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GENESIS 335 Targa

Unbeknown to all but the prophets and pilgrims, Genesis has a history dating back more than 20 years. Though most people in Australia have never heard of it, across the Tasman the brand is as revered as Riviera is here in Australia.

Like Riviera, Genesis must be doing something right. Hull No.140 of its most popular sports cruiser model, the 320, has just hit the water. Buoyed by its success, the company is now ready to crack Australia's boating market. Headed by Kiwi ex-pat, Carl Kellett, Genesis expects to import at least 10 boats a year to its new Gold Coast base.

But while the company manufactures several models up to 40ft, the intention at this stage is to concentrate on its new 335.

Designated as a Euro Targa, this boat makes smart use of space to give you more for your money.

I first saw it at the Brisbane Boat Show this year, where I noted a large crowd of admirers peering over its coamings. As the chic boat was displayed out of the water, it presented a unique opportunity to inspect the hull shape. A relatively sharp entry and moderate deadrise should mean a dry and smooth riding boat.

I finally managed to pull Kellett away for a few minutes to arrange a time to prove these assumptions right.

Naturally, the test of this sports cruiser had to be done in style, so where better than Marina Mirage? All I lacked was the bleached-blond hair and gold jewellery. Seriously, though, this is a very classy boat that's right at home among the Gold Coast's luxury fleet. And with poise we cruised out of the marina and through the six-knot zone, turning plenty of bleached-blond heads as we went.

Once clear of the speed-restricted area, the throttles were eased forward and the Genesis leapt onto the plane. The twin Volvo sterndrives proved very responsive and gave an impressive turn of speed. Top speed was a tad over 30kts at 4200rpm, but about 33kts is expected once the engines are run in. After upsetting a few tinnies and nearly taking out a couple of surfers crossing the seaway, we pulled the revs back to about 3000 and pointed the bow east. At 22kts on the GPS, we got a very comfortable cruise speed into the 2m groundswell. Though the factory says the cruise speed is 26.5kts, which would be ideal for inshore waters, offshore I found 22kts was enough. Although there was little wind, the swell was sharp and packed close together. In these lumpy conditions, I was impressed by the smooth ride of the 335. Even head on to the sea, there was no bone-jarring impact and the spray was deflected admirably... In fact, not a single drop on the windscreen. Turning the boat down-sea and opening up the throttles saw the 335 perform

with distinction. A little bit of trim on the legs sat the bow up, with no inclination of an unexpected nosedive.

The power-assisted steering meant even the tightest of turns was a one-handed operation. However, I like to drive most boats standing up. But due to the low profile styling of the cabin, only jockeys and kids have room to do it on the 335. That said, the helm seating was extremely comfortable and, well, maybe I could get used to parking myself on the seat with the wheel in hand.

Low-speed maneuverability was good with the twin motors, so mooring should be free of both trouble and embarrassment.

At the moment, the Genesis is available with either single or twin sterndrive powerplants, but shafts might be a future option.

Superbly finished, the test boat was also feature packed.

Smooth, rounded edges were used on all surfaces, eliminating bruises at sea.

The best description of the layout I can give is clean and uncluttered, making maximum use of space.

Via the huge teak-laid swim platform, which has a retractable dive ladder cleverly concealed within, you step through a hinged transom door on either the port or starboard side and into the cockpit. Sensibly, this transom door can be locked closed when underway.

Located centrally, and incorporating the transom bulkhead, is an egg-shaped lifestyle centre. Lift the lid and you'll find a sink with hot and cold shower nozzle, and a sprocket (rodholder) which is the mount for, wait for it, a stainless barbecue. Storage for the barbecue and other items is provided via twin doors on the inboard side of the molding, which is right where you want it, near the boat's seating.

Meanwhile, under hatches in the teak cockpit deck, which are insulated to reduce noise, you'll find the engine compartment. Because they are fitted with sterndrives, the engines are a long way aft. This, of course, means plenty of space and easy access to their forward areas. However, side and rear engine access is tight on the 335.

Back at cockpit level, beneath the Targa, is the helm station and nearby entertainment area.

There is seating for at least seven people, including two behind the helm, where it is extremely comfortable. Only top-quality materials have been used for the upholstery.

Storage space is virtually endless, while amenities include a 12V cockpit fridge to keep the bebies cold.

Large sliding hatches are incorporated in the ceiling to allow plenty of natural light and fresh air to enter; while closed they keep you protected from the elements. The helm station is sleek and modern, with all gauges and electronics flush-mounted except for the compass.

Though an easy fix, the GPS plotter was mounted a little too far to port for my liking and I found it difficult to read when there was sunlight on the dash.

Directly to port from the helm station are the sliding door and companionway that provides access to the main cabin, where fine Kiwi craftsmanship creates a beautifully-appointed interior.

At the base of the stairs on the port side is a generous head with shower, electric-flush toilet, wash basin and cupboard space. Continuing along the port side is a compact but

versatile galley with three-burner gas cooktop, microwave oven, fridge, sink and ample drawers and cupboards.

Portholes provide natural light for daytime meal preparations, while dinners can be served at the L-shaped lounge opposite (though it hasn't a table).

In the bow is a large double berth with a foredeck hatch for ventilation and natural lighting. A curtain can be drawn if privacy is required. Television, cupboards, side pockets and courtesy lighting are all within reach of the berth.

At the aft end, recessed beneath the helm station, is another lounge area that can also be converted to a double berth by way of filler cushions.

The bulkhead on the starboard side houses the switch panels and fuses, as well as a serious sound system, which is a must on a serious sportscruiser.

Back outside, I noted all the deck hardware is top-quality stainless. What's more, handrails have been mounted where they are needed in a seaway making (on the whole) the 335 an easy boat to get around.

Something of a sleeping giant in the marine business, it's not surprising to see Genesis rewrite the good book on sportscruisers.

I don't know what's taken it so long to get here.

However, I do know the Genesis 335 won plenty of admiration when it strutted its stuff off the Gold Coast...

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