



POWERBOAT TEST

Focus 33

SHARP FOCUS

Steyr Motors Australia has installed a couple of its beautifully engineered diesels into this smart looking compact cruiser from Europe.

STORY AND PHOTOS **John Ford**

When the Elan Power 30 was introduced in 2013, it won its class in the European Boat of the Year and became a popular cruiser in worldwide charter fleets.

Pretty, athletic lines from prolific British yacht designer Tony Castro wowed the judges, and the twin Volvo power units generated performance to match the looks.

The name 'Power 30' differentiated the sportscruiser from Elan's sailing yachts.

In early 2018, Elan went on to sell its powerboat division to Dutch company Focus Motor Yachts, who although based in Amsterdam, continued production in the same Obrovac factory in Croatia where they had always been built.

The 30 gave way to the Focus 33 and extended its winning ways with a redesign of the hull windows and hardtop for a more modern appeal.

The 33 is the smallest of a range that now includes a 36, 44 and the flagship 50.

AUSSIE ANGLE

Meanwhile back in Australia, Rob McIntyre from Queensland-based McIntyre Equipment had been looking for a boat to showcase his brands which include Steyr engines and a big range of specialist marine products. The Focus fit



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Unlike its European cousin, the local Focus 33 has an Australian engine management system; A deep-vee hull facilitates offshore cruising; Sporty twin cabin boats are few and far between in this size range for Aussie buyers

“The sharply raked entry and slight flare are more performance-driven than most similar-sized European rivals.”



the bill for an entry-level cruiser missing from the Australian scene since the demise of popular models as the Sunrunner and Mustang that disappeared during the GFC.

The sweet lines of the Focus offered an alternative to the current range of competitors in Rob's mind, which he says are often boxy-looking and built without the deep-vee hull needed for offshore cruising. He felt the time was right to reintroduce this sporty and versatile style of cruiser, but upgraded with modern economic diesel power plants.

Rob forged a deal with Focus to supply hulls to Australia where they were fitted with

Steyrs and a new locally-developed engine management system.

European versions come standard with twin 220 horsepower Volvo Penta sterndrives, so the 260 horsepower Steyr installation promises higher performance, with a 280 horsepower version on offer for true rev heads.

Introducing the boat here could be a masterstroke because sporty thirty-footers with twin cabins and a good size lower deck saloon are thin on the ground.

And what a combination of sources – a Dutch parent company, Croatian built boat, designed by a Portuguese-born Brit with Austrian engines and breakthrough Australian engine management.

Highs

Sharp looking and well finished
Punchy, predictable performance
and precise handling
Well-designed with a roomy
saloon and two cabins

Lows

Second cabin is a bit of a squeeze
Some back spray into cabin at
slower speeds



Smooth running

Did you know Steyr is considered one of Austria's most beautiful towns and includes the Christkindl Church among its many historic buildings?

The city is home to Steyr Motors, with a history going back more than a century and a reputation in Europe for superbly engineered diesel engines.

The company produces 12,000 units a year, many destined for military vehicles where reliability can be a matter of life and death.

And unlike many manufacturers, these engines are explicitly developed for marine use, not modified from an automotive base.

Since 1997, the company has been represented in Australia, initially by McIntyre Equipment, which morphed into Steyr Motors Australia in 2010, and now has more than 30 dealers across the country.

Claiming to have one of the best power-to-weight ratios around, plus the most compact design, the range uses high-pressure two-stage fuel injection

that eliminates smoke and diesel knock. Its monoblock engine construction sets it apart. Both head and block are formed together in high-grade cast iron, meaning there is no head gasket to cause problems.

The crankshaft is mated to the head/cylinder casting, then fixed to an alloy engine casing through rubber seals that reduce vibration and help deliver the brand's smooth-running reputation.

In the Focus 33, propulsion is delivered through a Mercruiser Bravo by the company's arrangement with Mercury Marine and runs 26-inch pitch duo-props.

The SE266S36 is from Steyr's six-cylinder marine range and uses an electronically variable geometry turbocharger with efficient fuel delivery from an electric pump and up to 2000bar fuel pressure created from its mechanical unit injectors.

Among other benefits, variable geometry delivers a more powerful fuel-air mix for improved torque at low engine revs.

BULLETPROOF BUILDER

Elan built its reputation on crafting bulletproof sailing boats, and took pride in traditional methods of construction.

Focus continues this proven approach and proudly claims the entire boat is hand-built, including cutting woven fibreglass mats from individual templates with scissors for a precise fit and a targeted weight/strength ratio.

In what could be considered a slight on much of the American boating industry, Focus claim its manual-layup is better than vacuum-infusion because it gives better control over bubbles forming and allows for a visual inspection of the process to help mitigate structural delamination.

Whatever you think of that, there's no doubting they take things seriously when it comes to build quality.

They further claim their International Marine Certification Institute oversight is more rigorous than the usual EC directive 94/25.

Targeted as a coastal cruiser, the boat has Design Category B for offshore use.

As with any compact boat aiming to optimise interior space, there are compromises in the hull shape to balance maximum cabin volume against a seaworthy hull.

The sharply raked entry and slight flare are more performance-driven than most similar-sized European rivals.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Central twin helm; The sharply-raked hull shows an emphasis on performance; Spacious teak swim platform with grab handles



“It’s a worthwhile trip to the bow for the wide and thoughtfully-contoured sunpad that offers a secluded refuge to soak in the sunshine.”

To aid drive and performance, four planing strakes meet moderate reverse chines that run back to flatter profiles at the transom.

A 1.25-metre swimplatform takes the length to 10.23 metres, leaving the hull at 9.9 metres (32’6”), so it’s easily handled but with a surprising amount of usable interior space.

As well as being forgiving underfoot, the platform’s teak covering adds an authentic nautical style that is becoming less common in production boats.

A neatly concealed slide-out swimladder has grab handles built into the platform, and you get a deck shower with hot and cold water to wash out after a swim.

A central walkway with stainless steel and glass gate leads into the cockpit, and the teak flooring flows through and forward to the helm.

Access forward is via steps up to the side deck moulded into the transom.

Lockers built into these steps make a handy place for storing mooring lines and small fenders, while grab rails in convenient locations and a high side rail keep you safe.

It’s a worthwhile trip to the bow for the wide and thoughtfully-contoured sunpad that offers a secluded refuge to soak in the sunshine.

AFT DECK LIVING

Back at the cockpit, light grey waterproof lounges wrap around for up to seven adults and a versatile timber table is handy for a few drinks, or folds out wide for a feast.

Drop the table to form a large lounge, protected from the weather by an awning that extends over the whole area. A small galley to

port has a moulded sink, an 80-litre Dometic fridge and a two-burner gas cooktop where you might prepare a quick breakfast or snacks.

I noted storage under the seats and a hatch for access to the two starter and two house batteries as well as to fuel cut-offs and a switch for an engine room fire extinguisher.

Lifting the floor section on hydraulic rams accesses engines.

Red and silver covers give the Steyrs a neat and modern look, and while space is tight, it’s still easy enough to check fluid levels and inspect strainers and filters.

Systems are well labelled, and sound insulation proved very effective.

Further forward, a twin helm seat positions the skipper in the centre of the boat behind an impressive modern dash with black carbon and



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Moulded stairs lead from the swim platform to bow-access walkways; The sheltered cockpit offers versatile entertaining options; The engine room is a little tight, but servicable nonetheless; The hull manages a good amount of internal space for its size

leather surrounds. The two-stage dash slopes away from the skipper, allowing excellent visibility of all controls and screens.

At the top is a 12-inch Motec digital array that is similar to those in many Australian V8 Supercars and was jointly developed by Steyr Motors Australia and Motec.

This system centralises all engine information across two screen options and is dimmable to a red glow at night.

Two panels of well-marked switches control accessories, a Quick bow thruster simplifies manoeuvring at dockside and Uflex trim tabs smooth the ride, while navigation is handled by a 12-inch Simrad GO12.





“The saloon and accommodation are surprisingly roomy given the boat’s size.”

LOWER DECK

A sliding glass door leads downstairs. The saloon and accommodation are surprisingly roomy given the boat’s size.

Here you find a relaxing space and a second galley leading off to forward, plus central cabins and a compact ensuite

Skylights and side ports keep the area bright and airy, and oak timber joinery fits nicely with cream upholstery and a white moulded ceiling.

To port is a four-seater lounge and a folding timber table, while this larger galley has a two-burner gas cooktop, bench space, a sink and 45-litre Waco fridge.

The master cabin in the bow features an island bed set at an angle to maximise its size and allow access from both sides.

The light oak panelling continues here, and the

fibreglass hull shape is covered with a soft lining for a more mellow impression.

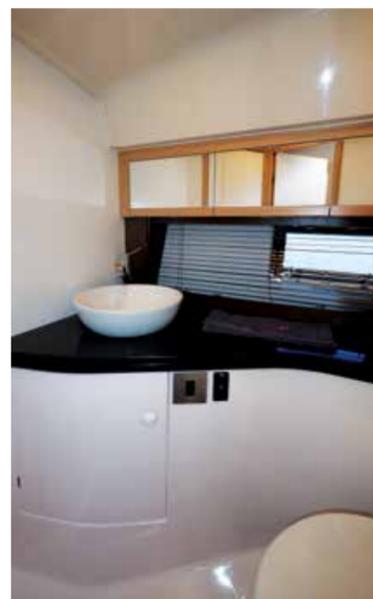
A door here gives private access to the ensuite with its black Corian benchtop and floating china bowl, and there’s a second door for guest access.

With limited space available, this combination shower and head makes sense and leaves room to move for either activity.

Aft of the saloon and tucked in under the helm is a second cabin with double bed laid out across the hull.

Standing room at the head of the bed is generous, and cupboards store spare clothes and personal items, but the low ceiling over the foot of the bed seems a touch confined until you get used to the layout.

Still, it’s a smart approach to design and adds a very usable private guest cabin.



TOP Oak panelling in the bright master suite
ABOVE Black Corian ensuite benchtop



Sea Trials

Focus 33, twin Steyr 260hp engines.
Three people, calm conditions, 300L fuel

RPM	SPEED (kts)	ECONOMY (L/h)	RANGE (nm)
640	5	3	750
1000	7	7.8	403
1400	9	16.2	250
1800	11	32.8	150
2000	13	40	146
2400	21	50	189
2800	27.5	63	196
3000	30.8	70	198
3400	36.9	82	202
3600 (WOT)	37	110	151

*Sea-trial data supplied by the author. Range calculated leaving 10% in reserve.
Fuel consumption is for both engines combined





THE DRIVE

The central driving position gives a commanding view forward and to the side through the wrap-around windows.

But for all-round vision, simply slide back the canvas sunroof and stick your head out into the breeze, while standing on a removable timber platform.

The soft leather-clad steering wheel adjusts to various positions and the smooth-touch Glendinning engine controls are well placed on an extended binnacle to starboard of the wheel.

In standard form, the 33 should have a top speed of 33 knots with the 220 horsepower Volvos.

Rob promised more from the Steyrs, which was something to look forward to as I set the throttles ahead in the quiet reaches of the Broadwater on the Gold Coast.

Holeshot was brisk and without undue lift upfront as we got underway with the legs trimmed down.

Once planing, the boat felt responsive and sporty at the wheel and with cruising speeds in the mid-20s around 2,600rpm; range should be around 195 nautical miles with 10 per cent reserve.

Facts & Figures
FOCUS 33

PRICED FROM
\$458,332

PRICE AS TESTED
\$529,000

GENERAL

MATERIAL GRP
TYPE Monohull Sports Cruiser
LENGTH 10.23m (LOA)
BEAM 3.47m
WEIGHT 5800kg (dry)

CAPACITIES

PEOPLE 4 (night) 8 (day)
FUEL 500L
WATER 140L

ENGINE

MAKE/MODEL Steyr Motors SE266S36
TYPE In-line, six-cylinder fuel injected diesel
RATED HP 258hp (190kw)
DISPLACEMENT 3200cc
WEIGHT 340kg
GEAR RATIO 1.81:1
PROPELLER 26-inch P Bravo 3

MANUFACTURED BY
Focus Motor Yachts Croatia

SUPPLIED BY

McIntyre Equipment
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Stafford Qld 4053
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CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The hand-built hull rides smoothly; John Ford caught resting on the job, stretched out in the guest cabin; The helm features a sporty layout; Back on the job, John puts the plush helm chair to good use



“Once planing, the boat felt responsive and sporty at the wheel”

Range is almost linear at 180 nautical miles from 2,400-3,200rpm where the engine sounds grunty and happy, and the hull rests back on its rear quarters for efficient running.

Wide-open throttles saw the GPS clocking 37 knots, so the performance is there for quick blasts, but most owners would settle for anything between 16 and 28 knots for happy cruising.

Offshore handling was smooth and predictable in the 1.5-metre sea, and the hull kicked up very little water as it broke through the waves.

Range from the 500-litre tanks is reasonable, so passagemaking between ports would be enjoyable and safe in such conditions and I could easily see owners coastal-hopping in the right weather conditions.

THE WRAP

Pricing starts from \$458,332. As tested, it's \$529,000 loaded with options like the wider rear swimplatform, teak decks, bowthruster, Simrad electronics, Motec display and Uflex trim tabs.

I think the time is right for the Focus 33.

A lot of couples will be attracted to the classic sporty style and the impressive amenity of twin cabins and a sheltered saloon.

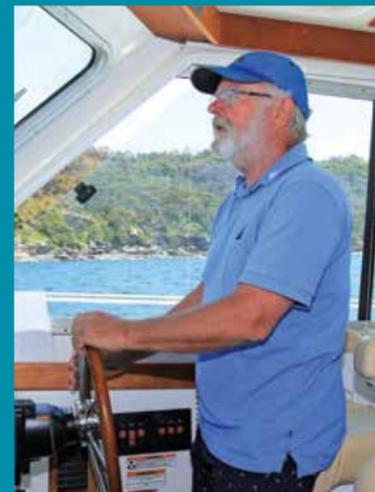
The idea of taking in the sunshine during the day from the decks is appealing but so is settling down of an evening in the private saloon when things cool down.

When you add in the bulletproof reliability and athletic performance of those Steyr diesels, this package becomes even more appealing. [3](#)



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE If the helm seat doesn't appeal you can wind the sunroof back, pull out the wooden platform and stick your head out the top; The new engine management system is simple and easy to decipher; The Focus 33 is a perfect cruiser for Aussie couples.

About the author



JOHN FORD

John Ford's background as a photographer saw him start with Trade-a-Boat in the days when the Packer family held the reins, making him one of our longest-serving contributors.

He initially shot boats for other journalists, but graduated to writing reviews when editors realised he knew more about boats than he was letting on.

His boating experience grew out a love of fishing on the South Coast of NSW, and he has owned many trailer boats over the years – he's currently running a 2001 six-metre Seafarer Victory.

He is on the committee of the Merimbula Fishing Club, and his recent catches include the boating of a 128 kilogram striped marlin.

As well as motorboats, he and wife Heather have owned a 30-foot sailing yacht, and for a long time, he campaigned a six-metre two-man Flying Dutchman dinghy, competing at Australian championships with moderate success (in his own words, he didn't sink or run into anyone).

John also writes extensively for caravan and travel magazines, spending much of each year on the backroads searching for photographs and stories.

With more than 500 photoshoots and reviews behind him, John quickly gets a feel for what a boat is all about.

And with his sharp eye for detail can give the reader a feel for what it would be like to live with, whether it be a 3-metre inflatable or a luxury 80-foot cruiser.