



SUNSATI O N 2 5 A G G R E S S O R

RUN WITH THE BIG BOYS

Sunsation's 25 Aggressor is an exciting performer burgeoning offshore boaters who want that true seat-of-the-pants feel.

IT'S ROUGH OUT THERE. HEY, THAT'S LIFE IN THE WIDE-OPEN OCEAN OR ON THE Great Lakes, where 3' swells don't keep real powerboaters in their boats at the marina because the waves are too big. That's Strictly for whiners. The basic fact is, offshore-performance fans look for the rough stuff, and if they buy a boat, the vessel had better be able to take it.

That's a reality Wayne Schaldenbrand, president of Sunsatation Products, Inc., in Casco, Mich., addressed with the 25 Aggressor: they built a tough entry-level offshore performer that won't crack when the going gets rough. Like its larger siblings, the 28 Intimidator and the 32 Dominator, the 25 Aggressor was made to take on the big water. Since it was introduced in 1991, nearly 150 25 Aggressors have helped buyers on a budget enter the world of offshore boating. At the Thunder Marine and Michigan Offshore Cruising Association poker ants last year, we saw quite a few Aggressors running right up there with the big boats.

Schaldenbrand and his brothers John and Joe tweaked a few things here and there on the 25 Aggressor, such as modifying the running strakes for improved performance, and redesigning the deck. The revisions made for a quick Single-engine offshore boat, with a top speed of more than 65 mph propelled by the base powerplant for the boat, a 300-hp MerCruiser 7.4L.

For the \$41,180 sticker on the 24'7" boat with a 7'2" beam we tested at the Marriott Bay Point Resort in Panama City, Fla., you get just about everything you'd need for running in big water, including standard features such as stand-up bolsters, trim tabs, a stainless propeller and thru-bolted motor mounts. For comparison's sake, we evaluated luxury runabouts that cost about \$10,000 more than our test model. But the only place they can run is a country

photo: walter daly. West coast photos on waterhead, boats & people

*Peel men took it standing up--at least when the water got evil--in Me 454
Magnum-powered 25' Aggressor. When it came time to sit, they enjoyed the twin bolsters.*

hatch, cabin lights, a depthsounder and a cockpit cover. The suggested price for the base 25 Aggressor was \$39,995.

W O R H M A N S R I P

Among the standard features on our test model was a four-color gelcoat. Sunstation's color scheme for our 25 Aggressor was stunning, with hot pink, white, gray and black gelcoat, all applied in the mold. The only vinyl on the boat was the manufacturer's logo. All the gelcoat and paint shone well in the Florida sun, with only slight waviness in the hull—nothing to get worked up about.

Installation on the wraparound plexiglass windshield was rated as above average by our inspector. Sunstation also earned good scores for its installation work on the rubrail, a plastic extrusion fitted with a rubber insert over the screws.

Checking the deck hardware manifest, the manufacturer started with an Aqua Signal navigation light on the bow, with a single 6" Perko cleat aft of that and two more cleats on either side of the windshield. In the starboard gunwale amidships, the plastic Attwood fuel fill was conveniently located. Farther aft, black Attwood bilge vents fed air to the motor and two more cleats were mounted on either side of the angled section of the transom.

Constructed of molded fiberglass, the engine hatch included the headrests for the bench seat. It opened to an almost-vertical position, providing excellent access to the carbureted 454-cid GM engine.

Sunstation installed the 7.4L with a standard transom mount and aluminum L-angles thru-bolted to the center stringers. The manufacturer kept things quiet around the docks with exhaust tubes routed through the transom in sealed rings and flappers on the tips. To starboard the battery was secured alongside the drive-trim pump. Run neatly along the gunwale on the same side, the wiring harness had strong support. For easy cleanups, the bilge was finished with a spatter gelcoat, with stow age troughs on

either side of the engine for tools, spare oil or other items.

Beneath that gelcoat, we could see Sunstation stayed with proven materials in putting together the 25 Aggressor. Our test model's laminate included alternating layers of 1 1/2-ounce and 24-ounce woven cloth. For strong, off-shore-worthy construction, fiberglass tabbing bonded the hull-and-deck joint and the chines at the top of the plywood stringers.

Formed from separate molds and bolted to the cockpit sole, the bench seat and the dash consoles felt solid. Kudos to Sunstation for finishing the bottom of the dash in plastic trim lock. Just as strong, the framework for the bolsters was thru-bolted to a reinforced section of the sole.

Belowdecks, the built-to-take-it approach continued, with another



We found plenty of room to recline in our test boat's cabin, which included two lounges and a V-berth.

molded cabinet housing the small galley, while the lounges and V-berth were built off the stringer tops.

I N T E R I O R

Staying with the cabin, a young couple should find the 25 Aggressor accommodating for a weekend getaway. Well-padded facing lounges could seat two and the V-berth felt comfortable after a long day on the water. Sunstation used a gray headliner, and a sort of black and gray art deco approach on the upholstery on the berth.

Overhead, the single deck hatch should let in plenty of natural light and fresh air on those hot summer nights. Strip lighting will brighten things belowdecks when the sun goes down.

There was no stowage in the lounge bases, which were built directly off the stringers. That we couldn't remove the berth cushion, however, confused us because there was a huge locker in the base, but only a small batch in the bulkhead provided access to it. Hatches beneath the pad would make it a heckuva lot easier to get to things that roll forward in the locker.

Working our way out into the cockpit, we made our first stop at the bolsters. Both had drop-out bottom cushions and small angled footrests, which will be helpful in rough water. To port, the co-pilot had a cupholder and grab handle on the dash. Due to space limitations inherent with a 25-footer, less-important instruments had to be installed farther away from the driver. Sunstation did a good job of prioritizing. The center of the dash

sported a small clock with an hour meter, along with accessory switches for the exhaust cutouts, cabin and courtesy lights and the Audiovox marine stereo behind a flop-over plastic lid.

Settling into the driver's bolster, we looked at white-faced Teleflex gauges in a white panel. The tinted windshield helped reduce glare, but not all of it. Our test model's gauge lineup began with the oil pressure, water temperature, voltage, trim and fuel indicators on the top level. On the bottom row, opposite of what

most people are used to, were the tachometer and speedo, a location that afforded a better line of sight.

Trim buttons for the drives and tabs were mounted forward of the throttle in a comfortable position along with a depthsounder, but there were no indicators for the plates. Tsk, tsk.

We found the cockpit a tad square, but that's a matter of personal preference. The bench seat provided space for three people, with grab handles on the base, which we think could be a problem—you have to lean forward and reach down to get to them. While we give Sunstation credit for providing grab handles, it seemed to us that a bow landing off a wave could launch bench passengers forward if they were grabbing onto the handles. We would



glass. Attention to detail was paid in its finish and top-notch rubrail installation.

prefer grab handles on the gunwales ahead of or alongside the bench.

For cockpit stowage, the bench seat offered space and will probably be the first choice for an anchor, while gunwale trays would provide homes for dock lines and fenders. There was also space alongside the engine in a removable retainer to port.

From our perch on the one-person sunlounge, it was apparent SunSation didn't build the 25 Aggressor for swimmers. There were small swim steps bolted on either side of the drive, but no grab handles, only a cleat on each side.

P E R F O R M A N C E

In the pursuit of top-end stability, SunSation's designers added a delta pad to the bottom of the 25 Aggressor that started out 10" wide at the transom and faded into the keel about 16' forward.

The bottom also sported four lifting strakes, with two inside terminating about 10' forward of the transom and the outer pair running full length. They were set in about 1' from the 2 1/2"-wide chine, which was turned down a couple degrees to improve stability and planing times.

With any deep-V design like the 24-degree bottom on the 25 Aggressor, adding trim tabs, such as the single-ram Bennetts on our test model, help stabilize the ride. MerCruiser's 7.4L engine turned a 14 1/2 x 24 three-blade prop through a Bravo One drive with a 1.5:1 gear set. The combination was

enough to push the boat to a top speed of 65.9 mph on Stalker Radar, while the speedo read 71. Working through the power curve, we reached six mph at 1000 rpm, 25 at 2000, 45 at 3000, 53 at 3500 and 62 at 4000.

Out of the hole, the 25 Aggressor reached 16 mph in three seconds, 25 in five, 43 in 10 and 56 in 15. Time to reach plane was 5.8 seconds without the tabs, 4.2 with them. You'll stay level without the plates at 18 mph; put the tabs down and you can drop to 15 and still stay on plane.

As for handling, our test driver gave the 25 Aggressor above-average ratings. Slalom turns at 20 mph were acceptable, and got better at 30 and 40. Tracking was excellent at all speeds, and the boat was appropriately sensitive to trim.

While we found the bolsters comfortable and our view of the gauges clear, we did have a gripe about forward visibility. The low-profile windshield blocked our view when we were sitting and we felt we were a tad too tall when standing.

O U E R A L L

Entering the offshore market may be daunting to the pocketbook, but you have to start somewhere. The SunSation 25 Aggressor is the sort of entry-level offshore boat that can take a pounding. On almost any rowdy-water day, the guys with the SunSations will be out there having fun, leaving everyone else back at the marina.



SUNSATI O N 2 5 A G G R E S S O R

HULL TYPE: Deep V
 Deadrise at transom 24 degrees
 Centerline 24.7"
 Beam 7.2"
 Weight as tested 3,100 pounds

BASE RETAIL: \$39,995
PRICE AS TESTED: \$41,180

STANDARD EQUIPMENT: Full instrumentation, stand-up bolsters, snap-in carpet, AM/FM cassette stereo system, cockpit and cabin lighting, wet bar with stainless sink, MerCruiser 7.4L engine, thru-bolted motor mounts, power engine hatch, trim tabs, stainless-steel propeller, integrated swim platform, stainless-steel hardware, four-color gelcoat graphics.

OPTIONS ON TEST BOAT: Depthsounder (\$360), bow hatch (\$350), cockpit cover (\$350), cabin lights (\$125).

ENGINE
 Model MerCruiser 7.4L
 Cylinder type V-8
 Cubic inch displacement 454 c.i.
 Lower unit gear ratio 1.5:1
 Max prop horsepower @ rpm 300 at 4600

PROPELLER: Quicksilver Mirage 14 1/2" x 24" three-blade stainless.

MANUFACTURER: SunSation Products, Inc., 5827 Hessen Rd., Casco, MI 48064, (810) 725-8020.

POWERBOAT TEST RESULTS

ACCELERATION
 Zero to 3 seconds 16 mph
 5 seconds 25 mph
 10 seconds 43 mph
 15 seconds 56 mph

TIME TO PLANE: 4.2 seconds
 Min. planing speed 15 mph

RPM VS. MPH
 1000 6 mph
 2000 25 mph
 3000 45 mph
 3500 53 mph
 4000 62 mph

SOUND LEVEL: 80 dBA (open)

TOP SPEED AT RPM
 Speedometer 71 mph at 4400
 Radar 65.9 mph at 4400

FUEL ECONOMY:
 At 25 mph 3.6 mpg
 At 35 mph 3.5 mpg
 At 45 mph 3.8 mpg

FUEL CAPACITY: 55 gallons
 Test conducted at Panama City, Fla.