

SEA RAY

230 Select Fission

As new electronics make their way into smaller boats, it makes it simple for anyone to become an instant Tow Pro.

By Bill Jennings

We all take for granted the many electronic devices on today's automobiles. Our cars have every bell and whistle from cruise control to ABS brakes. Considering the rapid advances in electronics and the many such devices we see in our cars, it was only both logical and a matter of time before these systems would find their way into our boats. While we have seen autopilots linked to GPS systems in yachts for several years, we are now beginning to see several interesting technical electronic devices finding their way into smaller family boats.

Case in point - Mercury Marine has introduced a new advancement in tow sport technology that allows anyone to become an instant "tow pro". They call it "Smart Tow". You might expect to find a system like this in a high-end professional ski or wakeboard boat, but Mercury launched the device in the quite affordable Sea Ray 230 Select. I'm sure they figured that more cottage families are skiing today and with a Smart Tow installed, one boat is all the family needs. Even more importantly, now anyone in the family can drive for water sports, with a new level of confidence and control.

The operation of Smart Tow is remarkably simple. Think about sport towing as having two stages. The first is getting your tow up and running, by initiating a pull from zero to the desired operation speed. This stage is critical because too much power will upset inexperienced skiers, while too little power will give experienced skiers too much drag. Achieving the correct balance in this initial stage is the difference between an experienced towboat driver and a novice. With Smart Tow, a single control gauge is fitted at the helm. By pressing a button on this gauge, you are selecting the most appropriate pull from a choice of five launch settings. The second step is to enter the rpm setting that you know will deliver the appropriate running speed for the person you are towing. It's like cruise control on the water - boarders and tubers will want a much lower speed than slalom skiers and bare footers.

When both of these numbers are set, you simply take up the slack in the rope, check that the skier is ready and push the throttle lever fully forward. You will hear a beep to let you know the system is reading the settings and then Smart Tow, coupled with digital throttle and shift, completely takes over and delivers precisely the launch and pull speed that you ordered. It even compensates automatically for speed changes in turns. When the ride is over or your tow falls off, a single tap on the throttle returns the engine to idle speed.

When Mercury Marine was looking for a boat in which to install and demonstrate Smart Tow, the Sea Ray 230 was an obvious choice. Not only does Mercury Marine own Sea Ray, but also Sea Ray is well established, as one of the most popular cottage runabouts and 23' 7" is a good length for a sports towboat.



A well organized and sporty design highlight the 230's helm.



The aft-facing tower speakers deliver tunes to both rider and passengers.



Mercury's Smart Tow gauge is easy to read and displays all the important details in one location.



Night Life: show your true colours at night with the 230's cockpit lighting system.

To ensure that skiers and wakeboarders are getting everything they need, the optional Smart Tow package includes a ski mirror, a wakeboard tower with integral bimini top, extended swim platform and concealed three-step stainless steel ladder. Since this is all about having fun on the water, owners will appreciate the iPod interface with docking station and the Clarion stereo package with dash and transom remotes. Two-tone gel coat hull graphics let your neighbours know that you are serious about tow sports. Of course such a tow machine would not be complete without a funky name and so Sea Ray has labeled it the "Fission Edition". And if traveling to different lakes is in your plan, you can add a Fission Edition colour matching ShoreLand'r® tandem trailer with four-wheel disc brakes.

In addition to the benefits of Smart Tow, the Sea Ray 230 offers many reasons to buy this boat as a comfortable runabout for up to 10 passengers. The twin bucket seats include the flip-lip feature that allows you to drive from a higher seating position when approaching a dock. The rear bench seat also is unique, in that the portside of the seatback can be moved to provide a walkway to the swim platform, while the starboard side of the seat folds onto a rear fac-

ing chaise lounge. Bow passengers have two-way lounge seats that are actually long enough to really stretch out on.

I found further positive proof that the Sea Ray designers did not hold back on the 230's features when I spotted the stainless drink holders and grab handles adjacent to every seat; the huge lockable wakeboard storage; power-assist steering; six 10-inch cleats; a tempered & tinted curved glass windshield, icebox in dash; carry-on cooler, snap in carpeting, a cockpit cover and a door between the cockpit and bow area, to keep wind from blowing onto cockpit passengers.

The helm on the 230 Fission Edition includes a host of items that will keep any captain happy and better informed. Examples include a keyless ignition system, multi-function gauges, an hour meter, a fuel consumption information gauge, power assisted steering, tilt wheel, SmartCraft digital throttle/shift plus a wood-grain dash and steering wheel.

Evidence of the legendary Sea Ray construction quality can be found everywhere. All through-hull fittings are stainless steel, the inside of all storage areas are gelcoated and the marine plywood stringers are encapsulated in fiberglass.

But with Smart Tow, the Sea Ray 230

Select Fission Edition becomes much more than just a solid family runabout. You also get a worthy ski boat that makes every member of the family a tow pro. By simply matching the settings to the skill level and type of tow sport, Smart Tow delivers consistent and precise towing for everyone, and that results in large and enthusiastic smiles all around. □

Specifications	
Length:	23' 7" / 7.21 m
Beam:	8' 6" / 2.6 m
Deadrise:	21°
Weight:	4,244 lbs. / 1929 kgs
Draft: (engine down)	38" / .96 m
Fuel Capacity:	50 gals. / 180 L
Power:	MerCruiser 350 Magnum MPI 300hp with Bravo III drive.
Top Speed:	52.0 mph
Acceleration, 0 to 30 mph:	Approx 10 seconds.

Sea Ray Boats
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Specifications, product features and colours are subject to change without notice. Read your owners manual carefully and always make responsible boating your #1 priority on the water. Respect the environment and always ensure everyone on your boat wear an approved personal flotation device. See your participating authorized Xpress dealer for details on their complete Suzuki equipped line up. Suzuki. Way of Life.

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