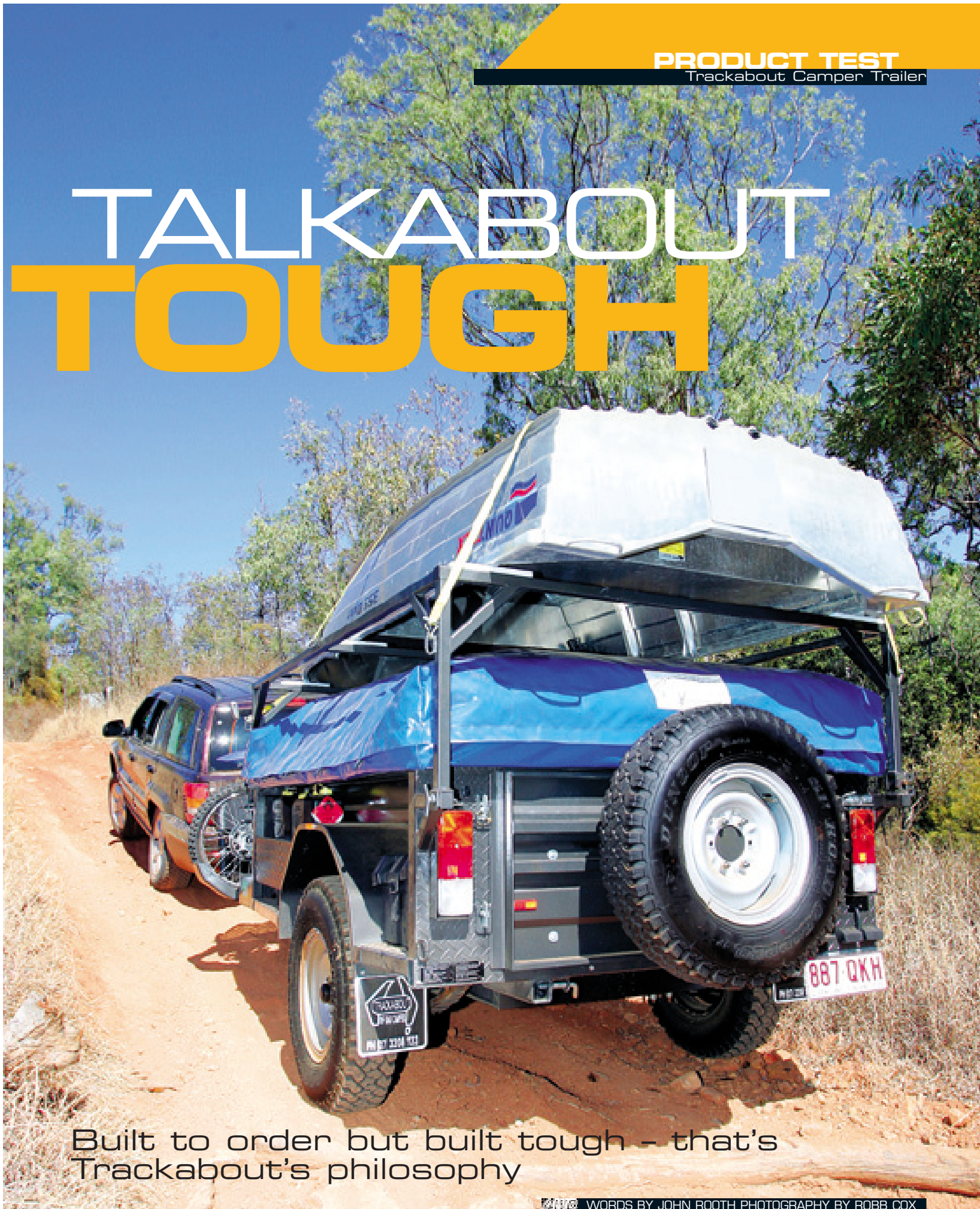


PRODUCT TEST
Trackabout Camper Trailer

TALKABOUT TOUGH



Built to order but built tough - that's Trackabout's philosophy

WORDS BY JOHN ROTH PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBB COX

The first time I saw Trackabout camper trailers was in a rental fleet yard in Cairns. The thick coats of dust and stone chips told some of the story; the bloke behind the counter filled in the rest. These Trackabouts were pumping up and down the Cape anything up to 20 times a year behind all sorts of mug camper's vehicles, yet they rarely required more than tyres and a clean.

"Solid, mate, just damned simple and solid. Sorta like the bloke that builds 'em, but don't tell him I said that okay?"

No worries, secret's safe with me – and our 35,000 readers. That bloke's John Vezos, and if you've ever been to Birdsville for the races, chances are you've walked on cans that Johnno emptied. No wonder the top-of-the-line Safari comes with four jerry cans and a 60L tank. 'Johnny Trackabout' has got a hell of a thirst himself! I know, I made the mistake of sitting up with him all night...

But you can't help but admire the mighty Trackabout, and after spending some time with their Safari, I'm pleased to say it meets and exceeds all expectations except one – I want more time with it! John and his lads build and sew everything in-house, starting with thick box-section chassis rails and solid-steel 7x4ft sides, to make a product that is possibly the best value for money trailer on the market. It's not fancy but it's exceptionally practical, and because Trackabouts are built mostly to individual order, they can be tailored to suit almost anybody.



The Trackabout's tailgate is swung from the side to mount the kitchen box, making it really handy to pack everything away and easy to access. Note the amount of benchspace available

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Safari's come with an extended extra-heavy-duty drawbar comprising triple rails. This makes the base strong enough to cope with almost anything from motorbike mounts to boat motors, extra tools or a generator. Trackabout can build a trailer to suit anyone



Here's the difference between a fair dinkum off-road capable trailer and your neighbour's garden cart – fair dinkum seven-leaf suspension hung off a heavy-duty chassis and fitted with 10in off-road electric brakes



I KNOW IT WAS EASY - HE DRANK HIS WHILE HE WAS DOING IT ONE-HANDED!

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Simple and solid pretty much spells out the Trackabout range, with plentiful use of chequerplate protection and big pinned latches to match. There are four jerry can holders on the Safari and a 60L tank slung underneath – plenty of fuel and water for a dry country!



The unit we played with is a Safari, Trackabout's current top-of-the-line model. In base form it sells for \$9990 – this one's got a boat loader (\$975) and a Breezeaway annexe enclosure (\$1695) – and is about as complete as a good trailer can be, even down to a pneumatic jockey wheel, off-road hitch, quality fittings and fixtures and a high-density (read: comfortable) mattress. No fancy tricks, just plenty of good steel welded in the right places on top of a damned good axle package.

The Trackabout crew are all into their off-roading – we'll be featuring John's hot rod 79 Series and Shane's International before long – and that experience shows with neat touches like the side-steps that graduate out around the wheel. You could scrape a Safari through the trees comfortably in the knowledge that its built-in side rails will protect the fuel containers, gas bottles and the mudguards too. There's plenty of ground clearance with the 15in wheels, and the water tank is shielded with a gal panel.

The lads are also into their drinking – sorry, sitting around a fire and solving the world's problems over a cucumber sandwich and mug of hot chockie – so they don't like spending time packing. I timed Johnno setting up the whole tent including this one's extra annexe, and found he got it done easily in less than a tinny. I know it was easy, he drank his while he was doing it one-handed! The bedroom's huge and living area equally fit for a few weeks of comfort anytime.

Johnny Trackabout made a big mistake asking our Bush Mechanic to help him tighten some loose nuts




PRODUCT TEST

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However, to my mind, it's the little touches that make a good product truly great. I like the way the awnings hug the roof pitch – looks good, offers great weather protection and makes it easier to extend even further. There are D-rings sewn in for storm tie-downs – maybe not something you'll need every trip, but worthwhile the one time you do! Then there's the gutters sewn on to the zips making that usually first-to-go spot watertight too.

I was pretty impressed by everything I saw at Trackabout's Moss Street factory and sales rooms, from the welding bay to the canvas room, but using the trailer itself really drove the point home. It's

exceptionally well thought out, easy to tow, can double as the world's most awesome garden trailer when you're not camping and still survive the rental game with flying colours up some of the worst tracks in the country. It's hard to put a price on that, but when a top-of-the-line Safari pulls in at less than \$10K, well, show me something that's better!

Finally, there's something bloody good about dealing with fellow off-road nuts who put engineering first and handle the marketing side of things when there's nothing left to weld. Or drink. Did I mention Trackabout Johnny's hidden office fridge? Damn, that was supposed to be a secret too... 

NO FANCY TRICKS, JUST PLENTY OF GOOD STEEL WELDED IN THE RIGHT PLACES ON TOP OF A DAMNED GOOD AXLE PACKAGE



The Trackabout towed brilliantly off-road and on behind Jeep's superb five-cylinder diesel Cherokee. Ball weight was reasonable at 140kg (considering the bike!) and the long A-frame and decent ground clearance made it a pleasure to tow to some tough places. Towing manners are all about balance – something Johnny Trackabout knows only too well

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