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Introducing what is bound to be one of the most controversial and widely read tests we'll publish this year, the first official test of the brand new Parsun 15hp 2-stroke outboard from China. With a rec. retail of \$1,650 including GST, Parsun Outboards are set to rewrite outboard price lists in Australia. Already several brands have acknowledged their presence by dropping the price of their own 2-strokes for the Boat Show season. What makes this outboard so special as well, is the size and scope of the manufacturing company behind it – this is a fair dinkum challenge from a very large multi-national Chinese company, and as Peter and Ruth discovered, Parsun has every reason to be extremely optimistic about the future.

Parsun's 15hp 2-Stroke Outboard

The Parsun 15hp 2-stroke is the first outboard we've been able to test from the Parsun combine, mainly because as soon as the container arrives, the outboards are dispersed and sold almost overnight.

Parsun is making a very determined bid for a share of the Australian market, and whilst the mainstream outboard manufacturers are frantically closing the doors in front of them, the reality is that Parsun are working on the Bunning's Principle ie, at the end of the day, only one thing matters in retailing, and that is the price, the *price* and the *price!* And at \$1,650 retail, including GST, the Parsun 15hp 2-stroke is hundreds of dollars – in several cases, thousands of dollars under the prices that we've published in the official OEDA price lists in this very magazine.



The Parsun outboard range is not a one model wonder, either – already on sale in Australia they have various smaller 2-stroke models, as well as brand new 15hp, 25hp, 40hp 4-stroke outboard models and a new 60hp 4-stroke planned for release early in 2009.

Nobody seems to know quite how

far they will go, but there's no doubt the Parsun company is more than your average corner store.

Background

Parsun Outboards are manufactured by Parsun Power Machine Co, an offshoot of a giant parent company called Genova Power Machine. They are the world's third largest generator company and have been trading for more than 30 years. They're not just any ordinary generator company coming out of China either, as they are internationally renowned for their patented 'rare earth' permanent magnet generators that have superior performance over conventional generators, with advantages including high starting current, less maintenance, better output wave, etc. Their PM&T brand water pumps have been the

number one brand of water pump exports from China, to customers all over the world.

In Australia, they're represented by Gary Baikovas of Menai Marine history, with all engines going through Gary's dealership network, Island Marine Enterprises.

Challenging Editorial

The Parsun Outboard program has really tested the F&B team too, challenging many of the standards we've used over the years, and throwing into question the ultimate effectiveness of an F&B engine test, let alone the more casual undertakings of the various marine media.

Case in point is something we've analysed very carefully between ourselves, because when it comes down to it (and it has) much of our work has relied upon history.

Yes, the history and knowledge we've acquired about outboard brands over the years from virtually every aspect of their usage, ownership application, maintenance and service.

The writer started boating with a West Bend outboard in the 1960s, graduated to a 'sophisticated' 50hp Mercury, before moving onto a plethora of engines from every manufacturer.

Apart from a couple of aberrations (such as the Italian Selva outboards, Chrysler outboards, Volvo Penta outboards, and other strays such as the Victa range) the writer has been a consistent user of Yamaha, Mercury, Johnson/Evinrude, Mariner, Honda, the original 2-stroke Suzukis, as well as the more recent Suzuki 4-strokes.

Over nearly 40 years, there's been an awful lot of engines that have seen a great deal of seawater underneath them. Analysing this position, we realised that much of our product assessment is based on this history.

In other words, if Yamaha release a new 40hp EFI engine for us to test, then we already have an expectation of product excellence before we begin – because we've had such a wonderful run with Yamaha engines over a 30 year period.

Similarly, the more recent reincarnation of Suzuki in Australia and New Zealand, has confirmed the writer's belief that Suzuki are right on the leading edge of outboard technology.

This gives us a very solid platform to work from, to the extent that we often don't detail the ready availability of service across Australia from Yamaha or Suzuki (etc), because we've taken it as a given; not so here with the Parsun.

Some of the first questions we've had to look at, concern the issues of longevity, service, spare parts supply and engine warranties. And being a completely new brand, there is no history.

There is nothing we can use to offer our readers brand 'comfort' or assurance, by way of hard won experience and knowledge of the product.

Ironically, it is precisely this knowledge that F&B readers need to know before parting with their dollars for Parsun outboards, so it is something of a Catch 22 we've gone into, and we are not convinced we have a credible solution, either.

The nub of the problem can be summed up in one word: *time*. The only way we'll ever know how good these Parsun outboards are in the field is to use them, and in turn, that means that we and our

readers have to take onboard an element of risk that they will not be as successful as we hope. Worse, they could break down in the field with embarrassing and potentially dangerous results. Against that, we have to weigh up the fact that they are fully 30-40% cheaper than regular brands to counter this very problem.

Obviously, if they had the reputation of the Big Three Japanese companies, then we would be paying just as much for the Parsuns as we would be for a Honda, Suzuki or Yamaha, wouldn't we?

So we went into this test with our eyes wide open, as they say, cynical as hell, determined to try everything we knew to check them out, and found the results very interesting, to say the least.

Technical Specifications

The Parsun is right on the money as far as 2-stroke 15hp outboards are concerned.

It has a displacement of 246cc, it's available in the usual short or long shaft transom lengths, and as we tested this version, a short shaft, it weighs just 36kg whilst the long shaft is 37.5kg.

For those that are interested and can work it out, it uses quite a high gear ratio of 2.08 (27/13) which is close to an industry standard. The overall length of the outboard is 873mm x 332mm wide, the overall height of the short shaft is 104mm and the long shaft is 1167mm. It's recommended that it uses unleaded petrol, and in typical fashion, starts life in the break-in period at 25:1 and within 10 hours or so, the oil to fuel ratio slips up to 50:1.

The maximum output of this model is 15hp at 5,000rpm, and interestingly, it has a sister engine at 9.9hp at 5,000rpm, too. The full throttle operating range is 4,500-5,500rpm.

It comes with a typical 24L tub which is well made with a sensible fuel gauge built in and good quality fittings.

Getting Underway

The outboard is blissfully simple. It's made in exactly the same mould as many others over the years, but it incorporates all the latest features.

From a safety perspective there's a start in-gear protection, a lanyard operated kill switch, a forward, neutral and reverse gearbox, a sensible, easy to operate steering friction control and one of those throttle friction controls



Fisherman & BOATOWNER Performance Graph

Horizon 355 Angler / 15 hp Parsun 2-Stroke Outboard

Fuel Consumption			Performance Data			
R/Min	L/ph	G/ph	Nm/litre	Knots	Km	Range
1,000	0.60	0.13	4.0	2.4	4.4	91.2
1,500	1.50	0.33	1.86	2.8	5.1	42.5
2,000	1.80	0.39	1.94	3.5	6.5	44.3
2,500*	2.10	0.46	2.19	4.6	8.5	49.9
3,000	2.40	0.52	2.04	4.9	9.1	46.5
3,500	2.70	0.59	2.18	5.9	10.9	49.8
4,000	3.30	0.72	1.93	6.4	11.8	44.2
4,250's						
4,500	3.90	0.85	2.36	9.2	17.0	53.7
5,000	4.50	0.98	2.31	10.4	19.3	52.6
5,500	5.70	1.24	2.31	13.2	24.5	52.8
6,010(F/O)	7.20	1.57	2.01	14.5	26.8	45.9
Propeller	<i>3 Blade std. alloy Parsun mm (P) x mm (D)</i>					
Range: Nautical Miles, based on 95% of the 24L tub ie 22.8 litres available						

Interesting and pleasing trials. The motor performed strongly through the range, with some roughness at around 2,500 rpm. But driven properly ie, opened up wide, snapping the Horizon onto plane, and then backing down to cruising revs in the 4,500 range, it was as good as any we've tested. At 36kg and \$1,650, it's destined to be hugely popular with 'occasional boaters' and once-a-year holiday makers. Just make sure it is 'run-in' properly before it is pushed too hard.



on the tiller that we've all used for about a hundred years.

The latch system on the cowling is practical and effective and it would appear to be quite well sealed.

Looking at it, it's very well made, has a good standard of paint finish and it looks quite impressive in its black glossy finish with red flashes.

I'm not sure what we were expecting, but we were genuinely surprised at the overall standard of construction, the quality of fittings, the minimalistic use of plastics (starting to become dominant in some of the other outboards) so the Parsun was quite impressive under the hood.

What it will look like in 5 years time, is anybody's guess; we had a brand new outboard that had been run-in very carefully (*most important with the Parsun 2-strokes - they have a carefully worked out running in period to settle the engine before it*

can be put to work properly) and needless to say, it ran perfectly during the entire test program.

Start Up Procedures

These are just the same as everyone is used to – squeeze the bulb a couple of times, go to half choke, pull the engine out to compression and then a quick tug on the auto recoil starter rope will generally see the Parsun start promptly.

A couple of times we managed to get it out of sync and half flood it, but that was partly to see what happened when we did, as much as anything else. After a few extra pulls, a cough and a splutter and a bit more blue smoke than we'd like, the Parsun cleared our lead foot handling, shook its head and settled right back down to put up with the dumb operators that were trying to prevent its forward progress!

Treated normally, and started

normally, it fired first pull every time and although it occasionally needed a minute or two to settle down, especially if it had been manhandled around the marina and garage, then it would carry a bit more oil in the cylinders and be smokier than we're used to these days. But it is a 2-stroke and that's what 2-strokes do – they can't help themselves because the oil has to be added to the petrol to lubricate the engine's operating system.

Underway

There's no gainsaying it – the Parsun 15 performed perfectly satisfactorily. In fact, both Ruth and I felt it was grunter than we'd remembered a couple of other 15hp 2-strokes from years back, although Ruth maintained this was more imagination than factual.

Given she grew up with a Johnson 15 attached to her arm, and later a Yammy 15hp, I suspect she has more intuitive knowledge and experience of these engines than almost anybody else on the east coast of Australia, but she was singularly impressed with the performance of the Parsun, and felt happily at home within seconds.

"Just like the Yammy 15", one of her favourite engines, "and even the parts look like they're almost interchangeable." So said the lady otherwise known as one of the original Pittwater Rats - a tribute to her daily passages from ages 5 to 17 back and forth along Pittwater NSW to her family's bush home on the other side of civilisation, in that beautiful part of the world.

Performance

As you can see from the data sheets and tabulation, the Parsun delivered an exemplary performance, turning in a best speed of 15.3 knots downhill with the wind behind us, and considering we had the two of us, our test equipment, camera equipment onboard for the test and it was only a little 15 on a pretty large boat, we were very pleased with the figures.

The cruising speed was probably more indicative of its all round performance, coming in at around 12-13 knots at 5,000rpm, and the Parsun seemed quite happy to run at that speed



Left: Short of stripping the engines down completely, we were impressed by the general standard of finish and engineering.

for ever and a day. Commonsense and economy pulled us back to 4,500 for a lot of the time, but it didn't really make a lot of difference to the Parsun, because at 4,500 we were pulling 9.1 knots, and as you can see from the figures it was actually slightly more efficient at the higher speed.

Nevertheless, the fuel consumption figures of 3.3 L/ph at 4,000 revs, 3.90 L/ph at 4,500 revs and 4.50 L/ph at 5,000 revs, suggest that this is going to be a very economical 2-stroke and really throws up the real issue of how much fuel a 4-stroke would save under such circumstances ie, in these small 15hp engines, they use so little fuel, a 10% or even 20% saving, is almost insignificant.

We would class this as a very economical 2-stroke outboard engine, and ideal for retirees, pensioners, youngsters – anybody on a budget who wants to get an effective fishing boat on the water for minimal cost; this is the way to fly.

Boat Performance

Using one of Horizon's new 3.55 Anglers, a two thwart (seat) model that was very nicely finished and painted inside and out, the Parsun and Horizon combo was terrific.

The whole rig packages up with a little trailer, for around \$4,527 and blimey, doesn't that make your hair stand on end – I could afford to go boating at this rate!

Seriously, this is what Chinese outboard engine building can do for our industry. It will let an awful lot of people go boating who might not otherwise be able to afford it. Retirees and pensioners especially; people who have to watch every dollar in this present economic morass we are dealing with in Australia in 2008. With everything from carbon trading, fluctuating interest rates and soaring fuel prices, keenly watching our pennies in the future is going to be a full time occupation for millions of Australians. BMT packages that can save thousands and thousands of capital cost dollars, let alone run very economically, are going to prove extremely popular in the future, I'll give you the tip.

By the way, there is a very important point to note with this Horizon 3.55 Angler – this model is fitted with the



Outboard testing, Chinese style. Parsun have already committed to a growing 4-stroke program.

that context, what Parsun is doing here, is certainly not without precedent.

Nor is building outboards in China, unusual. Mercury Marine now make all of their 4-strokes under 60hp in China and do it proudly – claiming to achieve the same quality standards as they can back at home in the U.S. of A.

So to castigate the Parsun outboard range simply because it's made in China is ridiculous, as damn near everything today is now "made in China."

I think the bigger issue for readers is the one of longevity and safety of operation.

Doesn't matter so much in a boat like the 3.55 Horizon – if it did break down, hey, you'd put the oars in the rowlock and row home, wouldn't you? At least you'd scarcely get yourself into any trouble in a small craft that would use a 15hp Parsun.

And the counter point to that is the one of capital investment and the savings involved. They are huge – the Parsun outboard is fantastic value for money on the basis of how much performance you get for your dollar – and at \$1,650 retail including GST, I don't think you have to be Einstein to figure out that it's going to have a very successful launch in Australia.

Would I buy one? Well in fact, we have – purchasing a 3.6hp model for the sole purpose of thrashing it hither and yon for the next 12 months in the Quintrex "Redaction" program.

We're also interested (now) in exploring the potential of Parsun's 4-stroke outboards too, because they will also hit a very raw nerve in the marketplace when they're released next month at the Sydney International Boat Show.

It's interesting to note that although Parsun Outboards make no claims for their emissions or engines' cleanliness with the 2-stroke models, they are adamant their 4-stroke outboards will not only meet, but easily exceed all of the Californian and Australian VELS-Star rating requirements.

Parsun is here to stay, and in due course, there will be many Australian families very glad of it.

F&B

very wide thwarts that give the boat the full Level Floatation rating, which is one of the most desirable features you can incorporate in a tinny of this size.

As a tinny, it's a wide-beam beauty, and absolutely ideal for a retiring couple to head out onto our estuaries and rivers, lakes and dams, safely with some comfort and work up a creel of fish and have a beautiful day on the water.

For very little cost, very little fiddling around, easy on the back and hips, and easily handled with a very small, super economical car at the launchramp.

If you can afford it - order it with the flat floors between the seats - but it is a fairly easy job to do at home in the workshop.

Conclusion

One of the most interesting tests we've conducted for some time, as much because it challenged our own perceptions about tests, and the rules we've used, and the standards we've applied over the years.

Most of them didn't work here.

We had to go back and think about other eras when Mariner outboards (for instance) were introduced in Australia and were made as a separate entity to the Mercury brand that subsequently absorbed the Mariner label. Honda came along in 1996 having never really made outboards of any substance before then (yes, I'm aware Honda made yacht auxiliaries and small outboards back in the 1980s) but in