

# SUNSATION

25' AGGRESSOR

Though braced for its 14th and most productive summer yet, Sunsatation Performance Boats remains one of performance powerboating's best-kept secrets. A series of HoT BoAT awards, a string of glowing test reviews and an inspired word-of-mouth customer response to their sleek line of open-water vees have helped to chip away at the relative anonymity of this outstanding family-run boat company, which keeps its production numbers low and its energy high.

The Schaldenbrand Brothers' impassioned efforts have been rewarded with HoT BoAT awards for Stem Drive Performer of the Year in 1995 (28-foot Intimidator), Best Offshore Performance in '94 (32-foot Dominator), Best Offshore Value in '93 (32-foot Dominator) and Best Value from 27 to 40 feet in '91 (25-foot Aggressor).

If our awards process was still in effect, this year's test entry, the 25-foot Aggressor, would likely have been the latest to curry distinction amongst its peers. Sunsatation has repeatedly dazzled our test team with its highly favorable value-to-dollar

exchange rate, and we're happy to report the tradition is alive and well in the soul of the 25-foot Aggressor vee.

It's Sunsatation's best-selling model and the smallest of three. A favorite of the line since its introduction in 1990, the '96 version of the Aggressor sports bottom modifications aimed to bleed a little more handling from its deep 24-degree shape.

## THE PACKAGE

A ten-inch Delta pad is a newly implanted feature of Sunsatation's conventional 24-degree vee platform, which has always been effective in balancing high-impact performance with crisp, secure driveability. Two sets of lifting strakes that cut the surface of the original's underside remain in place.

The addition of the pad, an arrow-shaped pivot point that's two feet at its widest and which tapers from the transom to midship, is Sunsatation's response to MerCruiser's ongoing release of high-output power packages



and their effect on the straight-vee design. The traditionally styled offshore-oriented Aggressor hull responded with more speed and also with a trace of chine-walk, which was not present in its early production days when the 365 Magnum was MerCruiser's big hitter.

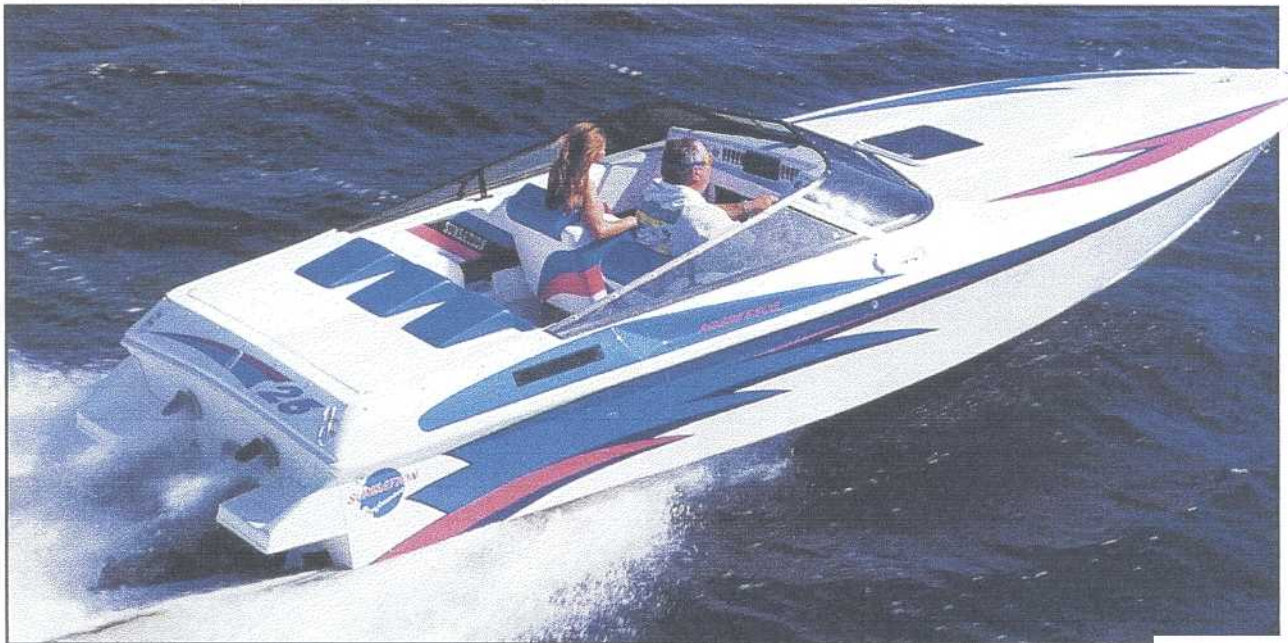
The new-generation Sunsatation/MerCruiser package is better than ever; our previous radar tests beamed the 365/Aggressor at 64.3 mph while the '96 version, packing MerCruiser's outstanding 454 EFI package, was a smooth 70.6-mph screamer. As for the walking tendency, the notes of HOT BOAT hot-shoe, Jim Wilkes, says it all: "Sunsatation has hit a home run with their new bottom ... an outstanding package!"

There's more to the Aggressor than its smooth 70-mph sprint. It has a decently appointed cabin, given its narrow dimensions and reasonable sticker (\$50,190 with the multi-port 454 EFI). It's also very fun to

drive and balances an aggressive performance side with smooth, polished manners when the requisite occasion arises.

The Aggressor's long deck and relatively narrow 86-inch beam contribute to its dramatic lines, which on our test boat were enhanced with four-gelcoat colors. The gelcoat theme was basic, competently executed and complimented the hull's look. The Aggressor's mold is obviously still primo, and the strong fiberglass work, that has long been a company trademark, remains intact. The rigged hull weighs 3,200 pounds, making its performance and responsive feel even more impressive. Sunsatation's hulls are designated for rough-water use and built for the long haul. Hull and deck are box-fit, then gassed together all the way around the seam, which is dressed with neat rubber-insert trim.

There's a lot more fiberglass work involved in putting the Aggressor together than one sees at first glance. Separate molds are used to form the cabin's V-bunk flooring, port and starboard foot rests, molded dash, rear-seat framing,



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hatch and blower ventilator. The boat's lack of vibration or rattle, even during hard-core rough-water blasting, was a testament to this company's thorough rigging abilities.

Construction and rigging were consistent and solid throughout our test hull with through-bolt mounting the standard on all exterior hardware, which was strictly stainless. Standard hardware included three sensibly placed cleats and a stout, braced six-piece aluminum-framed windshield that effectively diverted wind flow over the front passengers' heads.

The 454 ER package, which automatically self-adjusts to optimum tune under varying degrees of altitude and density, packs the Aggressor with 385 horsepower (at the prop), which is meted out in smooth, snappy fashion. Our tester's engine



compartment was neatly detailed, with clean placement of wiring and hardware and a neat job of through-bolting the motor to the stringers. The linking Bravo box housed 1.5:1 gears and ran a stainless 25-inch Mirage three-blade, which

is standard fare. Standard-sized Bennett tabs were also standard and were handy in offsetting shifts in the Aggressor's narrow stance, as well as softening some of the bowrise inherent in its design. Controls were base MerCruiser, with tab

located in the handle and convenient placement in the side gunnel. A hydraulically activated engine hatch, which had adequate mounting support in our sample, is also standard and raising it revealed a cool, removable ice chest on the port side.

The SunSation's cockpit is thoroughly dressed with quality pieces and finish work throughout, and it also has some decent size. Drop-through bolster seating up front is standard, and the two facing foot rests offer effective support during throttle-induced fun bursts. The flush-mount gauges were ideally placed, and the dash-switch panels were conveniently arranged. Everything in the layout made sense and enhanced the driving experience.

All of the seating was comfortable, with the bolsters particularly effective in offering a



snug, secure fit. Grab handles were placed within easy range of the rear passengers, who got a soft, supportive ride on the large, roomy bench. The interior stitching and color work drew strong marks, as did the installation of the sectioned snap-in carpeting accent work.

**THE SUNSATATION IS RESPONSIVE TO COMMAND AND CONVEYS A SMOOTH, PREDICTABLE FEEL.**

Sunsation packs its base boat with features they consider necessities, which jacks up the value of the Aggressor in the process. Every imaginable convenience is packed into the cockpit, including hour meter, depth finder, clock, cigarette-lighter power source, stereo system, drink holders, padded steering wheel and interior lighting package. There's also a fair amount of storage in the cockpit.

The styling of the cabin's entry-door is in bad need of an upgrade, and it didn't appear to be up to the demands of sustained long-term, high-impact use. Once through it, the Aggressor is obviously limited somewhat by its diminutive dimensions. However, good

use is made of available space. The V-bunks are somewhat claustrophobic, but there's sufficient room in which to sit in the facing benches. Standard amenities include a small sink, lighting package and lift-up storage area that could accommodate a portable head.

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**PERFORMANCE**

Like every Sunsation we've ever tested, the Aggressor test craft proved itself as a purist's driving machine: responsive to command and conveying a smooth, predictable feel. It's quick, direct, forgiving and extremely sensitive to trim and throttle. It also freely communicates its moves to the driver and responds to ride tuning.

The new bottom does, however, seem to carry more significantly and reflexively off the line. There's no getting around the bowrise that's inevitable during the first stages of takeoff, even tucked all the way in. Once on plane, however, that personality tick is quickly forgotten, and the Sunsation levels off into superior territory.

Low-speed handling and maneuverability were excellent, and the ride remained dry and soft at all rpm under every test condition. This hull is particularly responsive to tab, which is critical in offsetting its shallow beam, pronounced vee and rise off the line.

Once into the midrange, the Sunsation takes on a sports-car feel. It turns instantly, cutting the buoys as precisely as anything we've driven in its size range. It made great use of the EFI's broad torque range, powering skillfully through turns and gliding into a satisfying top-end strut that was as smooth as it was exhilarating. At about 3,500 rpm, the boat took on an accelerated, lighter feel that led to a controlled top-end glide. Turning at all speeds was balanced and equally smooth in both directions.

Our testers noted that almost anyone with basic performance experience could drive this boat to its full 70-mph



potential, and the limits of its design were nowhere in sight under the power of the 454 EFI train. All hint of chine-walk was obliterated with the new hydrodynamics, and we can't wait to get our hands on a super-charged version.

While the Sunsation's acceleration figures were somewhat underwhelming, a condition attributed to its rise off the line, its feel throughout the midrange and top end was absolutely exhilarating. Those uninitiated to the pure joys of performance sport boating would do well to sample the many favors of the Sunsation, which brings the sport within sensible economic reach of the weekend enthusiast.

For a midsize boat, the Aggressor handled rough water fairly well. It made a meal out of afternoon chop and rollers, and when conditions digressed to two- to three-foot swells, it held its own-although impact therein was admittedly jarring at times. However, there was no denying the solid, stout nature of the boat during these bouts.

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

The Aggressor has a multitude of appealing features, including a boatload of standard amenities, a smooth turnkey 70-mph nature and terrific value. All of that is wrapped around an attribute that has fueled

Sunsation's enthusiastic customer following since the Schaldenbrands set up shop: the Aggressor, like its brethren, is great fun to drive. B

**SPECIFICATIONS**

Centerline length: 24'7"  
 Beam: 86"  
 Bottom: Deep-vee  
 Engine/drive: MerCruiser 454 EFI/Bravo 1  
 Horsepower @ prop: 385  
 Ratio: 1.5:1  
 Prop: Mirage 25" three-blade  
 Base Retail Price, incl. trailer: \$42,560  
 Standard Features: 7.4L Bravo, hydraulic rear hatch, bolster seating, Bennett tabs, stainless Mirage 25" prop, four-gelcoat colors, flush-mount gauges, wet bar, stereo system, cabin lighting, drink holders, dash grab handle, lighted rocker switches, foot rests, circuit breakers, locking cabin doors, cigarette lighter, padded wheel, power steering, lighting package, cleats.  
 Options on test boat: 454 EFI upgrade (\$7,280), cockpit cover (\$350).  
 Price as tested: \$50,190  
**Performance**  
 Top speed, radar: 70.6 mph  
 Planing time: 4.56 seconds  
 Maximum rpm: 4,650  
 0-30: 7.85 seconds  
 0-40: 10.82 seconds  
 0-50: 14.30 seconds  
 0-60: 19.90 seconds  
 Speed at 3,000 rpm: 41 mph  
 Speed at 4,000 rpm: 62 mph  
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