

Aqua Java

Full blast ahead.

On a boat, nothing says "extreme" like a watersports tower and a set of tattoo-inspired graphics. But for many builders, these obvious ploys are the only step they use in trying to attract a younger, wake- and ski-oriented crowd. Rinker, as the kids say, is keeping it real. Sure, the R2 has a stylish folding tower with wakeboard racks and oversize rearview mirror as well as a bitchin' logo that sets it apart from Rinker's mainstream bowriders. But Rinker goes beyond that. Standards include such sound system must-haves as a subwoofer, amp, six cockpit speakers, dual tower-mounted barrel speakers, transom remote, and six-disc CD changer. Optional goodies: Perfect Pass speed control ($1,357), the system that high-end wakeboard boats use to hold their speeds rock steady; and a trim tab system ($921) designed to keep this 26-footer at the right attitude.

Rinker completely redesigned its Captiva line for 2006, and the effort shows. Fit and finish is on par with the better manufacturers in this field, and the lines are stylish and up to date, right down to the molded-in, not bolted on, swim platform. I found tremendous attention to detail in places where many builders scrimp—look at the well-caulked seams and shelf fiddles in the starboard console's stowage area. You'll also find an in-sole ski locker as well as a handy transom trunk that can keep skis and boards within reach of those on the swim platform. Both, however, need a mat to keep those items from banging around.

Within the cockpit the crew can lounge on the U-shaped aft bench or soak up the rays against the sunpad's chaise-like, lift-up backrest. Flip-up bolsters are standard issue on both the helm and companion seats, which feature a suspension design to take the backache out of rough water. Top speed nipped at 50 mph with a 300-hp MerCruiser 350 MAG MPI, and bowrise wasn't an issue during a 4.5-second time to plane. (The 6-degree inclination at 2500 rpm in the chart indicates a "forced stall" used to record incremental fuel burn readings. In normal operation, you'd never run at that engine speed without towing—or without lots of negative drive trim.) While I discovered the wake was best with neutral trim tabs at adult boarding speeds, applying tab enabled me to hold a comfortable plane as low as 13 mph, handy for teaching the littlest rippers. —JEFF HEMMEL

BOATING Certified Test Results

SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	run angle	sound level
1000	4.8	5.5	1.7	2.8	3.2	190	218	0	74
1500	6.4	7.4	2.6	2.5	2.8	167	192	2	72
2000	7.6	8.7	5.1	1.5	1.7	100	115	5	78
2500	14.3	16.5	6.7	2.1	2.5	144	166	6	79
3000	24.2	27.8	8.9	2.7	3.1	183	211	2	83
3500	28.3	32.6	10.3	2.8	3.2	186	214	2	85
4000	32.0	36.8	12.5	2.6	2.9	173	199	1	83
4500	37.8	43.5	17.0	2.2	2.6	150	173	1	88
5000	42.6	49.0	22.4	1.9	2.2	128	148	2	95

Advertised fuel capacity 75 gallons. Range based on 90 percent of that figure. Performance measured with two persons aboard, full fuel, no water. Sound levels taken at helm, in dB-A.

LOA	26'2"
Beam	8'6"
Draft (max.)	3'0"
Displacement (lbs., approx.)	4,950
Transom deadrise	20°
Bridge clearance	5'0"
Max. headroom	4'0"
Fuel capacity (gal.)	75
Water capacity (gal.)	10
Price (w/standard power)	$44,426
Price (w/test power)	$49,056

STANDARD POWER Single 260-hp MerCruiser 5.0L MPI Alpha gasoline stern drive.

OPTIONAL POWER Single MerCruiser or Volvo Penta gasoline stern drive to 375 hp.

TEST BOAT POWER Single 300-hp MerCruiser 350 MAG MPI V-8 gasoline stern drive with 350 cid, swinging a 26"-pitch ss Bravo Three propset through a 2.20:1 reduction.

STANDARD EQUIPMENT *(major items)* Fiberglass cockpit liner; folding watersports tower w/ board racks; Clarion AM/FM/CD stereo, 2 tower speakers, 6 cockpit speakers, subwoofer, amplifier, 6-disc CD changer; transom stereo remote; large watersports mirror; anchor locker w/cradle; Bimini top w/boot; extended swim platform w/ss ladder; 6 ss pull-up cleats; 25-qt. removable Igloo cooler; 12v outlet; depthsounder.

Monthly Payment $403
(7.25% interest with 10% down on test boat power, tax not included; 15-year loan to qualified buyers estimated by Excel Credit)

High Points Easy-to-clean ABS-lined stowage. Wind door, with barrel bolt, keeps small items from levitating and swirling underway. Wider-than-average boarding ladder. Restraining strap on head compartment door keeps it from dinging helm. Standard pull-up cleats prevent towrope snags. Full fiberglass liner in head compartment.

Low Points Perfect Pass speed control completes the package, but Rinker substitutes its display for a separate speedo, forcing the driver to watch speed on small digital display. Flip-up cushion intrudes into transom walkthrough. No latch on walkthrough windshield. Head lacks ventilation. Engine room stowage needs a divider to keep gear out of bilge.

Contact Rinker Boat Co., Dept. B, 300 W. Chicago St., Syracuse, IN 46567, 574/457-5731, www.rinkerboats.com.

Crownline 260LS

LOA	26'6"
Beam	8'6"
Draft	3'3"
Displacement (lbs., approx.)	5,700
Transom deadrise	21°
Fuel capacity (gal.)	75
Water capacity (gal.)	15
Price (w/300-hp MerCruiser 350 MAG MPI Bravo Three gasoline stern drive)	$65,092

Contact 618/937-6426, www.crownlineboats.com



Crownline's optional aluminum wakeboard tower ($4,608 with cockpit suntop) follows more of a radar arch aesthetic but is equally adept as the Rinker for air-catching boarders. Standard trim tabs also dial in the hull's attitude and help keep the boat on plane at lower boarding speeds. An extended, bolted-on swim platform and overhanging sunpad give riders a comfortable spot to gear up before hitting the water. The Crownline also features a stowage trunk below the sunpad that opens onto the swim platform, providing easy access to those in water. The enclosed port console contains a porcelain head, which includes a vanity and bests the R2 with both an exhaust vent and opening port. Underway, Crownline's FAST Tab hull combines the performance enhancement of vented chines with a wing-like tab behind the vent to maintain exceptional tracking.

Malibu Wakesetter 247LSV

LOA	24'7"
Beam	8'6"
Draft	2'3"
Displacement (lbs., approx.)	4,000
Transom deadrise	10°
Fuel capacity (gal.)	87
Water capacity (gal.)	0
Price (w/400-hp Malibu 6.2L Indmar Hammerhead MPI)	$60,400

Contact 209/383-7469, www.malibuboats.com



Rinker is intruding on the turf of V-drive-powered boats like the Wakesetter 247LSV. As such, some buyers will be on the fence about stern drives versus V-drives. A V-drive has decided advantages. Throttle control is more precise, and handling ability is better. Malibu also offers 1,150 pounds of ballast, as well as optional wake enhancement offered by the Power Wedge hydrofoil ($2,000). The standard Illusion X tower elevates rope height to provide the biggest air. Figure in another $3,400 to get the full-on stereo system with amp and subwoofer. The Malibu offers far more passenger capacity, with room for up to 16. A lesser deadrise and no trim, however, will result in a more jarring ride in rough water, making it less family-friendly when boarding is done. The lack of a stern drive's directional thrust also makes it harder to maneuver in reverse.

Four Winns 260 Horizon

LOA	26'0"
Beam	8'6"
Draft	3'0"
Displacement (lbs., approx.)	4,640
Transom deadrise	20°
Fuel capacity (gal.)	75
Water capacity (gal.)	12
Price (w/300-hp MerCruiser 350 MAG MPI Bravo Three gasoline stern drive)	$62,277

Contact 231/775-1343, www.fourwinns.com



Four Winns 260 Horizon is another stern drive bowrider with a long list of options. The Wakeboard Tower Deluxe package ($5,062) adds the tower, a Bimini top, dual board racks, a pair of tower-mounted speakers, and a Clarion amplifier and 10" subwoofer to get the party rockin'. Trim tabs ($738) are also available, and I'd suggest them if your boarding crew includes kids. In the cockpit you'll find a starboard refreshment center and a head enclosed within the portside console. The 260 Horizon also boasts at least one innovative take on the standard bowrider fare. The sunpad can be converted into an aft-facing, chaise-lounge style seat. Elsewhere you'll find a walk-through transom for no scramble-over-the–cushions water access, and a narrow trunk built into the port side of the transom that can handle skis and wakeboards.

OUR CHOICE Wakeboarding enthusiasts will prefer the wakes and precision throttle control provided by a V-drive, but the family buyer will want the softer rough-water ride, ability to trim, and directional thrust of a stern drive. By combining the demands of the wakeboarding crowd while retaining the satisfying appeal of a stern drive, Rinker walks the fine line between legitimate contender and tricked-out wannabe. Factor in the high style, solid fit and finish, and an ultra-competitive price, and the R2 rides this wake to the top.