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Off the Trailer

RAPID ENJOYMENT FORCE



Born in a racing stable and bred on the ski racing scene, the Force Interceptor F24XB is a powerful and exhilarating social boat.

By Dominic
Wiseman

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how comfortable
this boat is to drive



The 1979 film *Mad Max* was a smash hit on the international screen. The film might have launched Mel Gibson's acting career, but the true star of the show was arguably the V8 Interceptor, a heavily modified 1973 Ford Falcon XB GT Coupe. This bad-arse vehicle went on to be world famous and the 'must have' on every car lover's Christmas list.

Rod Bickerton and his team at Force Boats, NSW, must have had Max on the mind during the conception stage of the latest Force creation, the Interceptor F24XB. The latest in the Force brand's recreational collection, the Interceptor F24XB would be a mighty match for the V8 Interceptor any day.

Force Boats has a smaller following compared to the big brands. This is a blessing, as bigger operators need high production numbers to keep the doors open, and with that can come just a little less attention to the details. The Force

Below: Smiling is compulsory for all Force F24XB passengers ...



operation is kept purposefully tight, and when you buy a Force boat, you're buying directly from the man making your boat. Personal and local, every detail is carefully considered, with excellence and evolution a constant.

Since 1995, Rod and his team have been expertly manufacturing high-quality race-bred skiboats. You might say the Force brand is a little underground, cultivating a very loyal and deeply entrenched following in the competitive international ski racing scene – in fact, the current world champion ski racing boat is a Force.

That knowledge and ability to hone and perfect performance-bred boats is now seamlessly transitioning into its solid collection of recreational models.

BOWRIDER WITH THE MOST

The Force Interceptor F24XB is a massive bowrider, large enough for the whole family plus a few. This is a dream boat for anyone keen on on-water entertaining. There is a massive U-shaped lounge in the cockpit and another large lounge in the bow. Like all good entertaining boats, cupholders are plentiful and feature internal lighting, ensuring you never lose your drink in the dark.

The generous amount of seating will see you carry up to 10 passengers. The seats are exceptionally comfortable, using quality materials and diamond stitching reminiscent of a Bentley or Rolls-Royce.

The luxury theme spills through the entire vessel. The Italian steering wheel epitomises sports car opulence, while the freshwater washdown at the transom is a treat and a Clarion/Roswell sound system pumps the tunes all day long. The features also include a swimplatform and folding ladder, an esky and, to complete the look, custom teak flooring. It all adds up to a very comfortable day on the water.

The fibreglass work is as good as I have seen and, as a result, the Force F24XB gleams from bow to stern. It is impossible to spot a blemish anywhere, every corner and flat surface shining in the bright morning sun.

The design and layout are excellent, too, with some innovative ideas to solve some of the common space issues onboard. And despite all the seating, it is surprisingly easy to move from one end of the boat to the other. There are large storage



Above: Plenty of room to relax or move about in the spacious cockpit.

Below: Up, up and away!



compartments at the bow and located throughout the cockpit, with a large ski locker at the stern and a bin under the internal stairs that lead from the deep cockpit to the swimplatforms.

ON-POINT PERFORMANCE

Across the water, the Force Interceptor F24XB is as fast as she looks. Some might say that the tower detracts from the sleek look and I suspect

some owners will omit it, but I quite like it and feel she still has a clean aesthetic. The driving position is low inside the boat and both the helm and observer seat (it rotates for skiing) envelop you in a way that no other boat seat has, in my experience. Rod thinks he'll go even lower with the seat next time but, as is, it truly feels every bit the sports car as a result.

The performance is on point. The hull pops onto the plane instantly, and with very little power required from the 300hp Mercury Pro XS outboard engine. The hull is surprisingly efficient and very soft and smooth across the water and, while the upper reaches of the Hawkesbury River aren't known for their rough conditions, I have no doubt the 21-degree deadrise is more than enough for the always choppy and washing machine-like Sydney Harbour.

It is hard to put into words how comfortable this boat is to drive. From plush, comfortable and all-enveloping seats, the smooth throttle transition, to the easy-to-turn electric hydraulic steering and soft ride, everything feels next-level superb. Even the way the spray leaves the hull and lands on a flat river surface sounds impressive. The key to the Rolls-

Royce ride is the triple step foils, large aggressive stepped chines and incredibly well-tuned hull, the heritage of which comes directly from ski racing.

The Mercury engine strapped to the rear of the Force F24XB is a perfect match. The Mercury website runs the tagline 'outrun everything' and on a Force Interceptor F24XB, that is certainly possible. The 300hp outboard, the 'top dog' in the range, is a V8 with a 4.6lt displacement. On this hull, it is capable of speeds faster than 50 knots (92.6km/h) without even trying. At cruising speeds, it is almost too smooth – even at a cruising speed of around 30 knots (55.6km/h) it feels a little like *Driving Miss Daisy*.

EXEMPLARY HANDLING

The Force Interceptor F24XB is a boat that deserves to be driven. Whether in a straight line or cornering, it seems to lift its performance when needed. Its ability to hold on in a turn is exemplary and it beds in superbly, exhibiting a nice lean so you aren't fighting the considerable g-forces one can achieve by chucking a turn at around 40 knots. It also turns surprisingly tightly for a 20ft-plus hull.



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With all this refinement, luxury and performance, this is not a run-of-the-mill production boat



While it is an excellent recreational performance boat, it is also a very capable skiboat. The wake is small at ski speeds, making for comfortable runs. It gets on the plane so quickly, you're not fighting to get up on a deep-water start. It can also be used to give two up-and-comers their first taste of kneeboarding, as we did on the test day. Tubing is also definitely on the list.

Below: Seating comfort is all deluxe.

The options fitted to our review boat include freshwater shower with retractable head (50lt tank), driver and observer deluxe bucket-seats, custom U-Dek flooring, Mercury VesselView 903 DTS with 9in screen, DTS hand control, Roswell Tower (CAM RT Wide), Marine USB, MP3, WMA receiver with Bluetooth, and a Roswell stereo system.

With all this refinement, luxury and performance, this is not a run-of-the-mill production boat. Sure, you could buy something off the shelf that performs well but, if you're looking for a true luxury recreational option that performs brilliantly, this is the boat you need. 



FORCE INTERCEPTOR F24XB	
LOA:	7.48m
Beam:	2.5m
Draft:	0.58m
Dry weight:	1600kg
Power:	300hp Mercury Pro XS (sterndrive available)
Fuel capacity:	220lt (optional 280lt)
Capacity:	10 people
Price from:	\$180,000
Price as tested:	\$194,000
More information: Force Boats, tel: (02) 4575 4038. Web: forceboats.com	