

Sweden Marine V-8 Diesels: Breakthrough For V-8 Petrol Re-Power Boatowners

As petrol prices soar throughout the Western world, an increasing number of boatowners are becoming frustrated by the high cost of fueling their V-8 petrol powered boats. Now there is a safe, practical and remarkably economical engineering solution to 'future-proof' a V-8 boating investment.

In what could well prove to be the salvation of many of Australia's Mustangs, Sunrunners, Berties, old Searays and the like, a new range of beautifully built, brand new Swedish V-8 diesels has been released in Australia that drop straight into the engine mounting system for all those incredibly thirsty V-8 petrol engines.

Nobody has ever denied that the big American V-8 engines, most commonly available from MerCruiser and based on the Chev 5.0L, 5.7L, 7.5L and 8.2L V-8 petrol engines, have provided countless thousands of boatowners in Australia and around the world with smooth, reliable and relatively cheap horsepower.

Superbly marinised to the highest international maritime standards, the MerCruiser (and to a lesser extent, the Chev and Ford based Volvo V-8 petrol ranges) have certainly stood the test of time.

The trouble is, these engines were all first developed back in the early 1970s, when petrol in America was about 11 cents (US) a gallon. I repeat, 11 cents a gallon - that's **4.5 litres** in today's metric terminology. Needless to say, the American recreational boating industry took to these black V-8 marinised engines like the proverbial to water, and it wasn't long before the production lines at MerCruiser were jam-packed



with V-8 engines being shipped throughout America and later, throughout the world.

In Australia, the MerCruiser V-8 inboard or sterndrive power plant has been pretty much the backbone of

the entry level cruiser market and sportfishing boat market for several decades.

A flick through the pages of *Trade-A-Boat* will quickly reveal just how extensively these V-8 petrol engines

have been used over the years, as they pop up in just about everything.

More recently, with the mini-boom in the sales of Mustangs, Sunrunners and the American bridgedeck cruisers from Bayliner, Searay, Wellcraft etc, these smooth running, black petrol engines have been the basis of just about every boat sold.

Fuel Cost Blow-Out

Nothing wrong with that, either, except for one teensy problem - petrol in Australia off the pump at most marinas is now \$1.25 (+) per litre, and this is proving to be a crippling expense for many boatowners - most of whom object to using 40-60 dollars an hour's worth of fuel even if they can afford it.

It is especially frustrating if the boatowner wants to travel any sort of boating distance, such as the 90nm trip from Sydney Harbour up to Port Stephens, or Brisbane down to the Gold Coast, etc. On trips such as these, the fuel bill can run to hundreds of dollars. Already, boats are turning up on the secondhand market from disillusioned boatowners heartbroken over the cost of fuel and the cost involved in going boating.

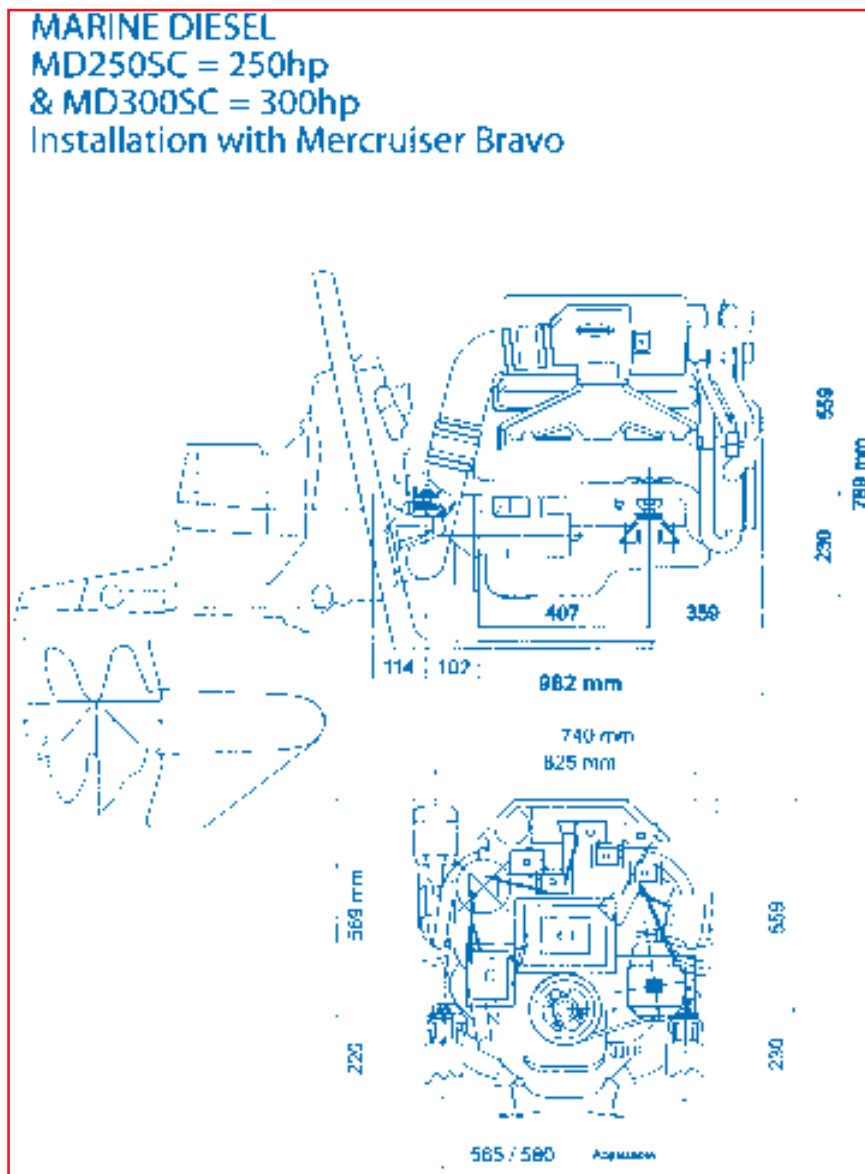
There's no point in coming up with the age old argument that the cheapest expense in boating is the fuel - it doesn't matter how wealthy you are, it hurts to be paying \$1.25 - \$1.40 for a litre of petrol - and then seeing it burned at the rate of 40-60L/ph, and that's taking it very carefully. Open up the throttle on an 8.2L MerCruiser and you'll quickly start using upwards of 70-80L/ph.

Not surprisingly, we are now seeing dozens of these otherwise excellent cruisers come back onto the market secondhand, often with as little as 50-100 hours on the engines.

New V-8 Diesels

Last month, F&B learned of a new range of Swedish built but American designed V-8 diesel engines that are now becoming available in Australia. So what, you ask? We've all seen and know about alternative V-8 engines from other sources, and there's been various replacement engines available for MerCruiser for years.

But this is different. These engines are brand new - they're not



reconditioned.

They are absolutely pristine, out of the box, brand new, purpose built V-8 diesels that are actually made (and will continue to be made) for military purposes right around the world.

These are the engines supplied for the American Hummer personnel carrier or 4WD, with a design heritage based on the original GM 6.5L V-8 diesel that has been made in its millions over the last 20 or 30 years.

However, this engine has been re-designed and built in Sweden diesel with many technological features and upgrades that have only appeared in the last couple of years, primarily at the request of the US Military.

As a flow-on from the military orders, Marine Diesel Sweden has now developed the first direct replacement diesel for the classic V-8

marine inboard or sterndrive petrol MerCruiser. Importantly too, the new diesels comply with the latest EU emission control standards (2003/44/EU) and whilst that's not a legal criteria in Australia (yet) most boatowners still want to know they are 'doing the right' thing in an environment they love.

When replacing a 5.0L, 5.7L, 7.4L or 8.2L petrol V-8 MerCruiser, the marine diesel will fit the drive shaft, front engine mounts, exhaust system, most wiring harnesses and has approximately the same weight and size of the old engine. But - and here's the good news: the fuel consumption of the new V-8 diesel, which is available in half a dozen power outputs, is up to 50% less than the petrol equivalent, and is even more efficient at trolling or lower speed settings. Because it is a highly

sophisticated fuel injected engine, even the entry level models of this classic 6.5L diesel engine are exceptionally economical and in their base 170hp guise (known as the Barracuda series) the engine is so under-stressed, it's considered to be virtually indestructible.

At the other end of the scale, the Supercharged Tiger Shark produces 400 horsepower from the same engine block, with 4-stage inter-cooling, high flow D-port exhaust system and state of the art Swedish Lysholm design supercharging - these engines are what performance is all about!

They are designed for maximum performance, looks and durability while maintaining one of the lowest fuel consumption ratings in the industry.

Re-power Application

These engines are going to breathe new life into many a Mustang boat operation. With a bobtail (that means no gearbox) 330hp supercharged diesel available for around \$36,000 (or \$39,000 with various gearboxes) they offer an exceptional opportunity to totally transform a petrol set-up into a smooth, efficient and even faster diesel powered rig that is (obviously) infinitely safer as well.

The fact that they bolt straight into and under the engine block is a godsend for the technicians and engineers who will undertake the work for you.

Most of the engine shops we've spoken to have all confirmed that with a bit of planning, it would be possible to complete the switchover in just a day or two, as taking the old V-8 petrol out is a fairly rapid process, and putting the new V-8 diesel in is equally as efficient - what really then has to take some time is re-structuring the fuel tank, fuel lines and the harness.

In most cases though, most of the engineers we've spoken to believe

that the original petrol tank can be used, subject to the obvious inspection and examination - but technically speaking, the use of diesel as fuel is far safer than petrol in any event, so the conversion is going the right way.

New Boat Application

Although we've focussed on the re-power market with these new diesels, they also have very obvious application to the new plate aluminium boat market too, and they represent one of the best power for dollar for fuel efficiency ratios we've encountered.

Of particular interest to the plate

Similarly, re-powering something along the lines of a Bertie 35, two of these engines in their inboard gearbox form, will set an owner back about \$80,000, again, an extremely competitive figure for a re-power with such strong and powerful diesels.

Conclusion

We're looking forward to the opportunity of trying one of these diesels in the field, and are following the progress of one of the installations here in Brisbane - and will bring this to our readers' attention in due course. In the meantime, we already know of several fairly shrewd operators who are looking to "pick

the eyes" out of the secondhand market, and are considering purchasing a couple of the secondhand petrol powered Mustangs that have come back onto the market because they're too costly to run with petrol.

If these craft were bought at the "right" price, the potential for re-powering at a profit is clearly there for people 'in the know'.

Equally the potential is there for existing owners to re-power their craft, taking out the thirsty V-8 MerCruiser and installing one of these outstanding V-8 diesel engines in its place - literally.

It could be a whole lot cheaper to re-

power a Mustang than take a bath on its resale with petrol engines.

Makes you think, doesn't it?

For further information about these engines, we suggest you talk to Mathew Barnes, Marine Diesel Australia Pty Ltd, 1/47Laguna Place, Port MacQuarie, NSW 2444. Phone: (02) 6583 2110 Fax: (02) 6583 1550 or Oz website: www.marinedieselanz.com.au Alternatively, go to the Swedish web site for even more info www.marinediesel.nu

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boat market, we noted that a 300hp Hammerhead 6.5L supercharged diesel driving through a Bravo Two drive leg will retail for around \$41,000 and that's a very competitive price compared to the cost of (say) Yanmar or Volvo diesels of equivalent horsepower.

Importantly, too, the 6.5L engine in its base form ie, just the bobtail engine without a gearbox or sterndrive, only weighs 430kg, so the power to weight ratio is class-leading, too - all of which adds up to even better fuel consumption in new boat environments.