

# THE REAL DEAL

WE'VE TESTED A LOT OF PURPOSE-BUILT SKI AND WAKEBOARD BOATS OVER THE YEARS, ALL MOSTLY BIG NAME BRANDS FROM THE US. NOW, NEW ZEALAND HAS ITS VERY OWN SKI & WAKEBOARD BOAT BRAND, SARONIC. WE SENT OUR RESIDENT SKI BOAT ENTHUSIAST FREDDY FOOTE TO TEST IT OUT.



THE FLUIDCORE T3 WAKEBOARD TOWER PROVIDES STORAGE FOR TWO WAKEBOARDS EITHER SIDE, AND A BUILT IN BIMINI PROVIDES SHADE FOR PASSENGERS BELOW.

I must admit, when I was assigned this test, I was a bit apprehensive. Having tested so many of the imported models, including some boats manufactured by companies that have been building them for decades, I wondered how a similar boat here in New Zealand would stack up.

Mat Bailey, the man behind Hamilton-based Matcraft Marine, the manufacturers of Saronic boats, says the Saronic SX6 has been designed as the perfect family "crossover boat" which means it will cater to those who desire the very best of a ski boat, but yet can easily cater to those who require a craft for wakeboarding and the aerial manoeuvres that go with it.

"The hull design features reverse delta technology and a

fine entry bow, meaning a smooth and comfortable ride," says Bailey.

"The performance wake is versatile for everyone in the family to enjoy, offering the best of both worlds the boat achieves a flat slalom table for skiers and when the ballast tanks (standard on all models) are full the wake grows considerably in size to keep any highflying wakeboarder happy."

**Layout**

In designing the layout of the SX6, Bailey has kept with traditional skiboat style, and incorporating all of the features that skiers and wakeboarders demand in a boat. As you would expect, there is plenty of seating and the

SX6 has provision for seven, either in the bow, the aft facing observer seats to port side of the helm, as well as a bench seat aft.

In the bow, the layout is what you would expect from a traditional bowrider. Forward facing seating is complemented with backrests for the passengers, hand holds and cup holders to keep drinks in place.

Storage is a main feature of any good ski boat, as skiers and boarders are usually accompanied by lots of gear and the Saronic SX6 is no different. Accessed from the inside of the walk-through into the main cockpit area, there is storage provided under the passenger console. This space can also be accessed by lifting up the backrest of the aft-facing observer seat – a great place to throw towels,

gear bags and anything else you want to keep dry.

The FluidCore T3 wakeboard tower provides storage for two wakeboards either side, and a built in bimini provides shade for passengers below. Additional storage is available via large cockpit side pockets, under the aft bench seat, and via the large transom locker.

Above and immediately under the windshield, a small dash locker is an ideal place to keep wallets, cellphones and keys.

At the helm, the comfy driver's seat is fully adjustable and you can also adjust the steering wheel to find your perfect driving position. A large rear vision mirror above allows you to keep an eye on the passengers and rider/skier behind.

INSET: THE HUGE REMOVABLE SWIM PLATFORM MAKES DROPPING IN AND OUT OF THE WATER A BREEZE.



THE SARONIC SX6 HAS BEEN DESIGNED AS THE PERFECT FAMILY CROSSOVER BOAT.

BELOW: AT THE HELM, THE DRIVER'S SEAT IS FULLY ADJUSTABLE AND YOU CAN ALSO ADJUST THE STEERING WHEEL TO FIND YOUR PERFECT DRIVING POSITION.

RIGHT: THE 315HP MERCUISER TOW SPORT ENGINE IS MOUNTED IN THE CENTRE AND PUSHES THE SARONIC TO A TOP SPEED OF 45 MPH.

**MerCruiser TowSport Power**

Powering the SX6 Crossover was a 5.7L MPI ECT engine from MerCruiser.

Bailey says he's chosen MerCruiser power for a number of reasons.

"The MerCruiser TowSport Inboard engines provide the perfect pulling power, with the right amount of torque, plus with MerCruiser's extensive dealer network, Saronic owners can get their boat serviced pretty much anywhere, so it's good peace of mind long term."

I have always loved driving these boats – they have plenty of horsepower and a really neat and comfortable driving

position. They are the kind of boat you can just drive all day long, and sometimes do.

The throttle lever is within easy reach and the instruments are all clearly marked and positioned in front and the shift from neutral into drive was incredibly smooth – so smooth in fact, you couldn't even notice the transition.

315hp is more than enough power for this rig. Acceleration out of the hole with the bite from the OJ XMP 13 x 11.5 was effortless, and the MerCruiser had tons of mid-range torque. We did a quick speed run, and the SX6 Crossover was no slouch. It hits 45mph at a maximum of 4820rpm. Bailey said he's interested in changing the prop to see



LEFT: THE SCREEN OPENING CAN BE FULLY CLOSED TO STOP ANY WIND INTO THE COCKPIT.

BELOW LEFT: EVERY SPACE HAS BEEN UTILISED FOR STORAGE.

BELOW RIGHT: IN THE BOW, THE LAYOUT IS WHAT YOU WOULD EXPECT FROM A TRADITIONAL BOWRIDER.

how much extra speed he might get out of it, but I think the current set-up is perfect.

This particular boat was fitted with a Stargazer Perfect Pass system, which is linked into the MerCruiser engine. Essentially, you dial in the speed the skier or rider desires, and the on-board computer does all the rest, keeping the boat at that constant speed once the throttle is applied. It's so easy to use that even a novice could quickly get up to speed (pun intended) with driving a ski boat.

As well as the perfect pass system; the Saronic SX6 has a few other tricks up its sleeve. With the flick of a switch, you can pump in 555kg of water ballast "to weight the boat up" enabling you to really enhance the boat's wake for wakeboarding. Flick the switch again, and within a few minutes you can pump the water back out again.

Ballast tanks are located under the floor, alongside the 120L fuel tank, and an additional 'fat sack' can be installed in the aft transom locker, when it's not in use for storage.

Should you want to flatten the wake out for skiing, there is an adjustable trim plate that when down makes the wake very, very flat, and just about perfect for slalom skiing.

This time, we were lucky enough to have the 2012 Men's Under 19 wakeboard champion, Regan Carlyon.

Regan usually boards behind a Nautique, so I was really interested to find out how our kiwi wake stacks up

against its American counterpart.

Turns out, he was very impressed.

"As far as wakes go, it's what you want. It's really predictable, and has a nice lip, and for a mid-engined boat it was really good."

For Regan's runs behind the boat we loaded the boat up with 555kg of water ballast, though should you wish, the boat can handle more.

For the other discipline, our skier, Mike Wortman said he was really impressed with the wake especially when the aft trim plate was pushed down.

"That trim plate made a huge difference. The Saronic was every bit as good as the Mastercraft I usually ski behind." So according to our experts the Saronic SX6 Crossover has all the attributes needed to make not only a brilliant ski boat, but also a more than capable wakeboarder too. Now here's the best bit, you can get a Saronic SX6 Crossover on the water from just \$59,800, and the example I tested was priced at \$69,000.

The Saronic SX6 is targeted at the family market – those who do a lot of fresh water boating, and who enjoy their





ABOVE: THE SARONIC OFFERS A NICE STEP WAKE FOR SERIOUS WAKEBOARDERS.

BELOW: SAME BOAT, DIFFERENT WAKES -SKI WAKE (UPPER) & WAKEBOARD WAKE (LOWER).



watersports and want some extra creature comforts for a day on the water.

Overall, I was really impressed with the Saronic SX6 Crossover, not just because it's a kiwi-built ski/wakeboard boat, but it does everything very well - no easy achievement considering the brand is up against some of the biggest names in the world of ski and wakeboard boating.

It does everything a boat like this should. It performs well, has all the features you would expect and the styling is tops. If you're looking for a crossover ski/wakeboard boat, then the SX6 is the real deal. **PPB**

### TECHNICAL

<b>Model:</b>	Saronic SX6 Crossover
<b>Priced from:</b>	\$59,800
<b>Price as tested:</b>	\$69,000
<b>Type:</b>	Inboard skiboat
<b>Construction:</b>	GRP
<b>LOA:</b>	6.40m
<b>LOH:</b>	5.95m (without platform)
<b>Beam:</b>	2.15m
<b>Height on trailer:</b>	1.80m
<b>Height on trailer w/tower:</b>	2.70m
<b>Trailerable weight:</b>	1700kg
<b>Power:</b>	MerCruiser 5.7L MPI
<b>Propeller:</b>	OJ XMP 13 x 11.5
<b>Power Options:</b>	Inboard only
<b>Fuel capacity:</b>	120 Litres
<b>Water ballast:</b>	555kg
<b>Trailer:</b>	DMW

#### Notable Standard Equipment:

Fold-away walk-through wind blocker, Fusion stereo system, glass windscreen, bilge blower, tilt steering, 300kg capacity pump-free ballast system, chiller box, 8 drink holders, removable swim platform.

#### Notable Options on Test Boat:

Wakeboard tower.

#### Notable Standard Equipment:

Fold-away walk-through wind blocker, glove box, Fusion stereo system, glass windscreen, bilge blower, tilt steering, 300kg capacity pump-free ballast system, automatic bilge pump, battery isolating switch, 660 CCA marine battery, 28,57mm prop shaft, OJ CNC propeller, chiller box, 8 drink holders, removable swim platform.

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### PERFORMANCE DATA

RPM	MPH
650 rpm	4.5
1000 rpm	6.5
1500 rpm	9.0
2000 rpm	12.5
2500 rpm	24.5
3000 rpm	29.0
3500 rpm	35.0
4000 rpm	39.5
4500 rpm	43.0
4820 rpm	45.0