



Above: The Powercat Party Cat deck-boat has some features that are very cruiser-orientated.

Right: The Powercat Party Cat has very distinctive lines and is somewhat unique, yet very practical.



Company MD Steve Shaw one day decided to chop and channel and 'have a play with' a set of 30ft Powercat mouldings, in order to provide a suitable 'alternative' platform from which to enjoy his local region. He ended up with a hull that had the ability to plane easily at low speeds, yet still had the ability to go from A to B at a reasonable pace, in seas up to a maximum 1 metre. All he needed to do then was incorporate all that (he thought) was good in a party style boat.

Within a short time (amazing how quickly 'house' jobs get finished) Shaw and his family were boating in style, in a user-friendly way they hitherto had not thought possible. To them it was the

Party Time



The Pontoon-style party boat phenomenon is huge in America, mainly due to the myriad of traditionally calmer inland waterways that are 'kinder' to the family who want to take family and friends out for a fun day on the water. The cylinder style of longitudinal hull, the more cynical would refer to it as a down-pipe with the ends crimped over, with associated handling qualities, does however have quite dramatic limitations when the seas roughen up, for simply, they were not purpose-designed to handle any kind of sea.

Sunshine Coast manufacturer Powercat Marine liked the concept of the boat however, and came up with their perfect solution in the form of the 7.6m Powercat Party Cat

best of both worlds, the Powercat ideal centred around a party platform, but the problem was other people liked it too - to the point where one extremely persistent gentleman finally got his way and ended up owning Shaw's new 'shop hack'.

Realising he was maybe onto a good thing with this concept that went one better than what was available on the market at the time, Shaw decided to test the waters with a production model. He added a few more ideas to the concept, tooled accordingly and as part of a focused marketing strategy he virtually unveiled it at this year's Australian Marine Industry Federation Awards - in the 'Day-boat' category, where it subsequently received a 'Commendation' award. It was launched onto the Australian market - in style and in the best possible way.

Yamaha Performance

Using the tried and proven 3000 hull, albeit modified significantly to allow it to plane at slower speeds, was a most astute move by Shaw as it afforded the make the ultimate in efficiency. By that I mean he didn't need to run huge horsepower in order to achieve his ideal of a party cat with attitude, that would handle a good sea whilst still performing well above the 'norm' of equivalent pontoon-style vessels.

The chosen power was a pair of 115hp Yamaha 4-stroke, in-line 4-cylinder, DOHC, 1741cc, FL115AET models running standard 17" pitch Yamaha S/S 3-blade propellers - the perfect package for a hull such as the Party Cat. You are going to be out all day, and possibly all weekend, so you are going to want to have economical engines that will alleviate the need to gas up half-way

through the weekend.

You also need the grunt to get a machine like this up and onto the plane with ease, and it did, and once up on the plane you need it to cruise along at an idyllic speed, without the noise of an engine spoiling the occasion. It is a party boat after all, and any engine noise would be most tacky, and more importantly you wouldn't want the smell of engine fumes wafting across the top of your glass of champers - would you!? In all instances the Yamaha excelled - for it was a great package in calm conditions, and even better when we rounded the corner from our sheltered marina, and nosed into a biting 35-knot wind and chop.

What chop, and what wind, one could well have been forgiven for asking at the time, for the cat hull literally ironed all the bumps out, even at the top speed

Left: The Party Cat has the ability to cater well for a full complement of 12 people.



of 36.8mph (at the maximum 6000 rpm) in quite diabolical estuary conditions. And the wind factor - thanks to a decision by the owners of this example to fit an optional extra front windscreen - there was none. Nestled in behind this windscreen, you were completely sheltered from the elements whilst underway.

Let's Party

The moment we glided up onto our sandy beach in paradise (the boat only draws 300mm), was the very moment the Party Cat came into its own, for it doesn't earn its demonstrably-applicable name by accident; there was everything aboard this boat to enhance the 'family-fun' aspect. By opening the front screen section and the 'cowling' door below it, the foredeck became a great playground for the kids, diving off the boat and swimming around, or in the instance when we nudged up onto the sheltered beach, a great platform from which to easily alight. Ah, the kids had gone, and with the designated skipper supping away on his lemonade, for us it was into a lovely glass of champers.

Sounds good eh, and we could just

picture it happening, but for me there was work to be done - so much to take in on this Party Cat. Laid out on one big long platform, as is typical of this concept of boat, it provided the base for what in effect was a caravan style of layout. I should perhaps mention at this stage when likening it to a caravan concept, that although it was to all intents and purposes an 'open' boat to start with, you had the potential as these people have done, to make it fully enclosed.

The solid and well-mounted hard-top structure, the 360-degree 'clears', and the extended bimini off the front of the hard-top, completely sealed off the expansive interior and provided the perfect retreat for one, two, three days, or even a week or two. The best part about it though, was unlike a caravan that needs to be towed everywhere, in this instance we could have left it all exactly as it was - the awning still up - and simply motored off to another idyllic spot.

How Did They Get It All In?

As noted, this concept started out as Shaw's dream for his 'perfect' boat, and

as such some of the features are very cruiser-orientated, others are very practical, and still others are extremely innovative - as he set about fitting all his ideas into a 7.60m (25ft) boat. Like a caravan built on a flat base, you can maximise space by building right around the perimeter of the platform, ending up with good floor space for walking traffic, plus all the furniture and features that sort of 'flow' into each other.

The boat is purposefully divided into two distinct areas, the kids' area at the front of the cockpit/saloon, and the adults' back aft. Well that was obviously the theory for meal time at least, for up forward an L-shaped lounge provided seating at the four-person (children's) table. For sleeping purposes, another lounge opposite became the second single berth at night-time.

The adults' lounge down the back was certainly more purposeful, seating at least six adults in absolute comfort around the adequate-size table. Presented in French-stitched hide look-alike vinyl, like the bow seating these plush lounges gave the interior a real look of luxury. For sleeping purposes this table dropped down to form a huge rear berth. If you wanted to sleep more than four people, then blow-up mattresses would be the order of the day - blown up utilising the 12-volt cigarette-lighter fitting on the dash.

Cruiser-orientated, this dash and helm station was an absolute gem. Comprehensive, and designed for the 'cruising' skipper who may be at the helm for a while, features included rounded screen, game-style swivelling armchair, Seastar hydraulic steering, sports steering wheel, 27-meg radio, Navman Fish 4100 sounder, Clarion stereo, Yamaha binnacle controls, BEP circuit-breaker switch panels, dual Yamaha instrumentation, and Maxwell Freedom 500 anchor winch.

But there was more, for this helm module served a double purpose in that it was also a step-down head. Lined, and complete with hand-basin, side-opening hatch, remote shower, mirror, exhaust fan, and macerator head to holding tank or dockside/overboard pump-out facility, the room was also home to the bow table that was attached by brackets, to the aft interior wall. "There is a home for everything," Shaw was heard to comment, "and if you look upwards you will see the aft table attaches by brackets, to the inside of the hardtop." Just ahead of the helm module was a side-opening entry door, brilliant for boarding, if you are not as deft of foot as you used to be.

Gourmet Galley

Well not exactly a gourmet galley, but an obscenely well set up galley module

Top: There is even a bow shower, so you don't cart sand all through the boat.

Right: Plenty of room to simply enjoy your day on the water - however you see fit!



Powercat 7.60

Model:	Powercat Party Cat 7.60
Price As Tested:	\$113,068
Price Std BMT:	\$89,200
Designer:	Powercat Marine
Material:	Solid GRP
Type:	Deck-boat
LOA:	7.60m
Beam:	2.6m
Rear Deadrise:	28 degrees
Hull Configuration:	Catamaran
Trailerable Weight:	2150kg approx.
Engine Capacity:	Twin 115hp
Power Options:	Outboard only
Fuel Capacity:	Twin 100-litre
Maximum Speed:	36.8 mph

Notable Standard Equipment

Grab rails, bow and stern boarding, deluxe helm seat, bow and stern lounges, concealed anchor mounting, electric head, remote shower, galley module with esky, sink, 3-burner stove and BBQ, 80 litres freshwater.

Notable Options on Test Boat

Shore-power kit, battery charger, hardtop and bimini, clears, Maxwell winch, heat exchanger for hot water, 12/240V, refrigerator, vanity & hand-basin, hard-top, full windscreens, cockpit lights, full set of camper covers, docking lights.

Engines

Make:	Yamaha
Model:	FL 115AET
Type:	4-stroke
Displacement:	1.741 litres
Horsepower:	115hp
Cyl Type:	In-line 4-cylinder
Max rpm:	6000
Propeller:	17" pitch S/S Yamaha 3-blade

Trailer

Make:	Sea Link
Model:	Ezy-launch
Axles:	tandem
Suspension:	leaf springs
Braked:	Electric Hydraulic
Rollers:	keel skids and rollers

Std Equip: submersible lights, winch, jockey wheel

Boat Package Supplied by:
Powercat Marine, 14 Roseby Rd,
Caboolture, Qld 4510
Ph. (07) 5428 0043,
Fax (07) 5428 1444
Email:
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none the less. Taking pride of place in this galley was a generously large 3-burner S/S gas stove with incidentally, a huge hot-plate that fitted nicely over the whole stove-top, to transform it into a 'beaut barbie'. As well, this module featured a Granitex bench-top, a good-sized sink with hot and cold water, a 55-litre refrigerator, a built-in esky, a servery, plenty of cupboard space, and a stainless steel rail that completely surrounded the top of the module.

While these main features were great, what I liked most about the Party Cat was the subtle innovation that made live-aboard life that much better, that transformed it from 'just another deck boat' into a real entertainer and live-aboard. User-friendly features like the table mountings, the side-entry door, the bow and stern boarding features, the concealed permanently mounted anchor so people don't stub their toes, the windscreens, the remote storage for the gas bottle, 80 litres of water storage capacity, deck shower at the bow, three batteries, shore-power, battery charger, the heaps of storage, and the push-pit

and pull-pit - there were so many redeeming features about this boat.

Conclusion

The Powercat Party Cat 7.60 was a real boat, a boat incidentally with an exemplary pedigree, for it handled sublimely well, leaning into a turn (a bit of a novelty for a cat) and cornering well. Despite the obvious windage potential it manoeuvred well (twin engines) - to me it was unparalleled in the context of a deck-style craft. Licensed to carry 12 people, it boasted a strong and rigid solid GRP hull. The innovation was superb, the features and fittings were of a high quality, and it was presented in an entirely opulent fashion so as to unashamedly attract the family boater who has everything - except a party machine like this! In places like Sydney Harbour, Gippsland Lakes, the Gold or Sunshine Coasts or even Port Philip Bay, you would get more use and pleasure out of a boat like this, than if you owned a full-blown cruiser. Sure it will not appeal to a huge audience, but those looking for this concept of boat would struggle to find a more practical or user-friendly example. 



Above: The cruiser influence is obvious.

Left: The 115hp Yamahas are at the 'maximum' end of the horsepower range.