

Chianti 635

Chianti 635 Boat Test

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Maturing with Age

Twelve months ago I wrote that the Reflex Chianti 515 was about as good a boat as you'll ever get and while it's hard to find the perfect boat, in the under \$30,000 category it came pretty damn close. Since then, the Chianti 515 has become Reflex's biggest seller, so it was only natural that the all new Chianti 615 Reefrunner would follow similar styling and layout. However the 615 is more than just a big volume version of the 515 and while it does incorporate a lot of the same ideas, its degree of comfort and physical size take Reflex to a whole new level.

To design parameters set down for the 615 were quite simple - a functional all purpose boat suitable for fishing, skiing, family cruising and overnighting. No more than what just about every designer of larger cabin boats strives to produce, and something that Alan Russell, the MD of Reflex Products Ltd, felt was quite achievable. After all he already had the Chianti 515 as a benchmark, so it should be easy. It also had to be a boat that offered plenty of volume. In other words the maximum workable areas possible in the cabin and cockpit, yet still staying within set dimensions. From a visual aspect first impressions favour the cockpit for size and it was this point that attracted a tot of attention at the recent Waikato Boat Show - especially from fishers.

Reflex were also keen to keep production time to a minimum as the less hours the boat takes to build the more you can produce and customers are happy because they don't have to wait as long. Construction is conventional grp with premium gel coats, woven rovings and high density injected polyurethane foam filling all the cavities between the hull and inner liner. There was also a safety issue, which goes further than just the foam filled hull, construction and CPC compliance. There was a requirement for high aft comings, therefore no walk-thru, maximum trailer able beam, stability at rest and whilst underway, deep toe recess under the side trays and leaning pads on the comings to ensure anglers were well balanced and secure when fishing, plus conveniently placed handholds.

It also had to be easy to clean and quick to convert from a family boat to a fishing boat. This was achieved by clip in carpets over a gel coat floor and removable quarter seats, which enlarge the fishing area to huge proportions.

Reflex wanted a boat that was genuinely able to handle the rougher water that someone who bought a boat the size of the 615 would not be unfamiliar with. The design followed much the same pattern as the 515 with a 20 degree dead rise hull with fine bow entry with massive flare, aft pods and a ski plank. These features were designed to achieve stability, soft entry limited heeling in the turns and a horizontal flat exit from idle to planning mode.

So did they achieve what they were after? In the functionality area there's no doubt it's a boat that provides you with the right platform to carry out just about any requirement. Apart from the already mentioned features, fishers have been well catered for with a bait bin, complete with cutting board - could be converted to a live bait tank in the rear transom area with a dedicated tackle box locker below, four rod holders and loads of workable cockpit space. A three-tier rod rack is standard above the full-length wide side shelf on the starboard side and there is always the option of a stainless steel rocket launcher for the more serious fish. Our test boat also came with a large multi-fit Bermuda Fishing Essentials bait board - which is well placed so as to not 'whack' the outboard on tilt mode - and optional bimini which goes back far enough to offer protection but not so far as to get in the way of your rods.



Divers will appreciate the flat comings and Portofino transom with an extra long fold down stainless ladder, plus the moulded forward wet locker in the cockpit sole, large enough for dive bottles, gear bags or a catch of bugs and scallops.

For the boatie who spends his time cruising and enjoying picnics with the family, the Chianti 615 offers seating layouts for six in the cockpit with plenty of storage space, high comings for the safety of small children and good weather protection from the canopy. If you have ideas about overnighting, then the Chianti 615 has 2m long squabs with an optional in-fill, plus dedicated space for a chemical toilet. There's sitting headroom for at least three adults and plenty of storage space under the squabs in moulded bins and in extra wide shelves with thickly padded facings. All anchoring can be carried out from the wide acrylic forward hatch and there is even a pad already moulded into the foredeck for an automatic capstan. Beneath the side opening hatch is a deep self-draining locker capable of holding a generous amount of ground tackle and I like the split bow rail for ease of anchoring.

A neat option to further enhance the over-nighting capability of the Chianti 615 is a back-to-back seating unit with cooker, freshwater system and sink unit beneath. If you don't want to lose the storage space, then a portable rod holder mounted gas cooker and freshwater tank tucked into the Portofino stern could easily be added. A full camper pack style canopy extension would also be an ideal addition for serious over-nighting.

If you are into wakeboarding or waterskiing then there is a fixed ski pole available which also doubles as a neat handrail for the rear seat passengers.

Smartcraft Technology

The Chianti 615 is comfortably appointed to cater for most needs with a thoughtful layout in keeping with the design criteria. One feature that I especially liked was the lack of bulkheads between cabin and cockpit. This accentuates the internal volume of the boat and blends the two areas together with only raised moulded footrests between.

The helm has separate areas for instrumentation and navigational aids with our test boat utilising the space for a Humminbird NS25 combo plotter/GPS/sounder and a flush mounted Sitek VHF. This was my first introduction to the Mercury Smartcraft SC1000 System Monitor, which is currently available only with Mercury Optimax and 8.1 litre MerCruiser engines. Using the latest in computer and marine technology, Smartcraft links power, controls and internal and external sensors to provide precise data on all engine functions at a glance. With the touch of button I was able to check such valuable data as our current fuel consumption, range based on the 180 litres we had in the underfloor tank, boat speed, and even air, water and engine temperatures.

Although we had a full back-up of instruments, you may choose to only fit the SC1000 System tachometer and speedometer, which between them offer a combination of as many as 16 gauges.

Being one of the first Chianti 615s off the production line, there were still a few small adjustments to make, some of which I didn't see until a week after the on-the-water test. There was some discussion about the canopy/bimini, both for and against. Personally, I liked it, although maybe there could be a stronger stay system to keep everything a little stiffer. With the split front clears in place we had total protection and with them removed, we were left with a bimini top to keep out the sun's rays. Standing to drive I didn't have the wind in my face as the uplift on the top of the acrylic screen deflects the air and tosses it overhead.

The seating in the test boat was also in for a few alterations, but basically the standard boat comes with a helm seat and back-to-backs opposite. I didn't like the helm when driving the boat side-on to the waves, as I found I was forever sliding off, although in a short chop on the bow the Soft rider pedestal certainly did the job of offering a soft ride when seated. There is however an optional captains seat with armrests. You can replace this with back-to-backs to give more seating and storage, without losing too much open fishing space in the cockpit. They even come with moulded footpads for side deck access.

Reflex have made good use of the Portofino stern for storage, plus mounting the battery and oil reservoir. With the rear jump seats removed there is excellent access to the Rule bilge pump, water/fuel filter and even the engine bolts if you ever require it.

2m Seas and Climbing

The lowest I could get the Mercury 150 Optimax to run was 1.5 mph @ 550 rpm, using 1.1 lph. The fastest was 40 mph @ 5800 rpm with the Smartcraft system indicating 59.7 lph. Acceleration onto the plane was good and the 615 has the waterline length to plane at around 8 knots.

Test day was a combination of flat calm to 2m seas and 25 knots from the NE. We covered about 50nm, with numerous fishing stops on the way, all of which proved to be somewhat frustrating. I can report that the claims about stability at rest are well founded as we had no problems anchored up in some reasonably 'rollicking' water off Flat Rock (off the Eastern end of Kawau Island). It is also an excellent boat for four anglers working from the cockpit.

On the 16nm run from Whangaparaoa Peninsula to Flat Rock, the sea conditions got progressively worse, but it wasn't until I got to the head-on, 2m steep short swells, a mile or two out from Flat Rock, that I backed off from 30 mph.

The 615 seems to run quite flat and the bullish bow has plenty of reserve buoyancy to get the nose up out of the troughs. Even when we were totally airborne, with the prop freewheeling above the waves, the landing wasn't harsh. Running into a 1m short chop I found it more prudent and comfortable to back off from 5500 rpm @ 37mph to 4500 rpm @ 30mph. In the side sea with about 15 knots of breeze on the journey home I found the boat ran best back at 5500 rpm, although it did suffer from not having tabs to level the ride.

The Reflex Chianti 615 blends soft curves and stylish lines that produce a boat that is not only pleasing on the eye but also has the right hull underneath to offer a reasonable performance. The ride and handling are as good as it gets for a boat of this size and it is certainly a fitting addition to the Reflex fleet.

Such was the acceptance of the new Chianti 615 at the recent Christchurch Boat Show, it won the Family Boat of The Show award.

Chainti 615

Designer: REFLEX Design Team

Material: GRP

Type: Cabin Runabout

LOA: 6.93m

LOH: 6.18m

Beam: 2.50m

Dead rise: 20 degrees

Hull configuration: Semi deep vee

Trailer able Weight: 1720kg

Engine Capacity: 130hp-200hp

Power Options: Outboard only

Fuel Capacity: 180 litres

PERFORMANCE

550 rpm - 1.5 mph 1.1 lph

1000 rpm - 4.5mph 2.5 lph

1500 rpm - 5.0mph 4.0 lph

2000 rpm - 8.5 mph 6.5 lph

2500 rpm - 10.0 mph 10.0 lph

3000 rpm - 16.0 mph 13.5 lph

3500 rpm - 21.0 mph 15.0 lph

4000 rpm - 25.5 mph 23.0 lph

4500 rpm - 30.0 mph 27.5 lph

5000 rpm - 32.5 mph 31.5 lph

5500 rpm - 37.0 mph 48.5 lph

5800 rpm - 40.0 mph 59.7 lph

All speeds and litres per hour are rounded off to the nearest 0.5.

Notable Standard Equipment

CPC rated

5 year hull warranty PU.FF polyurethane foam filled buoyancy

moulded bow sprit

Soft rider pedestal

Four rod holders

170 litre underfloor tank

Notable Options on Test Boat

Interior lighting set

bowrails

canopy

Engine

Make - Mercury

Model - Optimax

Horsepower - 150
Cyl. Type - V6
Max RPM - 5800
Propellor - 15" Vengeance

Trailer

Make - Mudgway
Braked - Yes
Suspension - Springs
Rollers - Multi Roller

Std Features

Submersible lights
jockey wheel

Manufacturer

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