water line. This is due to the tuna tower that was one of the main additions the owner made to the build. Supplied by Black Marlin Towers in Queensland, the tower makes for a sophisticated, hi-tech spot to lookout for shoals of fish with its helm controls, four Raymarine screens and two seats.

Once on board the impression that this is a serious fishing boat continues. There are a further six Raymarine screens, four in the flybridge – which have been specifically customised to accommodate them – and two in the cockpit. The screens are just part of an extensive electronics package installed by Emjay Services in North South Wales, which includes a Furuno drop-down 360-degree sonar, a Furuno sounder, a Raymarine hi-definition radar, towed cameras connected to two HDD recorders, a JRC HF SSB radio, ICOM VHF and Simrad autopilot.

The list of owner-specified customisations doesn't end there with other note-worthy sports-fishing features including an extra-large, glass-faced live bait tank, tuna tubes for feeding in the live bait, pop-out deck cleats, gaff and tag pole lockers, an alarmed rod storage locker, the removal of



colour scheme of beiges and creams.

The leather settees in the saloon area provide the perfect vantage point to admire the view out to sea or to enjoy a movie on the 32" Philips flatscreen TV recessed into its American cherrywood surround while the Bose sound system provides the soundtrack. A mere flick of a switch changes the coffee table set in the seating area into a dining table to enjoy an evening meal.

The preparation of such meals can only be pleasure in a galley that makes the most of its space with clever corner cupboards while leaving room for an extra-large Fisher & Paykel fridge-freezer. The dish drawer is also made by Fisher & Paykel, while the oven and hob are Samsung. The Corian worktop and sink with modern Paffoni tap-ware add to the feeling of quality.

In the galley, and indeed throughout the boat, all the storage is made from American cherrywood and the fact that all the drawers are soft-close is just another small but well-thought-out detail to add to the overall impression of class. Recessed lighting, kick lights on the stairs, individual controls for the air-conditioning system in each of the rooms and full height ceilings and doorways throughout are just some of the others.

Not having to bend to avoid hitting your head while entering into the cabins is a pleasure instantly followed by the impression of space in each of the three cabins. The master cabin is on the port side and has been customised into a configuration to include for an extra bunk above the queen-size bed. The leather headboard in the main cabin also features in the guest cabin and in each cabin there's ample storage while each bed has its own reading light.

Both the main head and the ensuite head are generously proportioned with large walk-in showers, modern bowl sinks and Paffoni tap-ware and plenty of the all-important storage and mirrors. The flooring in both is the same as in the galley - a polished, high-gloss cherry with a white inlay - giving a sense of



the boarding platform, two 300-litre fish slurry bins and twin cockpit bench seats.

With this mind-blowing list of specifications running around my head, it's time to see how the boat handles and the twin MTU 825-horsepower series 60 engines come to life. We set out from Auckland's West Harbour on a pretty smooth, if slightly overcast, day and take a trip out towards Rangitoto Island. As the sun glints off the gold anodised aluminium rod-holders as we leave the harbour, I can't help but notice the looks that this sleek boat, so smart with its oyster white exterior, matching outriggers and contrasting gunmetal stripes, is attracting.

On the open water Grant Senior from Formula Cruisers lets the full power of the engines come into their own. The boat seems to effortlessly glide to a near maximum speed of 32 knots as the 34-inch propellers eat up the nautical miles. When a photo opportunity calls for Grant to circle the boat several times, there's no heavy-handed steering needed as the boat handles very lightly - and it jumps through wake with the ease of a much smaller boat. With a range of 500nm at 24knots or over 2,000nm at 8knots this boat can go far and is built to NSW survey 1E/2B out to the 200nm limit.

While *Weaponry* is clearly a serious fishing boat, I wouldn't be doing it justice if I didn't spend some time explaining how beautifully the interior is fitted out - it's definitely a boat for comfort and relaxation too. Coming in from the teak deck at the aft of the boat there's an open-plan living area containing the galley and the living area. The interior atmosphere is immediately restful, helped in part by the subtle recessed mood lighting through the centre of the saloon and also by the use of a tasteful, neutral





continuity to the décor.

Going back up the stairs into the saloon leads to the interior staircase to the flybridge. The immediate impression here is of space and light – no cramped quarters for the captain of the ship on this vessel! The large windows offer a panoramic view and Ultra leather Navigator seats at the helm mean you can motor away in complete comfort with all the electronic information you might need on the screens right in front of you. There's room to chill out too as there's another set of settee, a 22" flatscreen television and a bar fridge to cater for all your relaxation needs.

As a hard-working fishing boat, the sumptuous interior is practical too. The wall and ceiling panels are made from durable, stain-resistant macrosuede, while both the seating areas in the saloon and fly bridge can be made into double beds – bringing the sleeping capacity of the boat up to an impressive 11. The boat is also equipped for as much enjoyment of outside living as the weather permits – the foredeck provides ample space for sunbathers who can cool off in the swim shower on the aft deck when needed before enjoying grilled catch of the day from the stowaway barbecue.

Weaponry has been aptly named – it's a fishing boat first and foremost and to that end it's kitted out with every imaginable 'weapon' in the pursuit of some serious fish. However it's also beautifully finished and built for comfort. This combo means it's feasible to spend up to a week at sea without any need for shore-based support and it's easy to see how this prospect would appeal to both the owner and those chartering the boat. Formula Cruisers have got the formula right on this one – and I have no doubt that they'll be proud of their work on this vessel. It just might be their hardest boat to let go of yet. 🚤