

Are the Coasties Watching You? p54

BOATING®

OCTOBER 2009

WORLD'S LARGEST POWERBOAT MAGAZINE

YEAR'S BEST GEAR

30 GADGETS
FOR BETTER
CRUISING
NAVIGATING
ENTERTAINING

TESTS

- ▶ **YAMAHA**
242 LTD S
- ▶ **REGAL** 44
SPORT COUPE
- ▶ **FORMULA**
290 SS
- ▶ **WHALER** 250
OUTRAGE
- ▶ **SEA-DOO**
WAKE 155
AND MORE!

BOATINGMAG.COM

U.S./CAN \$4.99



VOLUME 82, NUMBER 9

Yamaha 242 Limited S

WHEN YOU TEST DRIVE about 250 new boats a year, it's easy to characterize any one with a droll, here-we-go-again remark. But when we hit the throttles of the twin engines that power Yamaha's new 242 Limited S bowrider, the acceleration was so startling and the top speed so satisfying, "droll" gave way to smiles. Besides nimble turning and belly-busting speed, what sets the 242 Limited S apart in the very cluttered universe of midprice, midsize family boats is its seamless integration of hull, seating comfort and mechanics of propulsion. Even the relatively comfortable asking price is kept low thanks to the way Yamaha takes ownership of the entire building process — everything from laying the keel to casting the impellers.

NOTEWORTHY

This model's six-speaker Aquatic AV stereo system features a port that "swallows" an iPod device, can play its music files and charge its battery.

It's that ownership of the process, we think, that keeps Yamaha at the top of the game and makes ownership easier — a formula that has made Yamaha one of two top jet-boat builders. For the customer, when the boatbuilder is also the engine maker, there is no finger pointing between component makers in the event that something needs service.

It is the propulsion system and its low profile that lets Yamaha accomplish the most dramatic feature on its new 242 — its signature bilevel transom design, with padded seating and curved backrests over the swim platform. The area makes a perfect spot for comfortable socializing. Even more welcome to towed water-sports guys, the lower platform now is just 7 inches above the water surface, which eases reboarding — even without the integrated stainless-steel ladder. Since Yamaha debuted this transom concept in 2004, other builders have tried to match it and mostly failed. It's the compactness of the engines and jet-drive system that lets

Yamaha tuck them under its unique transom seating area, while other manufacturers build a "doghouse" over the area. A stern-drive won't accommodate this innovation either.

At first, the cockpit appears more conventional, with wraparound bench seating aft and a bucket seat at the helm. But a closer look at the port side shows the seat can flip to forward-facing seating or changed to aft-facing lounge seating that opens up the cockpit for easy conversations at anchor.

The LS model comes with a tow-sports tower that incorporates a sun top, three LED lamps and a pair of small speakers. The privacy compartment has about 3 more inches of headroom than the compartment in the Yamaha 230 series. To gain that space, Yamaha gave the 242 more freeboard, and compared with the previous 230 series, we felt more "in the boat" aboard the 242. The secure feeling of high freeboard is carried forward to the first-class section in the bow, and the wide seating arrangement there will make riders feel the spot was worth the ticket price. Filler cushions let you convert it from lounging to playpen to wraparound seating for up to six.

The 242 has drive-by-wire throttles that enable two rpm-based speed-control systems. Cruise Assist can be engaged at any planing speed, while the No Wake Mode holds boat speed at about 5 mph. Cruise Assist lets the captain toggle speed up and down in eight increments using a button to fine-tune the speed, which is great for water sports. The system is groundbreaking in its convenience and makes handling the boat more pleasurable.

Though its outboard division has "taught" the engines to self-synchronize through the electronic control module, Yamaha has opted not to do that to hold the line on price. That's about the only price concession we found on board. Even the instrument panel includes a GPS-powered speedometer for accurate speed and fuel-range calculations, giving you instant fuel-burn rates and mile-by-mile stats on total usage.

Underway, the 242 LS snapped onto plane in less than three seconds — and too fast really for an accurate test with a stopwatch. Time to 30 mph came in at a little more than four seconds with two passengers. Yamaha's new

A tow-sports arch with integrated (and removable) sun top is standard on the Yamaha 242 Limited S, which is very different from your everyday midsize bowrider.

PHOTO: BILL DOOSTER





Seating arrangements include a convertible passenger lounge, transom seats and a bow playpen that morphs into front-facing seats.

1.8-liter engines operate at a much lower speed — WOT is 7,500 rpm rather than 10,000 — so the tone from the engine bay is more pleasing. Our boat was a prototype and still undergoing tweaks, one of which will be to lower engine noise to or below the more-comfortable levels we experienced in the previous years' models, though we expect they'll still exceed the levels of stern-drives and most outboards.

Boats in the Yamaha

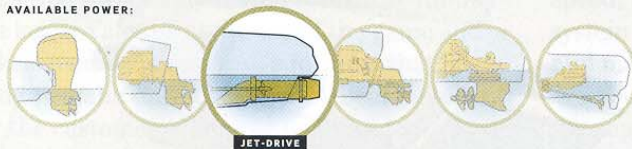
240 series will range in price from \$41,799 for an SX240 to \$47,599 for the 242 Limited S we tested. Each will offer similar performance. The difference lies in features and amenities. If you like the jet concept, Sea-Doo offers its 2009 model 310 hp 230 Challenger SP with a tower for \$42,999, a slightly smaller boat that's also less luxurious. A swank, broad-bow stern-drive like the 22-foot-3-inch Four Winns SL222 will be about \$65,500



with a tower package and a 300 hp dual-prop stern-drive. Which gets us to the best attribute of the Yamaha 242 Limited S: the value. It will be tough to find another boat that matches the design and quality of the Yamaha

for the money. If this price is a little strong, you can slide down the model line, spend \$4,000 less and still get the really important features. Looks like Yamaha has cooked up another best-seller. — *Boating Tech Team*

AVAILABLE POWER:



High Points

- ▶ Because Yamaha builds the engines and the boat, it also handles all warranty issues.
- ▶ It's tough to beat the value Yamaha offers in this segment.
- ▶ Transom design is great for lounging and family swim time.
- ▶ The jet-drive advantage: easy to maintain, shallow draft, no props.

Low Points

- ▶ Ignition-key switches are aimed at your left kneecap.
- ▶ Carpeted stowage will be tough to keep dry and fresh.
- ▶ No drain in the sole of the head compartment.
- ▶ The jet-drive disadvantage: No trim and no rudder negatively impact tracking when docking or towing.

- ▶ LOA: 23'6" ▶ Beam: 8'6" ▶ Draft (max): 1'4" ▶ Displacement (lb. approx.): 3,519
- ▶ Transom Deadrise: 20 ▶ Bridge Clearance: 7'10" ▶ Max. Cabin Headroom: 3'10" ▶ Fuel Capacity (gal.): 50.2

▶ **Price: \$47,599** (w/ test power)

▼ **BOATING Certified Test Results**

rpm	SPEED			EFFICIENCY				OPERATION	
	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	run angle	sound level
1,500	3.48	4.00	1.40	2.48	2.86	112	129	1	74
2,000	5.21	6.00	1.70	3.07	3.53	138	159	3	74
2,500	6.08	7.00	2.40	2.53	2.92	114	131	4	83
3,000	6.52	7.50	3.30	1.97	2.27	89	102	6	88
3,500	7.82	9.00	4.40	1.78	2.05	80	92	6	87
4,000	9.56	11.00	5.60	1.71	1.96	77	88	4	88
4,500	13.90	16.00	7.10	1.96	2.25	88	101	3	87
5,000	21.72	25.00	8.90	2.44	2.81	110	126	3	89
5,500	27.37	31.50	10.80	2.53	2.92	114	131	2	96
6,000	31.28	36.00	13.10	2.39	2.75	107	124	2	91
6,500	35.63	41.00	16.10	2.21	2.55	100	115	1	98
7,000	39.10	45.00	20.00	1.96	2.25	88	101	0	103
7,500	43.88	50.50	24.70	1.78	2.04	80	92	0	105

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

TIME TO PLANE: 2.5 sec. TIME TO 30 MPH: 4.5 sec.

HOW WE TESTED

ENGINE: Twin 110.6 cid Yamaha Marine gasoline inline-four jet drives DRIVE/PROP: Yamaha Jet Drives with 155 mm diameter, variable-pitch stainless-steel impellers GEAR RATIO: 1:1 FUEL LOAD: 25 gal. WATER ON BOARD: 0 gal. PASSENGER WEIGHT: 405 lb.

Yamaha Motor Corporation, USA Kennesaw, Georgia 800-962-7926; yamaha-motor.com

For more jet-drive reviews, go to boatingmag.com