

## Magazine Articles Testing Summaries

### PROFILE REVIEW POWER BOAT MAGAZINE

With its list of standard features, Cougar's 2300 Executive Bowrider makes the buying process easy.

By Eric Colby  
Photos by Tom Newby



The time has come for a new boat. You know what you want right down to the colors and fades in the paint job. Haggling over individual options, however, doesn't appeal to you.

Cougar Custom Boats Ltd. is making the decision less painful. "We've changed most of our boats so they're loaded--standard," said company co-owner Wayne Booth. "People are acceptable to that." Cougar, which is based in Salmon Arm, British Columbia, Canada, has followed the lead set by General Motors' "Value Pricing" program, stocking its boats with everything standard including five-color gelcoats, Gaffrig gauges, a Jensen Marine

stereo a tilt wheel and a tandem-axle trailer.

For engines, the manufacturer also takes a realistic approach. In the new 2300 Executive Bowrider, Cougar starts with the 330-hp MerCruiser 454 Magnum MPI.

We saw an example of this logic at work when we ran the 2300 Executive Bowrider, a Euro-style 23-footer with a 7'8" beam. With a 454 Magnum EFI, two extra gelcoat stripes and fades, white-powder-coated hardware, dual batteries, an hour meter and chrome trailer fenders, our test model went for \$49,779. The base boat, starts at \$38,188.

For the craftsmanship, the price is more than good. Let's start with the seven-color gelcoat sprayed by company coowner Tom Reynolds. Using fades of blue and purple on a shimmering white hull, he applied crisp stripes with razor sharp edges and smooth transitions from color to color.

On the inside, custom fans will appreciate flow-coated balsa in the engine compartment. Set against the custom backdrop, our test boat's engine installation featured heavy duty 1/2"-thick powder-coated aluminum L-angles thru-bolted to the stringers. The injected mill was equipped with stock manifolds and custom-fabricated S-pipes to take the exhaust through the transom.

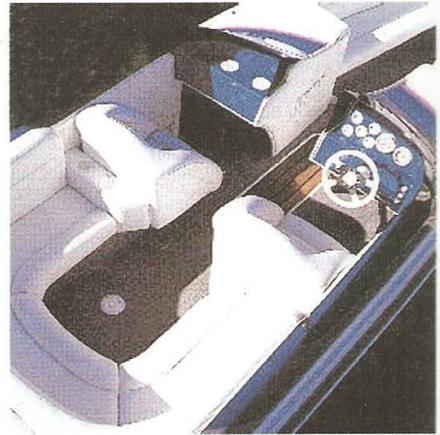
The stout approach continued with the Eddie Marine battery boxes, also thru-bolted to the stringers with the Perko switch on the firewall bulkhead. A similar bracket to port held the trim pump in place.

Coveting all this, the engine hatch opened on a pair of gas shocks. Cougar resin-coated the wood framing for the hatch and all the seat bases before applying the carpet or upholstery, which extends life expectancy. In another

heavy-duty installation, all the seat bases were assembled with thrubolted L-angles attached to the cockpit sole.

For comfort, the traditional custom-boat layout featured seating for 10 with a horseshoe-shaped lounge behind two buckets in the cockpit and the open bow. Pull up any bottom cushion and you'll find carpeted stowage beneath it. Additional stowage was available in map pockets and in a carpeted sled locker between the bucket seats.

Settling into the driver's seat, we had the rare experience of being part of the dialing-in process for the boat. Cougar only put 10 minutes on it in the cold Canadian climate before bringing the new model to our tests at a wind-blown Castaic Lake about an hour north of Los Angeles.



Our test model's 24-degree V-bottom sported four full length strakes and a turned-down chine. A Brave One spinning a 14 x 24 four-blade Trophy prop through 1.5:1 gears put the 454 Magnum EFI's 385 horses to the water.

We took the 2300 Executive Bowrider through slalom turns at 30 and 40 mph and it was silky smooth. In circles, it went as tight as we asked, even locked all the way over at a cruising speed around 3500 rpm.

During numbers gathering, we determined that the boat was a little over-propped. Spinning the big wheel meant less-than-snappy punch and having to go into the trailer mode when trimming out the drive to get maximum speeds--not a recommended move.

In acceleration tests, we ran to 25 mph in five seconds, but once the propeller caught up with the engine rpm, it doubled to 50 in 10 seconds. Time to plane was 4.6 seconds.

Working the power band, the 2300 Executive Bowrider hit seven mph at 1000, 18 at 2000, 40 at 3000, 48 at 3500, 52 at 4000, 61 at 4500 and a top speed on radar of 68.4 at 4800.

Solid performance was the final ingredient in this wellrounded runabout. Cougar's 2300 Executive Bowrider has everything you could ask for--standard.

Cougar web-note: Prices and some details may have been changed and/or adjusted from the time this article was written.