



Stingray 198LX

MORE SPEED USUALLY EQUALS MORE horsepower — and more money — but Stingray doesn't believe in conventional wisdom. The 198LX is the latest in a line of runabouts that coax maximum stats out of minimum horsepower. In a driving rainstorm, I noted a quick 3.0-second time to plane, 7.4-second time to the 30 mph benchmark and 58.2 mph top speed from my test boat's economical 220 hp MerCruiser 4.3 MPI and an optional 21-inch-pitch Laser II prop. In better conditions, Mercury techs recorded consistent 59s. What's Stingray's secret? Owner

Al Fink, who foregoes conventional strakes in favor of overlapping planes, also borrows a notched transom design from speedy go-fasts. The overlap is like roof shingles, acting as lifting surfaces until the boat gets on plane, and spray releases after, providing a smoother flow of water to the prop. The transom design extends the hull surface all the way below the swim platform, and

EXTRA POINT

Getting big performance from a smaller engine saves money at purchase time and at the pump. The 198LX surpasses 4 mpg at cruising speed.

allows the drive to be mounted higher, reducing drag. Speed is of no value if a hull can't handle the power. Stingray tweaked the 198's running surface to have both a deeper entry and a sharper keel. The design gives the 198 aggressive manners, enabling it to power through the sharpest of turns with confidence. Like most Stingrays, however, the 198 likes a lot of trim to reach those top-end speeds. The result is a looser feel than is typical, one that is best served with a light touch on the wheel.

Though Stingray dubs the 198LX a sport “deck,” it looks little removed from a runabout, though it does offer slightly larger bow and stern cockpits than are typical aboard runabouts this size, a result of its slightly wider than typical (for a Stingray runabout) beam. The LX also gets a full-fiberglass cockpit liner, replacing Stingray's typical carpet-over-marine-ply floor. Beyond those, layout is expected bowrider fare. Parallel lounges are featured in the bow, with both an insulated cooler and combination anchor/ladder locker in the steps leading off the bow. In the main cockpit, twin bucket seats with optional flip-up bolsters are placed behind each console. A three-quarter-width stern bench and sun pad are interrupted for a 15-inch-wide starboard walk-through for easy access from the swim platform. On that platform, an elevated seat makes a convenient spot to gear up for tow sports. Below, a wet compartment is ready to accommodate tow lines or other damp items. — *Jeff Hemmel*

MORE ONLINE

To see more photos of the Stingray 198LX, visit boatingmag.com/2778.

AVAILABLE POWER:

STERNDRIVE



High Points

- ▶ Extended swim platform has a handy seat for skiing and boarding prep.
- ▶ Ski locker features removable, rather than glued-down, carpet.
- ▶ Chrome plates, with raised-rubber traction, provide a side-boarding step.

Low Points

- ▶ No latch for the walk-through windshield, but Stingray is adding one.
- ▶ Neither the drain nor the raised exterior lip will keep the carpeted, under-seat stowage compartments from getting — and staying — damp.

Toughest Competitor

Bayliner's 195 features a “cockpit-forward” design, which moves the consoles and windshield forward to maximize space in the main cockpit. Powered by the identical 4.3-liter MerCruiser, the 195 starts at \$26,999.

- ▶ LOA: 19'9" ▶ Beam: 7'10" ▶ Draft: 2'8" ▶ Displacement (approx.): 2,662 lb.
- ▶ Transom Deadrise: 19 degrees ▶ Bridge Clearance: 3'11" ▶ Fuel Capacity: 34 gal.
- ▶ Max Horsepower: 220 ▶ Available Power: 220 hp MerCruiser sterndrive

▶ **Price: \$33,485** (with test power)

BOATING Certified Test Results

rpm	SPEED			EFFICIENCY				OPERATION		
	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level	
1000	4.52	5.20	1.30	3.48	4.00	106	122	0	74	
1500	6.34	7.30	2.40	2.64	3.04	81	93	4	77	
2000	7.30	8.50	4.20	1.74	2.02	53	62	7	85	
2500	21.90	25.20	6.10	3.59	4.13	110	126	7	85	
3000	28.24	32.50	7.20	3.92	4.51	120	138	1	87	
3500	34.93	40.20	8.20	4.26	4.90	130	150	1	82	
4000	40.41	46.50	10.50	3.85	4.43	118	136	1	84	
4500	45.27	52.10	15.70	2.88	3.32	88	102	1	87	
4800	50.57	58.20	16.60	3.05	3.51	93	107	1	92	

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

HOW WE TESTED

ENGINE: 220 hp MerCruiser 4.3 MPI/C DRIVE/PROP: Alpha One/1 3/8" x 21" stainless-steel Laser II GEAR RATIO: 1.62:1 FUEL LOAD: 8 gal. CREW WEIGHT: 320 lb.

Stingray Boats Hartsville, South Carolina; 843-383-4507; stingrayboats.com