



# Value for money

Want an affordable offshore sportfisher? Then look no further than the Caribbean Reef Runner. New or second-hand, this 6.2m half-cabin is great value for money, writes Jeff Webster.

**T**he current, late model Caribbean Reef Runner (as opposed to the boat launched back in the '70s) is based on the Bertram 20 launched back in 1988. I tested one of the first models and recall it being a well made, solid performing craft.

The interior of the Bertram/Caribbean wasn't all that modern, even back then, and it didn't have much in the way of standard fishing features. Despite this, the Caribbean Reef Runner continues to be popular as an offshore fishing craft, especially in the Caribbean's home state of Victoria.

What attracts most people to the big Caribbean is its first rate deep-vee hull, combined with a very keen purchase price. New models can be rigged up for as little as \$62,000 while well-outfitted 10-year old boats can be found for less than \$38,000.

## DESIGN

When the Reef Runner was launched as the Bertram 20 in 1988, it was available with a single petrol sterndrive, but this option was dropped in later models. Modern Reef Runners will have a single, extra-long-shaft outboard in the 150-200hp range.

The interior layout in the Reef Runner is conventional in the sense that it has a large forward cabin, two-seat helm area, and moderate-sized aft cockpit.

The cabin has a full berth setup with adequate headroom (about 900mm) above the berths. The berths are configured in the regular vee pattern, with two side-cushions and a central square cushion beneath which you could fit an optional full

flush toilet. Ample cabin storage is provided in the form of underberth lockers and side storage pockets.

Most second-hand Reef Runners will have a full cabin bulkhead/cockpit with lockable door, but this was an option. Standard models have an open recess that is often covered with a vinyl, zip-out privacy screen. Getting in and out of the cabin is much easier in the model without the cabin bulkhead, but you still have to duck down sharply to avoid banging your head.

Compared with the multi-function, moulded-dash setups of modern craft, the helm and dash layout in the Reef Runner is plain and simple. Nevertheless, there is space for standard engine instruments and gauges, and plenty of flat dash space for bracket-mounted electronics.

Dash-mounted electronics are protected from wind and spray by the upright, two-front pane toughened glass windscreen, but a bimini or hardtop (a common fitment) is needed for all-weather protection.

As for seating, the Reef Runner will generally have two helm chairs and two lift-out padded quarter seats in the rear cockpit. Pedestal-mounted helm chairs were standard, but many craft have been fitted with bucket chairs mounted over storage boxes. Some will have additional, aft facing seats behind the helm chairs with storage or a livebait tank built-in underneath.

## THE COCKPIT/TRANSOM

The transom layout in the Reef Runner is positively old



Fully rigged models on a tandem axle trailer will weigh in over the 2000kg mark.

A late model Reef Runner powered by a Honda four-stroke. Note the hardtop on this model.

## CARIBBEAN REEF RUNNER (MK3)

Hull type: ..... Monohull  
 Configuration: ..... Cuddy-cabin  
 Material: ..... GRP  
 Length overall: ..... 6.30m  
 Hull length: ..... 6.12m  
 Beam: ..... 2.41m  
 Deadrise: ..... 21°  
 Hull weight: ..... 1020kg  
 Weight on trailer: ..... 1900-2200 kg  
 Fuel Capacity: ..... 205/225lt  
 Rec. max. HP: ..... 175/200  
 Price range: ..... \$29,000+



fashioned. Modern fibreglass boats will have a full-height rear cockpit wall incorporating an integrated half-pod layout, or something similar. The Reef Runner has a traditional, low cut outboard that is flanked by removable padded quarter seats. This design does make it possible to walk right into the aft corners of the boat, but the low-set outboard-well is a negative in terms of safety.

One of its positive, however, is that it is a great spot for mounting things like baitboards or snapper racks. The cockpit itself is pretty large and there's storage space underfloor. Above floor sidepockets stretch the full cockpit length. Other features include recessed coaming rails and stern cleats, and cockpit corner-baitwells.

## HANDLING AND PERFORMANCE

The Reef Runner is rated for single outboards to a maximum of 200hp. The boat can easily handle this much grunt, but needs only 150hp for good performance. With a 150hp two-stroke motor, expect a top speed of about 34kts (63kmh).

On the water the Reef Runner's 21° vee-hull provides a comfortable ride although it's probably not quite as soft as the original, deeper vee'd '70s model boat. On the plus side, the current Reef Runner is more stable and requires less power.

Overall, the performance and handling of the Reef Runner are excellent and the hull is suitable for all kinds of boating activities, from offshore sportfishing to cruising.

## BUYING NOTES

International Marine (the manufacturer of Caribbean boats) has been building fibreglass boats pretty much since they were invented — so you should encounter few structural problems with used Reef Runners. Just in case, older models should be checked for wood rot in the transom and cockpit floor.

When shopping for a second-hand Reef Runner, look for a boat with a four-stroke or DFI two-stroke outboard. Models equipped with one of these modern, cleaner running motors will last longer and use half as much fuel as the boats fitted with an old technology two-stroke. 