

trailerboat
test

Sailfish S7 Limited Edition

Cat in the hat

WOULD MAKING SAILFISH'S LATEST CATAMARAN ALL FAMILY FRIENDLY BLUNT THIS KITTY'S CLAWS? **ANGELO SAN GIORGIO** POUNCED AT THE OPPORTUNITY TO FIND OUT.



Ailurophobia: the persistent irrational fear of cats. It's a relatively common condition among boaties and something that I battled with myself for many years. There are support groups for this sort of thing and dozens of internet experts who are more than happy to proffer the benefits of their inexperience in an attempt to convince fence sitters one way or the other. Medical professionals will tell you though, the best way of overcoming any phobia is to tackle it head on.

My opportunity came last May when I reviewed a pair of Sailfish cats following their release at Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show: the innovative single engine Reef Master and the mighty 7.3m Canyon Master. I admitted then that I approached the exercise with mixed feelings, grateful for the fact that my employers are well insured. Suffice to say the alloy cats and I all survived the experience with the larger boat scoring a nomination for Australia's Greatest Trailer Boat 2014 in the process.

DRIVEN TO SUCCESS

My initial concern – and one I've heard echoed by many boaties, even

veterans – was that I didn't have much experience driving multihulls. The security of twin engines and the inherent stability of a catamaran are a given, but the dynamics of two narrow hulls partially suspended on a cushion of air seems a little alien.

The best bit of advice I received came from Sailfish creator, Darren Foster: just drive it like you would any other boat. This is the key to Sailfish Catamaran's philosophy and is achieved by the use of their Hydroflow Gen 2 hull.

Constructed of 5mm alloy reinforced with a solid 25mm keel, the new hull is designed to minimise the transition to plane, while guaranteeing soft landings. Hydroflow Gen 2 is also symmetric – each side of each sponson is a mirror image, just like a monohull – by design, ensuring the hulls track true and turn at reasonably high speeds without the dreaded lean-out effect common to many cats.

It's no different to stepping out of one car and driving another or jumping behind the wheel of a low-slung ski boat after years in a high-sided cuddy cabin.


While it takes a bit of time to develop your rhythm to get the most out of your new ride, the fundamentals remain the same.

FAMILY VALUES

In an effort to appeal to a much wider audience, Sailfish called upon its extensive network of customers to compile a wish list of inclusions that would cater to both offshore hounds and family boaters alike. Taking its design cues from the formidable Canyon Master – current runner-up in Australia's Greatest Trailer Boats 2014 – the S7 Limited Edition is tweaked to reflect its split personality.

Built on a slightly shorter platform – 6.9m x 2.45m, as opposed to the Canyon Master's 7.3m x 2.45m – the S7 cabin has been extended rearward to afford more covered accommodation for passengers. There is now reasonable stand-up room behind the helm and passenger seats, each of which sits atop one of the many storage compartments. The buttresses that support the roof feature an accentuated curve that sweeps from the coamings to the rear of the hard lid. The arc is traced by integrated full length handrails that complement the new lines.

The roofline itself extends further back to protect passengers perched on the padded lids that cover a sink to port and stove to starboard, each with storage beneath. These storage boxes form part of the rear cabin bulkhead



Captain Gavan Daly finally gets the irony of fishing 24kg standup in water shallow enough to stand in.

“No bargain basement, would-you-like-bungs-with-that, approach...”

which frames the S7's crowning glory, a toughened glass screen with neat lockable French doors. While the Canyon Master's hardtop with wrap around glass affords a fair degree of protection and a lot more civility than removable clears, the S7's fully enclosed cabin approaches car-like comfort. With the doors closed and sliding side windows shut, occupants are cocooned in blissful isolation. Even the hull noise evident on the best plate alloys is minimised thanks to foam-filled sponsons.

The use of a matte black finish on the uprights, windows and doors adds a quality detail and a smart design element. Tempering the sharp edges has also resulted in a softer, dare I say, more feminine silhouette, but this has to be taken in context. For all its new found curves, the S7 is about as feminine as Xena, Warrior Princess.

INTERNAL EXAMINATION

Stepping on board, you're treated to a feast of design cues that defines this rig as a Sailfish. With many boats, it's evident that storage is an afterthought and while attempts are made to make provisions, the look is hardly cohesive or attractive. Not so, the S7 LE where

the use of available space is optimised without making the interior feel claustrophobic. Everywhere you look there is a hatch or door or shelf or pocket ready to swallow whatever gear you bring along. They've even gone so far as labelling every component – someone must've worded them up about my bad memory.

As a fishing platform, the Sailfish is brilliantly conceived. It's one of those rare hook-it-up-and-go prospects where all your gear could be locked up inside the cabin ready to hit the ramp at a moment's notice.

My initial concerns that the fishing cockpit would suffer due to the larger cabin was allayed as soon as I scaled the gunwale. I marched out to my preferred perch on the gantry between the two Honda 135's, then gazed back and took in the dance floor. With Gavan Daly, principal of Sailfish dealer Webbe Marine over near the sink and camera-snapper Jack Murphy leaning against the stove, it was evident that we could still fish four in comfort without tripping over each other.

That's one of the real benefits this plate alloy cat has over a 'glass boat: its overall beam of 2.45m is imminently useable since it is carried most of

the boat's length. The transom is fisherman's wet dream, where everything a skirt chaser or bait slinger could want falls immediately to hand. There is a bait station with its own tap to starboard above a two-tray tackle drawer. A neat LED striplight ensures fumbling in the dark with sharp implements is a thing of the past. Hatches below it open to reveal a secured battery raised above floor height alongside the deckwash plumbing. A large plumbed and lit livewell resides in the port corner finished with an inspection window. A second high crank battery resides below. Plush coaming pads trim the transom at a convenient thigh height.

Rod storage and deployment is another area that's been sorted. Seven rod holders are mounted to the hardtop with a further four angled stainless rod holders in the wide flat coamings. Two-way alloy rod holders are welded in each transom corner while another is welded each side of the gantry walkway. Horizontal storage for gaffs and tag poles fitted above short side pockets completes the picture.

A two-tone fibreglass chip cockpit flooring decks the entire surface underfoot, save for the helm which



is carpeted. A 100mm lip divides the fishing cockpit from the enclosed helm and prevents any water that does come on board from flowing into the cabin dry zone. Stepping inside the cabin, you're greeted with a familiar Sailfish layout. A clean uncluttered dash features a Garmin GPSMAP 7012 touchscreen combo that can also display the engine's vital statistics when utilising NMEA 2000 capability. Everything falls right to hand as it should in a good cockpit and I particularly like the use of the credit card-sized membrane switch system which replaces the traditionally bulky gangs of rocker switches. Since the system utilises circuit breakers as opposed to fuses, it creates less potential hassle for the skipper. A broad flat shelf that sits between the substantial windscreen and the console is always going to win points.

A stylish radio box is integrated above the companionway that leads to the cabin. In this instance it housed a GME GX600 and Fusion IP600G marine stereo system with Ipod dock. Once again the matte black finish has been used to great effect. The cabin has been given special attention by the Sailfish team to enhance its appeal to all members of the family. A pump out toilet with macerator sits dead centre covered by an alloy panel with upholstered insert when not in use. The attention to detail even extends to the

Sailfish logo on the cabin pillows and colour coordinated bunk cushions.

Webbe Marine prescribes to the "price-it-as-you-sell-it" philosophy. With an on water tag just shy of \$135,000, the Sailfish S7 Limited Edition actually represents remarkably good value as everything featured on the demo boat is included. No bargain basement, would-you-like-bungs-with-that approach here. A different hull colour or an autopilot/radar upgrade might be tempting but apart from that, I can't think of anything else I'd add.

THE RIDE HOME

At the risk of raising the ire of some, I'm going to gloss over the details in relation to the way this boat drives as every word that's previously been printed about the Canyon Master rings true with the S7. Despite being 40cm shorter there is more weight over the nose allowing it to retain a level attitude when running. Cats are generally in their element running hard into a head sea, but some are undone by a following sea, particularly when surfing down the face of a swell. Once again, the S7 didn't disappoint remaining responsive and nimble no matter what we through at it. I simply set the trim at just over a third up and left it there changing direction only when the need to pound some swell into submission became too tempting to refuse.

Unfortunately for this review the

facts & figures

Sailfish S7 Limited

PRICE AS TESTED

\$134,990 Ex-factory

OPTIONS

Everything you see is standard

PRICED FROM

\$134,990 (Refer above)

GENERAL

TYPE Aluminium Catamaran

MATERIAL Aluminium Alloy

LENGTH 6.90m

BEAM 2.45m

WEIGHT 2450kg (BMT Dry)

DEADRISE n/a

CAPACITIES

PEOPLE 7

REC. HP 270

MAX. HP 270 (Twin 135's)

FUEL 350L (2 x 175L)

WATER 45L

ENGINE

MAKE/MODEL Twin Honda BF135

TYPE 4-stroke outboard

WEIGHT 220kg(XL)

DISPLACEMENT 2345cc

GEAR RATIO 2.14:1

PROPELLER 141/4 x 17

MANUFACTURED BY

Sailfish Catamarans

SUPPLIED BY

Webbe Marine

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Test day
weather
information
supplied by



conditions were mild but I found we could hold almost 75kmh in messy chop without trying too hard. Slip back to around 4300rpm at around 40kmh and it feels like you could hold that attitude forever, leaving you in no doubt about its long range cruising potential.

Once again I'm left with the lingering impression that the S7, or to give it its full designation S7 Limited Edition was not conceived to retain their existing customer base or merely recruit other cat buyers looking to upgrade. These large trailerable felines have plate and fibreglass monohulls in their sights and I reckon they're onto another winner. An alloy cat that spoils the family and your fishing mates ... who ever said having a split personality is a bad thing?" ■