|  |
| --- |
| http://www.alburybrothers.com/images/logo_white.jpg |
| |  | | --- | | **DESIGN REVIEW ALBURY BROTHERS 23 RUNABOUT**  PREPARED BY JESSE F. RHODES | |  | | **The ultimate sea trial:** a run from Little Harbour to Hope Town, Abaco. An approximate ten-mile stretch, which includes all necessary sea-states: calm shallow water, bay chop and open ocean swell. The wind was blowing a steady fifteen knots onshore creating a true test for the two boats: a 24’ Cigarette and an [Albury 23’](http://www.salvatoresabella.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4&Itemid=113), both with two hundred and twenty-five horses. Within the spectrum of recreational performance, the former is the racing extreme, and the latter embodies the concept of moderation.  The 24’ Cigarette, with its deep-vee and lightweight construction, was a thrill a minute. While slicing through the chop and bouncing through the swell, my knuckles were white. With the wind whipping our heads back, we hit approximately 45-50 knots in the flat water. A fast boat is exciting but exhausting.  The[23’ Albury](http://www.salvatoresabella.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4&Itemid=113) channeled the energy of the engine in a completely different manner. Even though she was not hitting hair-raising speeds, the Albury created a solid secure environment. She took each wave and swell with smooth power. In the calm water, we maxed out at about thirty-five to forty knots; slicing the water the whole way. As we steadily decelerated into Hope Town Harbour, a feeling of achievement ran throughout the crew.   Willard Albury has lived on Man O’ War Cay and built boats his whole life. After building wooden strip planked runabouts for 30 years, he made the transition to fiberglass in 1985. Overlooking the harbour, his shop consists of his two sons, and a couple of helpers, all patiently working away. As you walk through the shop, you cannot help but marvel at the fact that most of the crew are barefoot. Willard’s original mold was an 18’, whose lines were taken from a tried and true wood boat that the fisherman favored. They liked her for her seaworthiness, her solid construction, the standing platform created by the large foredeck, and the visibility and the over-the-side water access created by the low profile. The culmination of practicality and dependability, she was a design, both in form and construction, that evolved from the day-in and day-out demands of living and working in the islands.  The Albury is a modified-vee planing hull with an infinitesimal hint of a semi-displacement cruiser. The ultimate example of balance and moderation, she is not a deep vee, go-fast gas-guzzler; a flat-bottomed planing machine; or a water pushing cruiser. She can take a sea, slice through any chop and scoot across shallows.  The deep-vee planing hulls of today are designed to achieve maximum lift with minimal drag. This translates into aft centers of gravity, fairly straight lines length wise, large chines and lifting strakes. The Albury contains these necessary ingredients but never departed completely from the inherent characteristics of the classic Maine lobsterboat. The three differences unique in the Albury are the round bilge coupled with a chine, the exterior keel and the slightly farther forward center of gravity.  As the mass of the boat plunges into each wave, the round bilge yields to the water rushing up the bottom sides of the hull. This effect creates more drag but softens the ride. On the other hand, a flat chine generates lift and slamming, by creating a roadblock for the water. Located above the round bilge, the Albury’s moderate chine creates lateral stability. A noteworthy attribute of the round bilge is its banking effect in tight turns. The boat lays right over into a turn. In many boats, the classic Boston Whaler being a prime example, you feel like your going to flip out of the turn. In an Albury, you feel like your going to fall into the turn. The difference is remarkable.  The 2 1/2” by 1 1/2” exterior keel, which is not accounted for in the deadrise [(see Fig. 1)](http://www.alburybrothers.com/press/23rev.html), is both useful and aesthetic. It tracks well in broadside waves and in an average following sea. It dampens slippage, caused by windage, when maneuvering at slow speeds, and it aids in slicing through the waves. Being the solid structural backbone, the keel is appreciated when beaching the boat.  The Grady-White has similar characteristics to the Albury. The best way to appreciate their resemblance is by examining their trim when planing. They both look like they have a farther forward center of gravity. Compared to a Contender or Jupiter, who sit back on the hind legs when planing, the Albury and Grady have more forward vee in the water and a more equal weight distribution. The sharp bow, instead of the beamier after sections, accepts the initial force of the water, and a gentle, stable ride is achieved. As with the round bilge, this creates more drag, but the modified vee of the Albury counters that. Since it is a flatter planing surface and covers less surface area, lift is created and frictional drag is reduced. Another great aspect of the modified vee is rolling at slow speeds is dampened. On deeper vee boats with an aft center of gravity, the hydrostatic buoyancy created by the underwater volume of the aft vee is needed to support the weight. Without the added buoyancy, they squat in the water and are laterally tender at the dock.  The construction of the Albury is constantly put to the test and does not let people down. They are a strong well-built boat, and the builders cut no corners and take pride in the construction. I can confidently say they are focused on quality not quantity. As with other quality-proven boats, an Albury is completely hand laid with the proper combinations of laminates and could be considered “overbuilt.” Thought, which translates into strength, is put into every construction detail. The laminates of the underwater body are overlapped at the keel, chine and stem. The bottom and keel are solid glass. There are a total of two top hat stringers in the boat. They are first tabbed into place and then completely tied into the hull with extra layers of glass. Each is approximately thirteen inches wide, and, with such wide spacing, could be thought of as four I-beam stringers. They are filled with closed cell foam. The topsides and sole are a combination of outer fiberglass skins with an inner 1/2” Core-Cell® foam core. The transom core is overbuilt with 1 1/2” thick marine grade plywood sheathed with several layers of 18 oz. Biaxial and 24 oz. Bi-Ply glass.  The cap decks are cored with a high-density Divinycell® foam. As a result of foam cores being used in the higher areas of the boat, they are not top-heavy, which further decreases rolling motion. In the mold, a thick gel-coat is applied, creating a durable, high quality finish. The center console is solid fiberglass and uncomplicated. The hull to deck joint is reinforced with a wood sheer clamp, sealed with 5200 and, with the combination of flange and rubrail screws, fastened approximately every 3”. Again, the strength of an Albury has been proven and can be trusted.  Part of practicality in design is simplicity. The interior layout of an Albury is straightforward and uncluttered. In the Bahamas, the afternoon washdown may include a five gallon bucket of saltwater and some dish soap. The ultimate in simplicity: no thru-hulls. At the transom, a recessed wet-well is self-bailing. The foredeck hatch is 18” x 32” and self-drains. Fuel and water tank fill hoses take the shortest runs possible. The 103 gallon fuel capacity is ample for today’s modern fuel-efficient outboards. The aluminum fuel tank exceeds the required wall thickness standards and is coated with cold tar epoxy; hence a “forever” fuel tank. The battery and the major cable and wire connections are located underneath the center console ready for easy access. Compared to its competitors, the systems of the Albury are simple and crisp, but simplicity equals less maintenance and cleaning.  When comparing boats, one must always remember that boat design is all about compromise. There is no such thing as a perfect boat. Each boat has her own niche, characteristics and application. Willard Albury created a versatile all-around great boat. She will not do 60 knots in the stream, nor will she run in 5” of water, but she will do most everything in between. | |
|  |