

review

Senator
800 HT

WORDS BY **JOHN EICHELSEIM**
PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO BY
ROGER MILLS

MEAN STUFF

The custom Senator 800 HT *Miss Dee Meana* represents a new direction for Senator Boats – it's effectively the first of a new, large-volume cabin cruiser range.



N

elson's Dan Govier owned his Senator 6.5m hardtop sportfisher (*Boating NZ*, January 2017) for five happy years, fishing the waters of Tasman Bay, D'Urville Island and the Marlborough Sounds. He loved that boat, but his wife Angela and their young

family's growing interest in boating, fishing and overnighting fuelled a desire for a bigger, more comfortable vessel.

Miss Dee Meana fulfills both family and fishing duties admirably. In fact, with its size and custom features it's an even more serious fishing platform than their old Senator. Experience with the previous boat gave the couple lots of ideas for features and innovations in their new boat. Dan worked closely with the team at Senator Boats in Napier, which started the build in September 2020. Angela was involved in the build process from the beginning, says Dan.

Grant Simmonds and the team at Senator were keen to accommodate the Goviers, immediately recognising the value

of their input. "Dan had such good ideas we were excited to incorporate them," said Simmonds. "So good in fact, we've decided to turn some of them into modules we can offer future customers."

CABIN CRUISER

Miss Dee Meana is based on Senator's 780 model, the cabin extended by 500mm, the cockpit/deck by 200mm and the fishing platform extended by 400mm. At 8.3m overall, bow to platform, with a 2.8m beam, the Senator 800 HT is a big trailer boat. Construction is sturdy, including 6mm thick hull plates, 5mm decks and 3mm pontoons, and while it looks painted, the boat is vinyl-wrapped inside and out.

The boat will be carried on a new COF trailer, currently under construction, electro-hydraulically braked on both axles. It requires over-width trailer panels/flags and a tow vehicle capable of managing its considerable mass.

Dan has a Dodge Ram for this purpose, with which he intends to tow the rig to the South Island's West Coast to chase southern





bluefin tuna, bluenose and groper/hapuku or up to Golden Bay for expeditions around Farewell Spit. More regularly, he'll tow the rig to Okiwi Bay or Havelock for quicker access to the fishing and cruising grounds at the Top of the South.

The big Senator's bow ladder is a custom feature with Okiwi Bay in mind, where there is no jetty. It allows easy access into the boat over the bow from the beach. Substantial bow rails, workable side decks and roof-mounted grabrails make it safe and easy to sidle around the hardtop.

Dan's previous Senator also had a bow ladder, but *Miss Dee Meana* has a Minn Kota Terrova 87-inch electric trolling motor mounted centrally on the bow rather than off to

**Two 12-inch
Furuno TZ3 Touch
displays grace the
boat's carpeted
dashboard...**



L-R Comfortable and safe with the ability to go anywhere; The well equipped helm console has room to spare; A multi-speaker Fusion sound system and three wiper-washers for the windscreen.

BELOW The cockpit is big, but there's plenty of space inside as well.



one side, as is often done. Fitting the electric on the centreline gives the Minn Kota much better control over the vessel but precludes fitting a conventional bow ladder. Instead, a custom fairlead keeps the electric clear of the Sarca stainless steel anchor and the bow ladder has been custom fitted to the starboard side.

Dan swears by the electric motor and reckons he now rarely anchors when snapper fishing, positioning and holding the boat perfectly in relation to his berley/chunk trail. The Minn Kota's also extremely useful when kingfish and hapuku fishing in deep water, positioning the boat over the fish. "I wouldn't want to be without it," he says.



RULE[®] THE SEA



BIGGER DECK

Bigger is always better.



GREAT RIDING

Legendary Senator ride.



TRUE MEASURE

More boat for your buck.

GET IN TOUCH WITH YOUR NEAREST DEALER

Whangarei Warren Hay Marine, 09 430 2666

Auckland Auckland Marine Centre, 09 271 1575

Hamilton Rollos Marine, 0800 804 809

Gisborne Harbourview Marine, 06 868 8686

Hawke's Bay Hawke's Bay Marine, 06 843 5001

Kapiti Coast Boat City Paraparaumu, 04 298 5931

Nelson Haven Pleasure Boats, 03 548 5864

Christchurch Mr Boats, 03 384 2726

Timaru Mr Boats, 03 684 4107

/ Explore the range at senatorboats.com



SENATOR

band 17543

**Miss Dee Meana
fulfills both family
and fishing duties
admirably.**



NIGHT AND DAY

Dan does a lot of his boating over the change of light, morning and evening, so the big Senator is well-endowed with LED lights inside and out, including Hella light bars on the bow for flood and spotlight illumination, downward pointing fishing lights on the sides and bright cockpit lighting.

The boat also has underwater lights, strip lighting in the cockpit, hardtop and cabin and switchable red/white cabin lights for night running. Cabling inside the hardtop is neatly hidden inside channels and ducted elsewhere in the boat, most obviously under the gunwales.

Andrew Wintstanley at Haven Pleasure Boats in Nelson rigged the boat and set it up, including installing lights and electronics. Although the boat shipped from the factory with the wiring loom, glass and upholstery, the cabling, battery installations, terminals and switches are all Andrew's fine work.

ADVANCED ELECTRONICS

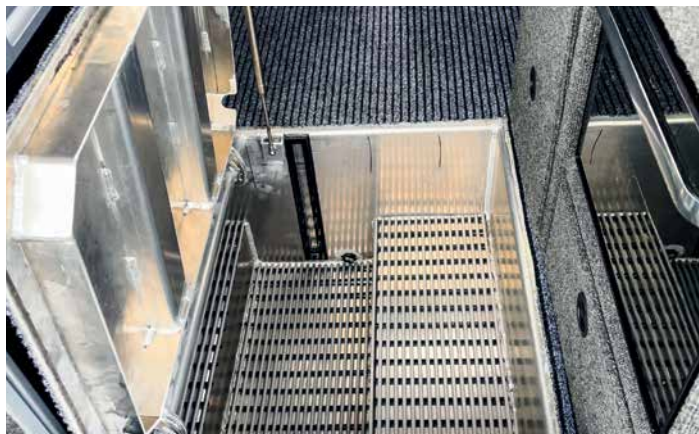
Dan went with Furuno electronics because of they offered advanced technology and local support: Electronic Navigation Ltd (ENL) has a branch in Nelson, supplying marine electronics to commercial and recreational users.

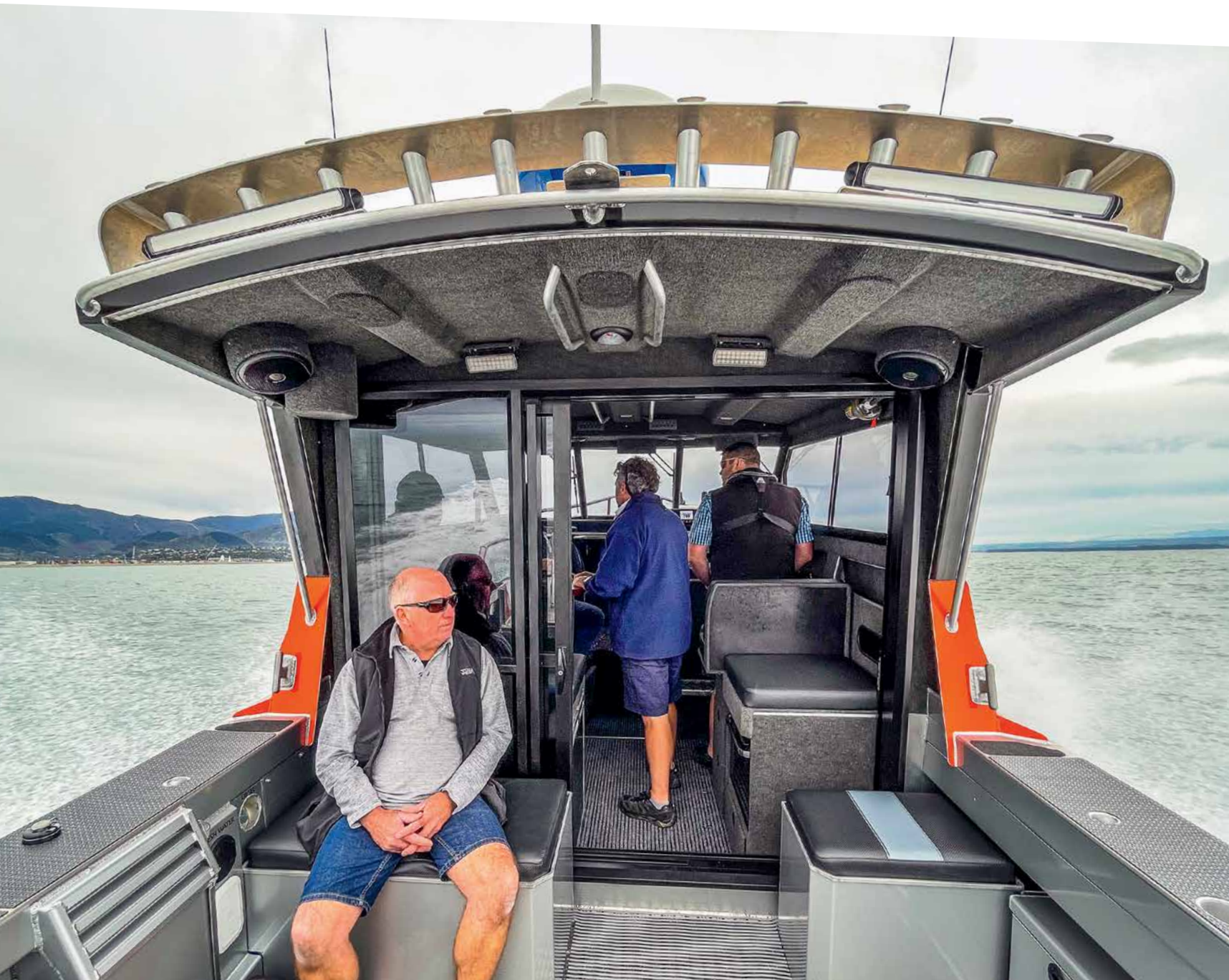
Two 12-inch Furuno TZ3 Touch displays grace the boat's carpeted dashboard, surrounded by digital displays for the Yamaha outboards, Zipwake trim tabs and Furuno autopilot. An iCom VHF radio, Fusion Apollo stereo head unit, winch control and assorted switches are ranged across the bottom of the dash, with additional switches beside the wheel. A lipped shelf under the dash is the perfect place for phones, keys and remote controls (Minn Kota and autopilot).

ENL also supplied the triple-beam sonar unit, a recreational version of ENL's New Zealand-developed WASSP multi-beam sonar system. Scanning a 120°-wide swathe of the bottom beneath the boat, it offers broader, more detailed sonar coverage and the ability to quickly build up a seafloor map in real time.

Dan's is one of the first such units fitted to a recreational vessel in New Zealand, and he can't wait to put it through its paces. The sonar's has the potential to totally transform his fishing especially when chasing schooling fish and keeping track of them as they move with the tide.

ENL's triple-beam sonar is complemented by a more conventional multiple frequency Furuno sonar unit featuring a 1kW transducer, radar and GPS chart-plotter.





OPPOSITE TOP The Senator is a dry runner.

OPPOSITE L-R A massive underfloor locker inside the hardtop doubles down on already generous storage; Twin 200hp outboards provide plenty of performance.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP There are seating options inside and out; The bait station is is sturdy and well designed; The live well is perfect for mackerel or kahawai livebaits; The galley makes excellent use of limited space, the helm seat folding forward and the seat back serving as a food preparation area.



COMFORT AND PRACTICALITY

It is pretty comfortable inside the hardtop, especially with the triple-stacking rear doors closed. The vessel is fitted with a diesel heater and screen demister (adjustable vent nozzles) while the cockpit shower and galley sink is supplied with hot water via a gas califont.

Cabin berths feature upgraded foam with fabric lining for comfort. They easily sleep three and there's generous cabin shelving and cubby storage, plus a pipe hammock for additional gear. There is red LED strip and night lighting for night passages as well as white reading lights for Angela and their daughter. A large hatch provides access to the Maxwell capstan on the bow with the anchor locker accessible through a hatch in the collision bulkhead.

In the hardtop, the dinette seats reconfigure and the table drops down to create a comfortable 2.3m berth. Along with shower and toilet facilities (forward under the berths), *Miss Dee Meana* has a compact galley with a decent cooker, sink, gas oven and food preparation space on the starboard side.

The galley has been cleverly configured to the owners' specifications, making good use of limited space. There's plenty of drawer and locker storage, a fridge/freezer under the dinette seat on the port side, plus a large underfloor locker with gas struts. A sight glass shows the water level in the 150-litre freshwater tank.

FISHING COCKPIT

The Senator's cockpit is optimised for fishing, including expeditions well offshore. High gunwales and lots of freeboard, along with the superb stability and safety benefits a pontoon design imparts, instil confidence, while the tube-mat covered sole offers secure footing in the wet while the boat's sides offer generous toe room.

A massive bait station dominates the cockpit. Under the bait/filletting board is an oversized kill tank that, like the bait board, drains directly overboard, forward of the aft platform. The live bait tank is located under the port-side transom step-through.

Cross-transom movement between the two sides of the platform is OK, but the cages are usually accessed separately via the transom step-throughs. The platform also has floodlighting for night fishing, a combination boarding/dive ladder/gate to port and a removable bait board to starboard. Fishing from the platform keeps all the wet and smelly stuff outboard and the cockpit washdown also services the aft platform.

As you would expect, rod storage is great, with six rod holders across the



ABOVE & BELOW Dan Govier (at the helm) has big plans for *Miss Dee Meana*, which can go almost anywhere, either by road or by sea.



transom, an 11-position rocket launcher and additional rod holders welded to the cage. Four welded aluminium through-coaming rod holders per side take care of fishing and trolling duties while four 12-volt cockpit outlets accommodate electric reels.

As well as the kill tank, the transom station houses a large tackle/utility drawer, a well-protected battery locker and access to the pumps at floor level. Three deep-cycle AGM batteries and a dedicated plug-in charger are located under the cabin berths, providing the electric trolling motor with many hours of continuous operation.

CAPABLE AND SAFE

The big Senator is powered by a pair of four-cylinder Yamaha F200 four-stroke outboards which give it a maximum speed of 43 knots. On the day of our review with six adults aboard, 300 litres of fuel in the 500-litre tank and 140 litres of water, we got up to 41 knots.

Cruising at a very comfortable 22 knots, just 3,200rpm was showing on the digital gauges and with D'Urville Island around 50 nautical miles from Nelson, getting there is only a couple of hours' travel at that speed.

The Yamahas are fly-by-wire with digital controls that are light and precise. Fitted with

Zipwake interceptor trim tabs Dan usually leaves in automatic mode, the boat rides with a level attitude, so vision ahead is good. The three-piece glass windscreen is built for strength, with three washer-wipers to keep it clear. Sliding side windows provide ventilation and a couple of electric fans move the air around, which is great when the heater's going.

Miss Dee Meana is a pleasure to drive – light and responsive to helm thanks to Sea Star hydraulic steering with comfortable, nicely elevated seating. The ride quality is plush and the boat is quiet, especially with the rear doors closed.

The way the Senator behaves gives the impression it would be completely unflappable – easily capable of handling whatever long-range offshore adventures Dan has in mind. Certainly the 'working' portion – the cockpit and transom – can accommodate any sort of fishing adventure he might wish for. That includes chasing tuna off the South Island's west coast, or in Waihou Bay up north – both on Dan's to-do list. In the meantime, *Miss Dee Meana* can happily accommodate Govier family expeditions, weekends away and even the odd boating/camping road trip.

Dan doesn't envisage replacing this boat any time soon, and better still, he really can't think of anything much he'd change. **BNZ**

The way the Senator behaves gives the impression it would be completely unflappable...



Senator 800 HT

PRICE AS REVIEWED
SPOA

MANUFACTURED BY
Senator Boats
www.senatorboats.co.nz

HIGHLIGHTS

Big volume cabin cruiser is a first for Senator Boats

The boat incorporates lots of its owners' clever ideas

A serious offshore-capable sportfisher, but also suitable for family boating, overnighting and 'trailer camping'

SPECIFICATIONS

loa 8.3m
beam 2.8m
tow weight 3800kg (dry)
deadrise 18° at transom
construction aluminium (6mm hull and transom; 5mm decks, bump rails; 3mm pontoons, cabin)
engine 2 x Yamaha F200 four-stroke O/B
trailer Galvanised steel; dual-axle, alloy wheels; Credo electro-hydraulic brakes both axles; Boat Catch
fuel 500 litres
freshwater 150 litres
cruising speed 22-27 knots
max speed 43 knots

WATCH IT

