



AIR - B O R N E

On any summer's day, trailer boats towing water toys loaded with laughing, screaming children are a familiar sight. They're part of the boating landscape, and most families enjoy towing the kids around on sea biscuits, water skis, or other water toys at least occasionally. It's a popular pastime.



review

Saronic SEVEN

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Pretty much any powerboat can tow a biscuit or a skier, from PWCs and runabouts to planing launches, but dedicated tow sport vessels built specifically for wakeboarding, wake-surfing, wake-foiling, and competitive waterskiing make up a very small subset of powerboats in New Zealand. Of those, none of them cheap, the majority are imported from the USA or Australia, reflecting their specialised nature. So, I was surprised to learn of a local company that designs and builds wake boats that compete with the best of the imports and, certainly in the case of the Saronic SEVEN, can more than match them in performance and specification.

Matcraft Industries in Hamilton, headed up by charismatic

boatbuilder and wakeboard enthusiast Mat Bailey, manufactures Saronic boats, CAD-designed, CNC-cut, and built specifically for tow sport duties at the highest level, including competition.

The SEVEN is the latest model, and at 6.8 metres, it's Saronic's biggest so far, weighing in at 3400kg on a custom, electrically braked Enduro trailer. It's a testament to Bailey, who, even in 1998 as an apprentice boatbuilder with Gerry Gerrand at Buccaneer Boats, had the ambition to one day build world-class wakeboard boats here in New Zealand.

To achieve his goal, he adopted the philosophy that only the best will do. Mat went out on his own in 2007, with boats of his own design, honed by countless hours of testing, and constructed using the best materials. He combines this with



industry-best, globally recognised wake systems and powertrains along with top-quality bolt-on components and accessories, all offering comprehensive warranties. Saronic boats are built not to a price, but rather to meet Bailey's own very high standards.

The new SEVEN is the culmination of Bailey's efforts to date, and this boat is Mat's own, used as a demonstrator and family fun boat. On the strength of it, he has already taken orders for two more SEVENs, which each retail starting at \$259,000. So, while the market for such boats in New Zealand may be relatively small, there is clearly real demand.

I must admit that this style of boat lies outside my experience. I have reviewed a couple of specialist tow sports boats while writing for *Boating NZ*, but without really spending much time enjoying the 'lifestyle' that goes with owning one. I do know, however, that the lifestyle is popular and that enthusiasts are willing to pay for it. And while many wake riders are young, I was interested to learn from Mat that the owners of boats like the SEVEN are considerably older, given their price.

I was also surprised to learn that, while the Saronic SEVEN is sought after as a competition wakeboard boat, most owners are more interested in fun days on the water with family and friends. Able to accommodate 12 people, it's the type of boat where you can comfortably spend all day on the lake, enjoying a range of water sports activities, socialising, and taking in the scenery.

That's pretty much what we did on Lake Karapiro, and the SEVEN, this one

it's easy to understand why there's now
a waiting list for the SEVEN.





ABOVE All of the boat's systems are optimised for wake sports.

LEFT The Indmar Raptor is purpose-built for the task; Comfort in the bow too.

RIGHT Mat can surf too.



an attractive Desert Storm colour, is certainly a comfortable place to spend time in. The interior is luxuriously trimmed with custom upholstery to Mat's own design, crafted by Casey at DR Trim in Morrinsville. Seats wrap right around the cockpit, which offers the security of plenty of freeboard and undercut gunwales with concealed LED lighting that greatly accentuate the feeling of spaciousness inside. At the rear, the seat slides forward on tracks, and a padded backrest unfolds to provide a comfortable aft-facing bench seat for two observers. There's more comfy seating in the bow, which can be closed off by a door and a folding section of the windscreen, and more drink holders, too, complementing those in the cockpit (10, no less).

The stern area has more padded surfaces embossed with Saronic's hexagonal motif, found gracing the upholstery throughout the vessel. Under them are a couple of huge storage lockers on either side of the engine compartment. Indeed, there's storage everywhere – for long items and watersports equipment under the seats and in underfloor lockers, dry storage for clothing, chilly bins, bags, and more – all the gear you could possibly want for a full day on the water.

Surfboards and wakeboards can be stowed in the racks on the tower, with extra boards sliding into pockets sewn into the canvas Bimini top. The large tower-hung speaker pods

are hard to miss and impossible to ignore when the volume is cranked up, something that very much goes with wakeboarding territory! The head unit is protected inside the glovebox, which also has USB charging and divisions to separate keys, wallets and other objects.

The tower itself, a top-quality unit manufactured specifically for the SEVEN by Roswell Marine in the USA, folds down to aid garaging. It's the primary tow point for wakeboarders and surfers, with a secondary pop-up tow point aft amidships on the transom for water toys and skiers. The full-width swim platform and pullout boarding ladder make entering and exiting the water easy.

A feature of dedicated wake boats like the SEVEN is the ducted heaters in the cockpit. When turned on, they blow hot air into the cockpit at foot level (proper board control is difficult with cold feet), and they pull out so you can direct the hot air anywhere you need it, including up your clothing.

Some of the seats are heated, too, including the swivelling bucket helm seat and the passenger's lounge on the port side, which has a lift-up backrest so the occupant can comfortably face aft and observe the action. Fit and finish is superb, and all the angles and corners, including the Saronic motifs, are 15, 30 or 45°. Colour-coordinated Ultralon closed-cell flooring is





ABOVE Set up for tow sports and comfortable enough for a full day on the water.

RIGHT There is a ton of storage onboard.



used throughout for comfort and style, and many of the custom components are 3D printed in-house.

Every aspect of this boat is tailored to not only enjoying time on the water, but also providing a top-quality tow sports experience, whether for beginners or seasoned pros. Speaking of pros, Jared Dawson (JD), a regular on the podium, President of Wake NZ, and Mat's workshop manager, demonstrated just how well the wake works by executing some truly awe-inspiring jumps and cuts for our cameras.

The SEVEN carries up to 1600kg of water ballast in large bladders, one on each side of the boat and another in the bow, to create and shape a world-class wake. The wake can be biased on the port or starboard side to suit left- or right-footed riders. Ballast bladders are filled and emptied at the push of a button by powerful pumps; push another button and surf tabs on the transom deploy to provide an amazing surf wave – wake surfing is another discipline JD and Mat also ably demonstrated.

The inboard power unit is an Indmar Raptor 400 with closed-loop cooling via a heat exchanger and a V-drive turning a matching 16 x 14-inch four-blade OJ Wake Pro propeller. The spade rudder, also bronze, is manufactured locally.

Displacing 6.2 litres and outputting 363hp at the prop, the Raptor 400 is the smallest engine in Indmar's range – Bailey offers bigger displacement units as well – but it provides ample power. A stern thruster, operated with buttons on the digital

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throttle and shift lever, make manoeuvring at low speed much easier and more precise.

Access to the engine and other systems is good via an electrically raised transom hatch under the vast transom sun lounger. The house battery lives under the port-side seat, and there's a drop-in cockpit table stowed under the starboard seat.

The digital tech onboard is a marvel. The MFD on the dashboard displays a huge range of information, from engine data, navigation, and performance to camera feeds (an aft-facing stern camera monitors riders in the wake, complementing the massive rearview mirror), music and entertainment, as well as current operational profiles and presets. Clever software allows the wake profile and preferred boat speed to be set up and saved for individual riders, and for making adjustments on the fly. Snappier hole shots are achieved by Indmar's Launch Assist system, which utilises the surf tabs to control bow lift and shorten the time taken to plane.

Ballast empty is also the mode to use when cruising from place to place, which can be achieved quickly and comfortably enough, though the after sections of the hull bottom

are almost flat, so it's not ultimately well suited to rough seas.

Boats of this type don't usually list good fuel economy amongst their desirable attributes, but the Saronic SEVEN's 240-litre underfloor fuel tank provides a full day of recreational boating and more. Even in competition situations with five people aboard, the boat uses less than a tank full of fuel, says Bailey. Not bad for this style of boat where, while towing people around with a belly full of water and pushing a large wake, you'd expect to spend a bit of money on fuel anyway.

Matcraft Industries is riding a wave of success all of its own making – its Saronic range leads the field when it comes to Kiwi-built wakeboard and surf machines. The new Saronic SEVEN is impeccably built, beautifully detailed, packed with tech, and delivers the sort of specific performance serious enthusiasts crave. Couple all that with a level of luxury unmatched by New Zealand manufacturers of similar craft, and it's easy to understand why there's now a waiting list for the SEVEN. Based on the strength of our introduction to the boat on Lake Karapiro, the wait will be worth it. **BNZ**



Saronic SEVEN

BASE PACKAGE
\$259,000

PRICE AS REVIEWED
\$POA

MANUFACTURED BY
Matcraft Industries
www.saronicboats.co.nz

HIGHLIGHTS

Totally dedicated to wake sports, with no compromises

Impeccable build quality, great attention to detail, striking looks

Equally at home on the competition circuit or the lake having fun with family and friends

SPECIFICATIONS

loa 7m
beam 2.5m
draft 0.6m
construction GRP
engine Indmar Raptor 400, 363hp
transmission V-drive, 16 x 14in OJ propeller
dry weight 24500kg
weight on trailer 3400kg
fuel capacity 240 litres
passengers 12 persons
cruise speed Presets available
max speed N/A



ABOVE Ballast-empty is the way to travel from place to place.