

Buccaneer 440 Esprite XL

Total FaceLift

THE BUCCANEER 440 HAS BEEN AROUND FOR OVER 20 YEARS, BUT IT'S TAKEN UNTIL NOW TO GET A TOTAL FACELIFT. BARRY THOMPSON CHECKS OUT BUCCANEER BOATS' SMALLEST MODEL AND FINDS A BOAT THAT RUNS AS GOOD AS IT LOOKS.

If you had been looking at the Buccaneer website in recent years you wouldn't find the 440 listed. It's not that the model had been discontinued, it's just the focus has been on other models and the 440 had been semi-mothballed awaiting a revamp. If you really wanted one Buccaneer Pleasure Craft Ltd would build one for you, although in recent years it's mostly been for the export market, namely Noumea that have taken the bulk of 440s.

It was through the persistence of a local client who wanted a 440 or nothing, that the revamp actually happened. Interestingly, when the customer received his 440 Esprite XL he had no idea he was getting the first of the revamped models, a bonus that he was obviously more than happy with.

"It was long overdue and something that we had always planned to do, but other things got in the way and it just never happened....until now", says Wade Gerrand, sales manager of Buccaneer Pleasure Craft Ltd.

"Since we launched the first boat in late 2012, we have had huge interest and I can see this once again being a big seller for us over the next few years".

Main Changes

While the hull of the previous 440 Esprite has been retained, it's an all-new deck and inner liner. Gone are the hard edges in favour of a more flowing form that follows on from the design trends of all the latest models in the Buccaneer range.

The windscreen for example is on the same footprint but it's a newly shaped extrusion with curved screens and a wide opening centre section. This lets you lean forward to the deep anchor locker, although it's a bit of a stretch to the fairlead to set your anchor warp. There is space for a small capstan to make the anchoring chores a little less strenuous. The 440 Esprite also now has a moulded bowsprit, which is slightly proud of the foredeck to give the appearance of a separate moulding. It makes a nice break from the curved deckline.

The 440 Esprite also has a totally new dash which has been borrowed from the 530 Esprite and modified to fit. There is provision for the common two main instruments and a few ancillary switches and things, or in the case of our test boat, it came with a Garmin 551S which is interfaced with the Suzuki outboard. This means you can do away with instruments altogether and simply use the one screen for everything from speed and fuel, to temperature and battery voltage. Oh yes, it is also a fishfinder and plotter. On the port side of the front dash there is a generous recess for items such as sunnies, keys and cellphones, plus the builders have purposefully moulded a flat section to flush mount a small fishfinder, should you be more traditional and like to have separate instruments. Another option would be a Fusion 600 with iPod connection, coupled to a pair of waterproof cockpit speakers.

Seating in the 440 is back-to-back on bin bases, which were derived from those in the 470 and 530. Storage is accessed under both fore and aft squabs and it's a great place



ANCHORING IS DONE FROM THE COCKPIT AND YOU HAVE THE OPTION OF A SMALL CAPSTAN TO HELP.



ABOVE: THE NEW 440 ESPRITE IS A VERY PRETTY BOAT ON THE WATER.

LEFT: THE COCKPIT IS TRADITIONAL WITH BACK TO BACK SEATS. LOW COAMINGS MEAN IT'S NOT FAR TO PULL THE FISH ABOARD.

to stow the lifejackets until required. The transom has been totally reshaped, with two internal moulded jump seats, twin integral boarding platforms and overall a much smoother look with soft edges.

Prop Choice

Being a new boat, there was some guesswork as to the correct propeller combination, albeit only between two props, a 15" or 16" three-blade alloy. Suzuki's Mark Presnall came along to make sure we were running the right prop to achieve the best fuel and performance data. Our first run was done with the 16" and we recorded a maximum speed of 36.5mph @ 6150 rpm. When we swapped to the 15", the speed increased by

only 1mph but we hit the rev limiter @ 6400 rpm. The difference in acceleration between the two was negligible and fuel consumption remained reasonably consistent for both, right through the range. At WOT both props stopped the fuel meter at 21L/h.

Remembering that the Buccaneer 440 Esprite XL is a small boat, in fact it's the smallest in the Buccaneer range, I wasn't looking for a rough water test and in fact if it had been blowing the usual midweek gale on Auckland Harbour we would have stayed on the trailer and gone to Swashbucklers for lunch.

It's not really a boat designed for heavy weather, although while we had only a short chop on Auckland Harbour, I was



TOP: YOU DON'T NEED A LOT OF HORSEPOWER TO MAKE THE 440 PERFORM.

BELOW LEFT: THE AREA UNDER THE TRANSOM HAS UPSTANDS FOR TWO TOTE TANKS AND THE BATTERY BOX.

BELOW RIGHT: ROD RACKS ARE STANDARD ON THE PORT SIDE.

surprised at how soft the boat rode. It trims well and is nimble to helm commands, tracks like it's on rails and acceleration throughout the rpm range was good for both propeller choices. It's also a damn nice looking boat on the water, both underway and at rest.

Recommended power options are outboards 30hp – 60hp, although boat number #1 was delivered to its Rotorua owner with a 70hp 4-stroke. In our case we had a Suzuki 60 DFATL, set up by Tauranga-based Suzuki/Buccaneer dealer Karl Rastrick of Master Tech Marine.

Engineered to deliver fuel-efficient operation in a compact and lightweight design, the DF60A utilises many of the advancements that Suzuki has pioneered over the last decade. This three-cylinder engine with a four-valve DOHC design is

combined with Suzuki's Lean Burn Control System and also sports the optional Suzuki Troll Mode System.

With the 4-stroke 60hp on the transom, our total rig, complete with trailer, came in under \$NZ30,000. If you wanted to save a few bucks then a 2-stroke 40hp would be a nice combination and see you on the water for close to \$NZ25,000. No big top-end speed but certainly still enough power to tow the kids on a wake board, skis, tubes or wave ski.

Improving with Age

One of the changes in the new 440 Esprite XL is the way the boat is put together.

While the previous 440 was in some ways ahead of its time for a boat of this size, with an inner liner that went halfway up





LEFT: NEW SCREEN, NEW FOREDECK AND A WHOLE NEW SOFT STYLE.

BELOW: THE BACK TO BACK SEATS HAVE PLENTY OF STORAGE.

the cockpit sides to form the bases of foam filled side tanks, the new 440 now has a full inner liner.

Of special interest is the new one-piece grid system that is adhesively bonded with Plexus to the hull and cockpit liner to form an incredibly rigid and strong unit. This also increases the flotation capabilities of the hull with large air pockets trapped beneath the cockpit sole. Buccaneer claims that the 440 now exceeds the CPC flotation standards, but that's yet to be proven.

The liner is totally new from the raised parcel shelf under the foredeck through to the moulded seat bases and tote tank up-stands. There is enough height under the rear seats for the largest of the 22-25 litre tote tanks, with a battery box in the centre that is also easy to get at should you need to remove it. If you are happy with a single tote tank for a day's boating then the opposite side will handle a reasonably good size chilly/esky bin.

The inner liner also forms the bases of the side trays, which have soft panel fronts and rod racks on the port side. The cockpit is finished in moulded anti skid and deck tread and there is the option of false teak or carpet.

There's no underfloor tank option, but then it's hardly necessary in a boat this size, with twin tote tanks more than capable of providing enough fuel for the day.

Overall, the new Buccaneer 440 Esprite has been long overdue and I am sure it's destined to follow the same success of its predecessor both on the local market and overseas. **PPB**



Buccaneer 440 Esprite XL

Model:	Buccaneer 440 Esprite XL	Notable Options on Test Boat	Performance					
Price Boat Only:	\$NZ14195	Garmin 551S Sounder/plotter	RPM	MPH	Knots	L/h	L/NM	
Priced from:	\$NZ25000		800	2.5	2.2	0.5	0.23	
Price as tested:	\$29000		1000	3.5	3.0	0.9	0.30	
Type:	Runabout	Engine	1500	4.5	3.9	1.5	0.38	
Construction:	GRP	Make:	2000	6.0	5.2	2.2	0.42	
LOA:	4.53m	Power:	2500	7.0	6.1	3.7	0.61	
LOH:	4.35m	Model:	3000	9.5	8.3	5.3	0.64	
Beam:	1.86m	Cylinder Config.:	3500	14	12.2	6.4	0.53	
Deadrise:	19 deg	Displacement:	4000	19.5	16.9	7.3	0.43	
Height on trailer:	1.62m	Max rpm:	4500	23	20.0	9.6	0.48	
Trailerable weight:	740 kgs	Propeller:	5000	28	24.3	14.1	0.58	
Power:	30-60hp		5500	32	27.8	15.8	0.57	
Power options:	Outboard Only	Trailer	6150	36.5	31.7	21.1	0.67	
Fuel capacity:	Tote Tanks	Make:						
Notable Standard Items on Test Boat		Braked:						
Underfloor grid construction, seating, walk through screen.		Suspension:						
		Rollers:						
		Retail Price:						

Speeds in MPH are rounded off to the nearest 1/2 mph.
Range based on a 25 litre tote tank with 10% reserve.

Manufacturer: Buccaneer Pleasure Craft Ltd, Ph +64 7 849 76129, E: jenny@buccaneer.co.nz www.buccaneer.co.nz
Boat Supplied by: Buccaneer Pleasure Craft Ltd.