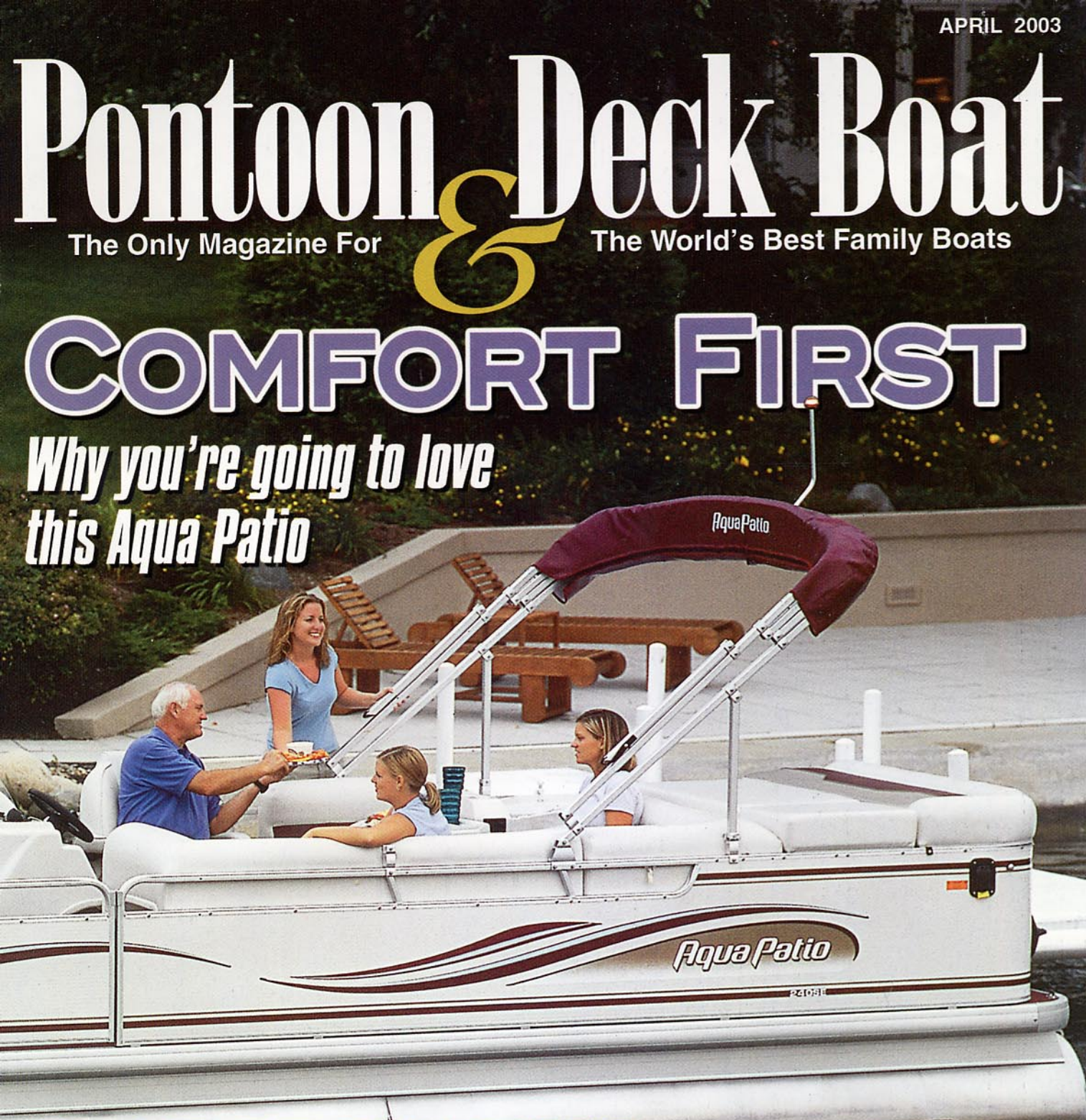
APRIL 2003

Pontoon & Deck Boat

The Only Magazine For The World's Best Family Boats

COMFORT FIRST

Why you're going to love this Aqua Patio



HIGH ON BOATS

WHY ALTITUDE SHOULD CONCERN YOU

Accommodation, But No Compromise

A look at wheelchair-accessible toons

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inset works well with the wood grain instrument panel. The Aqua Patio logo in the center of the wheel is also a nice touch. There is a very comfortable helm chair that not only slides and swivels, but it also reclines. The throttle may be a little too far forward to comfortably use the armrest from the helm seat, but the chair is adjustable so you do have options.



From a consumer standpoint, the Aqua Patio is an elegant and very luxurious pontoon boat that has a lot of the family features that are necessary for family fun.

Inspection Test

Below Deck

It's not really fair, but when it comes to construction quality, each Aqua Patio that we inspect is often compared to previous models manufactured by the same company. Simply put, we expect a pontoon from Aqua Patio to live up to that solid reputation that the Indiana-based manufacturer has created. This 2003 model lived up to those expectations and even raised the bar for future models to be compared to.

The two round pontoons are 25-inches in diameter and are made from .090 gauge aluminum. As expected, the weld quality is excellent and the overall construction is nice and clean. The C-channel cross members are on 24-inch centers and the C-shaped risers are made from .250 gauge aluminum.

Above Deck

Below the seats are Rotocast bases that provide ample storage. There are also utility trays for those storage units to help keep smaller items from getting lost.

There is nearly 22 feet in total seating room and the seatbacks measure 17-inches tall. The deep seatbacks not only make the seating very comfortable, but also safe for smaller children. Another good safe design is the three lift and lock gates that all have pinch guards to help prevent smaller fingers from getting caught. With the tall 26-inch railing around the perimeter, you have one less thing to worry about when dealing with those toddlers. The inch and a quarter square aluminum rails are anodized and fastened to the deck with risers for easy draining.

Finish Work

We found no dangerous or sharp edges on board and all the hidden areas are well finished. Access to the wiring below the helm is limited, but from what we were able to see, the wires are all well protected. The Next Wave Electrical system uses heavy-duty 10-gauge wiring with individual circuits to provide reliable power to the entire system. And with the automotive style plug-and-play Deutsch connectors, it's easy to replace or add appliances.

Performance Test

This pontoon was built more for comfort than for performance, but she did handle very well. With the Mercury 90hp four-stroke outboard we were able to reach a top speed of just over 23 mph at full throttle. The acceleration out of the hole can be best described as a steady climb, as she got up on plane in just over four seconds. The optional hydraulic steering made the wide turns very easy and overall she was fun to drive.

Final Thoughts

The Aqua Patio 240 SE-3 is perfect for those families who put comfort first on their priority list. With the optional entertainment center, plus the changing room, it's ideal for those extended trips with the family. The only "must have" item that this test boat lacks is a ski/tow bar, but it is available as an option.

We consider this to be a well-built boat, with exceptional fit and finish work. The attention to details is found throughout the boat.

TEST STATS

Top Speed	23.4 mph
Db-a @ Idle	72
Fuel @ 3000	2.8 gph
Any Rattles?	None
No. of Gates	3
Boarding Ladder	Yes

BOAT SPECS

LOA	24'
Beam	8' 6"
Hull Design	2-25-inch diameter pontoons
Dry Weight	2265 lbs.
Load Capacity	15 People
Fuel Capacity	24 Gallons

ENGINE & PROPELLERS

Engine	Mercury 90 four stroke
Cylinder Type	4
Displacement/hp	97.4ci/90hp
Lower Unit Gear Ratio	2.33:1
Propeller	13-pitch

RPM vs. SPEED vs. FUEL vs. DB-A

800	1.5 mph	0.1 gph	72
1000	3 mph	0.3 gph	72.5
1500	4.4 mph	0.3 gph	79
2000	5.9 mph	0.5 gph	80.5
2500	7.2 mph	1 gph	82.5
3000	9.3 mph	2.8 gph	84.5
3500	12 mph	3.5 gph	86
4000	14.8 mph	4.5 gph	88.5
4500	17.6 mph	6 gph	90
5000	19.4 mph	7.3 gph	91
5500	21.6 mph	8.5 gph	91.5
6000	23.4 mph	9.1 gph	98.5

PRICES

Base Retail w/Snd. Features...$23,770
(Boat and Motor)

Price as Tested.....$27,736
(Boat and Motor)

STANDARD FEATURES

Next Wave Electrical system, 25-inch tubes with keel, stainless steel fasteners, exclusive heavy-duty GX48 expanded vinyl, deluxe steering wheel, utility tube, adjustable helm seat, quick release durable windscreen, AM/FM cassette with two speakers, full instrumentation, fixed ladder, docking lights with module, running lights, bow and stern cleats, changing room, rear entry gate, Harbor marine grade carpet, 25-quart cooler, 24-gallon fuel tank, gate filler cushion, master power switch.

OPTIONS ON TEST BOAT

PP cover, Deluxe package with Clarion CD, rear entertainment center, bow cooler table ottoman, hydraulic steering, aluminum under skin, Mercury 90hp four-stroke engine.



Aqua Patio 240 SE-3

First Impression

This Special Edition, three-gate pontoon boat is packed with standard amenities. Heading into our test, we noticed a lot of nice features, including the plush looking furniture. We only hoped that the furniture was as comfortable as it looked. Like a good book, we hate to give away the ending, but after we were finished, we were very pleased. This is a very comfortable 24-footer and it's ready for family fun.

Consumer Test

If we only rated the furniture based on the appearance, it would still receive a high mark. Aqua Patio uses an attractive color scheme that really gives the whole boat an elegant feel to it. However, when you also factor in the comfort of middle and upper back support, well it has to be considered one of the most comfortable boats that we tested.

A new feature for 2003 is the gate filler seat. Its best quality may be the designated area for the removable seat behind the captain's chair (so you don't have to block the gate opening). The filler cushion can be placed in the bow to create the ultimate conversation area or it can increase your seating options in the stern. Either way, it's a great addition to any boat and is just one of the many standard features on board.

One of the three gate openings is in the stern and it's part of the rear entry design. Because of this design the sundeck is limited in size, but it should be adequate for those sunbathers in your family. Below the partial sundeck is the pop-up changing enclosure that is large and easy to access. It also doubles as a locking dock box.

The rear entertainment center is an option, but it's worth the upgrade if you want to stretch the most out of your time on the water. Complete with a sink, hand pump faucet and plenty of counter space, this refreshment center has it all. There is even a trash receptacle in the door, plus a second 12-volt outlet. Another great option is the padded bow cooler table ottoman that contains a cooler and storage for two one-liter bottles.

One popular standard feature is the removable 25-quart cooler that is recessed into the rear chaise lounge. This design keeps your cooler out of the way, while still providing easy access to your drinks.

The helm station is very well done. The one-piece molded fiberglass console is through bolted and there is plenty of legroom. All the silver trim gauges are well labeled and the instrument panel is very symmetrical. There is also a utility tube at the helm that is perfect for smaller dry storage items like keys and wallets. It's similar to a glove box, but the design actually looks better.

The three-spoke tilt steering wheel with a burl wood