



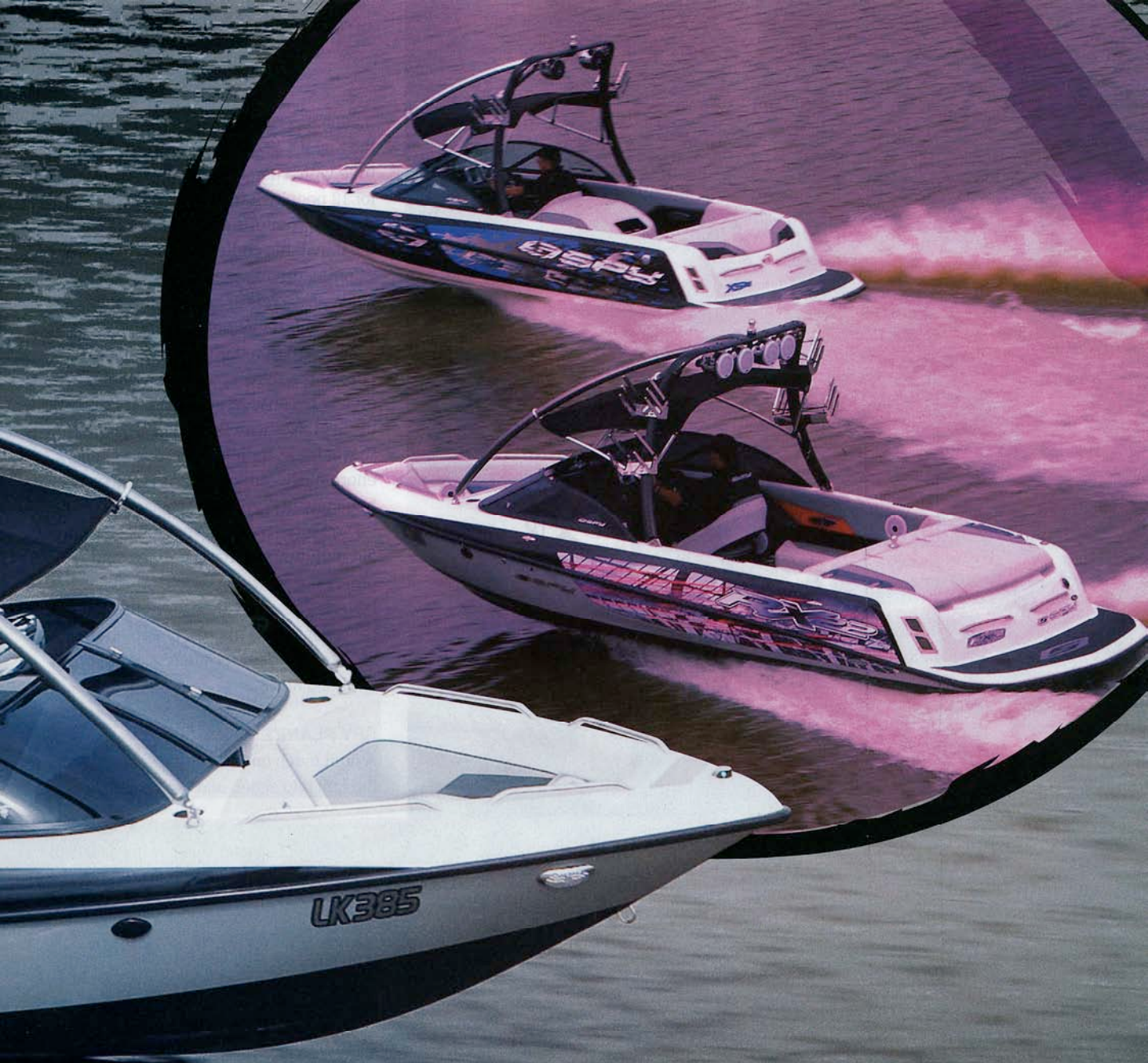
BOAT TEST: SPY RX22

STORY: JOHN WILLIS **PHOTOS:** ELLEN DEWAR

A LOT OF R&D HAS GONE
INTO THE CAD-DESIGNED
SPY RX22 TO MAKE
THIS AWARD WINNING
AUSTRALIAN SKI/WAKEBOAT
A WORLD-CLASS PRODUCT,
WRITES JOHN WILLIS



GETTING SMART



Watch out, there's a Spy in town! James Bond would be proud to be a namesake for the new Spy range of premium ski and wakeboard packages. Spy's are by reputation debonair, exciting, intriguing, attractive and sophisticated — attributes that are quite apt for the all-new Spy RX22.

Melbourne's skiboat specialist, Peter Webb from Performance Marine, has teamed up with the manufacturing brilliance of Whittley Marine Group to produce an exciting range of beautifully presented thrill machines. The market has endorsed the Spy RX22 by awarding it the

AMIF (Australian Marine Industries Federation) 2008 Ski Boat of the Year and it is easy to see why.

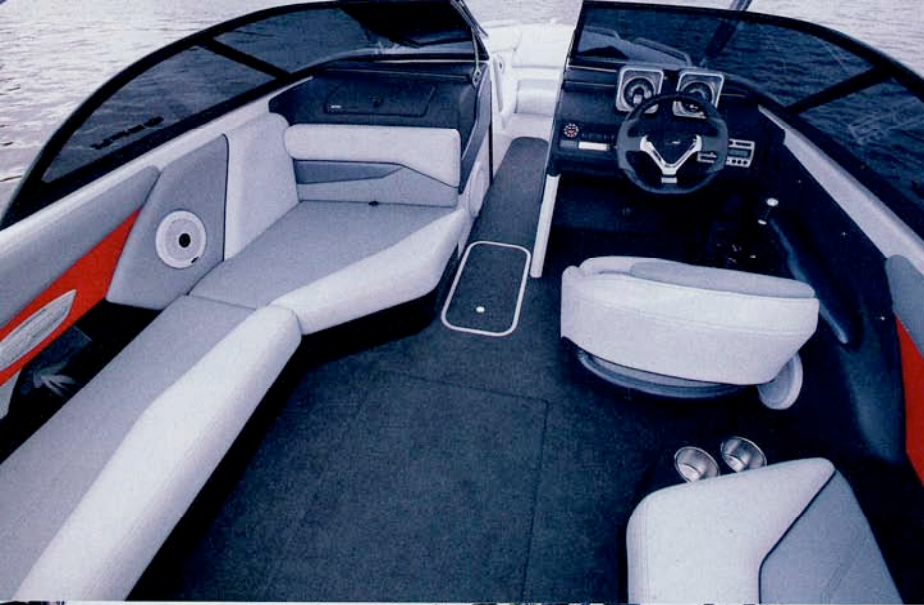
My first image of the boat was WOW! I have seen some terrific colour schemes on skiboats in the past, some costing untold thousands of dollars but I must say, the production decals and finish on the Spy look sensational. They are bold, brassy and classy, and easily stamp their mark on the brain.

Webb describes the RX22 as "the best crossover boat in the world". By that he means it is a boat designed for keen waterskiers, who also need the features of a dedicated wakeboard

boat that is at home in both fresh and saltwater. Versatility is the name of the game. This package has the power, performance and wake to satisfy the most ardent competition slalom skier. Simply engage the onboard ballast and wake plate to produce a world-class wakeboarding arena.

THE SOCIAL SKIBOAT

The RX22 is also a highly sociable boat. Gone are the days of waterskiing with a driver, an observer and a skier out the back. With its inviting rear-mount bowrider layout, and overall dimensions of



22ft8in (6.71m) long by 8ft (2.4m) beam, the Spy RX22 can entertain the whole tribe with a comfortable seating capacity for 12 people. It features plenty of creature comforts and storage to reduce the inevitable clutter.

From a driver's point of view, this Spy holds no secrets. It has possibly the most comfortable helm position I have ever encountered. Being a big bloke, I dread the request to do a skiboat review because often, I barely fit into the seat. Not with the Spy. The driver's seat is large, individually sprung and enormously comfortable as is the entire helm layout.

The Morse controls, sports tilt steering, 5in multifunction Faria gauges, and highly compact and visible dashboard layout, all make the driver's position and control a breeze. Its sporty appearance sets the standard for the rest of the boat's stunning attributes.

SPY PLANES

A light touch on the throttle springs the hull into action and the boat is on



This photo: The industry endorsed the Spy RX22 by awarding it the AMIF Ski Boat of the Year in 2008.

Clockwise from top: Big blokes will appreciate the large skipper's seat; Detailed look at the superbly engineered, optional board racks; Accommodating cockpit and bow section takes the Spy's seating capacity to 12. **Opposite, top down:** Dashboard layout is highly compact and visible, featuring multifunction Faria gauges; Like your music up loud? Then check out the speaker setup on the optional wakeboard tower.

the plane before you know it. There is virtually no bow rise as you accelerate from a dead start and as such, there is absolutely no loss of vision through the attractive, curved windscreen. Spy boats also supply a Perspex infill for the base of the centre-opening walkway under the windscreen to keep the wind at bay on those chilly winter's days when you don't want the breeze flowing into the cockpit.

This is the first skiboat in the country that totally utilises CAD computerised design, and the result in manufacturing quality and performance is outstanding. I would be pleased to say that the Spy is in the elite class as one of the best handling boats in the world today.

WHAT WE LIKED

- ✓ World-class product
- ✓ Social layout
- ✓ Luxurious accommodation
- ✓ Superb handling

NOT SO MUCH

- ✗ Where's Ursula, Britt, Barbara, Jane, and Halle?



The RX22 runs straight, even and true, however, its superb handling is only appreciated by throwing the boat into thrilling full-bore turns at high speed. It just hangs in there. There is absolutely no loss of control when crossing a wake and the hull produces no noise, banging or vibration. It also tracks dead strait, to the level that you can actually take your hands off the wheel at full speed, although not recommended.

This Spy is a breeze to control. Peter Webb told me of the surprise many women experience when they have hesitatingly taken the wheel. These are often women who have confined themselves to the observer's seat for many years due to previous ski packages that were often uncontrollable primitive beasts. Not this one.

True to its name, the Spy is comparable to driving a prestige sports car, with equivalent control and handling. It is exhilarating to say the least.

SCORPION GROWL

The rear-mounted 350hp MerCruiser Black Scorpion 5.7lt V8 engine coupled

with a Walter V-Drive provides quiet and very efficient power. Modern precision-ground helical gears in the V-drive have eliminated the high-pitched squeal that was once a deterring factor with such transmissions.

The Black Scorpion gives that satisfying purr of power that you only get from a V8. A combination of Multi Point EFI, silky smooth Walter V-Drive transmission throwing a 13.5in x 17.5in ACME propellor, and the CAD-designed hull ensures extremely fuel-efficient power at the prop. A fuel tank capacity of 120lt allows for plenty of uninterrupted fun and range.

The driver has full control of wake height and hull attitude with the combination of adjustable ballast and wake plate. The hull is integrally strong and features a foam-filled stringer and frame construction. There are five independent floatation tanks to meet the stringent Australian Buoyancy design requirements.

Test day saw the Spy RX22 record a

wakeboard speed of 35kmh (18.9kts) at 2500rpm and 73kmh (39.42) at WOT of 5000rpm.

SPYING INSIDE

A rear-mount configuration also provides the opportunity for a very entertaining interior layout. My wondering male imagination leads to exotic images of James Bond's sirens such as Ursula Andress, Britt Ekland, Jane Seymour, Barbara Bach and Halle Berry flying glamorously at high speed across a mirror-like waterway in alluring and sophisticated style enhanced by the beautiful interior of the Spy. My wife reckons Daniel Craig would look pretty good in it too, but then again she reckons he would look good anywhere.

The lush and alluring, yet hardwearing upholstery is double-stitched 14oz vinyl that extends from the wraparound rear lounge to the bowriding section. There is storage under every seating unit including a large ski locker located behind the passenger's backrest as well as a large underfloor recess.



The thickly padded sunlounge/engine cover rises on stainless steel gas struts to reveal the Black Scorpion power plant, as well as plenty of storage for ropes, wetsuits and floatation vests. The engine bay is easily accessed for maintenance and provides a quick-fit hose connector with tap for freshwater flushing.

A small scramble across the sunlounge places the skier onto the fully moulded rear platform that becomes the launching pad for on-water fun. It is incredibly stable and holds enormous weight without getting your feet wet. Our test boat even had a remote control mounted on the stern for full control of the Clarion multifunction sound system, as well as non-skid surfaces and stainless steel

grabhandles for easy boarding.

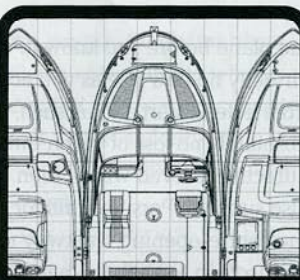
The bowrider area is simply stunning, comfortable and highly inviting. There are recessed drinkholders everywhere, speakers all over including the boom boxes in the stylish wakeboard tower, exterior wakeboard storage racks, optional drive lights, LED interior and navigation lights, auto bilge pump, horn, a big lockable glovebox, and the package is completed with the custom Easytow tandem trailer.

The partnership with Whittlely manufacturing brings the Spy in line with premium cruiser quality, and Peter Webb reinforced his pleasure with the partnership and its obvious all-Australian winning result.

This is certainly a world-class product which is intended to be released into the huge and highly competitive American market where, I have no doubt, it will gain immediate success. I can also see it cutting a wake through the waters of the Mediterranean before refreshments at Casino Royale!

It seems Diamonds Are Forever and the Spy RX22 is no rough cut. Take one for a drive and you will Never Say Never Again in this Thunderball of exquisite power, performance and style.

Top down: The Spy RX22 is an Australian-built world-class product and the result of a collaboration between Performance Marine and the Whittlely Marine Group; The plush and alluring interior of the bowriding section extends throughout the length of the boat; Transom sunlounge is in three sections and these lift individually or altogether for accessing the 350hp MerCruiser Black Scorpion 5.7l V8 and stowage either side.



SPY RX22

HOW MUCH?

Price as tested...\$78,500 w/ 350hp MerCruiser Black Scorpion engine, tandem trailer, regos, and safety gear
Options fitted:..... Driving lights, Spy tower, racks, ballast system, Black Scorpion engine, AWC control, and Clarion CD player
Priced from: \$65,900

GENERAL

Type: Monohull w/ variable deadrise
Material: GRP hull w/ foam-filled composite stringers
Length overall: 6.71m with platform
Beam: 2.4m
Deadrise: 24° (variable)
Weight: 1450kg (hull and engine); approx 1950kg (BMT)

CAPACITIES

Fuel: 120lt
People: 12

ENGINE

Make/model: MerCruiser Black Scorpion
Type: Four-stroke V8
Rated HP: 350
Displacement: 5.7lt
Weight: 373kg
Drive (Make/ratio): Walter V-Drive/1.46:1
Propeller: 13.5in x 17.5in
ACME CNC machined

SUPPLIED BY

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