

# POWER Boat

AUSTRALIA'S PREMIER POWERBOAT MAGAZINE

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HOT  
'BOARD  
TRICKS

## TESTED

ALLY CRAFT 510BR  
CROWNLIN 206LS  
DORAL MONTICELLO  
FORCE F21  
MAXUM 2100SC  
SAVAGE 650

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# Family Fun

ABOARD BEAUT  
FLYBRIDGE CRUISER





FORCE F21 WITH 225 MERCURY EFI V6



# FLYING FORCE

The latest model from Force continues the marque's tradition of excellent performance and flawless handling in a smooth and beautifully finished package. **By Graham Lloyd**

**RIGHT:** Beck shows off the front seats which are particularly deep and supportive. Note too the well placed foot rests, the central foot throttle, stowage pockets to the side and behind the seats, and drinkholders for the aft lounge. Both front seats have handy recessed drinkholders too.







**MAIN PHOTO:** Greg was enjoying driving his new boat with girlfriend Beck alongside and some mates in the aft lounge as we took the photos. The F21 runs remarkably cleanly and the twin steps in the forward chine can be easily seen.

**ABOVE:** Beck and Greg snuggle up on the optional U-shaped aft lounge - plenty of room to stretch out and with good legroom left in the cockpit as well.

The Force logo carries the tag line of "Sports Boats" and that's right on the ball. Think classic sports car with superb handling, great driving position, wind-in-the-hair freedom of the open road, exhilarating performance and sweeping lines that exude the essence of speed. Now change car to boat, add the ambience of sun and sea, and you've conjured into reality a Force F21.

This is the third design to come from Force and fills a space between the original F18 and the F23 that has a clever cuddy cabin for occasional overnighting. All the numbers designate length in feet and the hulls have a racing heritage that explains their impeccable manners, although it's the F18 that is the real racer with numerous ski and circuit-race wins (and records) to its credit as well as many happy social-use owners.

We've tested both the F18 and the F23, so we had a pretty good idea of how the F21 would perform, and it didn't let us down. Nor did Rod and Kelly Bickerton at Force who always set a high standard for preparing their boats (if only all boat-builders/dealers would do the same!) and who this time arranged for the test boat to be accompanied by its new owner. Greg Windust and his girlfriend Beck (note the BAG rego number on the hull - for "Beck and Greg" of course!) launched their F21 at Brooklyn and cruised upriver to the Force site at Lower Portland on the Hawkesbury for our test run.

That run typifies the Force design approach that lends itself to boats that cruise well and that handle open waters with a soft ride. Rod and Kell often run their own F23 down the river, out past Lion Island and Barrenjoey, down the coast and

into Sydney Harbour for a weekend of relaxation. The 21 carries a lower profile than the 23 (no cuddy cabin under the fore-deck) but has the same style of deep vee hull and generous topsides for easy running in rougher waters.

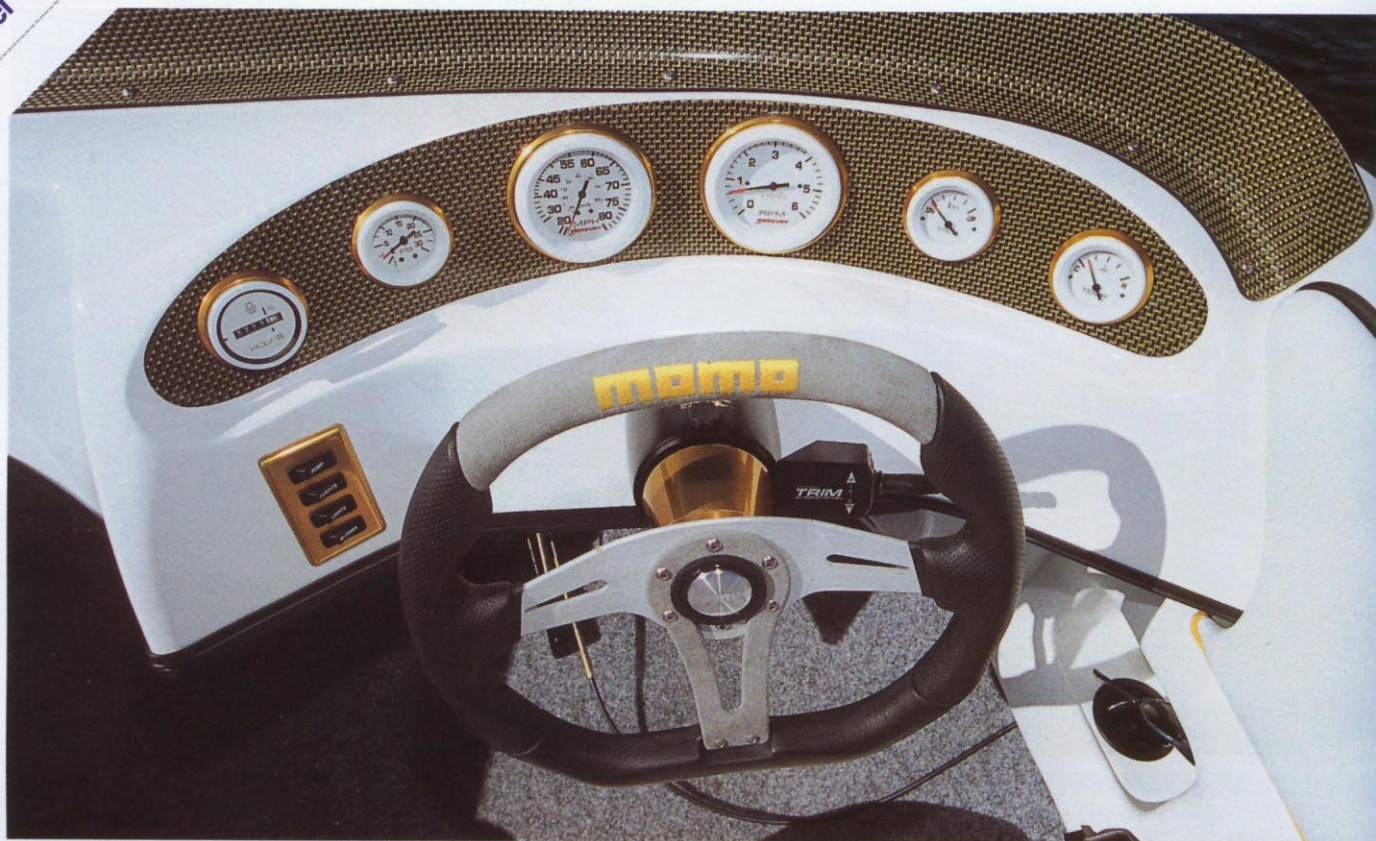
That was one capability that led Greg to choose the Force after earlier owning a competitive 19 foot ski/speedboat and looking at alternatives such as stern-driven bowriders. The extra room aboard the out-board-powered F21 was attractive as well and, even after an optional U-shaped lounge was fitted across the back of the cockpit, there's good floor space and lots of storage spots.

### Impressive Finish

As with the F18 and F23 that we tested, the F21 impressed with a meticulous finish and rarely seen level of attention to details. The



## FORCE F21 WITH 225 MERCURY EFI V6



external lines were unblemished and accentuated by shining gelcoat, whilst the interior had plush upholstery in top quality vinyl with carpeted floors.

The entire design is Rod's with flowing lines that sweep smoothly from the raked stem to the clean transom. The hull is a modified version of that on the F23 with slightly different chines and no aft extension pods. 21 degrees deadrise at the back ensures a soft ride, and twin steps in the forward chines divert spray and give lift in rough water. A unique triple-stepped lifting foil runs aft either side of the keel before flattening into a planing pad along the aft sections, and there is a single strake on each side that runs all the way to transom. The combination of these design attributes works exceptionally well with the F21 handling the way you dream a boat should perform.

The first clue comes as the F21 accelerates on plane. Do this slowly with mild application of throttle, and the hull barely changes running angle at all as it simply lifts along its full length to slip on to the water's surface. At just 1,800 rpm and barely more than 10 mph (17 kph), the F21 is on plane and doing it very easily.

When punched more forcefully out of the hole there is still minimal bowrise, and then the F21 is back at its efficient running angle and ready for strong mid-range acceleration. At all times, the skipper has perfect vision ahead over a quite high wind deflector that actually works.

At the top end of the scale, the 225 EFI

Mercury V6 spinning a 23 inch pitch three-blade Tempest prop had the F21 rocketing along at 66.5 mph (107 kph) and doing that with stability that allowed Rod to take his hands off the wheel (not recommended driving practice, but a good indication of the hull's inherent balance and hydrodynamic efficiency). That was with the Merc touching the rev limiter at 5,800 rpm which is spot-on its rated max power revs, so the prop selection was a good one.

From gentle curves around the river's bends to hard and tight turns, the F21 behaved exactly right. This is a well brought up boat! There was absolutely no slipping of the prop, and the hull held firm with not the slightest hop or bobble. Reaction to throttle and wheel was instantaneous, and the hull banked just enough to hold firm as it carved through the cornering routines with quite high G-forces - so warn your crew before you try the same yourself.

We had settled waters for the test run, so we spun through a few figure eights before heading out, turning quickly and slicing back through the turbulence to see how the F21 would handle that - which it did in an anti-climactic manner with a clean run and no impact to unsettle guests. The relatively high topsides and effective wind deflector would keep spray out of the boat too.

Cruising was most pleasant over a wide rev range from 3,000 rpm and 32 mph through 4,500 rpm and 51 mph. The wake changed shape and size as the speed

The helm looks spectacular with a Momo wheel, carbon kevlar dash panel and wind deflector, and gold anodising for the gauge bezels, wheel hub and switch panel. Engine trim is conveniently controlled by a direction-indicator-type lever just behind the wheel rim.

increased so would suit most watersports, and that extra low planing speed would be perfect for towing younger crew or newcomer towees at a safe and reassuring velocity.

### Deep Seats

The front seats are rather special with extra deep sides and even higher backs. You really settle down into them and feel part of the boat. In fact, the cockpit sides were virtually at shoulder level for me and gave a great feeling of security as we ran the cornering and speed runs.

The padding was firm yet comfortable and fore-aft adjustment on the driver's side allowed just the right reach to the sporty Momo wheel which had a soft rim and gold-anodised hub. That gold colouring was continued through the F21 with matching gauge bezels, grab handles, skipole and pop-up cleats. The gauges (hour meter, water pressure, speedo, tach, trim and temperature) were set in a high-tech carbon-kevlar panel, and that material was also used for the wind deflector. The helm area looked superb, and was very ergonomic too including perfectly placed foot brace panels - complete with Momo footrests for both skipper and passenger.

The throttle is mounted centrally for left-





**TOP:** Stowage everywhere around the lounge - to the sides, behind the back, and under the seats with an insulated cooler in the centre. The embroidered accents in gold and red looked bold and colourful.

**ABOVE:** A very neat transom with integrated boarding platforms either side of the 225 Merc that swept the F21 to 107 kph. The skipole, grab handles and oil and fuel fills are gold anodised to match other fittings, including pop-up cleats on the foredeck.

**ABOVE RIGHT:** The white undersides on this F21 sister-ship reveal the single strake each side and the triple-stepped lifting foil sections along the keel. Both F21s had navigation lights neatly inset in the topsides just below the gun'l.

foot operation and, as with other Force boats, I found myself rapidly at home using it. Trim controls for the Merc were on a direction-indicator-type lever at finger-tip reach behind the wheel where they were very convenient. Rod sets up each boat for its owner, so the wheel rim did intrude on my view of some gauges as Greg is taller than I. But that was barely noticeable and I sure didn't want to get out of the seat as driving the F21 is just like being at the wheel of a top-line sports car.

The passenger seat swivels through a full circle and can be held in any position, so it suits for observing watersports or for conversing with others on the U-shaped lounge. The latter has storage below and behind, with an insulated cooler under the centre cushion. The seat back lifts out too for access into the aft bilges and to the oil tank, battery and trim pump - plus there's more stowage capacity on each side. A thoughtful inclusion is a screw-off plug for a dipstick into the fuel tank - always the most accurate way of checking the level.

Inspecting that aft compartment showed typical Force engineering with extra transom-support knees and a through-bolted base for the skipole. Lifting the front pas-



senger seat squab showed more of that engineering with a monstrous bolt used to secure the swivelling base. Another example is the twin breathers fitted to the under-floor fuel tank - one running to the back of the tank and the other to the front for efficient breathing, and filling, at any angle.

More storage is in sidepockets and under the foredeck where the floor and hull sides are fully carpeted. Looking up behind the dash showed neat, well-secured wiring and even a light for the area. The lower edges of the dash were carefully trimmed and angled panels below each side were upholstered and carried stereo speakers with a Clarion CD system mounted in the driver's side panel.

### Strong Construction

This F21 was built for social use with a relatively heavy lay-up. All the 'glass work is hand-laid and Rod offers a vacuum-bagged foam-sandwich construction for lightweight high performance and race applications. In all cases though, the deck and hull are joined and then fully 'glassed together for that solid carved-from-granite feeling for the whole boat. The foredeck is securely braced and doesn't move a centimetre when you move across its shapely curves and central "power bulge".

The design is rated to 300 hp and Greg is already thinking of upgrading to a 275 supercharged Verado a little down the track. I'm sure the F21 would be a superb performer with its lowest recommended

power of 200 hp, and the 225 Merc certainly made it sprightly and speedy. With a 275 Verado it would be awesome (Rod and Greg - we'd have to re-test that!).

All up, the F21 is a worthy addition to the Force fleet and an outstanding boat in its own right. Pricing starts from around \$47,800 with a 200 hp engine and, as tested with the 225 EFI Merc, custom tandem trailer and other options, it came to \$58,000. Both prices are excellent value for what is a genuine hand-built custom boat.

Greg was pleased with his new acquisition. "It's an amazing hull," he said. "It's like a sports car. I'm really looking forward to getting it on the Harbour."

Beck, who skis and will be driving the Force herself, added: "It's great. Enjoyable to ride in and the wind deflector works well. I like it better than our last boat - it seems to ride smoother."

For more information, call Force Boats on (02) 4575 4038 or email [forceboats@big-pond.com](mailto:forceboats@big-pond.com). Ask about their regular email updates which are entertaining as well as informative.

## THE NUMBERS

### Force 21

<b>Length:</b>	6.48 metres
<b>Width:</b>	2.10 metres
<b>Weight:</b>	Dependant on lay-up
<b>Deadrise:</b>	21 degrees
<b>Fuel:</b>	170 litres (optionally more)
<b>Power:</b>	Outboard 149 to 224 kW (200 to 300 hp)
<b>Power as tested:</b>	Mercury 225 EFI 3 litre V6, 168 kW (225 hp)
<b>Speeds:</b>	17 kph at 1,800 rpm (planing) 51 kph at 3,000 rpm 61 kph at 3,500 rpm 72 kph at 4,000 rpm 88 kph at 5,000 rpm 107 kph at 5,800 rpm
<b>Price from:</b>	From \$47,800 with 200 hp
<b>Price as tested:</b>	\$58,000 with custom tandem trailer