

Howard 26 Cat



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Show Stopper

At rest or in motion, Howard's 26 Cat is a thing of beauty.

On a perfect test day when running photography goes off without a hitch and we power through workmanship and interior inspections, we usually don't begin performance evaluations until 11 a.m. Even in the abbreviated format we've developed for our annual Speed Roundup, which is not nearly as extensive as our annual Performance Trials, the process takes time.

That's only worth mentioning because a series of test-day delays forced us to push performance runs of the Howard 26 Cat on the Colorado River into the midafternoon. By then, the air temperature was a power-draining—even for the boat's 1,000-hp Teague Custom Marine engine—96 degrees Fahrenheit and the water was a sheet of sticky glass. Not exactly ideal conditions for wringing out the last mph from a 26' catamaran.

Plus, the 26 Cat had a full fuel tank. It also had a BMax Poker Run drive, well-known for its durability, but it reportedly takes more power to spin than a stock or upgraded Bravo One XR drive. (Then again, efficiency isn't worth much in a drive if it destroys itself under load.)

The point? Without understanding these variables, you could see the 26 Cat's top speed of 114.1 mph on radar and 116 mph on GPS as a bit slow for the boat-and-engine package. And that wouldn't be fair because under

ideal conditions we believe it could reach 120 mph. Even the boat's strong standing-start acceleration speed of 97.4 mph in 20 seconds likely would have improved.

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Precise gelcoat graphics and unblemished mold work made the handlaid 26 Cat a pleasure to look at—it simply was a pretty boat, one of the most aesthetically pleasing models at the docks. To match the cat's color scheme, the builder even installed a red anodized rubrail, which also matched its custom interior hardware from Dana Marine Products.

A four-person bench and two bucket seats comprised the seating in the cockpit, which had Berber carpet installed over the sole. There were gunwale trays for stowage, as well as lockers under bottom cushions for the bench seat.

Angled footrests were supplied for the co-pilot and driver. The well-equipped co-pilot's station to port also featured a gunwale-mounted Sony Xplode stereo system. A locking glove box, a grab handle and a flip-up windscreen were mounted on the dash.

Another flip-up windscreen was mounted atop the dash at the helm. Pewter-rim gauges came from Livorsi Marine, and were mounted in angled pewter bezels.

Quality was everywhere—and obvious—in the 26 Cat from Howard. And it's unconditional. ●

Clockwise from far left: A staple of the West Coast custom scene, Howard Custom Boats hand-laid its 26 Cat. At the helm, the Livorsi Marine gauges were set in angled pewter bezels. In the cockpit, the builder included stowage under the carpeted sole, in the gunwale trays and under the bottom cushions for the bench seat. Power was courtesy of a Teague Custom Marine 1,000-hp motor.