

SHOW STOPPER



The new 780 SuperSport is a sharp looking RIB.

If there was one boat at this year's Hutchwilco NZ Boat Show that got Barry Thompson's attention, it was the new Smuggler Strata 780 SuperSport.

He reckons it was show stopper.

WAY BACK IN 1979 when I tested my first ever RIB, a 2.9m Naiad, I could never have envisaged just how popular this style of boat design would be. Around forty years ago RIBS were seen as suitable as tenders and until Naiad came along, there were no local manufacturers. If you wanted a RIB, then Zodiac was about it and as there was no local agent for them, you needed to import one yourself.

How things have changed. Today there are hundreds of models from dozens of manufacturers in every style imaginable.

New Zealand builder, Smuggler Marine has always been at the forefront of the RIB market in New Zealand and over the years has built up an enviable reputation for quality and innovation with their Strata range. They not only produce some of the slickest superyacht tenders on the market but have an exceptionally broad range of cabin, centre console

and mid cabin RIBs.

Managing Director of Smuggler Boats, David Pringle is continually coming out with new designs and over the years has used the Hutchwilco NZ Boat Show to introduce something a bit different. The 2017 show in May was no exception and right until the show opened, his latest creation was a well-kept secret.

When I walked around the show on opening day I struggled to find a boat that really stopped me and had the wow factor. While there were dozens of exceptional alloy and GRP boats, nothing really spun my wheels. That was until I passed by the Smuggler Marine stand and spotted the 780 SuperSport bow rider RIB.

So why a bow rider? David explains – “The success of the mid cabin has been huge for us, but not everyone wants to walk around the side decks to go forward and we had some of our superyacht tender clients who wanted

to maximise the space available with more seating’.

Yep, that all makes sense and I could see straight away that once again the team at Smuggler Boats were onto another winner. If there had been a dedicated RIB category at the NZ Boat Show awards, it would have won it convincingly! Unfortunately, there isn’t but there should be.

Now I have always been a great fan of bow riders and had quite a few over the years, albeit this was my first RIB example.

VERSATILE BOW

Smuggler has worked the transition between inflatable and fibreglass extremely neatly by bringing just a hint of the soft tubes into the bow area, but still giving the focus to the solid GRP coamings and bow. The tubes also act as back rests around the generous seating.



The bow area is very versatile.



The rear seats lift to expose huge storage areas.



There's a live bait tank to port and battery to starboard.



The 780 SuperSport is based on a 27 deg V hull with water ballast.

With a built-in bow anchoring system and Savwinch, there is no need for a deck fairlead, although there is a bollard. The storage area under the squab is massive, with the Savwinch taking up little space. Very neat and a perfect option for the boat. The open bow comes with a clip on vinyl cover, which certainly does its job in keeping the breeze out of the cockpit. While the front squabs provide a couple of loungers, they can be removed to give more fishing space. Again, Smuggler has considered a variety of users for the 780 SuperSport and fisherman are certainly amongst them. The boat has a built-in live bait tank, rod holders, a Manta bait board and overhead a removable rocket launcher with six-rod holders. An optional infill allows you to convert the entire bow space into one large sun pad.

DUAL CONSOLE

Bowriders are sometimes referred to as being dual-console and the Smuggler 780 SuperSport is certainly that. The consoles are mirror images of each other apart from what's on top. To starboard is the helm console, finished with a carbon fibre look and with plenty of space for all the

necessary instruments and controls. Our test boat was fitted with a Simrad NSS Evo 3, Savwinch controls, Lectrotab switches, Yamaha engine management display and an Isotto steering wheel.

Opposite, the console features a dry storage locker above, Fusion MRX300 control, drinks holder and stainless handle. Both sides also have recessed footrests and big side hatches for access to dry storage spaces inside. Four Fusion speakers provide maximum quality sound.

This may be a bow rider but that doesn't mean you have to be exposed, with wrap around clears hanging from the light but exceptionally strong GRP/foam hardtop. We ran the boat with the clears on and the bow cover in place on an 8 deg chilly Auckland morning and it was like being inside a hardtop. In the summer you would open it all up and enjoy the warmer weather.

There is good standing and seated driving positions and with the front seats on sliders, you can adjust the base to suit. The 780 SuperSport has custom designed seat modules that incorporate rear queen seats that hinge to expose deep storage spaces. In here there is enough room for

dive bottles, a cooler bin and all your fishing and safety gear. Smuggler can also modify the seat bases to incorporate a built-in fridge/freezer.

With two more underfloor wet lockers, (between the 300-litre fuel tank) the Smuggler 780 SS doesn't lack for storage options, so there's no need to leave anything on the deck. Overall the boat offers seating for 9-10 people, so the super yacht tender owners are well catered for.

Down aft, the self-draining cockpit has a trademark Smuggler step either side, plus hand holds on the Hypalon tubes. The cockpit sole, bow area and twin boarding steps are finished with U-Deck. The moulded transom is customised to cater for whatever engine power an owner chooses. While we had a single 250hp Yamaha outboard, you can drop on twins or even a sterndrive. Maximum rated power is 300hp.

The rear platforms have been extended 300mm over the 750 models (hence the 780 designation) to cater better for divers and water sports users. There is a stainless drop down ladder to port.



With the covers and clears up it's like being in a big hardtop.



A well equipped facia with everything close at hand.

FLOODING KEEL...OR NOT

The 780 SuperSport is based on the same 27 deg ultra deep vee hull used under all Smuggler 750 boats, both in the inflatable and solid GRP model ranges. It also has the flooding keel, which brings in around 2000 litres of water or 200 kgs of extra weight below the chines when at rest. Drop the throttle and the water expels very quickly. Add the water to the tubes and you have a boat with incredible stability at rest.

An interesting feature of the flooding keel is the ability to stop the water from coming in, which is especially useful if you have a shallow water launching or retrieval situation. David says that with the flooding keel shut off the boat floats around 70 mm higher in the water, which could be all the difference between an easy or difficult launch and retrieval.

We ran the 780 SuperSport on a mirror smooth Auckland Harbour and at WOT @ 5700 rpm got the GPS to run to 50 knots. The boat is a rocket ship in the calm water and is a dream to drive. I never touched the trim tabs and only used about $\frac{1}{2}$ trim to really hang the boat up to see what I could get out of it. David said he had been asked about bolting a 400hp outboard on the transom, but I reckon that's just too much for this type of hull and it doesn't need it.

I have written many times about the superior handling of the Smuggler hull, which outperforms its competition in the

rough and while being such a deep vee it does take some power to push it, that's more than made up for in its sea handling in all conditions.

Power the 780 SuperSport with a Volvo Penta D3 or D4 diesel stern drive and you can expect 42-45 knots depending on how you weigh the boat up.

EXPERIENCED OWNERS

The Smuggler 750, from which the 780 is based has been around for some years

and is currently Smuggler's most popular large RIB. The Smuggler 780 SuperSport is going to suit an owner who already knows what they want in a RIB and while a bow rider may not appeal to everyone, I predict it will be a big success for the company, especially as a superyacht tender. While centre consoles have always been dominant in the larger RIB market, the extra benefits and options available with a bow rider could see it being just as popular.

SPECIFICATIONS

Model: Smuggler Strata 780 SuperSport

Priced from:

Price as tested: \$174,000

Type: Bowrider RIB

Construction: Hypalon/GRP

LOA: 7.80m

Beam:

Deadrise: 27 deg

Height on trailer:

Trailerable weight:

Power: Yamaha 250

Power options: Outboard-Sterndrive

Propeller:

Fuel capacity: 300 Litres

Trailer: DMW

PERFORMANCE & FUEL

RPM	Knots	L/h	L/NM	Range (NM)
1000	5.0	5	1.000	270
1500	8.0	8.4	1.100	240
2000	11.5	14.3	1.300	200
2500	18.0	21.2	1.200	220
3000	23.0	25.4	1.200	220
3500	28.5	31.2	1.100	240
4000	34.0	44.5	1.400	190
4500	40.5	57	1.500	180
5000	45.5	81.6	1.800	150
5500	48.0	85	1.800	150
5700	50.0	96.3	2.000	130

Manufacturer: Smuggler Marine

Ph +64 9 838 9024

E: dave@smuggler.co.nz

www.smuggler.co.nz

WHAT IT'S GOT