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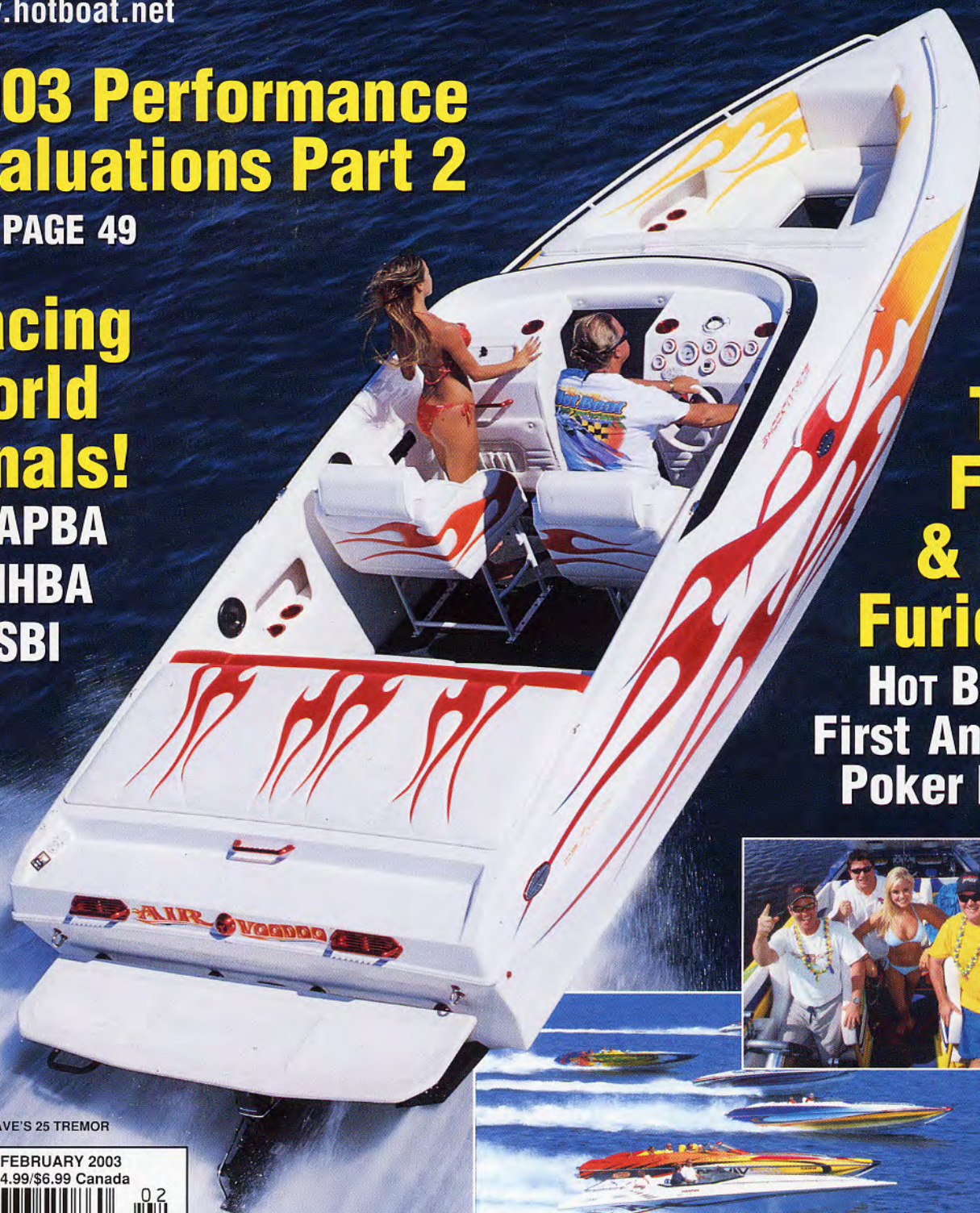
2003 Performance Evaluations Part 2

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SHOCKWAVE'S 25 TREMOR

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Shockwave

If you're a custom performance-sport-boat manufacturer who craves competition, simply jump into the bowrider/mid-cabin step-vee market in the popular 24- to 26-foot range. Don't worry, you'll find plenty of company.

Over the past decade, the family-performance boaters have grown accustomed to larger and more comfortable models. Where the market used to once covet 20- and 21-footers, today those models simply don't offer the room and versatility of larger sport boats like Shockwave's most impressive 25 Tremor.

Since there is an abundance of choices in this size range, the pressure is on the boat manufacturer to come up with a package that has all the ingredients, such as performance, styling, quality, comfort, value and price, to satisfy potential buyers. Fortunately for Shockwave, they've squarely hit the mark in virtually every category. ▶





About 18 months ago, MerCruiser began a major push, phasing out the old 454/502-style big-block V-8 engines in favor of the newer 8.1-liter (496) GM engine. The new 496/Bravo One package was made available in a couple of versions, the 496 MAG (375 PSHP) and the hotter 496 MAG HO (425 PSHP) version. Both of these engines, which

happen to feel more responsive and stronger than the old 454/502s, have quickly become the engines of choice for this 24- to 26-foot family-sport-boat marketplace. Not only do they pack a powerful performance punch, but they are still priced within reach of most recreational-boating consumers. For what you pay, you get a lot. A closed water-cooling system and all the latest onboard electronic monitoring devices are worth the cost just on their own merit.

Our test model 25 Tremor was equipped with a single 496 MAG HO and a standard Bravo One drive with 1.50:1 gear ratio. The propeller of choice was a Mercury Revolution, stainless-steel four-blade, 23 pitch. It was obviously a perfect selection as

the wide-open-throttle rpm nailed the 5,150 mark which is right on this engine's sweet spot. And how fast was that for an approximate 4,400-pound payload? A very respectable and rock-solid 68.3 mph on the radar gun with our two-member test team and all the gear onboard. If you'd rather put your faith in the dash-panel stock speedometer, it was reading a consistent 72-73 miles an hour as we trimmed it out. A nice brisk ride that will give you plenty of performance to impress your fellow passengers.

Since it's never any fun to have a boat that's a slug out



of the hole, you'll be pleased to know that Shockwave's 25 Tremor was one of the quickest-to-plane boats that we evaluated at this year's trials. Its 0-30 time was only 7.48 seconds, and it got to 50 miles an hour in just 13.67 seconds. The Tremor did come equipped with a set of very handsome Bennett dual-ram trim tabs; however, we never encountered any situation during the test that required their use.

Bowrise getting on plane was minimal,

rapidly found its way into the realm of the family-performance sport-boat arena. Although step and ventilated vee-bottom designs may offer some performance advantages in extreme applications, compared to conventional nonstep vee hulls, sometimes the pursuit of optimum top speed comes with sacrifices that are not always appreciated by mainstream recreational boaters. Fortunately, Shockwave has resisted the temptation to take the step-bottom design of the 25 Tremor to the max. Instead, this roomy bowrider makes judicious use of its single step-vee configuration with four conventional lifting strakes, avoiding any tendency to wiggle or feel slippery throughout the entire speed range, again proving that more radical isn't always better.

At cruise (25-45 mph), the 25 Tremor rides best

even with the tabs in the fully up position. Once the 25 Tremor leveled out at cruise speed, the ride attitude was flat and smooth. At no time did we need to compensate for improved lateral stability with the tabs, a good testament to the efficient design configuration of Shockwave's 24-degree deadrise deep-vee hull.

Over the past few years, step-vee technology has

with only a marginal amount of positive stern-drive trim position. As the throttle is advanced, more trim can be added in small doses. The hull responds well to the extra angle of the drive unit as the bow lifts slightly and the speedo numbers begin to climb toward the 60-mph mark. At



wide open, the 25 Tremor takes an extremely clean ride set with water/spray peeling off of the hull just aft of the single step. A solid feel that should put a big smile on any driver's face.

Sometimes, in an all-out effort to maximize performance, a boatbuilder will push to the limit the X-dimension location of the drive unit. In most cases, the higher the better in order to reduce drag and pick up valuable miles an hour. Unfortunately, other important performance factors, such as holeshot acceleration and cornering ability, are sometimes sacrificed for a little extra on the top end. Shockwave didn't play that game with the 25 Tremor. We've already commented on its stellar acceleration characteristics, but equally impressive was the way this boat turned. It was very quick to respond to any change of direction request

with only a moderate amount of banking that felt controlled throughout the turn. At no time did the propeller begin to ventilate (slip) as we went through our series of left and right maneuvers. For a 25-footer, the Tremor acts more like a Porsche than a Suburban, a fun and easy boat to drive.

When Shockwave initially began to conceptualize this model, they undoubtedly made a list of everything that a typical family-performance boater would want. Its exterior appearance is clean, crisp and distinctive, something you'll not likely tire of after a couple of seasons of ownership. Shockwave mold work and gelcoat application are exemplary, among the very best in the industry. Maybe more important is that the 25 Tremor is a beautifully proportioned boat with plenty of freeboard, a sensibly sized bowrider compartment, a taller-than-expected mid-cabin and a roomy main cockpit. In its base form, the 25 Tremor comes standard as a closed-deck model with a full cabin below. If you want to go the open-bow route, like our test model, that's a Shockwave option upgrade costing \$2,000 extra. In addition to its eye-catching exterior, the 25 Tremor is a solid customer from bow to transom. Shockwave completely hand laminates each hull using only the highest grade vinyl ester resins with bi- and tri-directional knitted fiberglass fabrics, plus ample amounts of hi-tech coring materials. Interestingly, all the raw wood that used to be a mainstay in the boat-building world has been eliminated from the construction process. The result is a stiff, firm hull and deck that ought to ▶

deliver many, many years of low-maintenance service.

In the main cockpit, the 25 Tremor is spacious and boldly handsome, with stark-white upholstery and fire-red, orange and yellow accents. In keeping with this red/white color scheme, the dash panel is adorned with white-face gauges with contrasting red anodized bezels. There's also an engraved billet aluminum face plate which is red powdercoated for the accessory switches. The tilt steering wheel and Kiekhaefer controls with in-lever trim switch are located on the starboard side. Sorry, no windscreen for driver or passenger. The bulkhead area in front of the dash panel is large and flat, allowing plenty of room to install a couple of drink holders, and there's even a center-mounted magnetic compass positioned directly in front of the driver as part of Shockwave's standard-equipment package. On the port-side gunnel is a flush-fit high-end Sony stereo/CD system which comes with six monster speakers. This particular upgrade will set you back approximately \$4,500, but you'll never have to worry about lacking for volume when cranking up the tunes on your favorite afternoon beach.

When you pop the engine hatch, and it does open extra rapidly, thanks to a set of Dana Marine electric/hydraulic engine hinges, Shockwave has done a nice job of converting the open space on either side of the MerCruiser 496 Mag HO engine into extra storage areas. It's a convenient place to stow items that need to be onboard but not necessarily accessible on a frequent basis. Although this is a totally stock engine and thru-transom exhaust setup, Shockwave's rigging job is nothing less than first-rate.

In the mid-cabin, the 25 Tremor is certain to win a lot of friends. Unlike some boats



in this size range which offer the cuddy-cabin convenience but skimp on sit-up head-room, Shockwave does not. For once, here's a family-performance sport boat where you don't have to bend your neck at a 90-degree angle in order to sit in the seat.

Remember our earlier comment about this boat being generously proportioned, especially with a little extra freeboard? This small difference completely changes what could have been a mostly for-show-only cabin into a comfortable, covered

lounge area that the wife and kids will find most enjoyable. Shockwave has also thoughtfully included a pair of oscillating electric fans in the mid-cabin to help keep a cool breeze moving on those particularly hot summer days.

The bowrider compartment isn't the largest in the 25-foot boat category, but it should be plenty big enough. In addition to nicely contoured upholstery, the bowrider area has an ample entry/crawl space, allowing relatively easy access to and from the mid-cabin. Also adding to passenger comfort is a set of powdercoated gunwale railings that border the open-bow space.

At the top of this review we mentioned that the yardstick by which today's top family-performance sport boats are measured involves a mix of performance, styling, quality, comfort, value and price. So far we've hit on four out of the six criteria, and Shockwave's 25 Tremor has passed each test with flying colors. In regard to value and price, we'll let you be the final judge in these two categories. Base price for this attractive piece is listed at \$60,000. The upgrade to the more powerful 496 Mag HO is an additional \$3,000, which looks like a bargain for what you get. And the upcharge for the bowrider model is another \$2,000 on top of that. Obviously, it never hurts to shop, but from our vantage point, this is going to be one tough package to beat on any scorecard. ■

