



MIAMI TO BIMINI ON PWCs. NO, REALLY.

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15 REASONS TO LOOK FORWARD TO BOATING SEASON

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FORMULA 290 FX4

RIGHT BOAT, FIRST TIME
OUR EXPERT TESTERS SHOW YOU HOW

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tested Formula 290 FX4



Special FX

Formula 290 FX4

BY ALAN JONES

If someone you know doesn't swivel his head as the new Formula 290 FX4 goes by, suggest he visit his eye doctor, because it's time for a new prescription.

Unique Factor

Clad in an Imron hue called Silver Diamond Pearl Metallic and splashed with liberal doses of nail-polish red, the 290 FX4 has a healthy dose of pizzazz. What's unusual is that the Imron continues over the gunwales and spills into the cockpit, creating a unique styling statement. While the 290 FX4 is essentially a 290 SS under the skin, the visual transformation is startling.

Pristine white upholstery, with easy-to-clean PreFixx top coating,

serves as the canvas for the embroidered FX4 logos, red piping and silver panels. The bling factor is elevated by the extensive use of silver carbon fiber matting under a clear coat in places such as the surface of the extra-large cockpit wet bar. The 3-D cut of the matting on the dash catches light like the facets of a diamond, accenting the Oversized Mega Series Livorsi gauges and ergonomically correct chrome binnacle controls. The boat's signature feature is the red aft sunlounger that folds flat to form a sunpad.

Performance

Thanks to the micro switch, we were spared the sound of crunching fiberglass when we activated the electronic engine hatch lift to peek under the hood and forgot to open the stain-

less steel walk-through gate. Inside the compartment were twin 320 hp MerCruiser 377 MAG V-8s with catalytic converters for reduced emissions. Prior to takeoff, we settled into the go-fast-style helm station with twin wrap-around, flip-up bolster seats. Although the seats are in single module for easy conversation, there's a man-barrier in between to maintain the necessary separation. And unlike true racing seats that wedge you into place like a hot dog in a bun, these are wide enough for beamy Americans.

Upon cranking the Mercs, we were rewarded with a satisfying rumble emanating from the standard Corsa side pipes. We toned down the attitude with a flip of the Captain's Call exhaust diverter to keep the neighbors satisfied and idled into Lake

FORMULA 290 FX4



SPECIFICATIONS

Length	29 ft.
Beam	9 ft.
Deadrise	22 degrees
Capacity	9 people/1,683 lbs.
Dry Weight	8,950 lbs.
Fuel Capacity	122 gals.

PERFORMANCE

	mph	rpm	dBa
Peak	55.2	5200	92
Cruise	39.5	3500	86
Time to Plane			4.0 secs.
Time to 30 mph			8.5 secs.

POWER

Test	Twin 320 hp MerCruiser 377 MAG
	w/cat.
Max hp	640 hp
Cylinders	V-8
Displacement	6.2L
Weight	1,019 lbs.
WOT Range	4800-5200 rpm
Base Price	w/test power \$226,720

VALUE-ADDED STANDARD FEATURES

Bennett trim tabs, 600-watt Kenwood MP3 stereo w/remote, Corsa side exhaust w/LED lighting

MUST-HAVE OPTIONS

Cherry woodgrain cabin flooring, cockpit pull-out refrigerator, windlass

BUILDER

Formula Boats
formulaboats.com

FINANCING:

\$1,626/month w/15% down and 6% interest for 15 years

Wawasee, Indiana's largest. The 290 FX4 is solidly built, as evidenced by the 8,950-pound heft of its pressure-treated Perma Panel structural hull matrix. Typically, stout boats with deep-V hulls are notoriously slow to get moving, but we reached plane in 4 seconds, and 30 mph in 8.5 seconds. Top speed wasn't far behind; we reached an eye-watering 55.2 mph, which reminded us temperatures were in the 30s. Even at WOT, the ride was quiet, measuring only 92 decibels thanks to its engine insulation, aerodynamic windshield and lack of anything rattling.

Handling

Our test boat stretches 29 feet long, and when we were tracking in a straight line through the chop, it felt even bigger. A clue to its successful hull design was that it felt good at any speed — from barely on plane all the way to its double-nickel top speed. If you over-trim it, the 290 FX4 will let you know by porpoising. Bumping the trim down a notch resulted in a very level ride that put us in a good position to use its sharper entry to slice through the chop smoothly. We could instantly make the boat shrink by whipping the aluminum racing wheel hard over into a sharp turn, transforming it into a mid-20s sportboat. It leaned in hard and cornered very well, leaving behind the perfect Oh!-shaped wake.

Best Uses

The 290 FX4 is in its sweet spot as a day boat entertainer. With a capacity of nine, it's large enough to handle your entire baseball team in the expansive cockpit seating area that fills its 9-foot beam. Actually, "day boat" is a bit of a misnomer, because Formula has taken night lighting to the max with LED mood lighting everywhere, such as in the cupholders, speakers, transom gate, side exhaust pipes and the convertible aft lounge seat. You can even order it with matching underwater lighting.

Heading into the cabin is a senso-

ry-pleasing event thanks to the extensive use of high-gloss deep cherry wood and tan, unbelievably soft Ultraleather on the facing V-shaped settees. Standing headroom is a little more than 5 feet, but there is plenty of room for a 6-footer to sit. For dining there's a gleaming cherry table that drops down to form a large V-berth. There's no amidships cabin, so this boat offers the perfect excuse for couples to leave the kids behind and get some "us" time.

At slow speeds with the trim bumped up a little, the FX4 plows up a nice wakeboarding ramp for the kids, and there's an optional swivel-head ski pylon for easy towing. The large twin aft trunks are a great place to store the boards and tubes.

Preferred Setup

If you choose zero options for the 290 FX4, you'll still have a fully loaded boat with standard features such as Bennett trim tabs, a china head with pumpout and black Corian countertops in the head compartment, a digital depthfinder and a carpeted cabin with custom throw pillows. There are twin Kenwood stereos, including a 600-watt unit in the cockpit that features a transom remote. The only addition needed is the 200-watt subwoofer for a party-inducing thump. Formula makes sure you don't screw up the FX4 by choosing too little power or too much, so it only comes with twin MerCruiser 377s with a total of 640 hp.

About the only add-on I would need is the windlass (fear of manual labor) that comes with 75 feet of chain and a hood ornament-worthy polished stainless steel anchor you might not drop for fear of scratching. Unless you will be spending time aboard dockside with access to shore power, you will probably pass on the air-conditioning unit (\$4,915), since the 290 FX4 doesn't have a generator option due to space considerations. If this is a deal breaker, check out Formula's slightly larger 310 FX5, which has this option.

tested Formula 290 FX4

Owner Feedback

Larry and Monica Weigand, plus Rob, 17, and Julia and Caroline, 15; and Matthew, 7; Ft. Wayne, Ind.

PURCHASED AT SUN SPORT MARINE, HARRISON TOWNSHIP, MICH.

What we liked:

- Great performance
- Formula quality
- Eye-catching Imron and graphics
- Dual seating at the helm
- Roomy cabin

What we would change:

I called my friend Scott Smith at Formula and told him on the next boat I want big blocks.

Why we bought it:

The 290 is the perfect size for Lake Wawasee, with plenty of room to invite four couples for sunset and night cruises. During the day, we like

to take turns dragging everyone around on tubes. We hit the waterfront restaurants, and we like getting out in the middle of the lake and cranking up the stereo and jumping in the water.

The oversized swim platform makes it easy to re-board, and we like just hanging out on the stern platform. Matthew, our youngest, loves diving off the bow and swimming to the stern ... endlessly. This year we are leaving it in Longboat Key, Fla., for the winter and are real-



ly looking forward to exploring the Gulf. Our previous boat was a Formula, and we won't own any other kind, because of the styling, performance and quality. **BW**



IN BRIEF: FEATURES

- 1 Rear bench seat folds flat in seconds
- 2 Upscale touches even carry into head compartment
- 3 Add filler cushions to create a V-berth
- 4 Go-fast controls and carbon fiber dash make a great-looking helm
- 5 Comfortable seats in the cabin for relaxation