

# Noosacat 3100 Sports

It's very fast, soft riding, capable of handling just about anything - and with today's high tech, high power to weight ratio outboards, has returned to the sparkle that make these big cats an absolute joy to drive . . . Peter Webster, complete with valium and an appointment with his shrink, joins Wayne Hennig for this special report . . .



**"T**esting" boats with Noosa Cat CEO Wayne Hennig is always something of a challenge. To begin with, getting Wayne out of the driver's seat is incredibly hard because the guy is the original 'rev head' - and he just loves nothing more than getting out of his factory for a couple of hours and letting loose on the Noosa Bar in one of his powerful Noosa Cats.

So the challenge for any "gunna do" boating journalist is twofold - firstly you have to get Wayne out of the helm seat

and/or secondly you've got to learn to hang on - tight.

*Real tight!*

In his other life, when Wayne puts on his civvies and knocks off from the factory, he's one of Australia's top competitors in the brutally fast and dynamic Porsche racing car series, so more than most, we're entitled to describe him as a genuine rev head and get away with it. However, that brings us back to the boat test situation - and us trying to figure out how to lever Wayne out of his driver's seat without actually pressing the

eject button.

I was contemplating these issues as we swooped down the controlled speed zone along the Noosa River before going through the 'chicane' that leads to the little Noosa Bar.

Wayne was in the driver's chair (*funny that!*) Ruth Cunningham was sitting in the passenger seat grimly hanging on, and yours truly was swinging from the centre hand rail, camera in one hand looking for all the world like a chimp that's lost its cage. But we were having fun - with Wayne at the helm there's nothing else

# sman / Verado Combo



you can do but hang on and enjoy the ride.

Wayne's idea of heaven is to have 40 knots of sou-easterly blowing across the bay on a run out tide with waves standing up about 4.0m tall and wet sand at their base. Thankfully on this day the bar was piddling and small, the tide was still coming in and it was safe for most craft, let alone something as powerful and as effective as a 3100 Noosa Cat. But did that stop Wayne Hennig? Did that slow him down in any way? No way - spying the nearly perfect conditions offshore on

this beautiful morning off Noosa, complete with blue skies, sparkling seas and about a one metre chop on the bar, we'd hardly straightened up out of the river run before 450hp screamed in the background as the throttles were opened up in manic fashion; it's the only way the man knows how to drive.

With the Verados digging deep, and the superchargers going off, I don't think that we actually touched the water from the first wave to the last wave across the bar, but judging by the amazed looks from the local

surfing fraternity, I think we were in the air more than we were in the water. Not that it mattered, Noosa Cats are literally born and bred for these conditions, and they handle them like no other.

I've made this comment before and I know it's raised a few eyebrows around the traps, but ownership of something like this Noosa Cat 3100, with the power:weight ratio of the 2 x 225hp Mercury Verado outboards makes it such a buzz to drive, it is fair to use the parallel of describing the e it





provides as being very similar to that found in a high performance car.

Boats may not have the sheer speed in outright terms as motor vehicles, but there is no denying the huge thrill that comes from fire-walling a boat as good as this, with the power of the Verados, out in the open sea. There's no blue flashing lights; no speed cameras; no radar behind the trees - there's just you, blue ocean and a magnificent steed beneath you. You can feel all 450 horsepower through your fingertips, and sense the cat rising and falling in the sea; after a few minutes at the helm, the mastery of the beast returns, and you start walking the cat across the swells . . . beautiful stuff . . . bring it on! . . . man, we're starting to fly.

I've thought about this quite a lot actually, because when it's all said and

done, most high performance boats of this kind rarely do more than about 45 knots (that's about 50-55mph) which in motor vehicle terms of course is positively dead slow.

Not out there - to stand behind the helm of a boat like this, travelling across the ocean at 40 odd knots, is a huge buzz with an enormously powerful sense of sheer speed and excitement that belies the automotive comparo.

### Back To Business

Semantics aside, as you have probably figured out, this is a seriously quick boat with real performance *attitude*. The twin 225hp Verados provide all the grunt in the world that you need, but remember, for the same weight, they can also be tuned right up

to 275hp for the true high performance fanatics.

In the real world, nobody who would use the Noosa Cat 3100 for fishing, cruising, etc would need anything like 550hp, but oh blimey, *wouldn't it be a blast . . . !*

Sorry, just got a bit carried away there with the concept of this boat with 550hp - bloody hell, what a weapon! However, for most of us, 2 x 225hp is more than enough, and quite seriously, provides far more horsepower than you'll ever need in normal circumstances.

I think that what Wayne has done here with the Noosacat 3100 Sportsman / Verado combo is brought back the sparkle into these cats.

In recent years, so many cats - and I include all the manufacturers here -



have been forced to use diesel sterndrives or worse, diesel inboards, and fair dinkum, none of them ever performed with anything like the sparkle that a real powered catamaran should have.

Once that tunnel is loaded down and the boat has trouble exhausting the wind and waves caught in the tunnel; once the skipper loses the ability to trim the drive angle of the props, these cats just become barges. Whilst they might be very good handling barges, they are nothing like what they can be - if the weight is kept out of the tail.

Here, even though the Verados are the heaviest outboards in their class, they're still about half the weight of any comparable diesel or even a petrol sterndrive, and boy, doesn't it show. The whole stance of the boat is 100%

better than it is with an inboard or a sterndrive. The bum is out of the water, there's air passage clean through the tunnel, (check the tunnel clearance in the big pic on the left) and it runs around the ocean like a little 23 footer, not a big heavy 31 foot 5 tonne 9.0m catamaran.

The handling and ride is truly wonderful - and it just lopes along offshore at around 25-27 knots, at which point in time the hull is just lifting and rising to the seas like a cat should - that's when it's time to switch on the autopilot, settle back and enjoy the experience.

It's that good.

### Design Specifics

In the statistic department it actually measures 9.5m overall, with a moulded



length of 8.97m. The waterline length is 8.2m with an overall beam of 2.85m. The draft at rest is .45 ignoring the engines - because they can be lifted out of the water.

This particular boat was superbly fitted out - whoever owns this boat has had many boats before. The quality of electronics was breathtaking. Simply the best of everything - including a full Furuno Navnet system which you have to see to believe. This includes a 19" LCD colour monitor, 36 nautical mile 4kw radar, 1kw dual frequency depth sounder and the GPS with C-Map charts - and of course, the Navnet system features superb auto radar overlay on top of the GPS plotter which is just awesome to use and work in practice.

The synergy between the Furuno

Navnet system and the way all this stuff works together, let alone the way Furuno has integrated the radar picture over the GPS plotter chart (C-Map) is sensational. We'll do more on this system in the not too distant future, but it was terrific to actually see it and work it in the field in an actual application, as distinct from seeing it at a Boat Show or on a manufacturer's demo stand.

### Finish & Fit-out

This Noosa Cat 3100 has been set up in a very blokey sort of way and I don't mean that unkindly or critically.

Boats like this are not really made to have spoofy interiors with mirrors on the ceiling plus grab handles - Wayne will fit all that for you if you want, he insists, but in fact, they're made for

blokes who really just want somewhere to put their head down while they're waiting for the fish to come on, or to take a nap between shifts at the helm.

I don't think anybody really sees the base Noosa Cat as a long range or long term live-aboard cruising situation, although having said that, there's actually no reason why you couldn't set one up to do just that. But as they're fitted out from the factory, most of the boats we've seen over the years have a very similar blokey style of finish where maintenance is absolutely minimised, and all the necessities are in place where they should be. But there are no frills; no velour, not a scrap of suede to be seen, and as noted, no mirrors on the ceiling. And I don't think any of Noosa Cat's customers want it any other way.





These are utilitarian, quasi work boats with a very pragmatic edge - they're made for blokes who want to hose out the cockpit quickly, get all the blood and gunk out of the corners, and they're more likely to look at how the cockpit is finished than they are likely to study the wall lining used in the forward cabin.

As it stands, this boat is pretty close to standard, with a big king size berth set up forward under the foredeck and a very large toilet or head down on the portside ahead of the main cabin bulkhead.

Back up in the wheelhouse what you see in the pictures is pretty much what you get - there's a small dinette arrangement in the back port corner of the wheelhouse, the galley runs down along the starboard side to the helm and it's set up very well indeed for the helmsman and passenger with more than enough room for a couple more people in the dinette lounge area.

Out in the cockpit, it's big - with just an island kill box and bait prep area and space. Lot's of it. Storage shelves

run all the way fore and aft on both sides, and it gives you the impression that 4 or 5 blokes could easily fish a reef without getting in each other's way. Access to the Verados is excellent, with a walk out between them.

### Conclusion

This is now a fairly well sorted concept available in several models that we've looked at on a number of occasions over the last 5 or 6 years.

In the intervening years, there have been many slight variations on the central theme, especially in respect of engines, but the fundamental design philosophy has not really changed.

The factory's quite happy to move things around in a modular sense but of all the boats we've seen over the years, there is always this underlying pragmatism which is the result of many, many boatowners with an awful lot of experience between them, walking into the Noosa Cat factory and ordering one of these craft to be set up the way they want it. And that's my

point - most of them are now setting it up pretty much along these lines - so it's very hard to be critical of a boat that is so well nussed out. Just about every nook and cranny reflects this experience and know how.

This particular boat was beautifully set up - it is a dream boat in terms of its Furuno electronics, engineering and fitting out program. I don't think the owner would have got much change out of \$240K, but you can actually get aboard one of these Noosa Cat 3100's for as little as a \$185K.

Certainly, for around \$200k, you'd drive-away with a beautifully set-up, fully found sportsfisherman capable of going just about anywhere, and doing just about anything your heart desires.

*For more info about this spectacular rig, or any other Noosa Cat model - give Wayne Hennig a ring at Noosa on (07) 5449 8888 or email [mail@noosacat.com.au](mailto:mail@noosacat.com.au)*

**F&B**