

**TEST** *Stinger 800GT Sport Custom* - [www.powerboatandrib.com](http://www.powerboatandrib.com)

# STINGER

## 800GT SPORT CUSTOM

**i** **LENGTH:** 8.3m **BEAM:** 3.0m **ENGINES:** Twin Mercury Verado 300hp **PRICE AS TESTED:** £89,500 **CONTACT:** [www.mrl-uk.com](http://www.mrl-uk.com)



*Alex Smith* tests the new and improved twin-engine variant of Stinger's faithfully effective 800GT Sport Custom ...

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The Stingher 800GT is a boat I know almost as well as my own. I am familiar with every detail of its shape, form and purpose. I remember the locations of braces, hatches and screws. I can recall the internal dimensions of lockers and, having tested it in one form or another three times in as many years, I can bring to mind exactly the ways in which Ed Pedley at MRL has overseen its development. We've seen folding plastic cup holders and grab handles replaced with glittering steel; we've seen the doubling up of gas rams in the storage spaces; we've seen the rigging of a user-friendly, one-handed aft bench lid; and we've seen the gradual elevation of the features list to incorporate items such as a carbon-style collar and LED strips in all the main



## THE NIT-PICKING PEDANTRY



Once again, the details on the latest Stingher have been subtly improved. The thick fabric partition in the heads that divides the loo from the wiring on the back of the dash is much slicker and classier than it used to be. There is also a very neat bank of high-quality switches on the underside of the dash, so you can activate or isolate the batteries without having to head aft and climb into the engine bay. And the Stingher logo is now neatly machined into the teak-effect deck, complete (if the boys at MRL are to be believed) with small chisel marks to make the machining look more intimate and hands on. However, my familiarity with this boat means my capacity to pick out the minor imperfections is duly magnified. So here goes ...

For the sake of long-term resilience, I would like to see a protective lining fitted to the exposed edge of plywood as the anchor chain makes its way up and down to the windlass through the circular hole in the forward locker. I would also like to see some blunt bungs terminating the sharp screw heads in the forward storage space where the speakers are screwed to the fibreglass moulding. Further aft, the point at which one of the grab rails on the console front meets the moulding is imperfect, with perhaps a 2mm gap, filled with a Sikaflex-style sealant. And lovely though that carbon-effect Orca Hypalon collar is, I would request some form of textured tube-top footpad to help make the wet fabric more grippy for people stepping on and off. However, it has to be said that the general fit and finish is well up to scratch for a boat in this bracket. In fact, in places, it exhibits some of the gratifying gloss of the RIB industry's most elevated echelons – and for a boat of this price, that is to be roundly applauded.

Twin 200 Verados offer ferocious acceleration, a 54-knot top end and amazing mid-range economy



## THIS LATEST 800GT IS A FINE LEISURE PLATFORM, WITH A QUALITY FEATURES LIST PLUS THE ADDED BOON OF TRULY PRISTINE DYNAMIC BALANCE.

compartments.

So when I was asked to take another look at the 800GT, I needed a good reason to accept the invitation. After all, I had already openly acknowledged that, through the incremental tweaks and upgrades of its various incarnations, this spacious, composed and very capable family boat had become 'one of the most perfectly judged modern leisure RIB packages' money could buy. And yet in the end, the reason for a retest was very compelling. This wasn't about another carefully targeted set of feature upgrades. This was

about a twin rig of Verado 200s that was generating performance figures not just unmatched by previous examples of the boat but of an entirely different order ...

### The impact of the twins

Every 800GT we've previously tested has used a Verado 300 – and while that single 2.6-litre unit weighs in at 288kg, each of these 1.7-litre 200s weighs just 57kg less. That generates a nominal increase in transom weight of around 174kg, or the equivalent of two large men perching beneath your radar arch. On the face of it, that doesn't sound

like particularly good sense, but effective performance is often more about weight distribution than weight itself, and the guys at MRL take that very seriously. Between the two of them, Ed Pedley and ex-Powerboat World Champion Neil Holmes have worked hard to optimise the weight distribution down to the finest detail. Even items like the anchor chain have found their way into the calculations – and while that might sound like excessive fastidiousness, its impact on the water could hardly be more explicit.

The transition to the plane is

## A CLOSER LOOK *Onboard in detail*



1 Battery isolation switches at the helm make all kinds of sense. 2 LED locker lights are a very welcome touch 3 The tube tops are lovely but a tread plate or two would help in the wet

## THE RIDE IS SECURE ENOUGH AND SOFT ENOUGH TO ENJOY LONG SPELLS AT SEA ...

astonishingly flat and the pickup through the mid range is as sharp and slick as any leisure boater could hope to experience. Take some time to record the acceleration figures and the truth of that is radically borne out. We're hitting 30mph from a standstill in just 4 seconds, 40mph in less than 5 seconds and 50 in just 9.5 seconds. If you want to talk in more nautical terms (and frankly, who doesn't), that means that from a standstill, just 10 seconds will comfortably see 46 knots clicking past on your speedo. And yet, when you factor in the fuel flow figures, the merits of such a well-balanced craft become even more evident ...

At a gentle 3500rpm cruise, not only is the twin-engined boat 9 knots faster than the single Verado 300hp model we tested last year, but it is also more frugal. With the revs set, we are seeing a combined fuel flow of 31 litres per hour at 31 knots, compared to the single rig's 32 litres per hour at 22 knots – and before you suggest that the old boat might enjoy better success when you increase the pace and free up the hull, it's worth pointing out that this was the most frugal sweet spot in the single rig's entire performance spectrum.

In terms of range, these remarkable results mean that the new boat will take you 352 nautical miles compared to the old boat's 244 – or in other words, about 44% further – on a single tank. Of course, economy falls away quite drastically for this twin-rig boat when you go much beyond 45 knots, but at no point at all is it outdone in terms of fuel flow at a given pace by the single-rig 800GT. So when you add all this together (a faster, flatter plane, more vigorous acceleration throughout the mid range, 8 knots extra at the top end and radically improved running economy and range), only a moron of the most monstrous and deluded order could possibly ignore the difference.

The only serious question you need to worry about is whether

### **i** **SNAPSHOT** *Onboard the Stinger 800GT Sport*



The heads is neatly concealed inside the console.



The long foredeck now has a machined insignia cut into the Flexiteek



The grab handle behind the anchor locker proves remarkably useful underway



Very few leisure boats can boast wiring of this clarity and competence.



The unprotected plywood edge below the windlass needs protecting.

The latest 800GT looks much the same as its predecessors



... THE SHEER POISE OF THIS FAST AND FRUGAL TWIN-ENGINEED 800GT FEELS MUCH TOO CLOSE TO PERFECT FOR THIS BOAT TESTER TO DISCERN ANY SUBSTANTIVE DIFFERENCE.

## SPECIFICATIONS



**LOA:** 8.3m  
**Beam:** 3.0m  
**Internal length:** 7.4m  
**Internal beam:** 1.75m  
**Weight:** 1250kg  
**Tube diameter:** 65–45 cm  
**Tube fabric:** Pennel & Flipo Orca Hypalon  
**Tube chambers:** 6  
**Max power:** 431hp  
**Engine:** Mercury Verado 300  
**Fuel capacity:** 400 litres  
**Water capacity:** 80 litres  
**People capacity:** 12  
**CE category:** B  
**Engine:** Twin Verado 200 outboards  
**Price as tested:** £89,500

## PERFORMANCE



**Acceleration**  
**0–30 mph:** 4.0 seconds  
**0–40 mph:** 5.8 seconds  
**0–50 mph:** 9.5 seconds  
**0–60 mph:** 20.0 seconds

## CONTACT



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you can afford it. So what of the price? Well, all other things being equal, the twin rig will set you back £10,000 more than the single rig, but from the experience at the helm (as well as from the reassurance of the figures), it continues to feel like money well spent. The ride is secure enough and soft enough to enjoy long spells at sea, and the Stinger's rare combination of near-perfect balance, ferocious throttle response and deft trim sensitivity means that if you smack it into a blunt wave at the wrong angle or speed, it's entirely your own fault. In any case, if you drive it well (and that's by no means a difficult thing to do), any lumps you do encounter are neatly absorbed by the charming impact mitigation of your Scot seats. In short, the sheer poise of this fast and frugal twin-engined 800GT feels much too close to perfect for this boat tester to discern any substantive difference.

## Verdict

This latest 800GT is a fine leisure platform, with a quality features

list plus the added boon of truly pristine dynamic balance. The fact that it is simultaneously among the most spacious, most rapid and most frugal 8m leisure RIBs I have ever tested makes it a cast-iron candidate for the family boater in search of that elusive fusion of practicality and entertainment. With all the bells and whistles exhibited on the test craft, it comes in at nearly £15,000 more than last year's single-engined RIB, but it remains

## WHAT WE THOUGHT



### FOR

- ✔ Flat transition to plane
- ✔ Radically urgent acceleration
- ✔ Great poise and balance
- ✔ Generous inboard space
- ✔ Impressive price

### AGAINST

- ✘ Minimal wind protection at the helm

as perfect an expression of this boat as we have ever seen. If for no other reason than to save me having to carry out a fifth test on the perennially overachieving Stinger 800GT, you should call MRL and discover for yourself just how satisfying a great boat for sensible money can be. **PBR**

## PERFORMANCE FIGURES



RPM	Speed (kn)	Fuel flow (L/h)	Range (nm)
500	3.6	3.6	360.0
1000	5.2	5.2	360.0
1500	7.2	9.6	270.0
2000	9.4	17.0	199.1
2500	14.3	22.0	234.0
3000	25.1	25.6	353.0
3500	30.5	31.2	351.9
4000	33.8	44.6	272.8
4500	39.0	61.2	229.4
5000	43.4	76.0	205.6
5500	47.8	94.0	183.1
6000	50.9	148.2	123.6
6200	54.1	152.0	128.1

