

STORY JOHN ZAMMIT PHOTOS JOE PRESS

DOUBLE TAKE

Trade-a-Boat goes for an exclusive run on Port Phillip Bay aboard a new avant-garde dayboat, the SPC 27. **JOHN ZAMMIT** finds nothing fruity about this striking, locally-built newcomer, its heritage steeped in performance boats, both power and sail

Braeside, located 26km southeast of Melbourne's CBD, is not exactly the first place that comes to mind when you think boats and boatbuilding. Yet that's exactly where you'll find Composites Constructions and the company's 43yo owner-manager Stephen Campbell.

He has been building boats since he was 17 and over the years been involved in the construction of many craft that have competed at the highest level, including *Illusion*, the overall race winner of the 1988 Sydney Hobart. Since branching out on his own in 2000 when he was commissioned to help build a Schionning catamaran, Steve has gone on to build many other well-known racing yachts including

Flirt, a Corby 49 IRC racer, and the Reichel/Pugh IRC 52 *Scarlet Runner*.

But it's not just sailboats that Composites Constructions produces, it also built the highly successful *Saracen* carbon fibre/Kevlar composite offshore powerboat racer as well as the hulls for the sleek, high-performing Velocity 21 ski-raceboats, and when they're not building boats they're involved in modifications and repairs.

I caught up with Steve at nearby Sandringham Yacht Club recently, where he agreed to give *Trade-a-Boat* a sneak preview of his latest high-tech creation, the SPC 27, an exciting 28ft powerboat that looks like it has come straight from the set of a James Bond spy thriller. Almost but not quite fully complete the SPC 27 was still a work-in-





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Above and right: Centre console helm stations are challenging for designers. This one, though, looks the part and functions well. Opposite page: The SPC 27 is all chiselled cheekbones and attitude, even at rest.

progress when we checked her out; although far enough along for us to get a good idea of what this boat is all about.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

I'd been hearing the buzz within the boating community about this unusual craft for a while and was keen to have a closer look. I've got no doubt that anyone seeing the SPC 27 for the first time will have a strong opinion one way or the other. Love the look or hate it, I don't think there'll be many sitting on the fence.

I do however believe that some who initially may not like the SPC 27 will change their mind once they get beyond the aesthetics and appreciate what she offers. Like oysters, truffles and French champagne she might be an acquired taste for some. Personally, I'm with the affirmative, I think she's a head-turner with loads of on-water presence.

Finished in a metallic, stone metal (charcoal) grey colour with a contrasting light-teak deck the SPC



27 has a pronounced plumb bow and centre console set well aft. My initial thought on first sight was that of a superyacht tender visiting from the Med'. She is 'out there' in terms of styling and you can almost hear her shout, "Look at me!"

Once you step aboard though, I think you'll agree the builder has come close to the mark for what she's designed to be – a stylish, performance dayboat that's a foundation for prospective owners to specify fitout and inclusions to suit their own needs.

Other than changing the shape of the hull, Steve says everything

else is open for discussion. At 8.2m long, with a beam of 2.7m and a dry weight of 1850kg trailering could even be an option for the SPC 27. This opens up more possibilities, but you will need a permit to tow as she exceeds the 2.5m road-width limitation on Australian roads.

Fast and sporty with a deep-V hull, lots of freeboard and full walk-around decks the SPC 27 is fitted with a 260hp Yanmar diesel on a MerCruiser Bravo III leg, a combination that results in speeds in excess of 35kts. This boat is versatile too. Steve and his brood (he's got five kids from two to





Far left: From the stern looking forward at the recliner seat-cum-engine access. Left: The dickey seat forward extra storage and the fuel filler underneath. Below left: Hiding all the anchoring equipment away adds real polish to the overall look.



[HIGHS]

- › Loads of wow factor
- › Great performer
- › Full walk-around decks
- › Trailerable

[LOWS]

- › No freshwater on base boat
- › Needs a wash basin in the head
- › Could do with a swimladder and transom shower



“WHEN I PUSHED THOSE THROTTLES FORWARD AND THE TURBO KICKED IN AT AROUND 1500RPM THE ACCELERATION WAS SENSATIONAL, THE THRUST PUSHING ME BACK INTO THE BOLSTER

18) have taken on the role of ‘test family’, using the boat at weekends trying out the practicality of various options, including seating layout, storage, canopies etc.

Their verdict so far, albeit slightly biased, is that the SPC 27 works well as a family dayboat/entertainer. Towing the kids around on water toys, dropping the anchor off at a secluded beach for a picnic and a swim off the transom that drops down to form a swimplatform or heading into Melbourne’s Docklands for lunch or dinner, all get ticks of approval.

ENDLESS OPTIONS

The fully covered centre console features dark-tinted acrylic panels

overhead providing shade but still letting in plenty of light, and a Fusion stereo system and LED lighting, including mood lighting at floor level, comes standard. At the helm a sporty timber sports wheel gives another hint that this is a performance sportsboat and the non-glare dash incorporates an array of gauges, a VHF radio and a Raymarine C120 widescreen with GPS-plotter.

The seating at the helm is interesting, it’s actually a twin bolster designed for the skipper and companion to stand and lean against underway and used as a seat at rest. I wasn’t sure about it at the start but it proved quite comfortable and practical once

we got going and gave me a good driving position and an excellent view all round.

Just to the right of the console beside the dash is the entry to a cleverly designed head. If you weren’t aware of it you may not even realise it was here. Step down into a spacious room with an electric toilet and a mirrored cabinet. It’s fully private with good head height and I’m sure would satisfy the most discerning female. There’s an option to add a washbasin, which to me is a must-have, and I’d even look at the possibility of making the head a wet room by adding an open shower too.

The full walk-around deck and

high sides means it’s safe for families with young kids and even pets to get around. There’s seating forward of the console with storage underneath and where the filler is located for the 400lt fuel tank. Two other tanks, each of 200lt capacity, are built-in under the sole either side of the console. On our test boat these weren’t connected but are fitted ready for any purpose an owner might require like additional fuel, freshwater, black water, or anything else.

Open space farther forward allows for the option of foldup seating and possibly a side-mount removable table. This would allow the space to be cleared quickly and easily, leaving the deck totally

unencumbered if you decided to go fishing. There’s plenty of room too under the gunwales on the hull’s sides for storage of numerous items such as rods, tackle and the like. Ahead, a hatch in the bulkhead reveals more storage while at the bow is a fully draining anchor well, an electric winch and a stainless steel Lewmar anchor.

There’s more room to sit or lounge around aft of the centre console. Here a large sunpad is fitted to the top of a raised hatch that hinges open on gas struts to reveal the engine compartment. Overhead a European awning fits into a sail-track on the rear of the centre console and extends aft to the transom providing plenty of shade.

MIGHT & POWER

The engine compartment houses the 260hp Yanmar BY2-0 diesel engine and although things here get a little tight – especially if you need to get to the power steering mechanism – there’s still room to get to all the bits you need from a general servicing point of view. Having said that, Steve tells me if major work is required the whole engine can be removed in around an hour. The engineroom is fitted with a blower and two batteries (one engine, one house) stored neatly in a battery box.

Underway there’s a bit of engine noise but that’s to be expected on a boat like this, it’s a performance sportsboat after all, and anyway it



[tradeboat SAYS...]

The SPC 27 is an interesting boat to say the least but if you're looking for something run of the mill, all kitted out, complete and ready to go, this is not the boat for you. This baby is designed for those that like things a little different, something with wow factor, but you'll have to put some thought into it. It comes as a base boat and as such there's no freshwater, no refrigeration (other than a fully drained icebox) and not a lot of storage either, but you can have all that and a lot more, just tick the boxes. The SPC 27 is even available in six gelcoat colours.

As a multifunctional fun dayboat the SPC 27 is suitable for the whole family, including young children, and I think it has loads of potential. It's also the type of boat that you can take your wife or girlfriend out to lunch or dinner on one day and the boys fishing the next day. The boat looks good, does the job it's designed to do and provides a great base for anyone with a sense of style and bit of imagination.



was still possible to hold a normal conversation at the helm. When I pushed those throttles forward and the turbo kicked in at around 1500rpm the acceleration was sensational, the thrust pushing me back into the bolster. With her deep-V the SPC 27 rides well and feels surefooted both in a straight line and throwing her around into tight turns. The steering felt a tad tight heading to port, but to be fair they hadn't finished setting her up properly when we took her out for a run and the cause of that was just some air in the line that only needed bleeding.

We took the SPC 27 up through the whole rev range to WOT of 4200rpm for just over 35kts on the day. A cruise speed of around 24kts (3200rpm) feels about right

Top: With the transom folded down the back of the SPC 27 is surprisingly roomy and strongly lifestyle orientated. Above left: Yanmars are quickly becoming an industry favourite for this sort of installation. Above right: A deck light splits a pair of groovy Fusion speakers under the back of the T-top.

for this boat and at that rate you could expect to use around 23lt/h of fuel. With a bit of a safety margin that equates to a range of around 350nm, which probably means you're not going to be lining up at the bowser every weekend in this boat. ⚓

Test day weather information supplied by



Facts & figures

SPC 27

PRICED AS TESTED

\$165,000

OPTIONS FITTED

Teak side decks, metallic paint, Raymarine C120 and GPS-plotter, trailer, safety gear, rear sun cover, and dash and seat covers

PRICED FROM

POA

SEA TRIALS

Single 260hp Yanmar 6BY2-260Z

RPM	FUEL BURN (LT/H)
890	1.7
1034	2.2
1214	3.0
1410	4.4
1644	6.7
1812	8.3
2007	10.1
2227	12.4
2406	14.1
2618	16.1
2815	18.3
3030	21.1
3201	23.2
3415	28.7
3606	32.9
3830	38.6
4216	47.9

*Sea-trial date supplied by Composites Constructions.

GENERAL

MATERIAL Foam sandwich construction using E-Glass with vinylester resin

TYPE Deep-V monohull

LENGTH 8.25m

BEAM 2.7m

DRAFT 0.8m

WEIGHT 1850kg (dry)

CAPACITIES

FUEL 400lt

ENGINE

MAKE/MODEL Yanmar 6BY2-260Z w/ MerCruiser Bravo III leg

TYPE Four-cylinder turbo-diesel

RATED HP 260

DISPLACEMENT 2.99lt

WEIGHT 315kg

SUPPLIED BY

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