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MAY 1998
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SHOCKWAVE'S 21' STEP SKIER



In a blissful fit of déjà vu, Shockwave's 21-foot Step Skier came at us again—this time packing 105 more horsepower. This boat came ready to dance.

WATER SHOCK

BY KEVIN SPAISE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY FERNANDO ESCOVAR

There was a point in time in the varied histories of each of the companies that have come to be revered in the performance custom realm when their mark on the industry first shone through clearly, leaving no doubt as to its prominence. Potential fulfilled—promise graduating to fulfillment.

It is far too soon to judge the long-range presence that will be registered by Shockwave Custom Boats of Lake Elsinore, California; though both Danny Mancini and Bob Anderson were accomplished, hands-on freelancers for other builders before they struck out on their own in 1995, three years is a blink of an eye in the boat business.

Should Shockwave endure the test of time, however, the defining moment in its formative stage may boil down to the day they put the appropriate power to their 21-foot Step Skier.

We first huddled around the Step Skier, you may recall, earlier this year, as a copy made its way through our Performance Evaluation process at Lake Havasu. Our report, which appeared in the January issue, reflected our high regard for this contemporary, highly polished bowrider.

On the business side, the Shockwave made good use of base big-block power, parlaying its available 310 horsepower into a 64.7-mile-per-hour top end and solid acceleration off the line and through the midrange. Solid, consistent performance, no doubt about it—but not spectacular.

Thus, when the opportunity arose to log some water time in a more appropriately stepped-up Step Skier—this one loaded with a 415-horse, 502 Magnum in the well—we snapped at the chance to see what would happen when we pushed the stepped bottom deeper into its intended high-performance element. We would not only report on the additional speed we expected to gain from the additional 105 horsepower, but also on how this speed might alter the Shockwave's flawless ratings for handling and ride. HOT BOAT team drivers Brian Davidson and Bob Brown, both of whom contributed to the

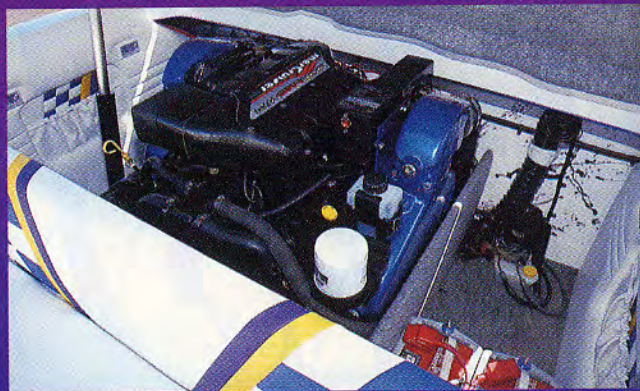
AFTERSHOCK

earlier, 7.4L MPI test, reported on our *Aftershock* project.

Given the nature of this subjective comparison, it is worth noting that both of these drivers have mixed views on step-bottom technology. Davidson is a lifelong hot-boater with deep, traditional roots. He's been convinced that step-bottom technology, properly harnessed, is effective; when convinced, he's been only too happy to acknowledge so. But more often than not he's come

away from step-bottom tests not entirely convinced that the additional mile or two an hour gained was worth the residual feel of the boat. The transition felt on some of the boats; the movement in the back third of the boat—both of these things unsettled him. There were times he didn't completely trust the feel of the boat, and that felt unnatural.

Brown was convinced early on of the step's potential—his close proximity to Eliminator Boats, one of the earliest and most effective West Coast developers of the technology, went a long way in that regard.



However, Brown too has become disillusioned with some of the step-bottom boats he's tested, which may not be as good, overall, as the nonstep

version on which it's based. Both were impressed with the base-powered Skier, which showed great handling manners across the board.



A LITTLE ABOUT THE SKIER

Shockwave's posturing as a high-end, somewhat limited, volume builder is supported in the ample array of standard equipment packed into their base boat and in the way it's put together. Mancini makes magic in the gelcoat booth, making the most of the company's policy of unlimited colors. The latest billet, Eddie Marine pieces dress the Shockwave, and a deep, rich, contemporary interior sets off the installation in style.

The boat feels nice and open for a 21-footer, even more so, says Shockwave, now that

they've squeezed an extra few inches from the bow of the original design we tested last year and converted it into interior room. The bowrider section is average-sized for its class (the boat carries a 96-inch beam) but exceptionally comfortable. It's deep, puts plenty of fiberglass between young occupants and the water and has plenty of legroom all the way around the cockpit. There is easily room for seven adults, without using the bow section.

The cockpit is arranged with two forward-facing buckets and a set of side bench seats attached. Aft is a full-width



lounge seat and a fully upholstered engine hatch that is suitable for sunning. A good-sized ski locker is cut into the floorboard, adjacent to a large, built-

in, draining cooler. Shockwave has integrated storage into every conceivable opportunity, and there is secured stash

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