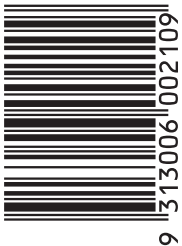


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LOCAL REVIEW
BRABUS Shadow 900 XC

SCANDINAVIAN NOIR

Scandinavian design gets a major boost from German engineering in the form of a supercharged BRABUS, reports Kevin Green.

WORDS **Kevin Green** PICS **Kevin Green & Supplied**



Just like BRABUS's snarling performance of hotted-up cars — their G Class Mercedes, for example — Axopar's hulls have received the same treatment from the German specialists in their first foray into the marine sector. During the last 43 years, BRABUS has grown to become the world's largest independent auto tuner, specialising in Mercedes-Benz, which it turns into supercars before they roll out of their Ruhr Valley factory. Other customers for this vroom treatment include Rover and Smart Cars from Daimler, plus a division with a long-established history of battery-powered vehicles. BRABUS otherwise build their own custom supercars.

So akin to Ferrari, Lexus, and several other car specialists, in 2017 BRABUS took a marine division under their wing — resulting in the perfectly matched BRABUS and Axopar. Having driven the early Axopars on their introduction to Australia back in 2017, their build and feel was all about understated power and precision, just like a re-engineered Mercedes-BRABUS. It helped that Constantin Buschmann, CEO of BRABUS, adopted his family's passion for boats after discovering Axopar and loving the functional yet alluring design. Shortly after, Buschmann formed a



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE It can get fairly close to shore thanks to its design; Relaxing will be easy with these sunpads; Storage and the anchor are easily accessible

partnership with Axopar to create an “elevated new product”, which is now known as the BRABUS Shadow range, based on the Axopar 28 and 37 models. The range is designed with Jarkko Jämsén, head designer for all Axopar boats, in collaboration with the BRABUS design team. Early success and market acceptance has so far resulted in a prestigious 2020 Red Dot Design Award for the BRABUS 900 Shadow.

“The Shadow name signifies a hyper-quick, hyper-exciting luxury day-boat or tender, a tremendous ‘go-anywhere’ support boat that

owners of large yachts and superyachts will love to drive themselves, seeking out beautiful bays, remote islands, and coastlines where the larger yacht may choose to follow,” said a company spokesperson.

Built-in exclusivity includes not only the fit-out and personalisation, but also because these are limited edition boats. This makes them guaranteed crowd pleasers, according to recent owner Ted who loves the attention and loud branding which gives him good reason to talk boats and cars with other enthusiasts whilst buzzing around Sydney Harbour.

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT It's a sleek and modern yet understated design; Water access is easy either side of the outboards; The hull design has had an update from previous models but retains the heart of it

BRABUS 900 Shadow Hull and Systems

The well proven two-step Axopar 37 GRP hull has been updated from the initial model that I drove back in 2017 but looks very similar, with the same stepped chine forward and pronounced longitudinal strakes and flairs to deflect waves. The shallow forefoot allows easy beach landings yet doesn't compromise linear performance thanks to the long keel and effective deadrise. Practicalities include an additional rub rail below the rubber gunwales, ideal for bumping against the superyacht mothership or for when errant journalists are behind the wheel. The Mercury 450 Racing engines are super smooth and lethal, capable of 85m/h according to the maker and with maximum torque at 5,500rpm and a silky smooth gearbox; allowing for seamless shifting between forward, neutral, and reverse.

Stored power is in four 100Ah Lithium ION batteries with a 300W inverter that is charged from the outboards' 115A alternators and runs most house systems including the 8000BTU Webasto air conditioner, so no need for generator. For Tasmanians there's a Webasto diesel heater, an excellent brand that I've used sailing in higher latitudes. Engines are started with a pair of AGM batteries. Other key systems include a shore power inlet and there's room on the cabin top for a large solar panel should you desire to reduce your carbon footprint.



NUMBER ONE

This accomplished company brings a lot to the marine table, which was apparent when I went aboard the first one that Eyachts has imported to Australia.

"We immediately put our hand up for the first hull when we heard it was available because of the cancelled Cannes Show," boss Peter Hrones told me. "Rather than see this brand go somewhere else, we had to have it because of our long-standing Axopar relationship."

Eyachts proved me wrong with the Axopars, which I loved but thought of as niche boats. However, with more than 100 sold in Australia, the numbers speak for themselves.

STYLE AND SUBSTANCE

Before boarding the BRABUS, I looked over its sistership, the latest version of the Axopar 37 that was nearby, just to remind myself about it and of course compare the two. When describing the differences between it and the BRABUS we can wax lyrical with many clichés — 'levels of refinement' and 'understated power' — but what we are really talking about is passion for an iconic brand backed up by good old fashioned German engineering. So yes, another final cliché — style and substance is what the BRABUS 900 Shadow is all about.

This has got to be the ultimate boat for brand loyalists of the hot-car variety and, having lived



for years in Germany where I futilely tried to outpace their car brands on the Autobahn in my Ford, I can see the attraction. It is of course pretty hard to miss given the emblazoned BRABUS marque on the engine cowls of the Mercury 450R outboards that cry out for attention.

The gunmetal grey hull immediately won my approval because the sunlight on the neighbouring Axopar 37 produced a lot of glare, while the BRABUS simply looked cooler and was quite literally easier on the eyes.

Remembering those clichés, the 'substance' on the BRABUS includes a carbon reinforced hull that allows it to be rated for these powerful 450 Racing engines (where the Axopar 37 maxes-out at 400HP versions).

CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON

There are three main layout choices: Spyder (open console), Cabin Cross and Sun Top. The first build, our review boat, is the Cabin Cross with opening roof and large doors on each side of the cabin. Deck options also include tall storage lockers, an aft cabin or a wet bar. Our review boat came with most popular layout for the Axopar range, the wet bar with triple removable seats at the transom, allowing the twin outboards to be fully elevated. Water access each side is good. Rubber sealed floor lockers and high bulkheads at the base of each door means that water can run out sans drama.

Underfoot my deck shoes enjoyed a firm grip on the white rubber cockpit sole. Important Australian features include a removable canvas bimini strung on poles going into the gunwales and the foredeck. Given the utilitarian nature of the BRABUS, a ski pole arch is ideal and underfoot are two shallow but long lockers for snorkels and small surfboard/kneeboard. Other storage comes in the form of lockers clad in stylish carbon.

Also stylish is the Corian-topped wet bar enclosed under a long fibreglass lid. It includes a Miele electric plate, top loading 40L refrigerator and sink, nicely lit by two ambient lights under the cabin overhang.

FOREDECK

Side decks are wide enough to walk along and tall gunwales with a sturdy powder coated guard rail ensure safe passage forward. Other handy features include integrated gunwale steps for boarding midships. Surprisingly, only standard cleats were used rather than retractable ones.

The foredeck is dominated by the cabin module with twin gull-wing doors. In front is a double seat and above the plumb bow the pulpit can have a cushion, for that ultimate bow rider feel.

The bow has an easily deployed anchor on an offset roller so some owners might choose to put a ladder alongside, given the shallow forefoot

that allows these boats to be easily beached — as I’ve done with Axopars in the past. Beneath is a deep locker containing the stainless chain and plinth for the horizontal Maxwell windlass, which comes with a remote control that cleverly also controls the Sidepower SE60 bow thruster. So if sailing solitary, you can work at the bow while keeping the boat into the wind.

SALOON DINING

Upright bulkheads, tall windows, and those huge side doors create a fantastic airy feel to the BRABUS cabin, yet simply shut the doors, pull the sunroof closed, and you have a cosy space for blasting offshore or along the coast to that



ABOVE The gunmetal grey hull matches its name while also setting it apart from the crowd

Sea Trials

Performance figures (dealer supplied, 65 per cent fuel)

RPM	SPEED (KT)	FUEL BURN (L/H)	RANGE (NM)
1000	6.7	5.1	959
2000	9.75	40.05	178
3000	20.8	69.85	217
4000	31.2	101.3	224
5000	42.75	181.5	172
6350	57.4	325.5	129

weekend retreat. The electric canvas sunroof still gives enough hard-top space for gantry equipment such as the Simrad broadband radar, lights and even a satellite dome should you desire. At the back of the saloon, the U-shaped settee and sizeable folding table make for a comfortable lunch-time nook, and I'd agree with BRABUS in describing the finish as 'fine leather' as the quality and feel of the upholstery is Mercedes level in every respect. This includes the car-style carpet segments that are easily moved — perhaps too easily.

Centre stage at the helm is the charismatic BRABUS leather-clad steering wheel on the

carbon fibre facie with twin bucket seats and bolsters. Close your eyes and the feel is supercar level. Yet German pragmatism ensures this is a highly functional part of the BRABUS 900, including paddle controls inside the wheel rim for tabs, bow thruster, and house functions. Steering is actuated electronically, which is efficient but can lack feel. Behind the wheel is the Extended Glass Bridge from Simrad that has NSS 12-inch displays with two additional 9in screens, including Mercury's Vessel View showing all engine data.

Mercury's Joystick Piloting black box controls the gear, revs and steering — so can be used not



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Entertaining is made easy; Twin 450R's had the hull motoring along nicely on review day; There are views all around thanks to the large windows; You won't miss a thing with this display



just for manoeuvring, but also when under way at slow speeds as we were whilst threading our way into the Quays Marina. The Skyhook feature uses GPS to maintain position and heading, the latter via an integrated digital compass. Also useful offshore is the Route feature, that follows the waypoints set in the Simrad NSS plotter. Another Mercury feature is its Active Trim that takes over from the manual trim buttons on the side of the twin throttles.

Other smarts include the Simrad HD radar and AIS, plus VHF. Laudable also is the chunky push-button switches below the glass bridge, controlling items like the sturdy single wiper that swept the toughened glass front window clean.

BRABUS bling is abundant everywhere, from the mood-lit marque footplate to badges on the carbon fibre panels, which helps to avoid confusing it with a mere Axopar. Lighting can be changed according to the mood and level of the celebrations.





COMFY CABIN

Despite the day-boat appeal, the cabin is fairly well fitted-out for weekend retreats at quiet anchorages, where the shallow draft of the BRABUS will give you a place far from the madding crowd. Simply open both gull-wing doors and the small fore hatch to create an alfresco resting spot, or even close up the lot when the mercury rises and switch on the air conditioner, which is powered by the inverter for short periods.

For the double bed, there's a sprung mattress in grey/black patterned Dinamica upholstery and a Corian sink for ablutions (plus the hot electric shower on the transom) and even a hidden electric toilet beneath the aft bench. This comes with an 80L holding tank. There's also an optional bulkhead for the toilet but I'd prefer to simply close the cabin door. Above the toilet is a large mirror, which can be optioned with a 42 in flat screen television. However, a Fusion Apollo 77 entertainment system will get the BRABUS rocking.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT The double bed is perfect for weekend getaways; Lighting can be changed depending on the event; It's a well laid out navigation centre



Facts & Figures
BRABUS SHADOW 900 XC
SUN TOP

PRICE
\$847,550 (drive away)

GENERAL
LENGTH OVERALL: 11.73m/38ft 5in
BEAM: 3.35m
DRAFT WITH PROPS: 0.85
WEIGHT (EX-ENGINES): 4,300kg
(engines 2 x 313kg dry weight)

CAPACITIES
FUEL: 730L
BERTHS: 2

ENGINE
ENGINES: Twin Mercury 450 R 4.6L
Supercharged V8
PERFORMANCE: 60kt

DESIGN
Axopar/BRABUS

DEALERSHIP
eYachts
PH: (02) 9979 2443
W: eyachts.com.au

CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW Dayboating is made easy with the BRABUS; There's no mistaking the name with the branding everywhere; Reviewer Kevin Green at the helm



BROKEN BAY BLAST

Driving on a bumpy Broken Bay was an ideal trip for the BRABUS 900 because its sharp hull simply cut through the one foot chop once I'd put it on the plane, cruising nicely yet at an incredible 40 knots. To do that I simply added about 15 degrees of tilt on the Mercury outboards which flattened the bow. After we passed Barenjoey Head I touched the tabs to see their effect, which resulted in more drag, rendering them unnecessary — at least for a lightly loaded boat. Out on Broken Bay, the chop increased but not the slamming or any sound of groaning from BRABUS components. So with throttles pushed fully down, the Simrad GPS showed a lightning fast 61 knots, which would be a truly scary speed in many hulls but not this BRABUS which felt rock steady.

Apart from the wind and faint whine of the motors all was tranquil. That was until I put the wheel down to push the hull into some tight turns. The BRABUS relished this new challenge, digging its chines in to drive me around rather than slide, with no cavitation despite the conditions. While doing this, visibility remained at 360 degrees, so including the high side when fully banked over, thanks to the large side windows.



“Driving on bumpy Broken Bay was an ideal trip for the BRABUS 900 because its sharp hull simply cut through the one foot chop”

About the Author

Kevin Green has spent a large part of his life making a living from his love of the sea, starting in the early days as an apprentice fisherman on his family's North Sea lobster boat, then working with the Royal Navy to later being a marine writer and former editor of *Australian Yachting Magazine*. He's lived and boated in various places around the world, including a glorious seven-year stint on the shores of the Mediterranean before moving to Australia. In between he's undertaken commercial delivery work, been a windsurfing instructor, worked as a superyacht engineer and more recently as a part-time charter skipper on Sydney Harbour.

As a yachting journalist Kevin has covered many international events including America's Cups, Volvo Ocean Races, Clipper

circumnavigations, World ARCs and local events such as the Sydney-Hobart. Kevin enjoys most of all just messing about in boats, something that 10-years writing for *Trade-a-Boat Magazine* has allowed him to do. Doing sea trials on innovative boats is particularly rewarding for him and as a former technology specialist.

Memorable moments over the last five years reporting for *Trade-a-Boat* have included crewing in the Sydney to Hobart yacht race and introducing readers to new boating experiences, such as the recent feature about motor boating through the French canals. Kevin has witnessed an incredible improvement in boat building and systems; future technologies such as foiling, green energy and recyclable vessels

to sustain our fragile planet are among his particular passions.

