

Boat review: Genesis 44 Vcruise

Classical gas

TYPE: sedan launch

By Brian Hartz

Photos by Mike Hunter

As highly customised sedan launches with traditionally styled interiors become more en vogue, it was only a matter of time before a production boat builder jumped into the fray. Genesis Marine has jumped – but with the Vcruise 44, and IPS-powered beauty that debuted with much acclaim at the Auckland International Boat Show in March.

Genesis has been building open and targa sports cruisers since 1974 but hasn't shied away from new looks and technology: in 2005 its 400 Targa made news as the first boat in the southern hemisphere to be equipped with Volvo Penta's new IPS drive system; and in 2001 the company introduced a fully enclosable targa saloon model – only its fifth new design since 1974. This is a company that prizes the tried and true, so when it designs a new model or adopts a cutting-edge technology you know the outcome is going to be special.

And so it is with the 44 Vcruise, a three-cabin cruiser that looks the part on the outside but takes an altogether different tack inside, with dark teak and walnut woodwork creating a sense of classic maritime sophistication. The hull is aggressively shaped yet generously proportioned in all the right places, such as the acres of boarding platform and cockpit space, resulting in a look that helped sell three 44 Vcruises before the first boat was even in the water, say Carl Kellett and Chris Pollock of Genesis Marine, who accompanied *Boating* on our trial of their latest project. They say the 44 Vcruise heralds the arrival of a new model line that will take Genesis to its first 50ft boat. A sister range called Vsport will also be introduced in an effort to grow the company's line of open and targa sport cruisers into the 50ft size.

“What we've done is formulated this model range with the sliding door at the back and the galley option aft,” Pollock says, “whereas the Vsport is going to be the more traditional sport cruiser layout with the open, al fresco dining option. But these are additions, not replacements, to our range. The targa boats will remain in the thirty to forty-foot market. The Vcruise/Vsport will take us from forty to fifty feet. Toward the end of this year or early next year we'll have two fifty-footers coming out; this new model will be fifty-two ft overall.

“The Vcruise/Vsport ranges will work alongside each other, one with the al fresco outdoor entertaining area and one with all the creature comforts of home. Both will have the electric sliding sunroof and vertical windows, and electric-operated engine-room hatch hinged at the transom.”

Kellett and Pollock ordered up a gorgeous late summer day that couldn't have been any better for zipping around the Hauraki Gulf in a sports cruiser. We met them at

Auckland's new Orakei Marina and stepped aboard a 44 Vcruise that had already been sold and completely fitted out and furnished for its new owner.

Kellett flipped a switch at the helm station to tilt the cockpit sole aft and reveal the boat's engine room and twin IPS 500 (370hp) drives – an impressive package indeed, as we would later discover. The engine room offers above average space and headroom, even for an aft installation, and unlike some similar models it keeps a starboard walkway free in the cockpit to allow passengers to get on or off the boat while the engine room hatch is up.

Even though the Vsport range will put the focus on outdoor dining and entertainment, I was somewhat disappointed by the 44 Vcruise's cockpit and thought its generous amount of space could have been put to better use. It offers only modest seating – a two-person bench settee at the transom – and no real centre of interest, although the portable saloon table can be moved into the cockpit and Pollock says additional aftermarket seating is an option. Other cockpit extras include a drinks fridge and icemaker unit and a fixed dinette table.

The boarding platform, as mentioned above, is a triumph and, thanks to its size, fulfils some of the cockpit's missing functions. It's fishing friendly, with a removable bait board and rod holders, and the large transom-mounted stainless steel barbecue will be an ideal place to cook on those beautiful days when you can't be bothered to toil in the galley. Other transom features are a sink, freshwater shower and plentiful locker storage.

The side decks are easy to mount thanks to teak steps built into the coamings. Width isn't an issue with the side decks but the rails might be too low and stylish for their own good – or passengers' safety. The foredeck, once reached, impresses with its devotion to European styling and intended use, ie sunbathing, with 12 – count 'em, 12 – drink holders for that foredeck party you've always wanted to host. The integrated sun pads weren't fitted during our trial, but that revealed the foredeck surface to be smooth, level and free of unnecessary deck fittings and hardware to trip over – good news for barefooted sun worshipers.

Overall, the boat's hull shape and hardtop combine to create a pleasing, well-balanced profile. The arrangement of the hardtop's windows is different, to be sure, with a small, inverted triangle-shaped pane set above and slightly aft of the main side window. I thought this design element makes the superstructure appear out of sync from the rest of the hardtop, but others might appreciate the extra vision, curvature and variety it adds.

INTERIOR

A curved, noise-dampening, sliding glass door separates the saloon and cockpit, but on fine days the Vcruise's aft-opening window can further enhance flow between the two areas. The aft galley is positioned to serve these two main living spaces and is well appointed with a convection oven, four-burner stove, a sink and draining board, eight drawers and cabinets and an overhead storage locker specifically for cups and dishware. The deep fridge/freezer is built into the aft port corner of the black avonite countertop.

The saloon's main attraction is the 1.5m electrically operated sunroof that spans the boat's beam. Fully retracted, it allows sun and warmth to flood the saloon in addition to performing the more practical function of improving standing helm visibility.

The ultra leather-upholstered seating offers variety and comfort, with two bench settees on opposite sides and elevated breakfast nook in the forward port corner. A walnut drinks cabinet is placed between the portside settee and nook. I like the idea of an elevated casual dining area in the saloon; however, the drinks cabinet and the nook's table restrict access to this area, although the table can swing back and to starboard to alleviate this concern.

Without a doubt the saloon offers a high-quality finish and an outstanding set of standard features, but the layout is too understated for my taste. And with the Majestic 15in flat-screen TV and CD/DVD player relegated to the top aft starboard corner of the saloon, there's no focal point, although most would agree, the huge sliding sunroof, when open, will certainly be the attraction in this saloon. The TV swings out and swivels for easier viewing to most parts of the saloon, but passengers will still have to tilt their gaze upward instead of watching the tube at eye level. It seems to be a layout geared toward purists, which is fine, and good on Genesis for offering a different take on how a mid-40ft cruiser should be set up.

The accommodation, however, is an inarguable success. The three cabins and two heads – one an ensuite to the master cabin – are magnificently appointed and beautifully crafted, with luxurious tan, silver and gold Italian soft furnishings by Besenzoni and the same glistening dark walnut found in the saloon. The port cabin is fitted with two single bunks while the starboard has a double bed, providing maximum versatility for family cruising. Storage and lighting are excellent in both guest cabins, especially the starboard, which has four mid-size lockers and one hanging locker. The heads are built to an equal standard, and their toilets have heavy duty covers to allow passengers to be seated while showering.

The master cabin has a Majestic flat-screen TV for some quiet entertainment at the end of the day, plus a convenient power point for small appliances. Two large lockers, one with a hanger bar, and six smaller lockers offer plentiful storage, and more space is available under the island berth if needed. LED lighting is used throughout the boat to reduce power consumption, and underwater fibre-optic lights create a stylish multicoloured glow around the hull.

PERFORMANCE

The 44 Vcruise we trialed was equipped with twin Volvo Penta IPS 500 drives that allow total docking control, via a joystick, when leaving or entering a marina. In joystick mode the engines can generate up to 1500rpm – plenty of power for quickly correcting handling miscues. IPS has been a good fit for Genesis: Kellett and Pollock estimate the company has sold between 10 and 12 IPS-powered boats since the technology debuted in 2005.

The helm set-up is excellent; it has a raised, high-backed, swivelling pedestal chair that practically begs you to imitate Captain Kirk as you gaze out over the ample array of Raymarine electronics. The helm seat is at the same height as the breakfast nook so the skipper won't have to keep looking down and/or back to consult with his or her navigator or lookout. All controls are within easy reach of the helmsman, especially the throttle and IPS controls.

The 44 Vcruise's IPS drives match their agility with power, easily blasting the hull out of the hole and onto the plane with little effort. On our way from Orakei Marina to Islington Bay – between Rangitoto and Motutapu islands, northeast of Auckland – the boat cruised nicely at 25 knots and 2700rpm, using about 83 litres of diesel per hour in a moderately choppy sea. The planing strakes lift the hull well clear of the water and direct wave action sideways to ensure a clean and dry ride. Accelerating to 30 knots at 3000rpm had little effect on the ride quality.

Turning was sharp and responsive at a variety of speeds, with maximum tracking and minimal heel. The hull responded well to the Volvo QL trim tabs although it didn't need much on the fine day of our trial. We didn't exceed 35 knots during the trial, but Kellett and Pollock say the 44 Vcruise's top speed, as equipped, is 39 knots. Based on the hull's strong and efficient performance, I believe them.

“We tend to think of this as a driver's boat,” Pollock says. “It's more sport-oriented than, say, a Riviera, but it's a little more conventional than our targa range, which has a softer, more modern feel. We try to carry that theme throughout the whole boat to differentiate it from the targas, and that gives us the variety our customers have been asking for.”

Based on our experience aboard the 44 Vcruise, all Genesis customers – past, present and future – should be more than satisfied. But they should also be excited about the company's willingness to experiment, adapt and put its unique interpretation on trends in the boating market.

SPECIFICATIONS:

BOAT

Model 44 Vcruise

Designer Genesis Marine

Builder Genesis Marine

construction GRP/foam core composite

loa 44ft, 13.4m

boa 13ft 6in, 4.1 m

draught 3ft 3in, 1.0m

deadrise aft 17.5 degrees
disp 10.5 tons
horsepower range IPS 500
engine options Volvo, Cummins
max speed 39.5 knots
fuel capacity 1000L
cruising range 400nm
price as tested \$750,000.00
packages from \$682,000.00

ENGINE

make Volvo Penta
type IPS 500
horsepower 370
cylinders Six
max rpm 3500/3600 rpm
propeller Volvo G3

boat package supplied by: Ray and Raewyn Guilford and Genesis Marine

other suppliers include: CMS Stainless: Stainless steel; Volpower: IPS500 engines, trim tabs, engine controls and fly-by-wire steering; Alphontron: Vetron inverter; Bep Marine: switchboard; Lighthouse Marine Equipment: trim tabs and toilets; Lusty & Blundell: Raymarine electronics, VHF radio, searchlight, radar, windscreen wipers, instruments and gauges; Maxwell Marine: winch; Manson: anchor; Waterware: showers; Serada Marine: washdown, stovetop and refrigeration; Southern Concepts: countertops; So-Pac Marine: barbecue; Kitchen N Things: microwave; Ocean Air Refrigeration: freezer; RFD Aquapro: dinghy; Majestic: TV, video and stereo; Wormald: fire extinguishers; GM Interiors: upholstery; Gibson Veneer: cabinet work and timber; Akzo Nobel: paint