

More for less





Improved performance and superior styling generally adds up to a higher price-tag for the new boat buyer. But Buccaneer have bucked that trend with their second generation 530 Esprite XL.

Photos by Mike Hunter



Sleek styling and sweeping lines are instantly recognisable as Buccaneer.

Whenever you can make improvements to an already-popular boat, and cut the cost in the process, you're onto a winner.

That's what Buccaneer have achieved with their 530 Esprite XL – a clearly superior second generation boat with a price-tag \$2500 cheaper than the model it succeeds.

Buccaneer runabouts have long been regarded as some of the most eye-catching trailer boats on New Zealand's waters; the smooth styling and sweeping lines are instantly recognisable. The re-modelled 530 Esprite – powered by a 130hp Yamaha saltwater series, two-stroke outboard – holds true to that pedigree, with Buccaneer DNA running strongly in this latest offering.

The broad blue colour band on the topsides and the distinctive ivory white deck are finished to a high level gloss; it makes for a striking first impression, sitting on its single axle, DMW Premium Series galvanised trailer, complete with alloy wheels.

Soon we were off in a moderate but building easterly, headed for the calmer reaches of the upper Waitemata Harbour with a couple of young blokes who were keen to test the rig's towing abilities with wakeboards and skis.

What's new with the G2?

While the hull and deck are unchanged from the previous model of the same name, scratch under the surface and the changes are many and varied.

The 530 joins the rest of the Buccaneer range in adopting the latest manufacturing technology, most obviously its full fibreglass internal liner.

Every exposed internal surface is now



The moulded liner extends to every portion of the new 530, including the anchor locker. Underfloor stowage is generous and the compact dash is functional enough.





a smooth, curved and radiused gelcoat finish. This makes an instant impact on the eye, not to mention the fact the interior is going to be a lot easier to keep clean and in good condition. The liner even extends under the skirt at the transom into the battery and oil reservoir area.

Between the liner and outer hull are the changes that help lift the new 530 Esprite XL to another level. Foam, injected into this void, provides a couple of massive benefits, firstly by improving passenger safety by way of positive buoyancy in event of swamping. Secondly, it makes for a marked decrease in ride noise; wave slap and hull

drumming is virtually eliminated. The difference between a soft ride and a soft ride with low noise levels is hard to appreciate until you experience it. In fact, it took

me a while to pinpoint this as a major contributor to the overall feel of the ride.

Another change that adds to the performance is the 'advanced composite stringer technology' now common to all Buccaneer models. It adds stiffness to the structure that wood cannot provide. In fact, the only wood in these boats is marine ply in the transom, boarding steps and along the stringers and centre floor. Buccaneer's Wade Gerrard says this will increase the structure's reliability and lifespan.

The more cosmetic changes include a stowage tray with a vertical face, designed to house the latest sound systems, providing space for i-Pods, MP3 players and phones etc. Re-designed, back-to-back seats increase cockpit room and between them is a full-length, under floor, fully lined compartment.

Standard equipment & stowage

A 90-litre alloy fuel tank sits dead-centre of

PERFORMANCE

RPM	MPH
1500	7
2500	10
3000	14
3500	20
4000	28
4500	32
5000	37
5500	41
6000	45
6200	47

We had a couple of young blokes along who wanted to test the 530's towing abilities.





the under floor area, in the optimal position to effect trim, particularly 'out of the hole'. It has been shifted forward slightly compared to the previous model. Fore and aft are drained stowage areas for bulky objects such as dive cylinders.

Fibreglass, non-skid foot rests for both driver and passenger sit just behind a large storage area in the bows. A curved half bulkhead prevents gear migrating south into the cockpit area while underway. There is also ample stowage for lifejackets and safety equipment under the squabs of the back-to-back seats. Water skis, fishing rods and other long items can be stowed in side-pockets, along with the standard equipment light pole. Rod racks are standard.

A shallow anchor locker is accessed through the centre-opening, wrap-around screen. A functional-looking bowsprit and roller fairlead completes the set-up.

The back-to-back seats are plush, upholstered in two-tone marine vinyl in a neutral colour scheme, with marine carpeted floors. Built into the transom are small boarding platforms, one of which is mounted with a stainless steel telescopic boarding ladder. The removable stainless ski pole is a standard item, as is a pair of rod holders.

Performance

Ergonomically, the seating position is easily one of the best I have used. Under hard throttle and in tight turns, the heavily upholstered seats lock you in securely. All-round visibility through the curved screen is excellent. Wheel and engine controls fall to hand comfortably. Yamaha digital gauges are easily read in the faux burl walnut-look dash panel.

The boat tracks impeccably in hard turns without a hint of breaking out or cavitation.



The Yamaha 130hp Saltwater series was ample to launch our skiers and wake boarders onto the plane with minimal effort.

A 17-inch prop had the engine at the rev limited maximum of 6200rpm, trimmed out at full throttle. There was no sign of chine walk or unpredictability. Noise levels are pleasantly low; normal conversation was possible even at wide-open throttle.

When low speed manoeuvring, the flexibility is there to fully stand or perch on top of the back rests and operate the boat.

The all-stainless Steerflex non-feedback cable steering is light and responsive at any trim setting. Propeller torque was almost non-existent.

Boating's verdict

The big winner with this boat is the end-user. Smart use of the latest manufacturing technology has enabled the price to come down, and put a better boat in the hands of buyers.

As Wade Gerrand commented: "The brief was to manufacture the boat cheaper, but our dealers and customers are amazed at how much better the boat is."

Anyone in the market for a family-friendly runabout with superior styling and performance should have the Buccaneer 530 Sprite XL on their shortlist. ■