

# MASTERCRAFT

## MARISTAR 225VRS

*With a heritage as a tournament waterski workhorse, and an inboard engine, how does this sportsboat manage as a leisure craft?*



**A** MasterCraft speciality is building specialist ski-boats. So, naturally enough, this sportsboat takes the lessons learned in the professional waterskiing arena, and parlays them into a vehicle aimed at family watersports.

### Design & layout

The layout of the MariStar 225VRS shouts 'sterndrive', but sometimes things are not what they seem. MasterCraft have never produced such a craft; in a ski-boat, what you need is an inboard shaftdrive configuration.

Normally the engine would be in the centre of such a vessel. With cockpit space essential in a leisure boat, it needs to be mounted aft in this case, but a sterndrive arrangement would compromise the wake characteristics and forgo the precision handling that comes with a rudder. So the answer is a V-drive system.

The layout succeeds in offering space aplenty, with an expansive bow area, a spacious walkthrough, an open cockpit configuration with seating all the way round, and a large sunlounger aft. Even with four people sitting up front and seven aft, plus the helmsman, things do not feel cramped, and the fit-out is luxurious.

A bowrider's 'hole' forward can easily compromise the rest of its styling, but the 225VRS is big enough to carry it off. The raked screen and the two-tone colourways either side of the rubbing strakes, dropping to the waterline at the transom, emphasise the boat's sporty appearance.

The hull is much modified from that of a tournament boat. There is a deeper-vee entry and prominent negative chines to assist a smooth, dry ride.

### Performance & handling

Our test boat was fitted with 308 of Chevrolet's best horsepower, by way of the familiar 5.7L block, running through a 1.46:1-ratio V-drive with a four-blade propeller on the end of the shaft. If you opt for the Corvette LT1 option, you pay an extra £2505 ex VAT for another 32hp. Both engines are marinised by MasterCraft.

The less potent installation certainly gets the 225VRS moving. We timed it from standstill to 15 knots in 2.5sec, and it took only another 2.9sec to reach 25 knots.

Skiers are not usually very interested in top speed, but the 36 knots we recorded at 4700rpm is typical for this type of

### Bow

Swing back the centre section of the screen and step through the wide walkway and you find yourself in a capacious area that will comfortably seat four.

You sit quite low so it feels safe, and there is a solid set of stainless steel grab-handles should the ride get exciting. But the emphasis is on comfort, with well-padded base and back cushions and a

deep-pile marine carpet. Passengers here even get their own set of speakers for the stereo system.

Underneath every base cushion there is a locker, which means three in total, carpet-lined and with wide openings for easy access.

An oddity is the small radio aerial to starboard, just forward of the screen, which seems to be there to give the passenger something to fiddle with.



craft. We are sure it can be bettered, as the test boat had missed a hull-cleaning session.

Handling is direct and responsive, better than you would get from an outboard or sterndrive, thanks to the V-drive configuration which means a

rudder is suspended in the wash of the prop. You can place the boat where you want and turn it how you want. The hull bites hard, tracking easily though turns, with no sign of prop ventilation.

Though the conditions on our test day were not demanding, the MariStar gave a comfortable ride. Its weight and build quality give it a solid feel. Our only major criticism concerns the noise of the V-drive, which is rather intrusive, there being no sound insulation to stop the Chevrolet's whining. Otherwise this is a well-built boat with no rattles.

Wake characteristics are not an important consideration for many sportsboat owners, but they might be a concern for some potential buyers of this craft, who have watersports in mind. And the news is good. At speed there is a low, soft wake with minimal rooster-tail, so you will not get thrown around when you cross it on a mono ski. Slow down for wakeboarding or kneeboarding and there is a smooth centre section, and the well-defined lateral wakes have smooth sides for launching off.

### Conclusions

Although the 225VRS is a ski-boat first and a sportsboat second, tournament skiers will prefer to opt for other boats in the

### Helm



One of the joys of the boat's tournament ski-boat heritage is a well-sorted driving position. Comfort is important on this type of craft, where the driver can spend long sessions in the seat.

The 225VRS has almost unrivalled ergonomics, though it does lack an armrest for the throttle. Instruments are clearly displayed, with no fussy over-design, switches are close at hand and the seat is supportive.

All-round visibility is excellent, and you are well protected by the screen.

MasterCraft range, for their optimum performance and wake characteristics. This is a more recreational option.

If watersports are not your priority, this is not the type of craft you will rush out and buy, because you could get a lot more hull length and performance for the same money. However the MariStar is a very well-built boat, as capacious as you have any right to expect from a craft of this size, and it handles better than any conventionally driven sportsboat ever will.

Buyers will not be those whose interest is in passagemaking or pure speed, but those whose boating has a sociable base, possibly involving watersports, and who have an eye for quality. □

### Engineroom

A power-lift smoothly raises the entire sunlounger to open up the enginebay.

You can stow your fenders and warps in two cavernous carpeted storage areas flanking the installation, and the way the dividers are pushed tight to the engine to maximise this storage space makes access to the engine itself look cramped. But in fact day-to-day checks are fine, and the dividers can be removed if required for unhindered access.

You can get at the gearbox and fuel tank as well, and the whole installation is very well executed.



### Bathing platform



You have to crawl over the sunlounger to get to the bathing platform, a slatted teak design that is removable to save a few inches if you want to squeeze the boat into a large garage for winter storage.

Although not formally integrated into the hull, the platform fits neatly in with the MariStar's sleek lines, sitting just above the water level.

### Cockpit

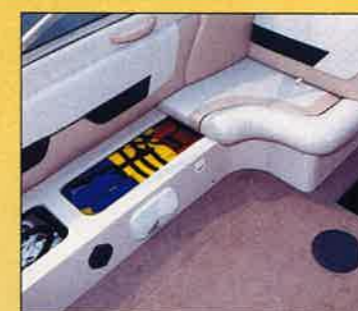
The wraparound settee offers seating capacity for up to seven, but still allows excellent access through the cockpit. There are grab-handles and cubby-holes aplenty.

The layout is very sociable. The forwardmost part of the settee being rear-facing, its occupant cannot help but act as the observer if there is a skier or boarder in tow.

Where there is a seat, there is a locker underneath, so stowage is excellent. Even more room has been found courtesy of a good-sized locker in the sole, under the walkway through to the bow, and the console area to port covers a void which is accessible from the bow seating or by raising the cockpit seat-back on its gas strut.

The starboard rear section of the seat hides a draining cooler compartment, while the centre section has a lift-out tray, both for convenience and for access to the gearbox.

Protruding from the front of the sunlounger is the boat's raison d'être, the ski pole. A swivelling nylon section minimises rope wear as the skier pulls from side to side.



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|---------------------|---|
| <b>BUILD</b>        | glass-reinforced plastic                      |
| <b>DIMENSIONS</b>   |   |
| <b>LOA</b>          | 24ft 0in (7.35m)                              |
| <b>HULL LENGTH</b>  | 22ft 6in (6.89m)<br>without bathing platform  |
| <b>BEAM</b>         | 8ft 2in (2.49m)                               |
| <b>DRAUGHT</b>      | 2ft 6in (0.76m)                               |
| <b>DISPLACEMENT</b> | 1.5 tonnes                                    |
| <b>ENGINE</b>       | Chevrolet 5.7L EFI petrol<br>308hp at 4700rpm |
| <b>PRICE</b>        | from £25,980 ex VAT                           |

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| <b>SUPPLIERS</b> | MasterCraft Boat Co UK,<br>Great North Road,<br>Knottingley, West Yorkshire<br>WF11 0BS<br>Tel: 01977 674635.  |
| <b>BUILDERS</b>  | MasterCraft Boat Co,<br>100 Cherokee Cove<br>Drive, Vonore, Tennessee<br>37885, USA.<br>Tel: (1) 423 884 2221. |