

STINGHER 10-METRE

The Stingher 10m has one horsepower for every 1.4 cm of its considerable length. If I were so blessed, I would possess no fewer than 260hp. Nice thought. Alex Smith reports.

I remember travelling to Plymouth to carry out a mid-winter review of an open boat. At nine in the morning, it sat at the pontoon, cloaked in a bedrock of frost. Not once did the needle lift above zero that day and, as we soldiered on with dampened faces at far too many knots for comfort, I felt my skin burning with the cold. I still recall how my face took on a strawberry sunbed complexion and my lips, pillaged of moisture and cut through by the wind, shrivelled up like strips of ageing beef.

So when Ed Pedley, Director of MRL, called me up with a mid-winter invitation to test an open ten-metre RIB, I anticipated pain. And when he told me that all 700 of its horsepower were conjured into being by a pair of Verado's flagship 350Sci supercharged outboard engines, rigged with painstaking care and tested to the most perfect expression of their potency by none other than seven-times world champion, Neil Holmes, I knew it was going to be monumentally rapid. But this time I was prepared. With a quart of Factor 30 massaged into my face and lips swimming in virgin seal fat, I made my way down to Drivers Wharf to take a look . . .

Sitting on the dock

Notwithstanding the promise of the prodigious Mercury twin rig, the ten-metre Stingher is actually a rather unassuming boat to look at. You get a broad, open deck with a two-man console in the middle, plus a long, elevated bow space with plenty of potential for sun bathing, storage and communal entertaining. In the forward-most V of the bow, the

level is raised further to accommodate the anchor locker and topped off at the peak with a hard nose at the apex of the large-diameter tubes.



The engines

Take a look on the Mercury Marine website and you won't find any mention of these engines because these are not just moderately ferocious supercharged Verados. These things come straight from the racing division of the Mercury empire, where fabrics are lighter, structures are stiffer and the engineers are all part cyborg. So what makes the 350Sci so different from the regular Verado range? Well the clues are there in the form of huge forward-facing air intakes to funnel air directly to the supercharger, plus a radically beefed up gear case with a 25 per cent larger propshaft. It's vital stuff if all that power is to be effectively transferred to the water but what is far more surprising is the fact that, at low to moderate revs, both the refinement and the efficiency of these race-tuned motors is perfectly acceptable for a relaxed family cruise. With a twin rig, you could of course spank 300 litres per hour but here, on the day, we achieve an easy cruise of 35 knots with a fuel flow of just 70 litres per hour.





Left: Despite the power on tap, the 10m doesn't require the expert coaxing of a World Champion pilot to give of its best - but if you do buy one, you get a free day's training from Neil Holmes himself. How special is that?

Why you would

- Huge mid-range poke
- Impressive composure
- Useful softness of ride
- Big internal space
- Competitive price
- Free training with Neil Holmes

Why you wouldn't

- Lightweight gas rams
- Non-draining storage spaces
- Drab switchgear
- Lack of 'special' detailing

Performance

Time to plane: 3.9 seconds

Acceleration
 0 – 55 knots: 15.25 seconds
 30 – 55 knots: 11.5 seconds
 35 – 55 knots: 8.9 seconds
 45 - 55 knots: 6.0 seconds

Specifications

Length overall	9.6 metres
Length internal	9.0 metres
Beam	3.43 metres
Beam internal	2.18 metres
Tube diameter	56 tapering to 48 cm
Weight (boat only)	1900 kg
Max power	600hp
Fuel capacity	550 litres
People capacity	18
CE Category	B
Engines	twin Verado 350 Sci
Price	£129,000

Contact

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This is not a hopelessly impractical, narrow-beamed, sea-slicing spear. This is a Renault Espace with a Ferrari engine - and for most of us, that represents the best of both worlds

It's worth noting however that, even with a fat, traditional, workmanlike collar, the internal beam measures more than seven feet at its widest point. That's enormous for a ten-metre RIB and although the need for a relatively fine entry means that this width cannot be carried very far forward, it does create a great deal more room than the average ribster would expect.

Singing in tune

By European standards, 700 horsepower on a ten-metre leisure boat seems like a hell of a lot. And given the fact that there is no cabin to add a little extra weight and dumb down the nose, it seems even more excessive. But when you get underway, it doesn't feel in the slightest bit overpowered and that has a great deal to do with the tuning process.

Here on the new Stingher, that testing period has been all about achieving the right balance - in this instance a combination of effective hole shot for quick planing, an aggressive mid-range for real-world throttle response, and handling characteristics that allow a novice to enjoy 700hp without fear or intimidation. To that end, the engines have been lifted on the transom to reduce drag as the pace picks up and as you ease up into the midrange you see exactly where this comes into its own. A planing time of less than four seconds is very decent but it's as you push on, from 30 to 50 knots in less than eight seconds, that you really begin to appreciate how useable the power is.

There's apparently some ballast in the bow (just 50kg or so) but it's enough to bring things into very productive equilibrium. Despite the huge grunt of those 350s, you can reign in the top speed of 61.2 knots by a full ten knots just by trimming in the engine and driving that nose down. It means that, while there's enough grunt on tap to thrill even the most committed power fan, there's nothing volatile or highly strung about the way the Verados deliver their power.

On the contrary, what we have here is a family boat, replete with seating and storage, that just happens to go like a race machine - or in other words, a Renault Espace with a Ferrari engine. It's an absurdly entertaining experience but by no means a frightening one. If you do decide the nose is getting a bit light, it's the easiest thing in the world to dip a bit more stabilising hull and regain that feeling of confidence - and that allows you to keep plenty of pace on without feeling in the slightest bit stretched or uncertain. It's a marvellous trick and one that pretty much every ambitious leisure boat aims to nail.

In fact this Stingher feels so pleasantly balanced that you can pretty much pick a course, set a speed and then drive this boat on the trim alone. And despite the generous breadth of beam, the ride is soft and dry and the comfort behind the console, with its very upright tinted screen, is altogether more gentlemanly than the average RIB skipper would expect. So it's comfortable, it's practical and it's monumentally rapid. Surely there's a downside . . .

The details

The effectiveness of the Stingher 10m as a driving machine is not in doubt and, given the rigours of its testing regime, that's precisely as you would expect. But, when you consider that the Stingher's likely customer base is those in search of something a little bit special, there are areas in which the 10m falters a touch. The multi-coloured LED deck lights, for instance, are a fine means of making the buyer of this boat feel good about the transaction, but they deserve far more fanfare than the simple, unmarked, black rocker switches that the dash provides.

That same faint disregard for the nth degree of detail is exhibited elsewhere. For instance, some of the storage spaces lack drainage holes and some of the gas-assisted rams are inadequately robust. With the teak-effect decking in place, the big storage lids, particularly in the bow, are too heavy for them to hold - and that will also make them too heavy for young or weak crewmembers to lift.

When I look into the nooks and crannies, I also find the odd self-tapper here and there and, although I can guarantee you will find the same on just about any boat you care to inspect, they do nonetheless suggest a certain lack of care on a craft that flirts with an echelon of boating excellence where soft optioning is not tolerated.

Meanwhile, up at the helm, the seat is very good indeed if you're a six-footer but a relatively small driver may struggle to make himself comfortable without compromising his view ahead over that big, elevated, hard nose. Yes, it's a potent driving machine with user-friendly dynamics but there are areas in which just a little more attention to detail would lift this product into an altogether more exalted bracket.

Verdict

The new Stingher 10m is a special boat when you're driving it and a slightly run-of-the-mill one when you're not. Yes, it's a joy to helm but there is nothing in the seating, the console, the controls, the trim or the features that makes you feel great about simply being on board. There's no doubt that its performance takes it into a higher league, alongside the Revengers, the Scorpions and the Pascoes of this world - and there it has the edge because not only does it perform like a thoroughbred but it does so with a blend of practicality and price that the others simply cannot match.

But where is that delicious attention to detail, those classy bespoke extras, that can make a product feel special? For the moment, what we have here is a fearsomely good boat that needs a little more work to hone the finer details. Once that's in place, I have no doubt that its breadth of abilities and its aggressive pricing will see it toppling some very big names in the world of luxury RIBs. ■



Above: The vast bow space is a major bonus both for sunbathing and for practical storage