

# FORMULA 233

## - Ferrari In A Sea Of Fords?

Original Story/Pics by Peter Webster

*“...This is not a boat for the family, or for women — well, wives, anyway—to me, it is the sort of boat which is dead-set perfect for getting a bunch of your mates out to the 'Reef in a hurry — and coming home again, happily tanked, even faster...”*

**T**o be quite candid, right from the start, one does not 'test' a Formula 233.

To do so, one would need the qualifications of a world famous engineer, raceboat driver and boat designer such as Jim Wynne, the skills of an international offshore powerboat race driver like the legendary U.S. racer and Jim Wynne's collaborator, Don Aronow — and the constructional know-how of a boat builder of Haines Hunter type stature. Truly, under those sort of conditions, it is a brave (or foolish) writer who ventures ahead under the banner "in my opinion ..."

Still, before it is suggested I have lost my critical zeal, the foregoing is not meant to suggest the Formula 233 is a powerboat of such extraordinary breeding that it is beyond reproach; indeed, considering its birthright, the opposite

could well be the case.

But for a moment, let us cast our minds back to those gloriously decadent years of the early Sixties.

The world was just beginning to feel the benefit of a decade without international conflict. The energy crisis was just a cheeky glint in a young shiek's eye; fuel was plentiful and cheap. And the world wanted to go faster.

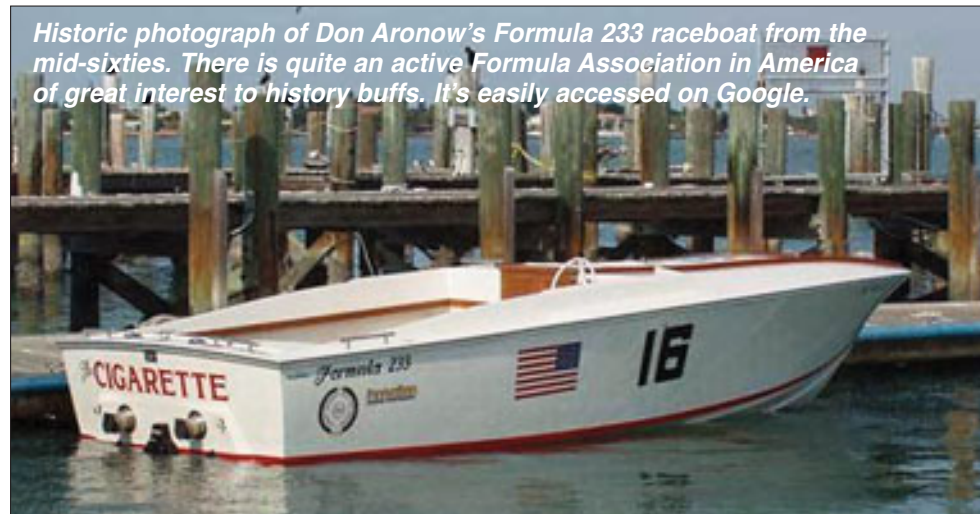
The first executive jets became a reality. The fabulous quad-cam, 12 cylinder Ferraris swept the motoring

world asunder, and in the powerboat world, real horsepower power became available to the hot boat designers for the first time.

By the late Sixties, several gifted American boat engineers and designers were preparing to launch themselves towards international acclaim.

Of particular note here, engineer Jim Wynne (recognised today as the father of the Volvo Penta sterndrive) and a terrific ocean racer, who, like his peers (Jim Smith, Ray Hunt, Don

Historic photograph of Don Aronow's Formula 233 raceboat from the mid-sixties. There is quite an active Formula Association in America of great interest to history buffs. It's easily accessed on Google.



Aronow, etc.) used the American powerboat racing circuits to test, develop and promote their products.

Wynne was one of the early designers who realised boatowners wanted to go faster. Much faster, so he got together with Don Aronow's newly formed Formula Boat Company - and the Formula 17 and this Formula 233 were born.

They were amongst the first designers to take advantage of the Detroit-based auto industry's new engines with their lightweight, reliable power plants, designed for cars, but easily adapted for marine use. Power that could be put in the stern, power that could be linked side by side easily, cheaply and effectively. Together, engineers and boat designers quickly changed the way the world went boating.

And so the first deep-vees were born. Remember them? Lord, there were some weird boats about in those days. Boats with huge side fins. Lashings of ghastly chrome "fenders". The hulls were either dead flat bottoms — or crazily deep veed, so deep they they were dangerously unstable.

But with time, and experience, the

boating world learned. And developed. Designers such as Soni Levi, Don Aronow, Jim Wynne, Ray Hunt and Don Shead proved and improved their hulls in the tough world of international powerboat racing.

And during this period, some "classics" were born. Boats that were so good, they have remained in service for nearly two decades, virtually without change.

And one, the Wynne designed Formula 233, arguably the most significant of them all, is the subject of this report.

### Design

The Formula 233 is a great big runabout with a pokey little cabin up forward. The cabin consists of two berths, with sufficient space between the berths (just) to install a chemical, or conventional pump-out 'loo. It is a great place to store fishing rods, life jackets, your game chair when it is not being used, the grog, extra clothes—and it is just right to hang the radio in, so you can get at it easily from the helmsman's chair.

Headroom it doesn't have, as anybody bigger than a circus midget

*Here's a blast from the past - these are the shots from the cover of Australian Boating in July 1975 (#22 actually) when colour printing was still in its infancy and dreadfully expensive.*

would have trouble even sitting in there.

The hull is a fascinating bit 'o gear by today's standards.

Up forward, the reverse sheer of the forward deck gives the Formula a "droopy nose" look; this curving down line-of-sight is met, in turn, by an upward curving chine line. Adding to this slightly pinched look, two moulded mooring light recesses give a very good illusion of two eyes peering forward.

Each to his own, of course, but I must admit, I love it — it's a sort of butch, muscular look, which has stood the test of time, and to me, tells it like the boat really is.

This is not a boat for the family, or for women (well, wives, anyway) to me, it is the sort of boat which is dead-set perfect for getting a bunch of your mates out to the reef in a hurry — and coming home again, happily tanked, even faster.

**TBM RETRO BOAT TEST:** Unchanged, as first published, written and photographed by Peter Webster in JULY 1975