

Greg's choice

Scorpion



...STRIKE

I love extremes; I detest compromise. A fast boat should be exactly that. Light, lively, exciting and just a little bit edgy. The Strike fits the bill to perfection. Its super-sharp, deep-vee stepped hull is addictively responsive. And its super-charged 300hp Verado puts the world in reverse the moment you touch the throttle. It turns on a sixpence and you can feel the G-force playing havoc with your insides while the wind tugs at your cheeks. In fact, it's not dissimilar to the motorcycles I have sitting in my garage.

It is a Scorpion RIB that holds the round-Britain record for a sub-30ft boat and, more recently, a Scorpion that completed a 61-hour passage from London to Monte Carlo. The Windy and Hunton can claim nothing this hardcore. Wave jumping is an experience that is simply unbeatable in a RIB like the Strike. Try it in the Hunton or Windy and you may be sorry – providing your wife doesn't castrate you first!

I look at the Hunton and Windy and I see a streamlined floating caravan, probably piloted by an overweight bloke whose sagging body would be destroyed by a RIB. The Windy and Hunton are fast in their own ways, but the Scorpion allows you that direct touch with the elements that boating is all about. And it costs only £90,000 – that's £430,000 less than the Hunton and enough for a waterfront holiday home, countless hotels, loose women and fine liquor!

Sure the Scorpion may not rain down creature comforts – there's not even a toilet – but this boat will reignite the



Cavernous locker can hold a long set of skis and all manner of toys



For sheer exhilaration and fast, efficient cruising, the £90,000 Scorpion Strike is hard to beat

passion for water, waves and wind like no other. If you need home comforts, there's always your brand new waterfront house to look forward to.

And if we're talking running costs, then the Strike is streets ahead thanks to a super-efficient hull designed to give the speed of a twin-engine set-up from a single 300hp outboard. At 30 knots it costs £57 an hour to run – £22 and £17 per hour less than the Hunton and Windy respectively. This margin will only widen as diesel continues to climb in price or somebody twigs that you are not using 40% of your fuel for heating!

Servicing an outboard is considerably cheaper than the four-figure annual bill you will be looking at for the Hunton and Windy. Lift-out costs do not exist as you will either dry stack it or keep this puppy on a trailer. And, as a result, there's no filthy antifouling. For the Strike, berthing costs are peanuts in comparison and if you have a 4x4 you can even tow it home or take it on holiday.



The Scorpion allows you that direct connection to the elements and leaves enough change for a waterfront home

It was once said of the Rolling Stones that "they are so ugly they are appealing". Some utilitarian RIBs fall into this category but this 'floating fender' is far from ugly with its fully moulded GRP interior and classy egg-shell blue finish – easily changed if you'd prefer something more menacing.

And its fun factor is head and shoulders above the rest; get the family on board and waterski and wakeboard till the cows come home. Ever tried water-skiing behind a boat that takes ten minutes to pop the skier up and then drowns them in a rooster tail? I suspect Mr Hutton hasn't. The Windy makes a credible ski boat – but nothing beats the Strike. Rapid acceleration and super-sharp turns make it perfect. And, the ease with which your other half can drive it means you can get a turn on the skis too.

Slipping close inshore into that perfect deserted cove without destroying your props is easy in the Strike, without having to drag some crusty inflatable out of your lazarette.

As a thinking man's performance boat, the Strike takes no prisoners. Nor should it. If you feel the need for some sea-going accommodation buy an Aquastar and keep the Strike for those moments of testosterone-fuelled madness.



Simple but well-designed helm and seating make for great driver experience



Deep seating allows guests to enjoy the action in comfort and safety



And finally the...

Verdict

What we really have here is three winners. Even though one is a RIB, these boats have more in common than they do differences: exemplary build quality, fine engineering installations and terrific looks for starters. They also dispel the idea that fast, deep-vee boats with big powerful engines are necessarily more thirsty than their slower, flatter, small-engined counterparts. Because boats like these are designed to go very fast from the outset, efficiency is often paramount in their designers' minds and if you compare the fuel economy of these boats with their more fleshy counterparts, it's these speedsters which emerge the winners. So in a world of ever-rising fuel prices they can actually end up making more, not less, economic sense.

This tremendous pace arrives with a whole slew of other interrelated benefits. Their high-speed ability directly expands an owner's potential cruising grounds – and the options too (Coves to Dartmouth in an hour, anybody?). Likewise, that amazing tempo demands great build strength. Indeed, the 50-knots-and-upwards rocketships from Scorpion and Hunton in particular are extraordinarily strongly-built boats, utterly free of any creaks or groans. Fortunately, all three have truly superb hulls too – among the very best – and it takes a lot to slow these boats. So although they have more potential to outrun bad weather, ironically they have less need to do so.

So they're not going to win any prizes for accommodation. But that's hardly the point. With the money their owners are likely to save on fuel, there will be some spare to live it up in decadent shore-side hotels. **MB**

THE DATA

	HUNTON XRS43	WINDY 35 KHAMSIN	SCORPION STRIKE
LENGTH OVERALL	43ft 1in (13.13m)	35ft 0in (10.68m)	31ft 2in (9.50m)
BEAM	10ft 10in (3.30m)	10ft 6in (3.20m)	9ft 5in (2.78m)
FUEL CAPACITY	211imp gal (960 litres)	148 imp gal (675 litres)	80imp gal (365 litres)
RCD CATEGORY	B (for 8 people)	B (for 10 people)	B (for 7 people)
DISPLACEMENT	70 tonnes	5.1 tonnes	1.7 tonnes
BASE PRICE	£522,000	£306,378	£90,000
CONTACT	www.hunton.co.uk	www.windy.no	www.scorpionribs.com
PERFORMANCE			
Top speed	58.0 knots	46.8 knots	54.1 knot
Fuel @ top speed	189lph/41.6gph/1.40mpg	156lph/34.4gph/1.36mpg	113lph/24.9gph/2.17mpg
Fuel @ 40 knots	99lph/21.8gph/1.84mpg	100lph/22.0gph/1.82mpg	58.5lph/12.9gph/3.11mpg
Cost @ 40 knots	£104 of fuel per hour	£105 of fuel per hour	£88 of fuel per hour
Range @ 40 knots	310 nautical miles	216 nautical miles	200 nautical miles
Fuel @ 30 knots	75lph/16.5gph/1.82mpg	70lph/15.4gph/1.95mpg	38lph/8.31gph/3.61mpg
Cost @ 30 knots	£79 of fuel per hour	£74 of fuel per hour	£57 of fuel per hour
Range @ 30 knots	307 nautical miles	231 nautical miles	231 nautical miles



TEST ENGINES AND DRIVES

HUNTON XRS 43 Twin Cummins NKT sterndrives, 480hp @ 3,400rpm, 6-cylinder 5.9-litre diesels
WINDY 35 KHAMSIN Twin Volvo D6-DPH sterndrives, 370hp @ 3,500rpm, 6-cylinder 5.5-litre diesels
SCORPION STRIKE Single Mercury outboard, 300hp @ 5,800rpm - 6,400rpm, 6-cylinder 2.6-litre petrol

Speed in knots. GPH & MPG figures use imperial gallons. Ranges in nautical miles and allows for 20% reserve. Calculated figures based on readings from on-board fuel gauges, your figures may vary considerably. All prices include UK VAT, Light chop, F2 for speed trials. Fuel cost at Lynton Yacht Haven: £1.50/litre petrol, £1.05/litre diesel with 60/40% split. Base price includes UK VAT and is with our best engines, not the smallest engine option.



DAVE SAYS...
"Three crackers! I wonder if someone could build me an XRS43 Strike?"



JACK SAYS...
"Elegance, refinement and superb useability puts the Windy in pole"



GREG SAYS...
"Great contest but on price and sheer fun for all the family the Strike wins it for me"