



## FREEDOM MIRAGE REVIEW

By Warren Steptoe  
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Modern Boating Issue: October/November 2005



To compete with the excellent 5.5 to 6m bowriders being imported these days, local products must be good — like the Freedom Mirage.

It competes strongly without losing its distinct Aussie flavour. You'd pick it for a local from a fair way away — and a good looking one at that.

It's a boat suited to local boating conditions, as appearances suggest. For example, lots of the imports lack a convenient anchor locker. Which is fine when your boat spends all its time berthed alongside. But even in our highly developed boating locations like Pittwater, the Gold Coast and Noosaville (where our test was conducted), a big bowrider is liable to be tied to a canal-side pontoon much of the time, so once away from home you 'do' need to anchor here.

Freedom's Glen Grams tells us this feature helps sell a lot of boats for him, but he isn't afraid to admit the (inarguable) excellence of competing imports. But he says people with enough 'boating nous' to see through a veneer of glam to practical considerations in their boating backyards are spending their money at home. You can't argue with the parochial pride Glen wears so happily — it's a valid point. As is his praise for competing locals such as the Cruise Craft bowriders. He puts it well when he says the best thing about these Aussie products is that they give nothing away to the imports!

So what, besides a decent-sized anchor well, does Freedom's mirage offer? Bowriders these days follow a fairly set menu (simply because it works) and the Mirage doesn't detour much.

### LAYOUT

It has ample storage space under both bow and aft lounges, with a lengthy ski locker underfloor in the cockpit.

Another capacious storage locker is found in the windscreen bulkhead and, as you'd expect, there's a pocket along each side of the cockpit.

Aussie practicality shows through in neat netting retainers to keep loose gear in place, and in a moulded liner for another storage locker beneath the centre of the aft lounge cushion. The 'drinks locker' in front of the passenger seat is huge, unlike some imports, which usually present as a tiny glove box. It drains overboard of course, the better to empty melted ice at the end of a day on the water. It's also of sufficient size to guard against that terror of all Aussie boaties — dehydration!

The bowrail is low and unobtrusive, although it is there. It is yet another practical consideration evident only when the lady of the house is trying to control the boat at some of the excuses for ramps we suffer in this country. As we've all learned, there's nothing worse than a boat that has a smooth gel coat with nowhere to hang onto it securely.



Freedom has done a great job finishing off the Mirage too. There are no untidy niches and the Gelcoat and upholstery are as neat as they come.

Seating is upholstered in the marine suede the Modern Boating team finds far superior to vinyl on sweaty summer days. The Mirage's windscreen is armoured glass and a folding boarding ladder on the transom is standard equipment.

A quality stereo system comes standard and an aft table, ski pole and bimini shade canopy are options.

### **PERFORMANCE & HANDLING**

Out on the water we were keen to put the Mirage through its paces, because sophisticated hull shapes are strong selling points for imported bowriders. When we mentioned this to Glen, he put the Mirage into a turn that had the water at eye level beside the passenger seat.

He then changed direction back the other way in a tight S-turn that generated some mighty impressive Gs. Needless to say, the Mirage tracked like it was on the proverbial rails. (And our knuckles gradually regained colour!).

At the wheel, the seating is one of the most comfortable we've come across. In Glen's high G turns unfortunates in the bow lounge found yet another use for the sturdy bow rail. And a recessed grab handle beside the passenger seat came in handy too. Secure seating and the Freedom Mirage's surefooted and predictable handling add a real fun factor to a boat we like very much.

Powered by a 150hp Yamaha fourstroke, the test boat packed quite a punch. There really isn't much lacking in fourstrokes these days, although in a lower cost package, any of the several punchy traditional two-stroke V4s would leave nothing to be desired either. So, how much will a Freedom Mirage set you back? Try around \$44,900.

### **YAMAHA OUTBOARDS**

Much has been written about Yamaha's impressive 150hp four-stroke outboards. It's a technologically advanced 16-valve, DOHC engine, that neatly fills the gap between Yamaha's mighty V6 outboards and its class-leading 115hp four. It utilizes electronic fuel injection for crisp, consistent performance, with unprecedented quietness, clean emissions and fuel economy. And like all of Yamaha's larger four-strokes it is lightweight and compact. This 150hp four-stroke outboard actually weighs less than its two-stroke carburetted predecessor.

### **ENGINE ROOM**

The Freedom Mirage was powered by a super quiet, super smooth 150hp, Yamaha four-stroke outboard. V4 two-stroke engine options are available.

### **PERFORMANCE**

In calm conditions on the Noosa River with four adults onboard the Mirage bowrider recorded the following performance figures: 8.1 knots @ 2300 rpm, 25.2 knots @ Cruise speed, 39.5 knots @ 5900rpm



## SPECIFICATIONS

- LOA: 5.9m
- BEAM: 2.5m
- HULL WEIGHT: 850kg
- FUEL: 180lt
- PRICE: 44,900

+ Hull to engine horsepower. Hull's surefootedness.

– Nothing to report Words & Photos by Warren Steptoe

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