

EMERATI MAGIC: VOODOO 27

AWAY FROM THE CHILLY SOUTHAMPTON WATERS, IT MADE A CHANGE TO CRUISE THE WATERS OFF ABU DHABI, AN IDEAL TEST GROUND FOR TRYING OUT A NEWCOMER IN EARLY DECEMBER.

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The newcomer in question is the Voodoo 27 from Emocean, a new Abu Dhabi based company that has entered the highly competitive world of sportsboat manufacture. However, under the leadership of Hamad Bachi, Emocean has taken a rather different approach to many of its rivals, by designing and building something very original. Emocean has recruited the services of American design company Raymond Hunt Associates to create a craft that will succeed in the European and Middle East market place. Furthermore, Hamad also invited Alberto Nencha to join the board of Emocean as Chief Operations Manager. Alberto boasts a reputation steeped in high performance powerboats having spent the last four years in the employment of powerboat legend Fabio Buzzi. During his period with FB Design, Nencha oversaw the production of the company's pleasure, race and military craft, collecting more than 20 world championship titles and breaking numerous endurance world

records. Prior to his involvement with Buzzi, he enjoyed a long and illustrious career as a Major in the Guardia Di Finanza Maritime section. (Marine Police).

Has Emocean got it right? The Voodoo 27 is certainly different, a cross between a Bowrider and open sportsboat. From inside it looks like it has the square front of a Dory, i.e. Boston Whaler, but the hull is a true Deep V. The test boat is the prototype and the production model will have the minor modifications that are required to make the Voodoo 27 a very desirable mode of transport. The modifications will include making the small 'stepping stone' between the cockpit and bathing platform, a step as opposed to a slippery slope. The other addition that will be appreciated is a foot rest for the driver and I'm told that will be on the production model.

What does a Voodoo 27 consist of and how does it perform? Emocean make two models, the Mercruiser 496 powered version we got our hands on, and an outboard version that should have



been available, but was still being finished.

The hull of this hi-performer can best be compared with a 'barn door' only not so heavy. It is constructed of GRP with a honeycomb core which results in a thickness of around 3 cm. To acquire a deep cockpit, the deck superstructure makes up a proportion of the topsides only this is of lighter moulding specification.

On entering the Voodoo from the stern, a full width boarding platform complete with stainless steel foldaway boarding ladder greets guests before stepping into the aforementioned slope (soon to be replaced with step) to reach the cockpit. The aft area is both spacious and comfortable while the centre rear seat, complete with upholstery, can be raised to reach the Mercruiser. Above the cockpit is a fixed GRP sun roof with a foldaway Bimini that protects rear seat passengers. The sun roof is held in place by a very substantial stainless steel framework that also provides more than enough handholds. This stainless pipe work is used extensively throughout, and is the base of the forward cockpit seating. I enquired as to the ease of removing the sunroof frame

for shipping and was assured the production model would have different fixing enabling easier removal.

Two pods, one either side accommodates to port, a shutter door for entry into the toilet - washroom that boasts full standing headroom. This feature is essential for extended family days out and it is both light and roomy. To starboard is the skipper's domain with full instrumentation, and everything is ideally placed apart from the need for a foot rest as this omission has already been addressed. Both pilot and co-pilot have a sumptuous seat each that has a stand-up or sit down option. A small windscreen in front of the skipper appears more for appearance than protection.

Plus between the pods and into the very well laid out forward cockpit that can seat at least six in style, and with the front of the pods upholstered, there are two very inviting sun beds. Under the floor in the forward cockpit is a vast storage area and throughout the Voodoo there is adequate storage space. The anchor is not visible from the cockpit and is raised by an electric winch that hauls it into its own enclosure.

The interior of the craft has been well thought out and although the builders do not imply that Voodoo is a weekender, there is a washing facility and cool box in the front of the port pod, accessible by pulling open a cushion covered door.

After the guided tour around Voodoo it was time to see if it performed as well as it looks. She was moored at the Emirate Boat Show in a marina berth, so there was no need to try out the bow thruster, a luxury I still think is a bit over the top on a boat of this size.

After firing up the Mercruiser, it was out into one of Abu Dhabi's many estuaries (Abu Dhabi is made up of many islands) which are used by pleasure and commercial craft, and the latter moor up at nearby docks.

The Voodoo was quickly on the plane, and as there are no speed limits in these waters, 45 mph was quickly showing on the speedo. The steering is very responsive, and the hull sticks firmly in the water taking turns at 35 mph as the craft banks safely, but steeply. Backing off the throttle to 30 mph and this speed is possibly the most comfortable and economical, although users in the UAE are not usually concerned about fuel prices.

I could not fault both the performance and handling of the Voodoo, although perhaps it would have been more thorough if we could have found some rough water, but 10 miles out into the Gulf could not guarantee the testing conditions we wanted. Crossing its own wash at speed did not produce any unusual quirks, and with the input of Raymond Hunt and Alberto Nencha, I'm sure the Voodoo will handle all conditions with relative ease.

As I said earlier, the Voodoo is aimed at a European and Middle East market although the craft will find more favour in sunnier climes, but its price should appeal to those looking for a family carrying high performance day boat as the price tag is \$55,000 complete ex. works. We do not have the price of the outboard model as various engine options will make a considerable difference, and even the craft we tried is offered with a bigger engine.

An interesting footnote is that Hamad Bachi, who started his career as the importer of Fiat Cars into the UAE before going into Advertising, also owns a waterfront 5 star restaurant on the Al Raha Beach development. Unlike Dubai, which has seen many of



VOODOO 27

SPECIFICATION	Holding tank: 10 gal (40 L)
Overall length w/ std. integral swim platform: 27' 8" (8.475 m)	STANDARD POWER
Beam: 9' 18" (2.799 m)	MerCruiser 496 Magnum Bravo III DTS (375 hp - 280 kW)
DRAFT	Mercury Marine Verado (200 hp - 149 kW) x2
W. sterndrive down: 36" (91.44 cm)	OPTIONAL POWER
W. sterndrive up: 21" (53.34 cm)	MerCruiser 496 Magnum HO Bravo III DTS (425 hp - 317 kW)
Dry weight: 5,180 lbs (2,350 kg)	Mercury Marine Verado (250 hp - 186 kW) x2
Fuel capacity: 100 gal (380 L)	
Water capacity: 21 gal (80 L)	

its developments put on hold, Abu Dhabi is steaming ahead on full power and Al Raha Beach will be magnificent when completed. An inland waterway has been created with residences overlooking the beach and waterway together with marinas, hotels and restaurants.