

Most notably in the Midwest and Southern states, the outboard air-trapper has long been the weapon of choice for budget-oriented lake warriors in pursuit of reliable, turnkey speed. A great number of inboard boaters were made believers by the legendary HydroStream hull, with its combination of a surface-cutting, modified vee and air-trapping hydrodynamics.

After the HydroStream molds were scattered to the winds by circumstances that had nothing to do with the viability of the boat itself, a number of the molds were picked up by longtime enthusiast Jim Cortzen, who worked for the original HydroStream in the late 1970s. He has vowed to carry the torch in a manner befitting the company's storied history. One of those molds is the Voyager XT. After 12 years in creation, it remains as popular as ever.

THE PACKAGE

The HydroStream's resilience is not merely seeded in sentiment and history; its well-chronicled owner loyalty is a product

MODEL: VOYAGER XT 20' ENGINE: MERCURY PRO-MAX/SPORT MASTER 2.5

of years of proven performance that stems from efficient simplicity that results in a stratospheric bang for the buck.

Consider: The fastest of the six I/Os we tested clipped the beam in the mid-60s; the Stream, packed with Mercury's potent 2.5-liter Pro-Max/Sport Master, ran a cool 80 miles an hour. After it ran 80 through the radar, it made a quick trip to the trailer where its 27-inch Mazco four-blade was swapped for a 23-inch Mercury three-blade holeshot prop—a change reportedly predicated by a spun hub. The

resulting numbers stacked up with the best of our I/O fleet; the Voyager was the quickest of all boats tested (including one jet) to 30 and 40 miles an hour, and was second-quickest to 50 and 60.

Admittedly, it lacked some of the smooth drivability you'll find in today's performance, I/O-driven, bowrider fleet. The rasp and feel of the 225 is apples and oranges compared to the silky manners of a production stern drive. Finding the HydroStream's sweet spot requires performing a balancing act between the hand shifter,



foot throttle, floor-mounted trim buttons and the dash-mounted toggle that runs the hydraulic, billet CMC jack plate (an \$885 option) 5.5 inches up and down the transom. The foot throttle and trim system (\$314), Gaffrig gauge package (\$495) and Morse hydraulic steering (\$750) rounded out the performance enhancements.

If the new-breed HydroStream remains faithful to its hydrodynamics, it also carries the company's torch into contemporary hot-boating consciousness with such things as a full complement of anodized hardware, a respectable five-color gelcoat theme, an updated dash design and layout, and passable custom interior work. The lines may be a bit dated, and its comparatively narrow, 90-inch beam help pinpoint its mid-80s origins; somehow, however, the graceful, diamond transom cut that is this boat's signature solidifies its time-exempt status. The refinements are all well-thought-out, and the execution does a good job of counteracting the concessions that early-generation owners made for the sake of owning an unusually fast boat.

The HydroStream covers the custom bases, but it does so basically. The seating is a bit tighter than some you'll find in this size range, particularly



in front of the pedestal seat bases. Aft, the outboard placement makes for more room for passengers occupying the rear bench. Adjustable swivel buckets are standard up front. A walk-out step divides the bow seating area. Drink holders are well placed through the cockpit, and a glove box is standard. Powdercoated bow railing and four matching cleats dress the hull.

Our tester reserved appropriate treatment for a hot-rod driver, including the excellent design of the Bob's Machine Hot-Shoe pedal and the Land & Sea foot trim system (red button for up, black one for down). Mix the jack height in, and the combo got a little tricky at first. Within a few minutes in the boat, tuning the ride was a matter of reacting to its feel. The driver has great control over its attitude and ride, and we liked its feel as a true driver's boat.

You'll also notice a distinct difference between the interior feel of the Voyager and the typical performance custom I/O—the 'Stream just doesn't feel as tight and solid, especially while at rest, where passenger weight shifts have a more pronounced effect on the boat's attitude. The contributing factors are the boat's sharply cut, modified vee-bottom design, which is suscepti-

ble to such movement, and its streamlined, 1,500-pound weight—light equals fast.

A windshield, which used the old-school groove mounting with small hold-down brackets, provided moderate wind protection at speed. Gaffrig gauges were framed with anodized bezels and were angled for maximum legibility. Storage space included a nicely finished locker area behind the rear seat and open gunnel areas.

PERFORMANCE

With the 27-inch four-blade on stem, the Voyager was a bit lazy rolling over onto top end, but once it hooked up, it was a rocket. The bow came up only slightly as we tucked the 'Stream into its business stance and began to air it out in earnest. The air-packing vee-bottom became increasingly responsive to trim as we picked up rpm. The Voyager feels most at home aired out nice and loose and fed plenty of throttle. It inspired confidence with each patch of rapidly passing shoreline, and putting it into controlled flight on its invisible rail also melted the torque we experienced while trimmed in at lower speeds.

Low-speed handling drills posed no challenge, and we found the Pro-Max to be quite tame in idle and docking mode, although it shifted into gear harder than we expected.

Getting comfortable with the handling and ride at speed required some seat time, and this isn't a boat that'll greet the novice driver with optimum performance. The experienced driver, however, easily taps into its controlled exhilaration. Low-speed turning was executed with ease, and the bottom maintained its excellent traction as we picked up speed through the corners. Great marks around the buoys.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The new-generation 'Stream extracts the essence of the original's ride and spirit, and tempers the experience with a custom muscleboat's flair. It's not as polished as some of its I/O-driven contemporaries, but behind the wheel, it's as rich as it is hard-core.



SPECIFICATIONS

Centerline length: 20'2"
Beam: 89"
Hull design: Modified vee
Engine/Drive: Mercury Pro-Max/Sport Master 2.5
Horsepower @ prop: 225
Drive ratio: 1.87:1
Prop: Mazco 27-inch four-blade
Base retail price, incl. trailer: \$26,200
Standard features: Pedestal seat bases, ski locker, bow rails, glove box.
Options on test boat: Anodized package (\$585), foot throttle (\$119), foot trim (\$195), Gaffrig gauges (\$495), CMC hydraulic jack plate (\$885), Morse hydraulic steering, ski pylon (\$695).

Price as-tested: \$29,925
Performance
 Top speed, radar: 80.1 mph
 Builder's estimated top speed in optimum conditions: 84 mph
 Maximum rpm: 6,650
 0-30: 4.06 seconds
 0-40: 6.19 seconds
 0-50: 10.33 seconds
 0-60: 16.18 seconds
Speed at 3,000 rpm: 24.6 mph
Speed at 4,000 rpm: 35.8 mph

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