

# ROCK STAR

The solid, smooth-riding 28 SCS sport cat is the latest addition to Howard's lineup of stellar river runners.

**W**hen it comes to performance-boat construction, silence speaks volumes. That means when the water gets rough, the boat itself doesn't get loud. Sure, you should hear some engine noise and the sound of the hull moving through the water. But neither should get lost in the cacophony of rattles, creaks and groans that may often come from a boat that really isn't put together well.

So impressive was that quality—call it the absence of unwanted noise—in the open-bow 28 SCS from Howard Custom Boats that it was the first thing *Powerboat* test drivers Bob Teague and John Tomlinson commented on after testing the sporty catamaran. Like every Howard product we've tested, the 28-foot catamaran was rock-solid, and in the choppy water of the Colorado River, that translated to smooth and quiet.

That our test boat was the first model out of the molds—the cat was finished last summer—made it even more impressive. For those who want a pure river hot rod, the 28 SCS also is offered in a closed-deck version. Both are close cousins of Howard's 28-foot Sport Deck.

## PERFORMANCE

As previously noted, *Powerboat* test drivers Teague and Tomlinson had the same initial comment after testing: In terms of sounds made by the boat itself as it ran through the water, the 28 SCS was the "quietest" model they had tested in years. Both attributed that to the boat's superior construction.

"And you know, this is the first one they've made, hull No. 1," Teague said. "With the first model, as much as you design and plan, there are always things you have to work out and modify as you go. These guys didn't miss anything. You'd think they'd been building it for years."

"The boat is just so quiet that it makes it feel even more solid than it is—and it's really solid," Tomlinson added. "It went



Utilizing a modified version of the bottom design from its award-winning 28 Sport Deck, Howard Custom Boats introduced the 28 SCS sport catamaran last summer. The new model is available in open-bow and closed-deck versions, both of which include a wraparound windshield, a sizable swim platform and plush interior features.

right through all the chop with no noise whatsoever."

Of course, while silence speaks volumes, it isn't everything. Our drivers also agreed that the 28 SCS displayed superior handling manners. In particular, the catamaran's tracking and stability was flawless at any speed, even at the top-end.

"It's probably one of the best-handling, if not the best-handling, sport cats on the market," Teague said.

With a single, reliable Mercury Racing HP600SCi engine—not a model we've seen a lot of lately—under the hatch, the 28 SCS also proved plenty respectable in the speed and acceleration departments. With the engine turning 5,350 rpm, the boat topped out a 91.1 mph. At a less-wound-up, cruise-all-day 4,500 rpm, it hummed along at 75 mph. Reaching that speed from a standing start took 20 seconds and change. Time to plane was 4.9 seconds.

Consistent in the midrange, the cat ran from 30 to 50 mph in 5.2 seconds, from 40 to 60 mph in 6.2 seconds and from 40 to 70 mph in 9.7 seconds.

Both of our drivers appreciated the extra space Howard left across the wraparound dash panel in the 28 SCS for additional gauges. But they also found the gauges and horizontal trim indicator to be a little too spread out to view at a quick glance.

## WORKMANSHIP

The 28 SCS was constructed with vinylester resin and Knytex bi- and tri-directional fiberglass. The hull and deck were cored with Baltec balsa and Diab foam. The hull and deck of the boat, which feature a full inner liner, were bonded together with Plexus adhesive. To reduce weight while adding strength, the builder used vacuum-bagged, balsa-cored Decolite panels instead of plywood. »

**What We Liked:** The sounds of silence, at least from the well-constructed 28-foot sport catamaran. They breed confidence in the builder and the product.

**What We'd Like to See:** As much as we appreciated all of the dash space, grouping the gauges a little closer together would make them easier to read at a glance.



From left: Equipped with an open bow, the 28-foot sport catamaran from Howard included a pair of embracing lounges. The boat's wraparound dash panel to starboard featured carbon-fiber-face Livorsi Marine gauges above the IMCO Marine tilt helm. For passenger seating in the 28 SCS, the builder installed a four-person rear bench.

## TEST RESULTS

### TEST CONDITIONS

Temperature/humidity	60 degrees/15 percent
Wind speed/water conditions	10 to 15 mph/1' chop

### HULL INFORMATION

Deadrise at transom	22 degrees
Centerline/beam	28'6" / 8'6"
Hull weight	4,800 pounds

### PRICING INFORMATION

Base retail with Mercruiser 8.2 Mag HO engine	\$129,950
Price as tested	\$179,335

### ENGINE & PROPELLER

Engine	Mercury Racing HP600Sci
Cylinder type	V-8
Cubic-inch displacement/horsepower	502/600
Lower-unit gear ratio	1.5:1
Propeller	Mercury Bravo One 15 1/4" x 32"

### OPTIONS ON TEST BOAT

Upgrade to Mercury Racing HP600Sci engine (\$28,650), front and rear capped hull (\$7,000), Mercury Racing ITS option (\$4,200), open bow (\$2,995), stereo system (\$2,000), mechanical trim indicator (\$1,295), custom removable billet ski pole (\$1,250), front/rear washdown shower (\$795), Gibson Performance mufflers (\$500), AquaStep ladder (\$350), depthfinder (\$300) and four-slot fender storage box (\$400).

### ACCELERATION

5 seconds.....	.29 mph
10 seconds.....	.49 mph
15 seconds.....	.68 mph
20 seconds.....	.74 mph

### MIDRANGE ACCELERATION

30-50 mph.....	5.2 seconds
40-60 mph.....	6.2 seconds
40-70 mph.....	9.7 seconds

### RPM VS. MPH

1000.....	.6 mph
1500.....	.8 mph
2000.....	.23 mph
2500.....	.28 mph
3000.....	.42 mph
3500.....	.54 mph
4000.....	.66 mph
4500.....	.75 mph
5000.....	.86 mph

### TOP SPEED AT RPM

Stalker Radar.....	91.1 mph at 5,350
Livorsi Marine GPS.....	.90 mph

### PLANING

Time to plane.....	4.9 seconds
Minimum planing speed.....	.20 mph

### FUEL ECONOMY

40 mph.....	NA
-------------	----

### FUEL CAPACITY

80 gallons	
------------	--

### TEST LOCATION (ELEVATION)

Lake Havasu City, Ariz. (480 feet)

### MANUFACTURER

Howard Custom Boats, Dept. PB, 25544 Avenue Stanford, Valencia, CA 91355, 661-257-9275, [www.howardboats.com](http://www.howardboats.com).

FOR MORE PHOTOS VISIT [WWW.POWERBOATMAG.COM](http://WWW.POWERBOATMAG.COM)



Execution of the boat's gelcoat graphics and mold work could not have been finer. Colors included red, gray and white, and the builder brought those colors into the boat's French-stitched upholstery.

To help customize the 28-footer, the crew at Howard went the extra mile to cap the hull at the bow and stern. Although it cost an additional \$7,000, the upgrade from the full rubrail look was quite apparent.

Aside from the rubrail, retractable cleats and full wraparound windshield with race-style fasteners and billet supports, the builder kept hardware to a minimum on the catamaran.

Two screw jacks opened the engine hatch, which was molded on the underside and polished to a bright white finish. To circulate air and cool the engine compartment, the hatch was designed with "hidden" vents on each side. As for the installation of the engine, it was handled with race mounts on through-bolted L-angles. Stainless-steel cushion clamps secured all the thoughtfully organized wiring and hoses.

The space in the engine compartment was such that the 600-hp big-block didn't occupy all that much of it. So Howard built a four-fender holding box on the port side.

### INTERIOR

With seating for seven, the Howard 28 SCS provided more than ample passenger space. While the four-person rear bench was just fine, our favorite seats were the two embracing, forward-facing lounges in the open bow and the two solid bucket seats in the cockpit.

All of the seats, which were constructed by Lake Elsinore, Calif.-based Premier

Marine Interiors, shared the same level of firm, but not overly so, padding that comes in handy in rough water. Other related niceties included excellent gunwale padding, especially in the bow area that incorporated padded recesses with cupholders, and plush snap-in carpet.

As noted earlier, the gauges—Livorsi Marine carbon-fiber-face models in silver rims—were distributed widely across the helm station dash. Accessory switches were to the left of the steering wheel, which was mounted on a tilt helm.

A Livorsi throttle and shifter were mounted in a molded extension from the gunwale near the driver's right leg. Molded angled footrests were provided for the driver and co-pilot. The port console also had a locking glove box in the dash.

Storage options were everywhere. They included two in-sole lockers and spaces behind acrylic doors in the driver and co-pilot pods. (A removable cooler was provided in each of those spaces.) There also were small lockers under several of the seat cushions.

Although you can exit the 28 SCS from the bow or the stern, the sizable rear swim platform is the best place to get in and out of the water, thanks to a pull-down ladder.

### OVERALL

With its V-bottom and catamaran lines, Howard has an outstanding series of one-two punches in its arsenal. The open-bow version of the new 28 SCS sport cat we tested is yet another example of the company's commitment to creating products that are not just rock star performers, but that are built rock-solid. **PB**