



HYDROSTREAM

Venus XT / Johnson 200 GT

Quite possibly the quickest cuddy on the water

It is most difficult to retain a distinctive identity, at least where the manufacture of products is concerned. Take a look at the automotive industry, and, yeah, even the boatbuilding industry, and you can

quickly see that, when a hot styling trend is discovered to be successful, it doesn't take long for others to copy and try for a piece of the action. It takes a very special company, or individual, so continually buck the trends and offer

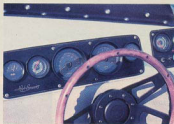
distinctively different products. There is usually a nice niche for this kind of innovation, however, and if quality is a big part of the distinction, success and acceptance naturally follow.

HydroStream is just such a company, it seems. A quick look at all the boats available today show HydroStream to be the maverick, offering a very distinctively styled line of boats. During my tenure in this business, I've observed people's reactions to the HydroStream line of boats and they always seem to fall into either a love or hate category.





Sleek and unusual styling has been a HydroStream trademark. Multi-color gelcoats enhance the appearance.



Wood-grain steering wheel and simple, but complete, instrument panel with easy-to-read OMC analog gauges.

Never any shades of gray.

It is not quite enough that HydroStream boats are unusual to look at, but they also have a good reputation for high speed. The combination of unique styling and hot performance can be most enticing to the fellow looking to add a Ferrari-like distinction to his boating. Indeed, the ones we've tried over the years have been exciting, and the far-out cuddy shown here is no exception.

The Venus XT is built on the HydroStream air-entrapment hull that works so well on the Vegas XT skiboat model (TBM June 1986). The hull configuration really defies description, except to say that it has a twin-tunnel shape, similar to the kind used in MGD-VP racing classes. We were very impressed with the Vegas model in the earlier Trial Run and its ability to go very fast, and to do so controllably and with little effort. The hull also works well at supporting

the extra weight of the cuddy model, though there are some expected differences in the cuddy's performance. Still, the Venus delivers respectable top speeds—I think 75 mph can be considered respectable for a 20-foot cuddy-cabin boat—and we can reiterate what we said in the earlier Trial Run on the Vegas XT to apply to the Venus: "This (boat) just downright handled beautifully in all circumstances. It was very easy to get going to speeds approaching 80 mph and to do so without having to spend time dialing in the trim and fighting the wheel."

To achieve a cuddy configuration on the XT hull, portions of the topsides were elevated from just behind the cockpit seating position forward. To keep a distinct HydroStream flair, however, the foredeck treatment takes an extreme nosedive toward the bow to form a sharp, narrow bow section. The profile is unusual, to say the least, but

attractive in its own way. The highest portion of the foredeck is relatively flat and surrounded by a rail, but a big deck hatch leading to the cabin intrudes on the space. I suppose a pad could be fabricated to allow the area to

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HYDROSTREAM VENUS XT

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|---------------------------|----------------------|
| List price* (w/16 engine) | \$8900 |
| Length | 20' 0" |
| Beam | 7' 5" |
| Engine | Johnson 200 GT |
| Fuel capacity | 20 gal. |

Manufacturer:

HydroStream
Dept. TBM
2211 West County Rd. D
New Brighton, MN 55112

* List price effective at time of writing and does not reflect freight, discounts, options, etc.

be utilized as a sunlounge, as the brochure indicates.

The cabin is fairly roomy in a cozy sense and would be comfortable for overnighting or taking a nap. It provides the daycruising basics, appreciated amenities for those wanting something more than an open skiboat.

A pair of body-hugging buckets and an aft couch provide cockpit seating for the cuddy. Our trial boat had an unusually low chair height, which hampered visibility in some instances, at least for a short driver, but a company spokesman assured us that the seat height was not normal, having been shortened for an especially tall driver. The helm area is simple and straightforward, with minimal instrumentation. Medallion gauges—tach, speedo, voltmeter, fuel indicator—are mounted in an acrylic panel directly in front of the driver. An OMC temperature instrument is also included in the panel. A second panel to the right of the dash face houses an OMC trim instrument and a VDO gauge that indicates the height of the engine. This particular

engine installation incorporates a Power Lift hydro/electric transom jack that allows the outboard to be raised and lowered from the helm.

The cockpit is appointed simply, but is nicely finished with good upholstery, short-pile carpeting and smooth gelcoat surfaces. HydroStream uses more teak than we would have expected, but some boating tastes appreciate its warmth and ignore its upkeep. A short taffrail, step plates and other teak accents are included. A forward-sloping venturi windscreen is mounted just ahead of the driver and companion seats; it actually works well at keeping a lot of the wind at bay. At 70-plus mph, however, the only effective wind protection is a full-face helmet.

The Johnson outboard installation is neat and tidy, with dual-cable steering to handle the torque. Steering effort was light and positive without an undue amount of torque feedback to the wheel, even with the engine trimmed up and raised to the higher levels. A transom jack is a nice thing to have for a boat like this that will doubtless see double-duty as a speedboat and skiboat. Raising the engine reduces drag and allows exotic props to be used. Lowering the

HYDROSTREAM *Continued*

engine allows the kind of good, low-end pull that skiers appreciate. Such a system allows the driver to really "dial in" optimum performance effortlessly.

Though I personally prefer the Vegas XT model over this cuddy, mostly because of its trimmer profile, I can understand the attraction of the Venus for those wanting some playpen space on a performance boat. It would also provide quite a distinction for some proud owner to know that few boats on the lake would be able to touch this cuddy when it comes time to "show 'em what ya got."—*Jim Youngs* ▶