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Stingher 800 GT

The Stingher 800GT from Italmarine looks monumental the very moment you set eyes on her. Like an Italian sports car, she has stylish elegance, strong lines and meticulous detailing, often missing from other RIBs.

There are occasions when you see something rather special, only to be let down when you finally get to sample it, be it food, wine or, in my case, a RIB. When this does happen, it can lead to one becoming rather cynical, so it was with great relief that, when we tested the new Stingher 800GT, the craft was every bit as good as it looked...and it does look rather good.

This attractive range of Italian RIBs had caught my eye each time I had seen them at various boat shows and occasionally on the water around the Solent. Also, when speaking to 'the trade' the feedback on the craft was very positive, so I was keen to find out how they stacked up against the opposition, and our offer to test the 800GT version, fitted with one of the latest Mercury Verado 300hp engines, was warmly accepted.

The craft are imported and distributed in the UK by Southampton-based MRL and, as their chief executive Edward Pedley explained, there are two distinct ranges of RIB from this Italian RIB manufacturer; the less expensive and smaller craft, Predator, and the larger 'upmarket' range, Stingher. Ranging from 5.2m to 10m, these two types of RIB are manufactured in Northern Italy by the highly respected Italmarine, considered one of Europe's premier RIB builders and certainly no newcomer to the industry, with over 21 years of RIB building under their belts.

Stepping aboard from the pontoon, one is immediately aware of the non-slip Flexiteak-covered moulded step on the side of the RIB which makes getting on and off the craft safe and easy. The Flexiteak continues over the entire deck area, bathing platform and forward hatches and sets the craft off by

contrasting well with what could otherwise be a rather austere white fibreglass finish. The interior layout is leisure orientated, with comfortable seating for seven crew, occasional seating for another two facing aft and enough space to carry up to 12 on a calm sea.

Starting with the steering console, this is a stand-alone unit with a high, tinted windscreen giving excellent protection from the elements but, like all tinted screens, difficult to see through in poor light or at night. There is an excellent stainless-steel grab rail around the screen which is useful for holding onto when moving forward underway, and a small grab rail to the side of the console. However, a grab handle in front of the navigator's position would have been appreciated, and Edward Pedley said that future craft would be fitted with one. The dashboard layout is excellent, with all instruments easy to read and everything positioned correctly for ease of operation. Above the rear seat is a stylish GRP radar arch with the usual lights etc, but mounted on the top is a rather novel solar panel that keeps the batteries charged – a great idea and something that



Left: Fully equipped well designed console, below: Quality decking and 250 horses of Mercury power

is eminently practical. Let into the console below the helm position is a useful angled footrest (Flexiteak covered), above which is an access hatch to the lower part of the console. In addition, this whole section can be unscrewed, and further access from the front of the console makes this often overlooked area one of the most accessible we have encountered. Set into the front of the console is a comfortable two-person 'suicide' seat with good side supports and grab handles for the passengers, and overall this is a very well thought out helm area. The helmsman and navigator are provided

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with an attractive contoured leaning post, to the rear of which is a two-person rear-facing bench seat with dry storage. Above this seat, however, is a wide stainless-steel grab rail which seems to be positioned in such a way as to be impractical. If seated on the rear facing seats it catches the passengers in the back, and it is just too far away for the rear bench-seat passengers to reach; only when standing behind the helm position can it be used and, to be fair, we did find it useful for this purpose during the test.

The wide three-person rear bench seat is a comfortable wrap-around full-width unit with correctly positioned grab handles on either side and an excellent storage locker beneath, which I thought was particularly well designed. With a flat, raised floor to keep loose items dry rather than lying in the

bilge area, easy access to the electric bilge pump, proper location for the batteries and, finally, accessibility to the fuel filter, this was a lesson in sensible, practical thinking, with everything in one location for instant access should something go wrong!

Other interesting features, if using the craft at night, are the remote-controlled LCD locker and deck lights. The locker lights sound like a good idea, but why would one want to illuminate one's feet at night? And why they are fitted aft of the rear seat, above the bathing platforms, is anyone's guess... night diving, perhaps! OK, they do look rather special in a marina at night, and being remote controlled from 200 metres away you could impress certain people, but then how many people sit on their RIBs at night in a marina? Right aft is a deep splash well with a freshwater shower and, on either side of the outboard motor, two Flexiteak-covered bathing platforms, one with a folding ladder.

Right forward on the bow is a GRP anchor/mooring moulded section with roller and, you've guessed it, more Flexiteak, below which is an anchor locker and a raised deck-cum-sunbed section which houses two cavernous lockers. Normally this sunbathing area would be fitted with comfortable cushions but, due to the inclement weather, these were not fitted for the test...Flexiteak, anyone?!

There is no doubting the excellent finish of everything on this craft, nor the practical nature of the fit-out and engineering. But now for the acid test – how does she handle and ride, especially on a very moody Solent?

Fitted with the latest Mercury 300hp Verado outboard motor sporting a four-blade 19" Bravo propeller, one would expect any 8m RIB to get up and go, and the Stingher 800GT did not disappoint. Acceleration was fast, smooth and continuous, with 30 knots coming up in a very respectable 7 seconds,

Stingher 800GT

TECHNICAL DATA METRIC

Length overall:	8.01
Width:	3.00
Weight (dry less engine):	1600kg (as tested with engine & full tanks 2245kg)
Persons capacity:	12 Persons
Max hp:	431hp
Recommended engine:	250-300 hp
Depth of 'V' @ transom:	22 degrees
Tube diameter:	65 to 45 cm
Number of chambers:	6
Max. load capacity:	Not specified
Tube material:	Hypalon
CE category:	B
Warranty:	Buoyancy tubes 5 yrs, hull 3 yrs, upholstery/fittings 2 yrs

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

- GPS/Plotter, VHF radio, CD/stereo, compass
- Radar arch with solar panel & lights
- Remote-controlled LCD deck & locker lights
- Hydraulic steering, electric bilge pump & deck drains
- Bathing platforms with ladder
- 600-litre fuel tank with filter (full with new craft)
- Freshwater shower with 80-litre tank
- Flexiteak decks and surfaces, deck cushions
- Overall cover, Sea Start membership (12 months), flares, first-aid kit, inflation pump, Anchor, chain & lines

PERFORMANCE

RPM	Knots	LPH	Knots	Seconds
2000	7.00	2.34	0 to 20	5.4
3000	20.00	24.50	0 to 30	7.0
4000	28.20	42.00	0 to 40	9.0
5000	37.00	99.00		
5600 Max attained	44.00	113.00		

PRICES (incl VAT)

From: £39,900
As tested: £52,000 with Mercury Verado 300hp

MANUFACTURER

Italmarine (Milan)
Distributor: MRL
Southampton Dry Stack, Drivers wharf, 146 Millbank Street, Southampton, SO14 5NQ
Tel: + 44 2380 335333
Email: edward@mrl-uk.com
www.mrl-uk.com



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and 40 knots only another 2 seconds later. Curiously we could only achieve a top speed of 44 knots at 5600rpm, being unable to replicate the 52 knots at 6100rpm that MRL had evidently experienced a few days earlier. But conditions were far from ideal, and whilst the weather may have blunted our top speed, it did provide us with a challenging sea state to evaluate the handling.

With her high bow and deep-V hull configuration, the Stingher 800GT displays impeccable manners underway, and we could not fault her handling in any department. Heading into steep waves she rode with reassuring poise, and in a steep following sea she just lifted her bows to brush aside potentially tricky troughs. Cornering was equally impressive but the best feature was her dry ride and stability throughout the test; not once did the craft make the helmsman have to make any corrections over the bigger waves and, believe me, that is unusual.

I expected the Stingher 800GT to be somewhere at the top end of the price spectrum for a craft of this size and specification, but I was in for another surprise; with all the extras such as GPS, VHF radio, CD/stereo, freshwater shower, anchoring equipment/mooring warps, deck lights, first-aid kit, flares, overall cover, a year's free subscription to Sea Start (handy if they operate in your boating area) – and, er, have I mentioned the Flexiteak?! – the £44,255 (plus VAT) asking price represents good value. The same craft but with less electrics and a 250hp instead of a 300hp outboard motor (plus, of course, there is no F in teak!), works out to a very reasonable £33,957 (plus VAT); now that's like buying a new Mercedes for the price of a Ford... mmmm!

As previously mentioned, the Stingher 800GT looks right from the moment you

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set eyes on her, and if looks are the main issue when parting with your well-earned cash, then this is one craft that should be on your shortlist. Not everyone likes the pure leisure boat layout of Continental RIBs, and the light colours could put some practical ribsters off, but increasingly the British RIB buyer is leaning towards the leisure look as opposed to the pseudo- commercial look so, as usual, you pay your money and take your choice.

To sum up, this is a well-made, stylish RIB with a comfortable interior, that handles really well, ticks all the boxes and is available at a very attractive price. It would appear that my instincts were right – the Stingher 800GT package really is as good as it looks.

Paul Lemmer