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# BLOOD LINES

Sunsation's new 28 Intimidator is a chip off the old block.

## HEN SUNSATION OFFSHORE POWERBOATS

President Wayne Schaldenbrand sets his sights on excellence, his aim is always true. We've watched his company grow over the past few year-sand feel proud that we've been able to help make it a positive process.

With his latest offshore offering, the 28 Intimidator, Schaldenbrand and his brothers, John and Joe, are on the mark once again with a smooth handling, solid-feeling single-engine boat.

Schaldenbrand patterned his '98 Intimidator after the highly successful 32 Dominator, which won our Award For Outstanding Offshore Value last year. Sunsation uses many of the same molds for- the 28 Intimidator as it does for the 32 Dominator, so they were starting with a proven winner. Housed in the same engine compartment as on the bigger boat, the single MerCruiser 502 Magnum EFI/MP was an upgrade from the standard 7.4L.

Other options, such as a Corsa Captain's Call exhaust system, a refrigerator and a microwave, among others boosted the price of the 28 Intimidator used in our tests to \$82,895, up from a base price of \$68,750.

For a single-engine boat, the 28 Intimidator handled well and we ran it to nearly 70 mph in fairly rough water. Measuring 28'6" with an 8' beam, the boat weighed in at 4,500 pounds, so more than mile-a-minute speeds are not had at. all. When Schaldenbrand puts the finishing touches on the 28 Intimidator, we expect to see a first-class boat that runs along with the big brother, the 32 Dominator.

## WORKMANSHIP

Looking at the 28 Intimidator's stunning gelcoat, it was obvious the brothers spent the time to do it right. Hull colors in black, purple and yellow on the white base were all applied in the mold with sharp edges and clean, straight lines. Mold work received high scores, void of print-through or waves. The task of protecting the gelcoat fell to the rubrail, a heavy-duty plastic extruded piece that fit the boat well and was up to the job. The multi-sectional windshield also displayed quality craftsmanship in its installation.

Sunsation laminated our test boat with 18 to 20 mils of gelcoat backed up by a skin of 1 1/2-ounce mat, 24-ounce woven roving and 1708 Knytex fabric in alternating layers. A core of 3/4" balsa in the bottom and solid putty in the strakes gave the boat plenty of backbone. To ensure an exact fit, the stringers were set in adhesive before being set in the hull and encapsulated in fiberglass.

A Bennett Marine hydraulic ram opened the engine hatch, which was finished in smooth white gelcoat with the company logo on the underside and upholstered on top. Twin plastic boxes housed the batteries to port of the 502 Magnum EFI/MP, which was installed with MerCruiser offshore mounts on L-angles thru-bolted to the stingers. Also to port, the trim pumps for the drive and tabs were conveniently mounted for servicing, while the molded prill-out stowage bins fit in place between the stringers to starboard.

Workmanship and amenities on the 28' Intimidator earned raves from cockpit to cabin.

Neatly gathered engine-compartment wiring utilized flexible plastic conduit for protection and screw-down tie wraps to hold it in place. Servicing a single engine in a compartment that could accommodate a pair is always easy and our test boat was no exception.

Part- of the interior liner, the base for the bench seat had a clean, finished appearance, as slid the bolsters, which were thru-bolted to the cockpit sole and tied into the gunwales in a stout installation. Fit and finish below-decks was equally antiseptic and free of unmatched seams or rough edges. Lounge cushions built on molded fiberglass bases fit into sturdy- frames constructed on the stringers.

#### I N T E R I O R

The 28 Intimidator incorporated the type of interior layout and accessories we're used to seeing in much pricier offerings. It also had the attention to the little details that make a boat user-friendly, such as hand rails in all the right places, McLeod power bolsters with two level footrests, and non-skid surfaces everywhere.

Heading belowdecks, we passed through a sturdy fiberglass sliding door that could be locked open or closed with a snap lever on the bottom. Descending the molded step into the lounge area, we found handsomely upholstered seating for four-three to port and one to starboard.

Located under the aft cushion of the V-berth, the portable hull way easily accessible beneath a lift-up hatch that stayed rip with the assistance of a gas shock. Snap-down carpet throughout the lounge was a good idea, providing for easy removal and cleaning.

Improving on an idea we saw with the 32 Dominator, Sunsation simplified the process of turning the lounge into a second berth. We liked the concept and now that they have made

it easier\_, it's even better. It always helps to have extra places to sleep when friends arrive unexpectedly. There was also stowage under the long port lounge.

Four comfortable cushions on the two person V-berth pulled out easily to access stowage in the base and the 28 Intimidator had an anchor locker in the forepeak.

Sneaking a galley into a 28' offshore boat is no easy feat, but the Schaldenbrands pulled it off. To starboard

and there was also a Maxxima marine stereo system.

Sleeping accommodations, a head and a galley. You know what that means. The 28 Intimidator qualifies for that all-important second-Home tax deduction.

Belowdecks ventilation was provided by a single screened hatch that let in plenty of natural light. Interior lighting was good with strip-style bulbs that were easy to operate.

In the cockpit, the mini-offshore boat had the twin McLeod bolsters, an aft bench with cupholders in the armrests and a small sunlounge, all covered in white, purple, black and yellow upholstery with an eye-catching swirling pattern on the sunlounge. Grey snap-in carpet covered the cockpit sole. After a dip, the nonskid swim platform will facilitate re-boarding-a ladder would make it even easier. Carpeted gunwale trays, a bench seat, locker and the removable bins to starboard in the engine compartment offered ample stowage.

You can't get much more comfortable than the two-level footrests and the McLeod power bolsters in the 28 Intimidator. Nor will you find a more straightforward dash layout. Our test boat's two-tier system with white-faced VDO gauges consisted of the tachometer, speedometer, fuel gauge and depthsounder in the upper row and those for drive trim, voltage, temperature and oil pressure indicators on the bottom. Should a buyer want the boat with twin engines, there was plenty of space for the required instrumentation. A white Ritclinc compass was on the top flat section of the dash.

To the driver's right, the Kiekhaefer Zero Effort throttle and shift levers were comfortably located, aft of the rocker-style trim switches for the drive and tabs. We've said it time and again this year, if you're going to get the tabs, pay the money for the indicators so you don't go crazy trying



*Space-galore—the engine compartment housed a Merc 502 Magnum protected by a power hatch and sunlounge.*

alongside the one-person lounge, the galley consisted of a sink, a Norcold refrigerator and a microwave. It's not a big deal, but you should note that we could not open the refrigerator when the second berth was made up. All the way aft in the cabin to starboard, Sunsation provided AC outlets



The brothers Schaldenbrand didn't mess around when it came to the 28 Intimidator's purple, black, yellow and white gelcoat which, like the mold work, blew us away.

to guess where the tabs are set.

Clearly labeled accessory malches were in a row just forward of the steering wheel with an easy-to-read schematic that told which accessories were in use.

To port, the observer's dash included a lighter and an ash tray, a clock and an hour meter.

Getting out on (leek couldn't have been easier. We climbed up two molded steps at the (lash and opened the center section of the windshield—a unique feature you normally don't get on an offshore boat. For traction, the entire (leek surface was nonskid.

**P E R F O R M A N C E**

We tested the 28 Intimidator in Gulf of Mexico waters that would challenge boats 10' longer, so we weren't able to hang it. out completely and top speed may have been hampered slightly. But the boat made a good showing, gamely challenging the quartering, following and head-on seas.

Transferring the 502 Magnum EFI/MP's 415 willing horses to the water, the Mirage 14 1/2 x 25 prop spun on the end of a Bravo One drive equipped with a 1.50:1 gear set.

Putting that much power behind a 4,500-pound package provided for quick acceleration. The 28 Intimidator planed in 4.7 seconds when we used the tabs, 5.9 without. In five seconds, the boat. reached 19 mph and moved out to 32 in 10, 41 in 15 and 51 in 20. Stalker radar caught the boat scampering across the water at 67.2 mph

at 49(0 rpm. Starting at the bottom of the rpm scale, the boat ran 7 mph at 1000, 1:3 at 2000 3:3 at 3000, 42 at 3500, 52 at 40(0 and G:3 at 4500. It also held plane at 1:3.9 mph with the tabs down.

A 24-degree V-design. the 28 Intimidator's bottom had a 2' wide delta pad that spanned the width between the two inside strakes. Our test boat had a small 2"-wide step that will not be on production models. Full-length outer strakes were about 1'0., in from the chine, which turned down slightly at the transom.

In maneuverability tests, the 28 Intimidator was victimized by propeller slippage, which in no way can be blamed on the hull design. Because the prop had some difficulty staying hooked up, the boat wasn't as nimble as we think it could be. Going to a lower pitch prop. or possibly a four-blade that would provide more torque, may cure the problem. Sun-sation may also want to consider a lower X-dimension.

On the plus side, our test drivers praised the (lash layout and controls placement, as well as the substantial bolster support.

**O U E R A L L**

The 28 Intimidator is definitely geared for the buyer who wants performance, looks and reliability rolled into one tidy, inexpensive package. Obviously, Sun-sation put a lot of care and craftsmanship into this boat, which will make novice and veteran offshore boat buyers happy.

**SUNSATIION 28 INTIMIDATOR**

**HULL TYPE:** Deep V  
 Deadrise at transom ..... 24 degrees  
 Centerline ..... 28'6"  
 Beam ..... 8'  
 Bare hull weight ..... 2,800 pounds  
 Weight as tested ..... 4,500 pounds

**BASE RETAIL:** \$68,750  
**PRICE AS TESTED:** \$82,895

**STANDARD EQUIPMENT:** Full instrumentation, lighted rocker switches, McLeod Design Group interior, stand-up bolsters, power steering, sport wheel, lighted display panel, dash grab handle, tinted windshield, fiberglass galley sink/counter, Mirage stainless propeller, on-throttle trim, Kiekhaefer throttles, dual ram trim tabs, Ritchie compass, AM/FM cassette stereo, galley, snap-out carpet in cabin and cockpit, molded fiberglass, cabin door, power engine hatch, swim platform.

**OPTIONS ON TEST BOAT:** Upgrade to MerCruiser 502 Magnum EFI/MP engine (\$9,040), Corsa Captain's Call exhaust (\$1,100), depthsounder (\$375), bow cover (\$400), Port-A-Potti pump-out (\$250), shorepower (\$890), microwave (\$475), refrigerator (\$865).

**ENGINE**  
 Model ..... MerCruiser 502 Magnum EFI/MP  
 Cylinder type ..... V-8  
 Cubic inch displacement ..... 502 c.i.  
 Lower unit gear ratio ..... 1.50:1  
 Max prop horsepower at rpm ..... 415 @ 5000

**PROPELLER:** Quicksilver Mirage 14 1/2" x 25" three-blade stainless.

**MANUFACTURER:** Sun-sation Boats, 5827 Hessen Rd., Casco, Mich. 48064, (810) 725-8020.

**POWERBOAT TEST RESULTS**

**ACCELERATION**  
 Zero to 5 seconds ..... 19 mph  
 10 seconds ..... 32 mph  
 15 seconds ..... 41 mph  
 20 seconds ..... 51 mph

**TIME TO PLANE:** 4.7 seconds  
 Min. planing speed ..... 13.9 mph

**RPM VS. MPH**  
 1000 ..... 7 mph  
 2000 ..... 13 mph  
 3000 ..... 33 mph  
 3500 ..... 42 mph  
 4000 ..... 52 mph  
 4500 ..... 63 mph

**SOUND LEVEL:** 94 dBA

**TOP SPEED AT RPM**  
 Speedometer ..... 70 mph at 4900  
 Radar ..... 67.2 mph at 4900

**FUEL CAPACITY:** 110 gallons  
 Test conducted at Panama City, Fla.