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New Power

HIGH PERFORMER

Axopar turns to the automotive high-performance aftermarket tuning company BRABUS to up the wow factor on the 28 T-Top.



By Dominic
Wiseman



Above: Transom sunbed for two.

Below: Bow seating is on the portside only.

Below right: Helm seats tip forward, revealing top-loading fridge and sink with tap.

Axopar burst onto the Australian boating scene in 2015 with clean, open designs perfectly suited to the Down Under boating lifestyle. In fact, distributor Eyachts has sold close to 100 of these impressive looking boats across three different sizes, from 24.9 to 36.75ft. The unique model range that Axopar brings to the competitive boating market already sets it apart, but how to keep it fresh?

The answer for Axopar was to join forces with BRABUS, which is well-known for its tuning and makeover of Mercedes-Benz motor vehicles, and it has certainly attacked the partnership with gusto.

Enter the 30.1ft (9.18m) Axopar 28 T-Top from the BRABUS Line, the latter's influence taking the 28 T-Top from an excellent to a brilliant craft, but not to be confused with the BRABUS Shadow 500, which is an entirely different boat.

The BRABUS touch travels across the entire boat, from the stitching in the cockpit and cabin using a diamond pattern in the seat designs, to the suede-wrapped steering wheel with a subtle 'double B' embossed in the centre. The cleats are matte black, again featuring the BRABUS insignia, and all traditional stainless steel parts are matte black to complete the look. It is striking, yet not overdone.

The Axopar 28 T-Top BRABUS Line looks more sleek yacht than powerboat, yet, for Australian boaties, the Axopar is a great fit with a functional amount of space, a head hidden in the front of the console and a small cabin down the back. On the water, the freeboard looks low, but an aggressive entry angle slices through chop with ease. It is a boat that needs to be driven, but more on that later.

DAYBOAT DELIGHTS

Onboard are plenty of well-designed entertaining spaces, and a luxurious area at the bow. Upholstered in a classic grey-coloured suede-like material, the forward seating runs across the bow and down the port side, creating quite a spacious area for four people. There are no seats on the starboard side – you can stand, though, and the padded coaming is at the perfect height to rest your backside on. There is a convertible table that drops down to turn this area into a sunlounge.

At the stern is another entertaining area, behind the helm and passenger seating, with an elevated sunlounge spacious enough for two that

Onboard are plenty of well-designed entertaining spaces, and a luxurious area at the bow





hides a cosy two-person cabin below. The cabin has two small windows either side for airflow, and the space feels large enough to not be restrictive.

During hot summers, you're bound to spend a lot of time taking a dip, and separate swimplatforms either side of the outboard offer excellent access to the water. The platforms are finished in a light-coloured timber-look hard-wearing material.

For those wanting extra creature comforts, there is a head hidden in the front of the console behind a large swinging door. It's a little like stepping into Dr Who's Tardis – it's hard to imagine the space in there. The head is well-appointed, with timber and stainless steel highlights, the large mirror and freshwater sink allowing guests to freshen up.

The console is protected by an expansive integrated hardtop, its rigid bimini frame topped with a Stamoid canvas cover. The first-gen models used a custom North Sails cover, but the canvas does more to complete the look. The driving

Above: The plush and obviously comfortable seating in the cockpit for four.

Below: Under the transom sunbed is a two-person cabin.



position and seating arrangement enhance the sports-car-like manner of this boat, with separate helm and passenger seats situated ahead of bench-style seating for three or possibly four people. Crew are protected by a large raked windscreen which is decentred, allowing full view through the curves and the frameless corners without distortion.

The minimal dash design is a personal favourite. On the left is a large storage area, while ahead of the driver a 12in Garmin unit takes pride of place and is probably as large as you could fit. The steering wheel has a good level of adjustability, allowing you to stand or sit comfortably.

RACE BRED

Powering all this is a hefty Mercury 400R race-bred engine – it's big, bold and white, offering incredible acceleration. Make no mistake, this is a 400hp performance engine built on a 2.6lt inline six-cylinder platform with sequential multiport fuel injection and a maximum top-end rev range of 6400 to 7000rpm. It runs an all-new water-cooled supercharger and is effortless in performance. Mercury claims that this engine operates on a minimum of 89 octane unleaded, but recommends 91 octane. In any case, the higher octane is said to provide better performance and fuel efficiency.

The engine also has exquisite electro-hydraulic steering that is a pleasure to use, delivering sports-car-like control. The wheel spins freely with a good balance and level of feedback for full control without excessive pulling to get the boat to turn. Mercury's Active Trim is also onboard – this is a GPS, speed-based automatic engine trim system that is intuitive and hands-free, and continually adjusts outboard trim based on changes in boat speed to improve performance, fuel economy and ease of operation. It is great for someone new to boating, while an experienced owner may prefer to do this manually.

The Axopar 28 T-Top is built on a stepped hull, and it too offers excellent performance. The design allows the boat to plane faster and use less fuel by introducing air under the hull to reduce friction. Performance overall is exemplary, especially with the 400R strapped to the back. We wound the boat up to a striking 44.3 knots (82km/h), burning a decent 126lt of fuel per hour and, while you're not going to be running around like that all the time, this is certainly a driver's boat.




The Axopar 28 T-Top BRABUS Line looks more sleek yacht than powerboat

That said, there is no room for half-hearted driving – the boat simply doesn't respond. Several times I went into a turn throttling off and the boat simply didn't feel right. This was evidently not the way to drive it. By maintaining throttle and powering through a turn, the 28 T-Top impresses, giving a feeling of confidence throughout. Put it this way: I didn't want to get out of the driver's seat once I got the hang of it.

Offshore, the 22-degree deadrise at the transom handles superbly. Again, slowly nosing along into chop isn't the best way to drive, although I'm yet to see a hull entry slice through waves like the Axopar 28 T-Top. Despite the length of the hull, it manages to ride over lumps and bumps with no banging and surprisingly very little spray over the front when running both into and with the waves. As such, I found it extremely difficult to fault the ride both offshore and inshore.

The Axopar 28 T-Top BRABUS takes an already bold-looking boat and gives it a little more. There have been more than 80 small changes made since Axopar's Series 1 models, and this Series 2 package has a lot to offer. It is a sports boat that is immensely usable from simply entertaining to towing waterskiers, and you can do it all in style. It sits neatly in between sport and luxury, and now, with the BRABUS touch, you can stand out even more.



At the time of going to print, Axopar will have launched a new Series 2 Axopar 37 powered with twin 450hp. Can't wait to see that one. 

AXOPAR 28 T-TOP BRABUS

LOA:	9.18m
Beam:	2.95m
Weight (dry):	1840kg
Fuel:	260lt
Power (as tested):	400hp Mercury Verado 400R
Price from:	\$208,000
Price as tested:	\$275,990

More information: Eyachts, tel: (02) 9979 2443. Web: eyachts.com.au.



Above left: The BRABUS sports wheel is suede-wrapped and BB branded.