

Boat review: **Smuggler Strata 750 centre cabin**

POWER dresser

Words by **Rebecca Hayter** Photos by **Bryce Taylor**

At the Bay of Islands from 21 to 23 January, the Smuggler Strata 750 RIB was in high-powered company: a fleet of superyachts worth north of \$500m.

With managing director David Pringle at the helm, the Smuggler Strata 750 RIB was media boat for the NZ Millennium Cup – that meant getting photographers amongst the superyachts and getting eye-time in front of their owners, skippers and crews.

That's advertising money can't buy – a perfect opportunity for Pringle to promote his new concept in RIBs: a stylish, centre-cabin that delivers a sturdy offshore ride in comfort, thanks to a high quality, sheltered interior. He calls it the grown-up boat.

"Because you can be comfortably dressed on this boat," he says. "It's not like you have five layers of clothing on just to go boating."

It's dressed in a smart corporate suit of grey, black and white. Bold piping on the upholstery enhances the style curves of the pontoons and moulded interior. For its high profile work at the NZ Millennium Cup, the Smuggler opted for tailor-made chic,

accessorising an Evinrude E-tec Gen 2 250hp outboard engine in retro red.

This was the first Evinrude E-tec Gen 2 250hp outboard in New Zealand since the brand's revolutionary release last year [*Boating New Zealand*, August 2014]. Evinrude's master touch is that its new range is available in a choice of colours including two or three-tone to complement your boat.

But even for a boat named Smuggler it takes more than good looks to steal the show. The centre cabin model is the major development here – taking the RIB concept from an open-air experience to a sheltered office, suitable for commercial or recreational use. Basically, the Smuggler Strata 750 starts as a basic RIB including stainless steel fuel filler, bilge pump and trim tabs for \$56,600. As reviewed here, including the centre cabin, the boat is \$136,860. As for the range of variations on the base boat, Pringle says simply: "We do anything."



My days of risking life and limb to leap between boats are over after it all went wrong for an Australian yachting journalist, but I'll happily go boat-to-boat if one of the boats is a RIB. That's how I boarded the Smuggler, stepping easily onto the teak step set into the pontoon in the cockpit.

I joined Pringle at the helmseat and immediately felt extremely grown-up: safely enclosed within a high-headroom, composite/fibreglass surround with good visibility through a curved Perspex windscreen. Perched on the two-seater helm seat, I had a good view of all instruments on the console.

This really is a dash with panache. The star is the large screen Evinrude management system with touchscreen to allow systematic scrolling and navigating through engine data and performance figures.

Keeping it company is a Lowrance HDS9 Touchscreen chartplotter, Fusion Stereo and speakers, VHF, 12V outlet, and two, six-way switch panels. These activate features

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**PERFORMANCE**

SMUGGLER STRATA 750/ EVINRUDE 250 ETEC GEN2

Engine speed	Boat speed	300	Litres	Range
rpm	knots	L/h	L/NM	NM
500	2.0	1.1	0.6	490
750	3.5	1.5	0.4	620
1000	4.5	2.5	0.6	480
1500	6.0	0.5	0.8	320
2000	9.5	8.5	0.9	300
2500	15.0	14.0	0.9	280
3000	21.5	20.5	1.0	280
3500	27.0	26.0	1.0	270
4000	32.5	35.0	1.1	240

"...dressed
in a smart
corporate suit
of grey, black
and white."

such as the floodlight on the bimini, navigation lights, anchor light, console light and cockpit lights – in other words, hardware that would satisfy a superyacht skipper on tender duty.

The skipper's position, to starboard, has full access to this display of electronic muscle, which takes the boat to its full potential as an offshore-capable craft. The electronics run on two boxed batteries, one in the console and one in the transom.

The joy of driving any boat is in the feel of the helm. The Smuggler has Dynamic Power Steering which delivers super-smooth steering with easy, medium or hard amount of 'feel'. The Evinrude 250hp produced plenty of boogie, taking the boat to a top speed of more than 50 knots. In the hard turns, you'd better be holding on as it leans into its deep vee but in the choppy water we munched easily through the waves head-on and enjoyed a smooth, controlled slide downhill.

"It's the most interactive and responsive boat I've ever skippered," Pringle says.

The combination of the Smuggler Strata hull and the Evinrude is proving a highly economical ride; Pringle says the economy is approximately 20% better than any other engine of that size and delivers 20% more torque. With a built-in 300-litre fuel tank, the



OPPOSITE PAGE, INSET:
The dash with panache,
including Evinrude screen.
TOP: Timber baitboard
with stainless surround and
washdown are some of the
options.

LEFT: An insulated chilly-
bin built into the forward-
facing seat in the bow.

SMUGGLER MARINE

The innovative Smuggler team has recently delivered two new models

- Strata 770 Sealegs Mid Cabin
- Strata 750 Twin Engine

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EVINRUDE

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boat has a range of 300 miles.

Following the NZ Millennium Cup, the Smuggler was going to trade its Evinrude 250 for the Evinrude 225hp, which would give a cruising speed of around 24.5 knots.

The Strata 750 hull is a loyal Smuggler campaigner: a constant, 27-degree vee which has featured in its fibreglass hull and decks since the 1970s. Smuggler introduced it as a RIB 12 years ago.

The 27-degree vee is at the deep end of deep-vee in powerboat design; there are three strakes a side on the Strata.

"Not many boats have a constant deep vee," Pringle says, "but

you get a better ride because the boat gets up on its second strakes and there's less surface area in the water."

The deep vee carves a confident path through rough water, but is less stable at rest than a shallower vee. To keep it calm when stationary, the Smuggler has a 150-litre ballast tank in the centre, aft which fills automatically when the boat stops and empties within three seconds of being underway. If desired, a gate valve prevents the ballast tank from filling, for example when launching from a trailer in shallow water; this reduces draft by 60mm.

The High Modulus-designed fibreglass-composite hull meets

"catch fish... not cables"

There are a number of international submarine cables which come ashore in the Auckland area. These cables supply international communications for both New Zealand and Australia to the rest of the world.

New Zealand is a very isolated nation and as such is extremely reliant upon global communication via submarine cables. There is New Zealand over 97% of all international communication is carried via submarine fibre optic cables. These cables are a key component of New Zealand's infrastructure and play a significant role in our everyday lives, the general economy and future growth of New Zealand.

These cables are laid in three submarine cable corridors in the greater Auckland area where anchoring and fishing is prohibited under the Submarine Cables & Pipelines Protection Act.

These areas are:

- **Muriwai Beach** out to the 12 mile territorial limit where both anchoring and fishing is prohibited.
- **Scott Point to Island Bay** in the upper Waitemata Harbour where anchoring is prohibited.
- **Takapuna Beach** this runs from Takapuna Beach in the south to just north of the Hen & Chicken Island (opposite Takapuna Head) where anchoring and fishing is prohibited.

Note: These protected areas are monitored by sea and air patrols.

Symbols Relating To Submarine Cables

	Submarine cable
	Submarine cable area
	Anchoring prohibited
	Fishing prohibited

Figure 1.

These are some of the penalties

- A maximum fine of \$20,000 for a non-commercial vessel.
- A maximum fine of \$100,000 for a commercial vessel.
- A maximum fine of \$250,000 for damaging a submarine cable.

Additional to the fine for damage, the cable owners would inevitably pursue the recover of costs associated with repairs, this could be up to \$750,000 plus a day; a typical repair can take up to two weeks (around \$10 million).

Be Aware

These international submarine cables carry up to 10,000 volts to power the system repeaters along the cable.



Spark
New Zealand



To download Spark Undersea Cable Awareness Charts visit:
www.boating.co.nz/undersea-cable-awareness-charts.html

What should you do?

- If you are going into any of these areas, be sure to check your marine charts and/or GPS plotter so you know the exact locations of the prohibited zones. The relevant charts are NZ53, NZ532, NZ533, NZ532, NZ53, NZ42 and NZ43. The symbols used to mark the zones are detailed in Figure 1.
- If you suspect you have snagged your anchor or fishing gear on a submarine cable in one of these areas, don't try to free it. Note your position, abandon your gear, then call 0800 782 627.

What happens outside the prohibited areas?

These cables are covered by the Submarine Cables and Pipelines Protection Act regardless of whether they are inside or outside a prohibited area. Beyond the confines of the "anchoring and fishing prohibited" areas, the cables are clearly marked on the appropriate marine charts.

Considering possible positioning inaccuracies and repaired cable section deviations, fishermen are advised to keep a minimum distance of one nautical mile from either side of charted cables.

Note this number:

For any queries regarding submarine cables call: 0800 782 627





Evinrude's big torque

THE EVINRUDE E-TEC G2 was launched in June last year, announcing new technology from prop to cowling. From its super-efficient combustion chamber to the 74-degree bank angle of the powerhead, plus features such as Starboard-Starboard exhaust routing and SLX gearcase, the new Evinrude had a lot to talk about.

And to torque about, claiming up to 20% more torque than its competitors in the same size range, best-in-class fuel economy and low emissions.

The new engines are produced in two versions: 250, 225 and 200 horsepower HO (High Output) and 300, 250 and 225hp V6 series. The Evinrude E-tec 250hp model on the Smuggler Strata 750 is a High Output version; all share the same 3.4-litre V6 block.

They also deliver a confident burst of acceleration when power is applied. This was certainly true on the Smuggler – the boat climbed out of the hole like a jet plane on take-off. Along with strong acceleration is a high capacity for load-carrying.

Despite its high-tech features, rigging is relatively simple. The engine mid-section incorporates a large diameter tilt tube with a helical actuator. Instead of cantilevering the powerhead off the transom, its axis is behind the transom. This means less engine deflection and more stiffness, which gives better stability especially at high speed and clean transom rigging.

Evinrude's smooth steering, as noted on the Smuggler, is the work of Evinrude's integrated hydraulic steering, built into the mid-section and contained in a protective bath of oil. This model has the electric motor option, known as Dynamic Power Steering. The steering is hydraulic from helm to engine, where an electric motor comes into play to adjust the amount of 'feel' or resistance to the helm. The skipper adjusts this on Evinrude's screen, selecting minimum, medium and maximum assistance:

- minimum is suitable for close-quarters manoeuvring or an inexperienced person on the helm;
- medium suits higher speeds, perhaps in rough water;
- maximum may suit for fast speeds in flat water.

Evinrude's fully integrated digital controls include rpm tune: push-button adjustment of the engine rpm by 50rpm increments. Six pre-set screens give information such as fuel usage, oil levels, range and litres/km. The gauge activates the I-Trim system, which lets the engine automatically trim in and out based on rpm and throttle position – a nice feature.

Evinrude is taking an independent route with its large two-stroke engines, believing the lighter weight gives a better power to weight ratio. G2 engines weigh-in at 253kg for the lightest version, including all the fluids and the steering system.

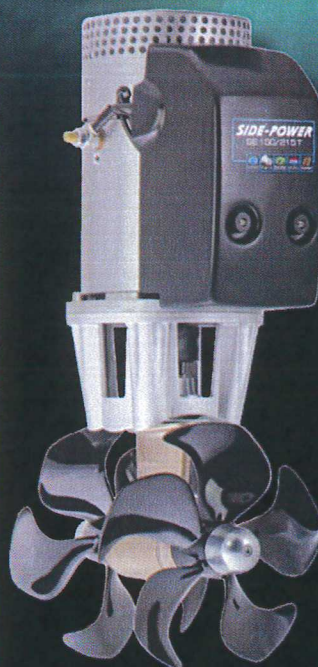
BRP has designed a new lower unit for G2 engines, building the hydrodynamic SLX gear case around robust gears. The RX4 four-bladed series and the Raker HO three-bladed, high-speed propellers were developed for the G2.

SIDE-POWER Thruster Systems

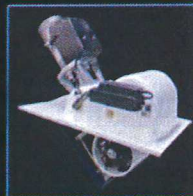


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Smuggler 750 centre cabin

- **loa** 7.5m
- **beam overall** 2.8m
- **length on trailer** 8.3m
- **deadrise** 27 degrees
- **towing weight** 1600kg
- **fuel capacity** 300 litres
- **horse power** 225hp to 250hp
- **trailer** DMW Trailer – multi roller, double axle, hydraulic brakes
- **base boat** \$56,500
- **as reviewed** \$136,860
- **manufactured by** Smuggler Marine
- **boat supplied by** Smuggler Marine



ABOVE: The 27-degree vee Smuggler in a hard turn. Seats combine storage either side of the transom. An adjustable rod holder on the pontoon.

CE, MSA and ABS standards. It has three layers of triaxial glass in the centre and five layers of chopped strand mat, with a fibreglass liner and carries a five-year structural warranty. "It's the same as all our assemblies," Pringle says.

The 600mm diameter tubes are made in 868 Hypalon by Southern Pacific. There are five chambers – two either side and one at the bow – to meet CE certification. The Hypalon tubes have safety ropes inside and out, double wear patches where required, repair kit, dual action pump and full manufacturer's guarantee.

Pringle particularly likes the Smuggler Strata RIB's separate spaces, meaning teenagers can be up for'ard with their iPhones while adults talk boats in the cockpit. Access for'ard is either side along the pontoons with rails on the cabin to hold onto.

For'ard, there is a twin, forward-facing bow seat over a large, built-in, self-draining insulated chilly bin. A mini sun lounger in the bow is a prime spot, although you need to lift the cushions to use the windlass. The anchor, with 12m of chain and 50m of warp, is deployed over the stainless steel fairlead on a fibreglass support. The windlass is well back from the bow, ensuring a good drop for the anchor chain. Anchoring is by remote from the helmstation.

For socialising in the cockpit, the twin helmseat bolster can flip forward to create a rear-facing seat for two, with a footrest. This seat lifts up to reveal storage for four dive tanks. There are also cushioned seats either side at the transom.

The transom is Fun HQ with a baitboard with stainless steel surround, livebait tank, salt water washdown in a pullout hose and a ski pole. There are rocket launchers on the cabin top and four more in the baitboard.

A half-height door beside the helmstation provides access to storage within the centre cabin and – surprise – a manually operated toilet. It lacks headroom and would involve a Mr Bean-like manoeuvre to get yourself sorted but proved useful during the long days on the water at the NZ Millennium Cup.

The Smuggler Strata will be on display at the NZ Hutchwilco Boat Show in May. Rather than superyacht captains, its viewers are likely to be commercial operators and recreational fishermen with their own options for this versatile boat. ■