



The new speedboats are classic rich men's toys — extravagant cost, outrageous lack of usefulness, and enough fuel-swilling speed to give the Sierra Club seizures.

called Formula Boats, then sold it to create Donzi (reputedly so named because his secretary called him Donzi Baby). Selling that, Aronow moved next door on a backwater North Miami Beach street and started Magnum Marine. Again he disposed of that operation at a high profit and trucked a few blocks down the road to begin Cigarette. Since then, he re-bought Magnum, reportedly increased sales *eight* times in sixty days, then sold it a second time at an even greater profit. Aronow has now also sold his first love, Cigarette, to a New Orleans concern, leaving him without direct involvement in the superboat business for the first time in recent memory. This, presumably, will provide him more opportunity to dabble with his extensive stable of thoroughbred racehorses and will relieve him of the steady flow of incoming calls from all over the world. The callers have invariably been European, Middle Eastern, or South American moguls and noblemen lusting after his boats. The Spanish king Juan Carlos reportedly called Aronow to inquire about his new thirty-five footer on *the day Francisco Franco died!*

Superboats can be purchased in miniature as well—Donzi makes a single-engine sixteen footer—but the thrust of the market is moving toward hyperbolic extravaganzas like the Cigarette 45 or the Maltese Magnum 53. Imagine these behemoth speedboats, with open cockpits and rakish windshields that from a distance look exactly like their smaller counterparts—except that they seem to be populated by midgets. These brutes will press along at a creditable fifty mph with the right engines.

However, unless one has at least \$300,000 jingling in his jeans, it is advised that a smaller craft be budgeted. Regardless of the seeming simplicity of the design—that is, an outsize, open-cockpit speedboat—the Cigarette 45s and Magnum 53s offer full below-deck accommodations for six, usually in three staterooms, with additional but less elegant bunking for several more. The interiors are custom fitted (a Frenchman recently equipped his Cary 50 with a bidet featuring gold fixtures) and generally range in style from Miami baroque to Mafioso modern. If one is seriously committed to spending money, he can equip his new dreadnought with a variety of exotic diesel engines, such as a pair of turbocharged 650-horsepower 12V71TI Detroit Diesel Allison engines attractively priced at \$30,000 each. More powerful German-built MTU diesels will cost more than twice as much and are usually the choice of devoted spendthrifts.

Should the \$300,000 (low line) to \$500,000 (loaded) price tags associated with such equipment press your high roller instincts to intolerable levels, do not despair. A whole flotilla of more modest wares awaits you. They are the heart and soul of this boat class and range in size from twenty-four feet to just under forty feet. A whole army of small boatbuilders—all operating within the general design parameters developed by Aronow and his fellow ocean racers—pop these hulls out of their fiber glass molds in shops spread all over south Florida. Cigarette, Magnum, Corsa, Donzi, Wellcraft, as well as scores of smaller, more transient builders will supply you with a craft roughly fitting this description:

Length: 24–40 feet
Beam: 8–10 feet
Hull material: fiber glass

Hull type: deep vee
Berths: 2–4
Engines: two gasoline V–8s, 280–370 hp
Price: \$30,000–\$80,000
Decor: gaudy
Speed: incredible (50–75 mph)
Fuel consumption: astronomical
Function: water-skiing, skin diving, informal racing, ego reinforcement, and aid in seduction

While Charlie McCarthy's operation is located in Rhode Island, not south Florida, his Banana Boat Company is rather typical of the manufacturing syndrome from which these craft are generated. A young man who got rich early in the trucking business, McCarthy translated his enthusiasm for fast cars and boats into the purchase of a mold for a twenty-four-foot superboat from patron saint Aronow after it was removed from the Cigarette production lineup. (This is an exception to the rule; some entrants in the business simply buy a competitor's hull and pirate the design by making a counterfeit mold.) Entering offshore powerboat races with a boat carrying his company's black, yellow, and white colors, McCarthy carefully promoted his business to a point where he now produces several models of his twenty-four footer (available with single or twin inboard or outboard engines) as well as a thirty-three footer and a high-dollar thirty-eight footer. "Now that outboard motors producing more than two hundred horsepower are available, our business is undergoing a real revolution," says McCarthy. "Instead of a single V-eight stern-drive inboard, you'll begin to see boats with two, three, and even four two-hundred-horsepower outboards hung on the back. Since that part of the market opened up, our sales have gone right through the roof." McCarthy will initially use his new thirty-eight footer as a race boat, then convert it to customer use with the installation of bunks and other necessary amenities. "It's strange," he reflects. "In this business, the higher the price is, the easier the boat is to sell."

Perhaps the most difficult thing about buying one of these superboats—after you've convinced your banker, your insurance agent, and your aforementioned analyst—is developing a rationale for owning and operating such an overtly nonfunctional bauble. We who are lashed along by the puritan ethic continuously grope for justification in terms of solid, responsive utility for all our acquisitions. But this time it will not work. A superboat is unvarnished hedonism. There is not a shred of usefulness contained within its pretty, wave-slashing hull. To be sure, certain enterprising individuals have effectively pressed them into service to smuggle dope, using them to make high-speed nocturnal pickups from mother ships lying in the Gulf Stream, but that hardly falls into the realm of a socially acceptable industry. No, it is better to face facts: This superboat business is irresponsible, outrageous, profligate, and extremely wasteful. It is also extravagant fun for anyone who enjoys balls-to-the-wall speed.

Hang the decency. One blast across the bay in your Cigarette will leave responsibility in its wake. When you punch the throttles and those big V-8s begin to holler and the fresh sea breeze begins to gnaw at your tear ducts and the blowboaters shake their fists as you rocket across their bows, be comforted by the words of that great but anonymous sage who counseled, "Anything worth doing is worth doing to excess." ☐