

MCLAY 571HT

A BIT OFF THE TOP

Hearing that the first of McLay Boats' new 571 Sportsman Hard Tops had arrived at Fish City in Hamilton, Sam Mossman headed down to the 'Tron' to check it out.



Mclay Boats needs no introduction from me. The South Island manufacturer, with a large factory in Milton (south of Dunedin) was founded by the genial Steve McLay, who continues to head it up. It has become one of the largest aluminium boat builders in the country.

The 571 Sportsman Hard Top is a new model, based on the popular 571 Sportsman cuddy, but sharing a lot of the features

of McLays' top-selling model, the 591 Sportsman Hardtop.

"Four seasons in one day..." Crowded House famously sang, and this is an accurate description of the changeable weather conditions often experienced in this country. From a blistering sun delivering among the highest UV radiation levels in the world, to rain, icy wind and even snow, boaties experience it all at some time, somewhere in the country. It is little wonder that the protection from the elements offered by hardtops makes them

extremely popular with Kiwi recreational boaties.

The downside is that a hardtop raises a boat's centre of gravity by putting more weight upstairs, as well as increasing its windage. A hardtop configuration has the potential to reduce a monohull's stability, unless the hull is large and heavy enough to sustain it.

While cats and pontoon boats are stable enough to carry a hardtop on a hull smaller than six metres (the benchmark length for a hardtop monohull) below this, stability suffers. So, despite

demand for smaller hardtop boats, they are rare beasts in the monohull market.

McLay have moved the goal posts with their new 571 Sportsman Hard Top. The hull is a modified version of the 571 cuddy, 5.65m long, with hull design changes to counteract the destabilising weight of the hardtop. At the stern, the chines are much wider than usual, with a decent down-turn. Beam is 2.20m, substantial for a boat of this length. Deadrise at the transom is a modest 17 degrees,



also aiding stability without affecting the ride.

McLay incorporate a bottom thickness of 5mm which also increases low-down weight, but the sides and topsides are 3mm, reducing the weight of the upper structure. The sealed deck is 4mm tread-plate, giving good footing, and drains to a sump under the transom emptied by a 1100gph bilge pump. A 130-litre fuel tank runs just above the keel line, effectively helping to ballast the hull, but still allowing space for 120kg of reserve buoyancy (by



There is no shortage of grab rails for the passengers.

CPC calculations). And finally, a bow keel-wear strip is added, again adding weight to the keel line (a full-length keel protection strip is an option).

All these design factors add to the model's stability, so its 5.65m hull can carry a hardtop without compromising its ride or stability.

River cruise

At Fish City's Hamilton boat yard I met up with salesman Peter Orton and marketing manager Jucinta Stevenon. The 571HT was all ready to go and it was only a short drive to the Grantham Street boat ramp on the Waikato River.

It is seldom I get to do a boat test on a river and I had never boated this section of the Waikato before, but fortunately Peter was very familiar with this water and the snags to avoid.

Freshwater doesn't provide the same buoyancy as saltwater and we were also running against approximately 4kph of current, which must be taken into account when considering the performance.

Once we were on an open-speed section of the river, we could open the engine up (see the figures on page 118). Despite



The fairlead is set on a bowsprit with split bow rails that help constrain the warp.



A locking glovebox features a pair of fold-down cup holders on the front face.



The McLay is well finished, with competent welding.



the Mercury 90hp four-stroke engine being at the bottom end of the recommended horsepower range of 90-115hp, there was plenty of power. With three adults and half a tank of fuel aboard, and running into the current, we achieved a top- speed of 58kph

(31 knots). Cruising at 40kph (22 knots) and 4000rpm was smooth, quiet and comfortable.

The rig rode smoothly, handled very well, and the open-back hardtop provided plenty of protection from the elements. It was, to be fair, sheltered water in the river gorge and the

only waves we encountered were from a big old river cruise boat coming the other way, but there didn't appear to be any stability issues resulting from the hardtop configuration. At rest, having the crew move around the cockpit or stand all on one side did not cause much

McLAY BOATS

571 SPORTSMAN HARDTOP TO BE RELEASED AT THE HUTCHWILCO NEW ZEALAND BOAT SHOW. MOST OTHER MODELS WILL BE ON DISPLAY. **STAND 333**

NEW MODEL



/Mclayboats.ltd



03 417 8135

www.mclayboats.co.nz



McLay Boats have produced a well-behaved 5.65m runabout with the protection of a hardtop.

of a list. It looks like McLaren Boats' design innovations have done the trick.

Stem to stern

The fairlead is set on a bowsprit with split bow rails that help constrain the warp. A crucifix bollard performs tie-off duties and a hatched anchor well is fitted forward of the large access hatch in the fore-cabin roof. An anchor winch can be fitted if required.

As may be expected, a boat of this size is not set up with full-length forward berths or squabs, but they are long enough for the kids to nap on and there is modest stowage beneath them, along with side shelves above. The step-down drains to the bilge.

At the helm a decent-sized dash is lined with dark marine carpet and fitted with a grabrail. A locking glovebox features two fold-down cup holders on the front face and there are two levels of shelves built in to each side of the hardtop.

Electrics and electronics include: a GME 6.Com VHF radio mounted in the

companionway; a Lowrance Hook-5 sounder/GPS (Hook-7's will be supplied on future models); Mercury Smartcraft gauges, plus the usual switching. Steering is hydraulic but cable is quite adequate for the 90hp Merc.

The seats are upholstered, moulded plastic types on swivel bases with tread-plate foot rests. They are mounted atop aluminium bases with internal stowage that also mount rear-facing bench seats. Plenty of grabrails are fitted around the back of the hardtop.

The cockpit is a reasonable size for this class of boat. Side shelves are fitted with mounting braces underneath, suited to rod or pole racks.

The transom locker is accessed through two hatches, with a battery box, isolation switch and plenty of storage room inside. Mooring cleats are sited in each stern quarter, and over the transom wall treadplate boarding platforms are provided, with grab rails and a fold-down boarding ladder on the port side. The filling port for the 130-litre underfloor fuel tank is also sited on the boarding platform, avoiding any possible fuel spillage inside the hull.



A six-position rocket launcher is mounted on the hardtop.

Clear polymer anti-corrosive protective coating



Nyalic Marine Kit

ALL KITS IN STOCK NOW!



Marine touch-up kit

NYALIC
CLEARCOAT SURFACE PROTECTANT

- SURTEES
- MCLAY
- EXTREME
- WHITE POINTER
- IMAGE

ALL CHOOSE NYALIC

MAKE SURE YOU SPECIFY

NYALIC FOR YOUR BOAT

AVAILABLE DIRECT FROM

NYALIC NZ LTD

E: sales@nyalic.co.nz

Ph: 0800 692 542

www.nyalic.co.nz





A removable bait station with cutting board and drainage over the transom is sited on the transom top; Once on an open-speed section of the river, the engine could be opened up.

Fishing fittings

As mentioned earlier, the 571 HT offers decent stability, especially considering its modest size and hardtop configuration. The treadplate deck gives good footing and the flat gunwale faces offer comfortable mid-thigh support to anglers; all this goes to providing a good fishing platform.

A removable bait station with cutting board and drainage over the transom is mounted on the transom top; four alloy rod holders are positioned around the cockpit and a six-position rocket launcher is welded to the

hardtop.

Although it could fish four without too many issues, the cockpit would be ideal for two.

On the road

The trailer for the 571 HT is made by Toko Trailers, a McLay affiliate. It is a cradle A-frame, 1500kg single-axled galvanised steel design with zinc-protected leaf-spring suspension, plastic arches with moulded non-skid panels, and galvanised steel wheel rims. Other components include a dual-ratio manual winch; wind-down jockey wheel and submersible

LED lights. Tow weight for the rig (including fuel) is around 1200kg.

McLay Boats have succeeded in their desire to produce a well-behaved 5.65m runabout with the protection of a hardtop. It is well finished with competent welding, very fair plates, and it looks good in its protective Nyalic coating. Easily powered, towed, launched and handled, this hull is ideal for lake or coastal fishing and general outings, with particular application to couples or retirees wishing to down-size from larger craft, but wanting to retain protection from the elements.

Performance

Mercury 90hp FourStroke

Revs (RPM)	Speed (kph)	Fuel (l/hr total)
1000	7	2.4
2000	10	6.2
3000	27	9.8
4000	40	16.1
5000	52	27.0
5400 (max)	58	32.2

Prop: Mercury Trophy Plus, 17-inch pitch, four blades. Against approx. four kph current in freshwater

Another excellent boat from the Deep South.

Specifications

McClay 571 HT

Material:	Aluminium
Configuration:	Open hardtop
LOA:	5.65m
Beam:	2.20m
Deadrise:	17 degrees
Bottom:	5mm
Sides and topsides:	3mm
Deck:	4mm
Fuel capacity:	130 litres
Recommended hp:	90-115hp
Test engine:	Mercury 90hp FourStroke
Prop:	Mercury Trophy Plus 17-inch pitch
Trailer:	Toko single axle
Tow weight:	1200kg (including fuel)
Base price:	\$54,470 (Mercury F90 FourStroke)
As tested:	\$57,179
Test boat courtesy of:	Fish City, Hamilton

The flat gunwale faces offer comfortable mid-thigh support to anglers. Peter Orton tries for a trout in the Waikato.

