

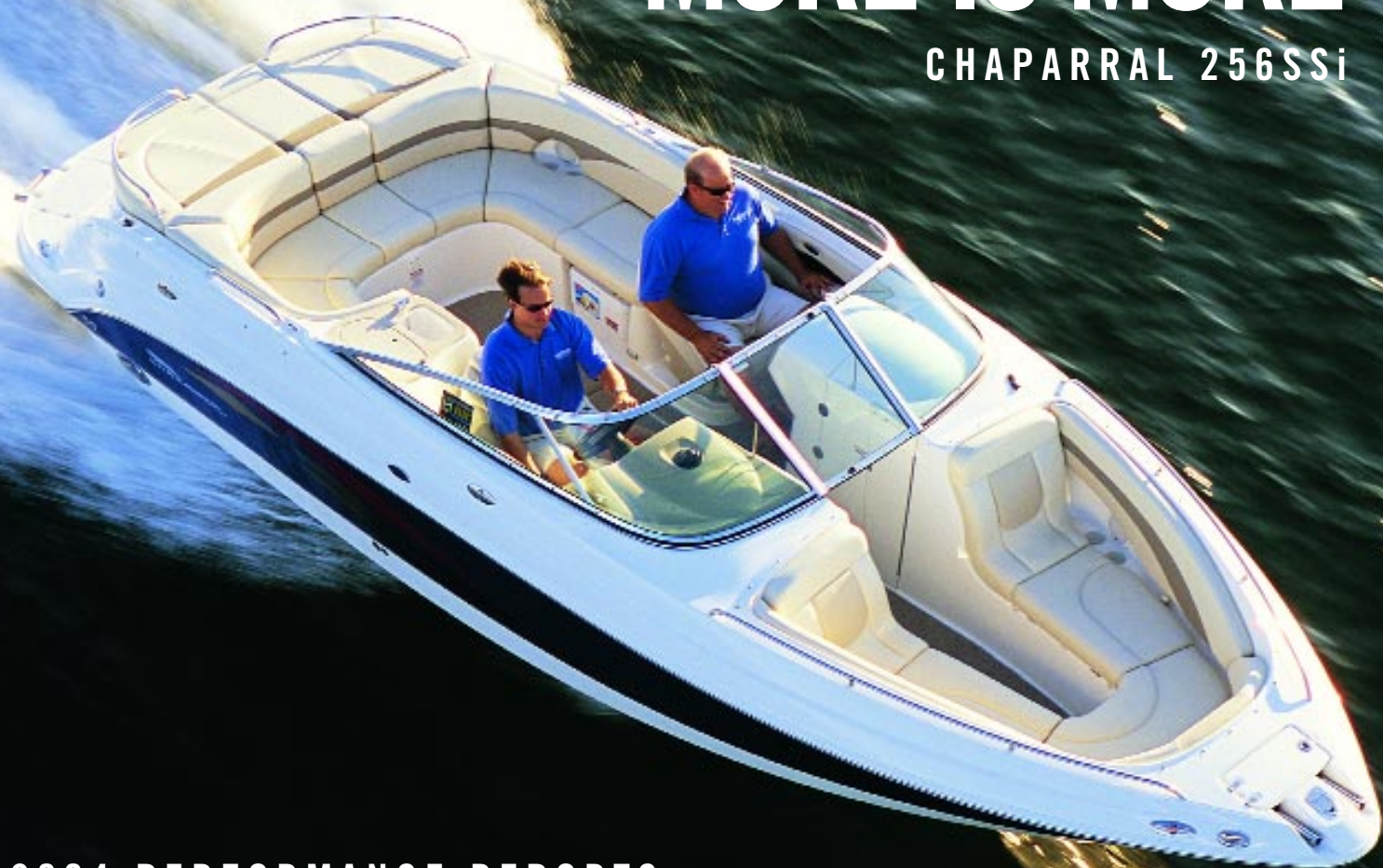
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POWERBOAT

THE WORLD'S LEADING PERFORMANCE BOATING MAGAZINE

MORE IS MORE

CHAPARRAL 256SSi



2004 PERFORMANCE REPORTS

TestResults



MORE IS MORE

Passengers in Chaparral's 256SSi will find plenty to keep them entertained.

JUDGING FROM ALL THE FEATURES IN THE NEW-FOR-2004 256SSi, the designers at Chaparral must have been in a mighty good and generous mood when they created it. They must have been thinking things like, "If a ladder on the stern is good, another on the nose will be better" and "Why not include a full-size head locker with Corian countertops and woodgrain accents in a 25' bow rider?" Or maybe they just designed the boat based on some kind of wish list.

Either way, the 25-footer is as complete as open-bow runabouts get. It's also well built and, though it could stand more power than the 300-hp delivered by the MerCruiser 350 Mag MPI in the model we tested, has civilized handling manners. Fact is, the 256SSi has everything necessary to keep a group comfortably engaged.

PERFORMANCE

The 350 Mag MPI engine is base power for the 256SSi. No dig on the motor, but it proved a tad wimpy for a boat weighing almost 2.5 tons. A great choice in terms of getting the hefty runabout moving—time to plane was a reasonable 5.2 seconds—the twin-propeller Bravo Three drive did nothing to help top speed, which was 48.9 mph with the engine turning 5,000 rpm.

Chaparral offers several engine upgrades for the 256SSi. Bumping up to a 320-hp MerCruiser MX 6.2 MPI engine, which has acquitted itself well in boats of similar size and weight we've tested, ups the price by less than \$3,000. Go to the top of the engine upgrade list with a 425-hp MerCruiser 496 Mag HO engine and you add about \$15,000. A 420-hp Volvo Penta GXi DP power plant ups the ante by a bit less than \$12,000. If top speed and acceleration matter to you and you have the means, any of these power upgrades is worth considering.

Of course, we wouldn't recommend bigger power for the 256SSi if the boat couldn't handle it. Riding on an Extended V-Plane, conventional hull with four strakes, the bow rider proved totally predictable, yet crisp enough to keep our test driver interested in full-circle and slashing maneuvers. Tracking during full-throttle acceleration, such as it was, and abrupt deceleration was straight and required no input on the mahogany steering wheel from the driver.

WORKMANSHIP

Built with Chaparral's new one-piece sole, the 256SSi was handlaid with Hydropol resin, fiberglass mat, woven roving and two-tone gelcoat. The manufacturer employs a quad-radial lamination technique that ensures plenty of material overlap in the hull. For a little more



CHAPARRAL 256SSi



From left: The helm came with full instrumentation on a handsome dashboard and a real mahogany steering wheel. Open and airy, the cockpit was covered with snap-in Berber carpeting and featured a ski locker beneath the sole, and a spacious, and fully appointed head tucked in the port-side console.



TestResults

TEST CONDITIONS

Temperature	85 degrees
Humidity	56 percent
Wind speed	3-5 mph
Sea conditions	2' to 4' chop
Elevation	Sea level

HULL INFORMATION

Deadrise at transom	22.5 degrees
Centerline	26'5" (with swim platform)
Beam	8'6"
Hull weight	4,950 pounds

PRICING INFORMATION

Base retail	\$51,883
Price as tested	\$57,801

ENGINE & PROPELLER

Engine	MerCruiser 350 Mag MPI
Cylinder type	V-8
Cubic-inch displacement/horsepower	350/300
Lower-unit gear ratio	2:1
Propeller	Mercury Bravo Three 15 1/2" x 24" and 14 1/4" x 24"

OPTIONS ON TEST BOAT

Upgrade to Quick and Quiet exhaust (\$1,794), cockpit and bow cover (\$779), wide-band gelcoat (\$679), cockpit carpet (\$581), premium package (\$523), convenience package (\$507), transom shower (\$284), fire extinguishing system (\$244), WB sport graphic (\$183), dual battery crossover switch (\$181) and bow table (\$163).

ACCELERATION

3 seconds	18 mph
5 seconds	26 mph
10 seconds	40 mph
15 seconds	45 mph

MIDRANGE ACCELERATION

20-40 mph	7.9 seconds
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RPM VS. MPH

1000	7 mph
1500	9 mph
2000	12 mph
2500	19 mph
3000	27 mph
3500	31 mph
4000	39 mph
4500	44 mph

TOP SPEED AT RPM

Radar	48.9 mph at 5000
Nordiskog Performance Products GPS	48.5 mph

PLANING

Time to plane	5.2 seconds
Minimum planing speed	19 mph

FUEL ECONOMY

At 25 mph	3.2 mpg
At 35 mph	3 mpg
At 45 mph	2.5 mpg
At WOT	2.2 mpg

FUEL CAPACITY

	80 gallons
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TEST CONDUCTED AT

	Fort Myers, Fla.
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MANUFACTURER

Chaparral Boats, Dept. PB, P.O. Drawer 928, Nashville, GA 31639, 229-686-7481, www.chaparralboats.com.



beef and better flotation, the builder used closed-cell foam in the hullsides.

Vinyl tape graphics complemented the Atlantic blue-and-white gelcoat, and the boat's mold work was strong. The hull and deck were tabbed together in a shoe-box-style fit, and a plastic rubrail with a stainless-steel insert provided protection.

The Accon Pull-Up nav light was a nice touch and Accon Pull-Up cleats and stainless-steel grab handles were liberally dispersed on the boat, but the coolest pieces of hardware turned out to be something we rarely notice—mooring cover snaps. With a push and a turn, the snaps on the 256SSi raised or retracted flush. That's something anyone who's gouged a knee or rapped a knuckle on one of those wicked little things can appreciate.

An electric screw jack raised the entire sun pad and part of the cockpit sole for access to the small-block power plant. In standard production style, the engine was lag-bolted to the stringers. Above production level, rigging included protection for the wire looms and support from stainless-steel cushion clamps no farther than 10 inches apart.

INTERIOR

Two hinged cushions on each side, which opened gull-wing-style, and a center cushion formed the sun pad. The center cushion was removable and provided access to the non-skid walk-through from the tiered swim platform, which had a shower and a remote control for the JBL stereo system, to the cockpit. The other cushions raised for access to a pair of wet stowage lockers.

Gear of the dry kind will find any number of homes, such as under the cushions for the

U-shape rear bench or in the in-sole locker. Larger goodies such as wakeboards should fit easily in the large locker in the driver's console.

Snap-in Berber carpet added elegance to the cockpit. So, too, did the molded entertainment/galley console, with an attractive Corian countertop and a stainless-steel sink, behind the swiveling bucket seat for the driver to starboard.

Opposite the helm, which included the aforementioned mahogany steering wheel and three gauges—speedometer, tachometer and multifunction engine—privately labeled with the Chaparral name and logo, was the co-pilot's station. At a glance, it appeared to be routine runabout fare with a bucket seat, a grab handle and a glove box. But the entire aft section of the co-pilot's console doubled as a hinged door for the head locker, which was as well outfitted as many we've found in full-size, big-buck offshore boats. You don't see a bow rider head locker with a padded vinyl headliner, woodgrain accents and a Corian countertop very often.

A particularly wide walk-through made it easy to reach the open-bow area, which was outfitted with two contoured, chaise-style lounges. When reclined on one of those lounges, one of our inspectors noted that the gunwale tops were above his shoulders—"comfortably deep," he called it.

OVERALL

If you'd owned a few runabouts and were asked to assemble a list of features you'd like on your next one, the finished product probably wouldn't be too different from the Chaparral 256SSi. OK, you might ask for more power—heaven knows we would—but everything else is there. ●