



New Power



Simple, n'est-ce pas?

The distinctly-styled Arvor 215AS is a boat with a lot to offer Aussie boaties.



By Chris Beattie

Simplicity is a virtue. But in a boat it is, increasingly, a rarity. Advances in electronics, engines and other knick-knacks and widgets have resulted in trailer boats that have become more and cluttered with gear and technology. And consumer demand for more creature comforts has likewise contributed to crowding more and more gear into smaller and smaller boats. For many, this is a good thing. But equally, for those wanting a simple experience on the water, it is not.



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Which brings us to the Arvor range of boats. The uniquely-styled, French-designed craft have been brought into Australia for the last 11 years by Collins Marine, in Alexandria, NSW. The Australian range runs from the smallest Arvor 20 – which is actually built in Nowra under licence by Collins Marine – up to the flagship 280AS. All boats run shaft-drive diesel inboard drivelines boasting frugal fuel consumption and good overall performance from their semi-displacement hulls.

We've tested Arvors in the past and our writers have been unanimous in their praise for these distinctive craft. From good seaworthiness to practicality and ergonomic efficiencies, our testers have liked what they've seen. Not having had the pleasure myself, I was quick to take up the offer to try one when the folks at Phillip Island Marine invited me down for a spin on the company's latest creation, the 215AS.

WORTH A VISIT

Firstly, I must say that Phillip Island Marine is well worth a visit in its own right, hidden away as it is in the tranquil hamlet of Rhyll, on the north side of the island. MD Scott Huther and his helpful staff have a large inventory of anything you're likely to need for boating and fishing around the island, are open seven days a week, are a mere stone's throw from the boat ramp and can supply fuel, too.

Scott and sidekick, Wayne Bain, who owns his own Arvor 20AS, explained that Arvors are becoming increasingly popular for boaties who tend to use their boats a fair bit and value ease of maintenance and low running costs.

Having heard a bit about Arvor sea handling abilities, I had mixed feelings about the state of nearby Westernport waters on the day. The bay was about as flat as it ever gets, with a balmy early Autumn cloudless day adding to the pristine, boat-friendly conditions. Great for a lazy cruise or for wetting a line and working on the tan, but pretty much useless for determining how a boat reacts to an angry sea. So I had to be content to enjoy the near-perfect conditions and rely on previous tester's comments, which were all complimentary about the Arvor hull's seakeeping and handling characteristics. All I can say with confidence after an hour or so spent on a billiard table-smooth Westernport is that the Arvor 215AS handles a smooth sea, well ... smoothly.

But first things first. Before we departed the ramp, Wayne gave me a tour of the boat, pointing out various features, beginning with the wheelhouse and cabin.

ALL-WEATHER SHELTER

Entered via a sturdy sliding and lockable door, the 215AS's interior is spacious for a boat of its length. It offers an all-weather sanctuary for occupants and a spot of comfort for overnighting, courtesy of an infill cushion that provides a double berth. A porta-pottie adds convenience and there is a small sink console, with a moulded indentation for a standard equipment single-burner gas stove.

There is storage room aplenty, with parcel shelves in the bow and next to the skipper's perch, as well as under-cushion space. In addition, there is a large open cavity on the starboard side of the cabin floor.

From a skipper's point of view, there is a lot to be said for the helm, with gobs of visibility in pretty much every direction. The dash is simple and straightforward, with a couple of Mercury SmartCraft gauges informing the boss about a variety of functions, from engine rpm, to fuel consumption and level and oil temperature. Two switch panels handle everything from nav lights to livebait and bilge pumps, while there is a rather large red knob, labelled a 'Trolling-Valve', at the top of the dash. Its function is to offer fine low-speed control when trolling lures.



The throttle is within easy reach and there is adequate storage in the way of parcel shelves directly adjacent to the helm. Skipper and companion can either stand or sit in a pair of fold-down seats, while a clever and simple – there's that word again – pole slots into raised mouldings in the floor to provide an optional foot brace.

Overhead on our test craft was an optional M84 Northstar chartplotter/sounder, with

Above: The asymmetrical placement of the wheelhouse confers a wide starboard bow walk-around.

Below: The helm area is compact, but fitted with an array of standard electronics.



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1

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Locking Ring inside hull
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2

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Can be relocated



3

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Draws 1.2-2.0A at 12V



additional standard electronics, in the form of a GME GR9000 marine stereo unit and a Northstar Explorer VHF radio.

Wheelhouse height is close to 2m, so unless you're an NBA basketballer, your hairdo is safe, although it can get a little squeeze if two regular-sized adults are attempting to swap places around the confines of the helm area.

WIDE WALKAROUND

Space is certainly not a problem outdoors, though. Nearly all Avors boast a wide and deep starboard-side walkaround for forward access, hence the 'AS' designation, which refers to the asymmetrical placement of the wheelhouse. There is a stack of room to access the bow, enhanced by sturdy and high bowrails. Generally, though, most people won't go further forward than the wheelhouse, as the Arvor 215AS is sensibly equipped standard with an electric windlass operated from the helm.



The self-draining cockpit is an expansive, uncluttered area, save for the raised engine hatch, although its angular and curved lines do not provide too much of an obstacle to movement. Seating is provided by foldaway wooden slat bench seats; a twin seat in the starboard coaming and a single in the port rear corner, above which is a compact tackle drawer. In the opposite corner is a compact storage locker.

Both gunwales sport teak inset planks in which are housed stainless steel rodholders, with an additional pair of holders in the transom. I'm thinking there would be an opportunity for stainless craftsmen to market a rocketlauncher to run across the back of the wheelhouse roof for extra rod storage for serious piscatorial pursuits. Outboard of the teak gunwale insets are rollers, which are quite a normal addition for Europeans

hauling nets and pots, but not likely to see as much use here.

A spacious kill tank resides on the port side cockpit floor, while a quite large plumbed livebait tank is nestled into the transom, beyond which is a sturdy swim platform, complete with a boarding ladder and auxiliary outboard engine mount – a sensible touch for anyone who spends a lot of time fishing out of sight of land.

From a fishing perspective, the relatively high coamings offer good leverage, although it's a bit of a reach to the water if you have to spend any time manhandling large fish in close quarters.

SOLO STEERER

Along with the trolling throttle control, the 215AS also has a manual tiller attachment in the transom, which makes it a great craft for solo skippers who need to be able to run their boat from the cockpit.

Engine access is via the large hatch in the centre of the cockpit floor. It opens to reveal a very low-set, 115hp Cummins MerCruiser common rail diesel engine driving through a shaft that emerges at a very shallow angle and spins a prop located at the end of an angled keel. The propeller is afforded some protection by a metal brace that extends from the end of the keel to the bottom of the rudder.

There is more than enough room around the engine to make maintenance work relatively easy.

The semi-displacement hull has a relatively deep forefoot, with full-length chines and deep topsides, creating a relatively tall profile on the water.

Gear engagement is accompanied by a solid driveline thump, which I'd assume will ease as the clutch and gearbox loosen up. Once underway, there is an almost imperceptible transition on to plane at around 2000rpm, with the bow barely rising. The hydraulic steering is precise, with good feedback, although Arvors tend to turn fairly flat, with virtually no hull lean, so it pays to be well braced when throwing the 215AS into a tight turn.

Engine vibration and noise were minimal, although at higher rpm the small diesel could certainly be heard inside the wheelhouse. Nothing too intrusive, but conversation required a bit more effort at speed.

Being a single screw boat, manoeuvrability at lower speeds, particularly when docking, requires a bit of deft helm work. While the larger Arvors rely on small bow thrusters, the 215AS skipper



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needs to be adept at subtle wheel and gear adjustments, particularly given the boat's high side profile and windage.

Overall performance was about what you'd expect from this combination. Given its semi-

Top: The manual tiller in the transom makes running the boat from the cockpit a breeze.

Above: The self-draining cockpit is an expansive, uncluttered area.

It is a solid, practical and well thought-out craft that offers good protection from the elements


displacement hull and a weight of approximately 1650kg, the Arvor held a WOT of close to 40km/h (21 knots). With a 90lt fuel tank and expected consumption in the range of seven to 10 litres per hour, the 215AS will certainly offer good range and value for money for a boat of its size.

And speaking of money, the retail price is currently pegged at \$103,000 as tested and minus trailer. Peter Collins says that given current international exchange rate trends, there is a good chance that that figure could come down in the near future.

I came away impressed and refreshed by my time on the 215AS. It is a boat that is intended to handle big seas – designed as it was by people who build boats for the northern Atlantic. It is a solid, practical and well thought-out craft that offers good protection from the elements and has a heap of standard features. Anyone who spends a lot of solo time on the water, particularly keen fishos, will appreciate the many practical touches that allow them to operate and fish the boat on their own.

Collins said that Arvors had proven to be a popular option for Australian boaties. “We’ve sold several hundred to date all around Australia, from Cape York, down to southern Tassie and Western

Australia across to Lord Howe Island,” he said. A typical Arvor buyer, according to Collins, was “somebody looking for a low-maintenance boat with a diesel engine, shaft- instead of stern-drive or outboard, a boat with a self-draining deck, the safety of a good walkaround and the security of a lockable cabin.” If that ticks all your boxes, the Arvor 215AS is well worth a look.

More information from Collins Marine, tel (02) 9524 2699, or Phillip Island Marine, tel (03) 5956 9238. Web: www.arvor.com.au. 

SPECIFICATIONS: ARVOR 215AS

Overall length:	6.88m
Beam:	2.54m
Dry weight:	1650kg
Fuel:	90lt
Power:	CMD 115hp diesel
Price (as tested):	\$103,000 (without trailer)

PERFORMANCE

RPM	SPEED
1500	10.7km/h
1800	12.8km/h
2000	16km/h (planing)
2500	28km/h
3100	38.5km/h (WOT)

