

MYTH BUSTER

Rumours suggest cats can be trouble and bite the hand that steers them. Angelo San Giorgio puts on his sleuthing cap to find out if the Sailfish Canyon Master can be tamed.

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WEATHER CONDITIONS

Wind: 25-30kts

Sea: 2.5-3m swell



ON THE WATER

Words: Angelo San Giorgio
Images: Jack Murphy



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I've been around boats for a fair while now, but I'm the first to admit I don't have much direct experience with cats — of the marine variety, that is. I've driven the odd one now and then over the years, but never long or hard enough for them to leave a lasting impression. But I'm always up for a challenge, so when Gavan Daly from NSW's Webbe Marine, dealer for cat-specialist Sailfish, offered up a couple of new models for testing, I jumped at the chance.

Actually, that's a lie; I kind of cautiously accepted. Truth be told, despite being in and out of different hulls each week, they've all been mono and driving them required a familiar skillset.

BLURRED LINES

Cats, I've been led to believe, are an altogether different beast, highly strung and apt to bite if you get it wrong. And some of these opinions were proffered by people in the industry whose word I respect.

Like many things in this world that are a bit left of centre, cats are treated with caution, and even suspicion. Speculation and uninformed opinion germinate and sprout into rumours, which in time grow to become accepted as fact.

This goes a long way in explaining why there seems to be a certain stigma when it comes to cats.

But it's *TrailerBoat's* job to put its neck and reputation on the line to test such theories, and since everyone else was on assignment, I drew the short straw. As a consolation, the test was set for the sunny Gold Coast, which would prove a welcome respite from the cold snap Melbourne was experiencing at the time.

Since reviewing the Canyon Master's kid brother, the Reef Master, in last month's issue (*TrailerBoat* #296, July 2013) it would be fair to assume I returned from the experience relatively unscathed. In that review, I remarked that the single-engine Reef Master had the potential to convert monohull enthusiasts to the dark side. So can its big brother change minds? Well, yes, and no.

The relatively compact Reef Master is a cleverly executed exercise in compromise intended to tempt monohull owners who want to dip their toes in the cat pool. It facilitates a gentle and considered transition from one to two hulls and even dispenses with the traditional twin-engine layout in favour of a larger single.

Compromise is not in the Canyon Master's vocabulary, though. Where the compact Reef Master attempts to blur lines, the big cat prefers to hammer home its point of view. Its philosophy seems to be: why go around it when you can just smash through? And after my time behind the wheel, I understood the sentiment.

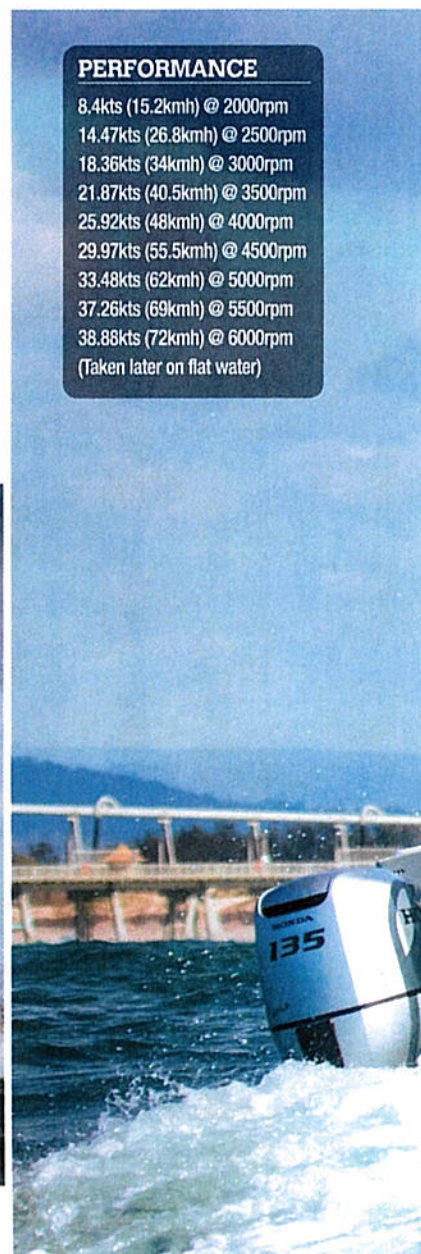
TRAILERBOAT RATES THE SAILFISH CANYON MASTER

1 Fun factor	✓✓✓✓✓
2 Innovation	✓✓✓✓✓
3 Design and layout	✓✓✓✓✓
4 Quality of finish	✓✓✓✓✓
5 Handling and ride	✓✓✓✓✓
6 Stability at rest	✓✓✓✓✓
7 Ergonomics	✓✓✓✓✓
8 Standard equipment	✓✓✓✓✓
9 Value for money	✓✓✓✓✓
10 X-Factor	✓✓✓✓✓
OVERALL	✓✓✓✓✓

Right: A solid 4WD will likely be in order for this big cat. Below: Twin hulls helped keep the Canyon Master stable in everything the sea threw at it. Below left: Ploughing through 3m waves proved little trouble.

PERFORMANCE

8.4kts (15.2kmh) @ 2000rpm
 14.47kts (26.8kmh) @ 2500rpm
 18.36kts (34kmh) @ 3000rpm
 21.87kts (40.5kmh) @ 3500rpm
 25.92kts (48kmh) @ 4000rpm
 29.97kts (55.5kmh) @ 4500rpm
 33.48kts (62kmh) @ 5000rpm
 37.26kts (69kmh) @ 5500rpm
 38.88kts (72kmh) @ 6000rpm
 (Taken later on flat water)





ON THE
WATER



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TESTING TIMES

To the uninitiated, the average boat test lasts for around four hours, during which we try to gauge a range of aspects. The first hour is normally about getting comfortable with the hull, gradually extending the working envelope before exploring the upper limits of its performance and handling. It's a process, albeit a fun and fluid one.

The other option, of course, is to simply open up the throttle and let fly, which is exactly what happened with Gavan on the tiller.

So my first introduction to the new Canyon Master was not a subtle one. Rather than exchanging pleasantries and easing into the relationship, we launched off a solid 3m wave just as we exited the Gold Coast seaway, 10 minutes into our run. We landed smoothly, softly and with a flat attitude.

Okay, I thought, it's going to be one of those tests. So I strapped on my goggles and snorkel and we barrelled through another wave, turning in wide arcs to repeat the process. Thumbs up from cameraman Jack Murphy didn't help

other than to validate the pilot, which in turn him drive harder. It soon became obvious the normally quiet and reserved boat salesman was in his element and I had to remind Gavan we were in fact working.

I finally managed to prise Gavan from behind the wheel and took station at the helm. It didn't look that hard: just pick your line and ignite the engines.

The Canyon Master's helm itself is a relatively simple affair, with all controls falling nicely to hand. Simple flat surfaces abound with a 12in Garmin GPSMAP 5000 Series taking pride of place, flanked by an array of gauges monitoring the twin Honda 135s. The hardtop is a substantial structure and provides protection and comfort for up to four occupants. It certainly proved welcome on the day of the test, and probably encouraged us to drive it harder than we needed to.

On that score, and in light of the prevailing conditions, attempts at conducting proper performance figures fell in a heap. But in a seashell, I can tell you we never felt under-gunned

Right: Garmin GPSMAP sits centre stage on the flat surfaces of the dash. **Bottom right:** Why have one engine when you can have two? Twin 135s power the Canyon Master through pretty much anything. **Below:** With dealer Gavan Daly behind the wheel, the introduction to the boat was not a subtle one.

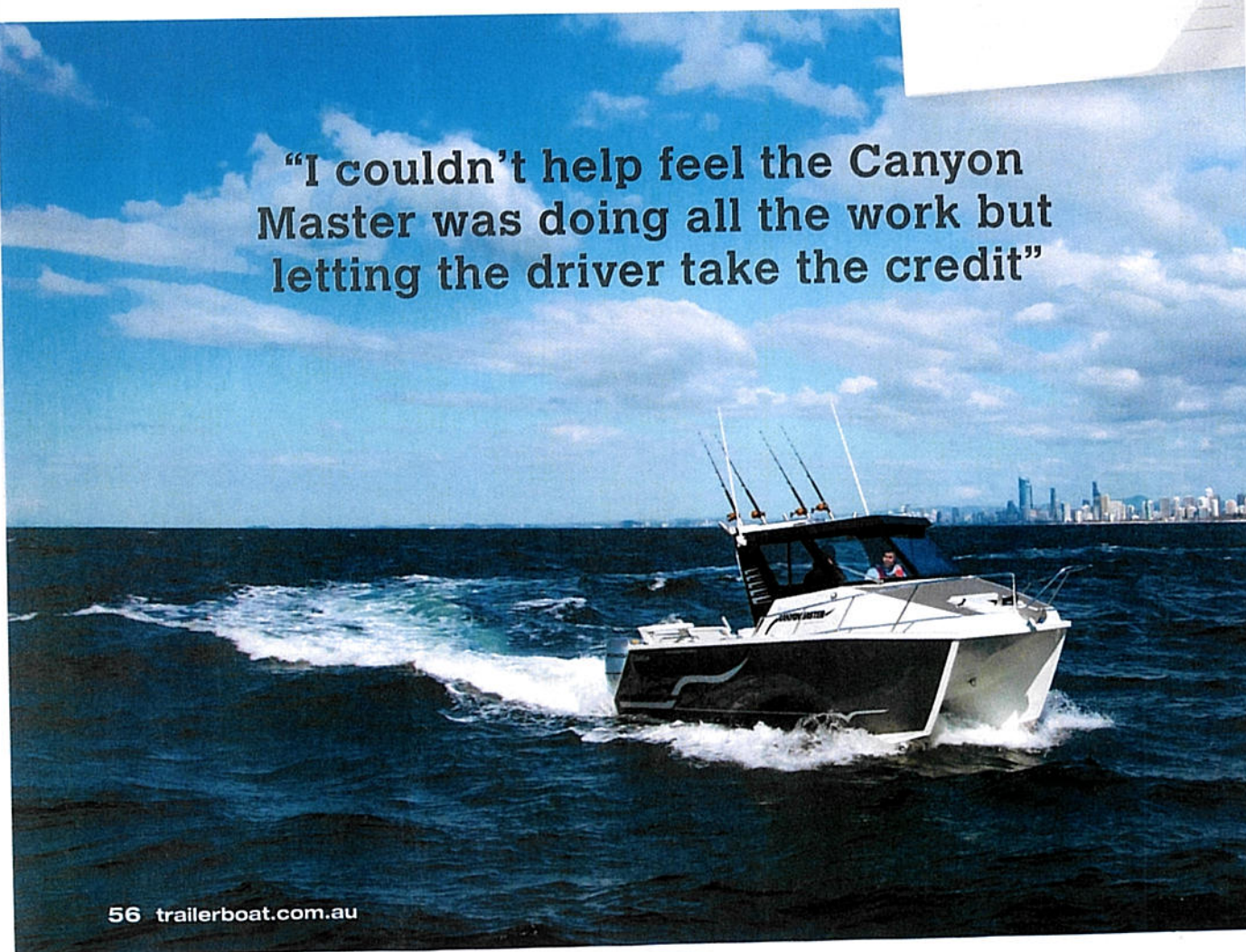
On the plane...

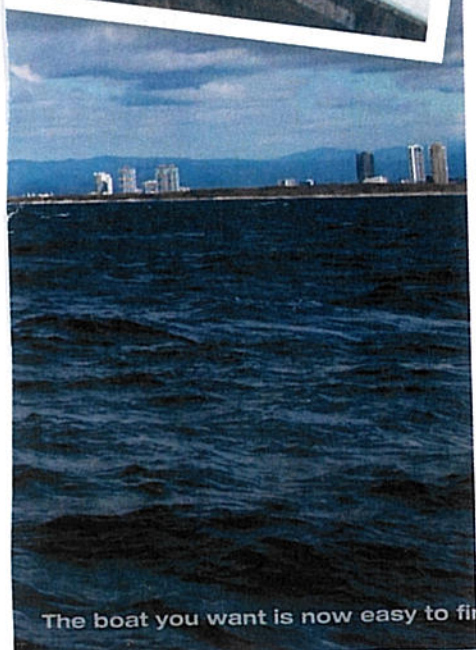
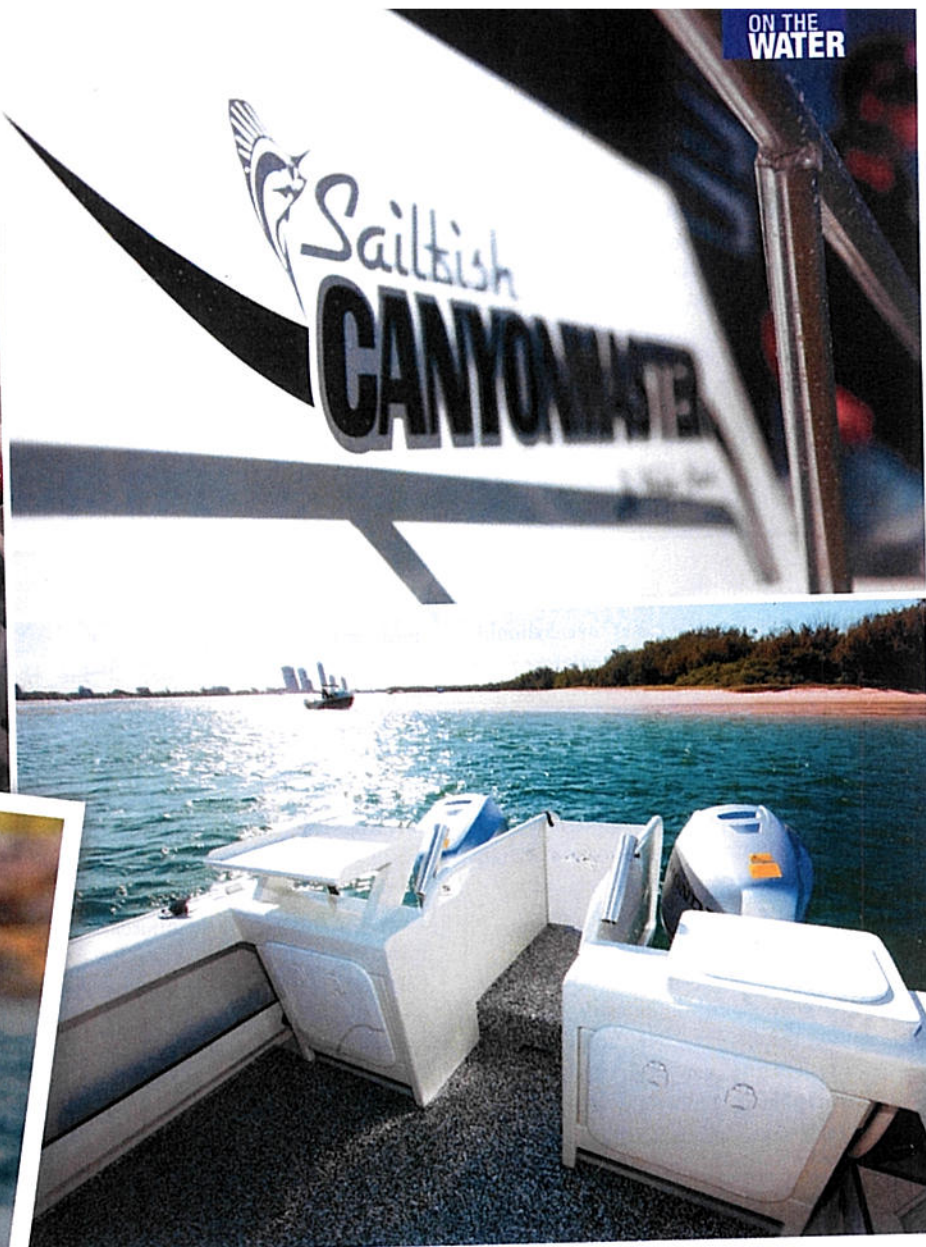
- ✓ Great fishing platform
- ✓ Inspirational handling
- ✓ Loads of fishing space
- ✓ Soft and dry ride
- ✓ Economical offshore rig

Dragging the chain...

- ✗ A bit pricey, but you get two hulls
- ✗ Won't fit in an average garage
- ✗ Some still won't get it

"I couldn't help feel the Canyon Master was doing all the work but letting the driver take the credit"





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and motors and hull worked as one powerful, cohesive unit.

Fishing from the deck of the Canyon Master is like towing a jetty into the middle of the ocean. It's stable in a way no monohull I've tested could ever touch. With the rig's substantial bulk spread across a wide area, any concerns about it rocking on the fine keel lines were put to rest, and it doesn't have the pitch or roll I'm used to.

I loved the vast cockpit with gangway that extends between the outboards and could only imagine tangling with a big southern bluefin from there. There is also loads of storage and plenty of flush, uncluttered surface. Big ticks all round.

DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION

Here's where things got interesting. I headed the Canyon Master toward

shore and was running down sea with a solid swell behind me and breaking waves occasionally hitting us at 45° on the port quarter. If the so-called experts are to be believed, I should have been in a world of trouble, but we didn't broach. The reserve buoyancy of the new Hydroflow Gen 2 sponsons resisted any tendency to bite in. We drove on the throttle with minimal steering effort, adjusting trim as required.

When I turned our port flank to the sea and ran in the troughs, we dispelled another furphy: we wouldn't just topple over. The swells simply ran under and past us. We then turned 45° and quartered occasionally-breaking seas and drove through it.

Now, all this has to be taken into its correct context. The seas offshore were challenging, occasionally verging on

THE SAILFISH CANYON MASTER

HOW MUCH

Price as tested: \$139,990 (BMT)

Options fitted: Muir drum winch upgrade; sounder upgrade to Garmin 5012; sliding side windows; cabin mattress; porta-loo.

Priced from: \$131,990 (BMT) with too many standard features to list.

GENERAL

Type: Alloy catamaran

Material: Aluminium

Length: 7.30m

Beam: 2.45m

Weight: 2500kg (BMT)

CAPACITIES

People: 6

HP Rating: Twin 115-135

Fuel: 2x175L

ENGINE

Make/model: Honda

Type: Twin BF135s

Weight: 220kg

Displacement: 2354cc

Gear ratio: 2.14:1

Propeller: Stainless 14.25x17in

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dangerous. This was my first experience with this hull, and a cat at that. I should have been well outside my comfort zone, yet I always felt in complete control.

I drove the Canyon Master almost exactly how I would drive any (monohull) boat in those conditions. The only concession was making slightly wider turns to allow both sponsons to maintain contact with the water and weave their magic.

While I felt kinda chuffed with all of this I couldn't help feel the Canyon Master was doing all the work, but letting the driver take the credit.

So is it a great cat? I can't really answer that since the only recent point of reference is another Sailfish, but


since neither of them killed me they both scored highly in my regard. Is it a good fishing boat, then? Without question. And here's the clincher for me: after five minutes behind the wheel I wasn't thinking about twin hulls or twin engines, but rather what a great package this would be out on the tuna grounds or trolling through a current line for marlin off the shelf.

Yes, you drive it a little differently to a mono, but it doesn't mean much if you have to make slightly wider turns. Truth be told, every boat, regardless of hull configuration, has its own personality. I wouldn't be buying the Canyon Master if I wanted to zig-zag through a slalom course on the Murray, but I also have no

intention of chasing a mako in a Malibu Wakesetter.

THE WRAP

There will inevitably be some who won't be able to see past their cat prejudice, but that really is their loss. If I was out wide, where currents converge and home is just a distant speck on the horizon, I'd trust one of these in a heartbeat.

And that's why I'm letting the cat out of the bag (sorry, I had to) and announcing that the Sailfish Canyon Master is the first ever cat to qualify for the finals of Australia's Greatest Trailer Boats and will be returning to the waters of the Gold Coast to stake its claim on the title late August. I can't wait. 



All that power and stability and it's a great fishing platform, to boot.