



The ITM Fishing Show presenter Matt Watson brought his vast store of fishing knowledge to bear when working with Stabicraft to create the ultimate trailer boat sport-fisher.

After spending a day with *ITM Fishing Show* presenter Matt Watson on his new Stabicraft 2750 MWS Centre Cab, *Fishing News* Editor Grant Dixon asks: “Is this the best-appointed trailer boat sport-fisher yet?”



# Got Em On's GOT IT ALL

Story and photos by **Grant Dixon**





When you already have a pedigree setting up sport-fishing boats, a blank canvas to work with and the boat manufacturer's invitation to "go for it", anything's possible.

Exploring the possible is exactly what happened with *Got 'Em On*, *The ITM Fishing Show's* flagship trailer boat and the TV show's biggest boat to date.

The centre-cab layout, a first for Stabicraft, is the biggest departure from Matt's previous project boats, its walk-around configuration giving anglers access to additional fishing space in the bow and the ability to follow hard-running fish around the boat.

The centre-cab layout was achieved without compromising Stabicraft's "buoyancy ring" pontoon design or the boat's aesthetics. The hull features Stabicraft's latest Gamechaser transom and Arrow pontoons. But the most notable thing about the boat isn't any single feature but a whole heap of little ones that reflect Matt's experience as a crewman and angler: there is a place for everything and everything is in its place.

The performance of the proven Stabicraft hull is a given, as it is for the latest Evinrude 300hp E-Tec outboard. The rest of the boat's setup is pure innovation, the fruit of a successful collaboration between TV show host and Stabicraft Marine.

And while I suspect Stabicraft's designers must hide under their desks when they see Matt coming armed with a bunch of "ideas", many of those fanciful ideas have been incorporated into other Stabicraft models over the years. Matt is a one-man R&D department and from stem to stern, *Got 'Em On* has Matt Watson stamped all over it.

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Shimano Beastmaster electric reels also serve as downriggers. There are 12V powerpoints for electric reels in the bow and the stern of 2750 CC.

### FISH FROM THE BOW

Starting from the pointy end, the bow rail is angled slightly inboard to offer support and security when fishing from the forward casting platform. Up there you'll find three rod holders plus Starports for the extensive range of Railbaza fittings, while the two forward lockers contain plugs for the spotlight, electric reels, and a USB connection.

Chains, Ropes and Anchors supplied the Sarca anchor on the pulpit. Chain and warp are neatly tucked away under the platform on a StressFree drum winch.

A bow seat set into the front of the cabin roof is perfect for those short trips between drops and the bow area is lit up with Hella courtesy lighting under the coamings. In fact, Matt has gone nuts with the lighting around the boat: there is a focus-beam searchlight up forward, forward, rear and side-facing floods, as well as lighting for the live-bait tank and bait-board. The different lighting zones are switched separately.

Marine Deck 2000, a compressed cork, non-skid flooring, covers the decks. It is not only practical from non-slip and comfort perspective, but also sets off the boat aesthetically.

Being a full walk-around, any waves coming over the bow could end up in the cockpit, but *Got 'Em On* has deep scuppers set into the deck to clear water overboard.

### A WORKING COCKPIT

The boat's bait-station is a work of art, reflecting Matt's commercial fishing and professional sport-fishing background. It features a raised board to make filleting easy, with drainage overboard. There are six knife slots edged with Octigrp to hold the

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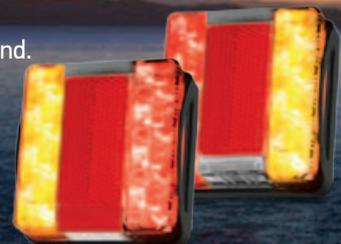
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As used by Matt Watson on the ITM Fishing Show



knives securely without dulling the blades. Bait needles have their own spot, as does the thread spool. There are four rod holders and the obligatory Railblaza drink holders.

Bait station tackle drawers, customised by Stabicraft, have small Hi-Tech plastic bins modified to fit Shimano Ocea trace holders and Shimano tackle boxes. The edges of the dividers have been scalloped to make the removal of individual bins easy. Hi-Tech has also customised the bins to ensure a number of spaces are fully utilised – one is especially designed for sinker storage.

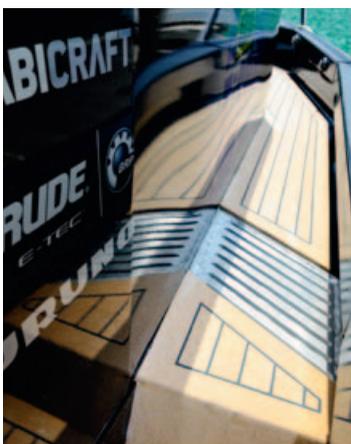
Beneath the tackle drawers sit three Exide deep-cycle marine batteries, all dedicated to providing power for the various electrical systems and on-board electronics. A separate starting

battery lives under the port-side coaming; a solar panel in the roof provides charging back-up.

There is a 70-litre live-bait tank with a viewing window, plus three tuna tubes set into the transom, each with its own tap, fed by two 1200gph pumps. A lid prevents the baits splashing water everywhere.

Located in the centre of the cockpit is a customised 300-litre Icey-Tek bin. This accommodates nine individual plastic bins used for bait, food, drinks and the catch. Matt says he rarely keeps snapper over 4kg in weight, and these fit perfectly in the individual bins. This system means there's no mess to clean out of the Icey-Tek at the end of the day.

At one end of the cockpit is a dry tackle/lure rigging area, along



Marine Deck 2000 provides a comfortable and good looking non-slip deck surface. Scuppers drain overboard. There's room to bunk down forward, but the boat is set up primarily for day trips; A 300-litre Icey-Tek bin fits up to nine plastic bins for bait, food, drinks and the catch.

with a couple of Railblaza holders to hold rods conveniently in place. Under the cabin floor another large Icey-Tek provides additional cold storage.

### DUAL HELM STATIONS

There are a number of “big boat” features on *Got ‘Em On*, not least the cockpit helm station. The autopilot, Furuno TZ Touch remote, an iPad with Bluetooth on a Railblaza base and Evinrude “fly by wire” throttle control are at Matt’s fingertips. When hooked up to a decent fish or just manoeuvring over a spot, Matt has full control of the boat from the cockpit helm station.



The wraparound screen provides excellent vision with no blind spots. 300 horses of Evinrude E-Tec Gen 2 power are quiet and economical to run.

In the main cabin the helm is dominated by two things: the Shark seats and the 14-inch Furuno TZ Touch multifunction display. The helm seat swivels through 360° and has a great suspension system, while the passenger seat features a double bolster for maximum comfort and practicality. These Kiwi-made seats are quite revolutionary in their design.

Electronics play a large part in any serious fishing operation and *The ITM Fishing Show* is no exception. The Furuno TZ Touch MFD interfaces with the autopilot and Fusion sound system – Matt has always believed that good bass sounds raise billfish, so the system in this boat includes six 7-inch speakers and two 10-inch sub-woofers to deliver pretty decent sound.

Within easy reach of the helmsman above the sounder are the Uniden VHF radio, Fusion headset, Evinrude engine monitor and Furuno autopilot. The cuddy cabin offers seating, under which there is more storage. At a pinch you could sleep up there, but the boat’s specifically set up for day trips.

Another important issue for any helm station is vision. This is excellent in the Stabicraft 2750 CC due to a moulded wrap-around screen – no blind spots.

## Power Performance Style





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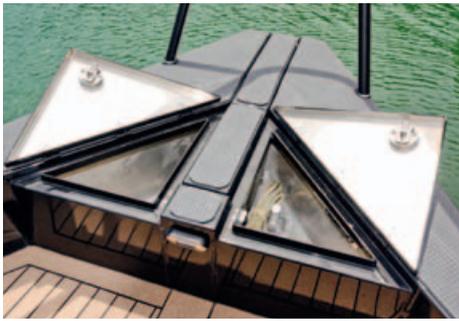
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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Bow lockers house connections for spotlights, iPads and electric reels; Hardtop solar panels trickle-charge the batteries; Transom drain; Three tuna tubes grace the port side transom; Tackle drawers have been heavily customised; Three well-protected Exide house batteries.

### ROD HOLDERS GALORE

The space above the cabin top is another work of art. It features a foldaway spotting platform, a solar panel, a double rocket launcher and Rupp's Revolution outrigger bases with Reel Rods outriggers.

The 'riggers are deployed from inside the cockpit and have been set up with the halyards perfectly tensioned, whether in running or fishing positions. Blacks release clips are used when targeting striped marlin; roller-trollers can be added for bait and switch or tag lines clipped on when targeting blue marlin.

The rocket launcher has been designed so rods in the 11 rod holders do not hit each other. And when this rack is full, there are a further 19 holders around the boat to house all the tackle Matt likes to use.

The stern has power points for Shimano Beastmaster electric reels, which also serve as downriggers, and completing the fishing accessories are three Oceans LED Xtreme series underwater lights. These are angled to offer maximum coverage and can switch between three options: colour cycling, continuous and strobe.

*“Got ‘Em On is one hell of a fishing weapon”*



## EVINRUDE E-TEC G2 POWER

All of the above would be pointless without a decent powerplant. Matt has again opted for Evinrude, this time a 300hp E-Tec G2 (Generation 2) outboard. His previous boat had twin Evinrude 150hp E-Tecs on the transom using around 58 litres of fuel per hour at 25 knots. The G2 uses between 41 and 43lph for the same speed on a bigger, heavier boat.

At trolling speed, the twin rig used 11.6 litres per hour; the G2 uses 6.0lph. As *Got 'Em On* carries 500 litres in a single underfloor tank, she has a huge range.

Matt speaks highly of the Hosking trailer under his new Stabicraft, saying towing is a comfortable and safe affair aided by Kodiak brakes and a Hydrastar braking system. The tow vehicle is a Toyota Landcruiser V8 diesel.

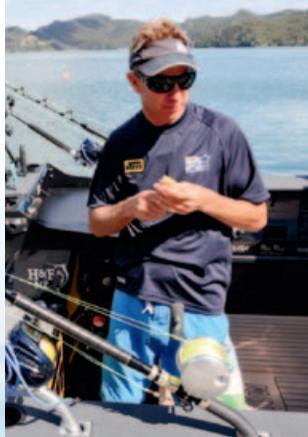
Other providers include Club Marine with a comprehensive insurance package, Halvo Signs for the "mobile billboard" sign-writing effects, and Ocean Star for the essential PFDs, EPIRB and other safety gear.

## A TRUE MATT WATSON SPECIAL

Readers will agree *Got 'Em On* is one hell of a fishing weapon. *The ITM Fishing Show* team, along with Stabicraft Marine and an impressive array of contributors, have pulled together a project boat that is the envy of many – a true Matt Watson Special. ▣

### Stabicraft 2750 MWS Centre Cab

- ▶ **loa** 8.4m
- ▶ **beam** 2.5m
- ▶ **draft** approx 0.5m
- ▶ **weight on trailer** approx 3250kg
- ▶ **engine** Evinrude E-Tec G2 300hp V6
- ▶ **propeller** 17-inch three-blade Rebel
- ▶ **deadrise** variable; 21.5° at transom
- ▶ **fuel** 500 litres
- ▶ **cruising speed** 25 knots
- ▶ **max speed** 37 knots
- ▶ **packages from** POA
- ▶ **manufactured by** Stabicraft Marine Invercargill, [www.stabicraft.co.nz](http://www.stabicraft.co.nz)
- ▶ **boat supplied by** Matt Watson and Stabicraft Marine



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