



TWO SMART

WITH A PAIR OF SMALL-BLOCK ENGINES, B&H'S WATER ROD 300 REMAINS A SMART CHOICE FOR FAMILY ORIENTED SPORT-BOAT BUYERS.

WE'VE TESTED THE WATER ROD 300 from B&H Performance in various forms over the past few years. Open bow with a midcabin. Closed deck with a full cabin. Mild big-block power. Wild big-block power. And in all those configurations, we found the stepped 30-footer delivered solid and predictable performance, and was reasonably well built. It also was loaded with features and aggressively priced.

Matching this description, the latest incarnation of the Water Rod 300 was outfitted with a pair of Mercury Racing Scorpion 377 small-block engines. That was a curious choice to be sure, as Mercury Racing stopped production of those engines in 2004. But B&H had a couple in stock and installed them in our test model, and the boat still rang in at a reasonable \$136,780. Not bad for a twin-engine 30-footer.

PERFORMANCE

The builder still has access to new Scorpion 377 engines. One of the company's vendors reportedly bought a number of the 350-horsepower models from Mercury after they were discontinued. For those who'd rather go a

more contemporary twin small-block route, the boat can be ordered with MerCruiser MX 6.2 MPI engines.

Equipped as it was, though, our test model topped out at 72.1 mph with the engines turning 5,000 rpm. That was 2 mph faster than the manufacturer estimated the boat would run—and its 90-gallon fuel tank was full. Getting the power to the water was a pair of Bravo One drives with 1.5:1 gear ratios and 26"-pitch Bravo One four-blade propellers.

Time to plane was 5.5 seconds. From a standing start, the boat reached 66 mph in 20 seconds. Accelerating from 30 to 50 mph took 5.1 seconds.

Based on the numbers, you wouldn't call the Water Rod 300 a rocket. But the model is marketed as a family sport boat, and given that push, the numbers were entirely appropriate for the breed.

Reinforcing the sensible performance of the Water Rod 300 were its solid handling manners. The triple-stepped hull with four strakes did nothing untoward or unpredictable during our handling drills, which included radical high-speed slalom turns. In fact, it turned out to be a model of stability and civility in all maneuvers. Full hydraulic

steering—always a must in any boat that can top 60 mph—was a big plus.

"This boat has great manners—they made it stupid-proof," said lead test driver Bob Teague. "And it's nice to have the redundancy of the twin engines."

In addition to precise, straight-line tracking, the 30-footer boasted a soft ride in 1- to 2-foot river chop. Also a plus, it didn't rattle, bang, squeak or groan.

WORKMANSHIP

The builder laid up the Water Rod 300 with vinylester resin, Coremat, 1708 and 1808 fiberglass, 2- and 4-ounce mat and 18- and 24-ounce woven roving. Balsa was used for coring, and the stringers ran full length.

The boat's gelcoat graphics were reasonably bright and crisp. We found several small waves in the boat's hullsides and deck. Installation of the rubrail was equally uneven, though the plastic-and-vinyl piece looked up to the job of protecting the boat at the docks.

Formed from four sections of dark acrylic, the Water Rod 300's low-profile windshield proved surprisingly effective during our tests. It also had minimal distortion. A slightly lighter





TEST RESULTS: B&H WATER ROD 300

TEST CONDITIONS

Temperature/humidity	91 degrees/30 percent
Wind speed/water conditions	1 mph/1' to 2' chop

HULL INFORMATION

Deadrise at transom	22 degrees
Centerline/beam	29'8"/8'6"
Hull weight	6,200 pounds

PRICING INFORMATION

Base retail with Volvo Penta 8.1/DPS engine	\$95,900
Price as tested	\$136,780

ENGINE & PROPELLER

Engine	(2) Mercury Racing Scorpion 377
Cylinder type	V-8
Cubic-inch displacement/horsepower	377/350
Lower-unit gear ratio	1.5:1
Propeller	Mercury Bravo One 15 1/4" x 26"

OPTIONS ON TEST BOAT

Upgrade to twin Mercury Racing Scorpion 377 engines (\$30,000), IMCO Marine dual ram steering (\$3,500), stereo system (\$2,400), 20-inch flat-screen TV with DVD player (\$1,750), smoked acrylic cabin door (\$1,500), cockpit lights (\$800), tilt helm (\$452), Dino steering wheel (\$250) and electric pole light (\$250).

ACCELERATION

5 seconds	27 mph
10 seconds	57 mph
15 seconds	61 mph
20 seconds	66 mph

MIDRANGE ACCELERATION

30-50 mph	5.1 seconds
40-60 mph	7.8 seconds

RPM VS. MPH

1000	6 mph
2000	19 mph
2500	33 mph
3000	42 mph
3500	51 mph
4000	57 mph
4500	65 mph

TOP SPEED AT RPM

Radar	72.1 mph at 5,000
GPS	71.1 mph

PLANING

Time to plane	5.5 seconds
Minimum planing speed	21 mph

FUEL ECONOMY

At 30 mph	2.3 mpg
At 40 mph	2 mpg
At 50 mph	1.8 mpg
At 60 mph	1.6 mpg
At WOT	1.3 mpg

FUEL CAPACITY

90 gallons

TEST CONDUCTED AT (ELEVATION)

Parker, Ariz. (450 feet)

MANUFACTURER

B&H Performance Boats, Dept. PB, 26005 E. 9th St., San Bernardino, CA 92410, 909-864-7722, www.waterrod.com.

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WHAT WE LOVED: A \$136,780 price tag for a twin-engine 30-footer with good performance and a usable cabin.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE: Cleaner tooling and more attention to detail in the engine compartment.

tint would have enhanced forward visibility and made it even better.

Hardware included stainless-steel grab handles. For mooring, there were evenly distributed pin receptacles for lines and fenders.

Twin rams raised the engine hatch. Inside the compartment, the engines were mounted on solid feet and L-angles through-bolted to the boat's stringers. Batteries were housed in aluminum billet boxes.

As we expected from a twin-engine 30-footer, compartment space was limited. We didn't ding it for that. However, more support and general tidying up was in order for the wiring.

INTERIOR

First thing we noticed about the Water Rod 300's carpeted cockpit? It was deep, up to the rib cage of our 6-foot-tall inspector. That's a big plus when children are on board.

Cockpit seating consisted of a three- to four-person conventional straight-back bench and two bolsters with manual dropout-bottom cushions. Stainless-steel rails tied the backs of the bolsters to the gunwales, and those rails served as grab handles for bench passengers. Gunwale padding was excellent.

For stowage, there were compartments under the bottom cushions for the bench, as well as two lockers in the sole. There also were small gunwale recesses with cupholders.

Consisting of a grab handle and a locking glove box, amenities at the co-pilot's station were adequate. On the opposite side, the helm featured a Dino tilt steering wheel with the Water Rod logo in the hub and an assortment of Gaffrig Performance gauges, as well as Gaffrig throttles and shifters.

A dark acrylic door slid open for access to the cabin. Headroom inside was exceptional for that of a 30-footer, and the space was laid out well with generously padded lounges and a soft V-berth. Even above the berth, where the deck tapered downward, headroom was decent. In a pinch, a couple of adults could probably spend a night in the cabin without feeling claustrophobic.

Typical for a B&H model, the cabin was set up with a microwave oven, a DVD player with a 20-inch flat-screen, a cooler and an Alpine stereo system. In particular, we liked that the recessed light fixtures were dimmable.

OVERALL

Shop twin-engine 30-footers and you'll quickly discover that \$136,000 and change is at the low end of the price scale. Given the performance of the B&H Water Rod 300 and all of its features, that price seems particularly reasonable. Sure, we've seen the boat before. But when something is consistently good, we don't mind seeing it again. **P**

Clockwise from top left: Cockpit seating in the Water Rod 300 consisted of two bolsters and a straight-back bench. At the helm, B&H installed bright green throttles and shifters. Headroom in the cabin, which included a V-berth and well-padded lounges, was outstanding. Twin 350-horsepower Scorpion motors fit snug under the engine hatch.

