

BOAT REPORT



If there was a prize for fastest boat at the 1988 Southampton Boat Show, then the 31ft St Tropez would have been high on the list. With a pair of 365hp Mercruisers aboard, speeds in the high sixties were promised. A Revenger open day gave us the chance to test the claim, and also try out their 25ft Volante.

REVENGERS 31&25

REVENGER boats first made their mark in cruiser racing circles, with the Revenger 25. Back in the early '80s these were the boats to beat, with Colin Stewart's *Disprin*, and Lady Arran's *Laura Lucy* being two of the better known examples. In the 1984 Round Britain Powerboat Race, *Disprin* was one of only six entrants to complete every leg of this gruelling event, going on to finish fourth overall, a remarkable performance for a single-engined boat, pitted against 40ft Class I racers, with over six-times the power.

St Tropez 31

The 25 was built by Plancraft in those days, but is now produced by Revenger Boats. Designed by Don Shead, it is a limited accommodation cruiser racer, but the company wanted a new model, with more length and extra space down below. They commissioned Lorne Campbell to do the drawings, and the result is the 31 St Tropez.

Unmistakably a Revenger, this has the lean and hungry look of the rest of the family, but with a more luxurious

finish. The deep vee hull is still there, with a deadrise of 26° amidships, 23° at the transom, and the familiar pronounced spray rails remain. The changes come in cockpit layout and accommodation. Extra beam allows a full-width rear cockpit seat, and a sunlounger over the engines. The driver and navigator have a pair of stand-up racing seats to starboard, facing the control panel. The seats have a drop-down squab, allowing you to sit during the sedate moments of the trip. Once travelling fast, most people will choose to stand, and there are strategically-placed grab rails to facilitate this.

The instruments and controls are well thought out for high speed driving. Throttle and gears are operated by a pair of Morse's new twin-lever racing controls. With their positive click-stop operation, and precise feel, they allow you to accurately handle the power of the big engines, both out at sea and manoeuvring in the marina.

Similar prominence is given to the other vital controls on a boat of this speed, the power-trim and flap switches. These are clearly placed ahead of the throttles, with switches for operating port and starboard units separately, or both together. These are matched by large racing-type gauges to indicate the angle of the flaps, set clearly in the driver's line of sight. Disappointingly the trim gauges are just the standard Mercruiser dials — small and none too precise. The rest of the engine instruments are well laid out, in a prominent head-up display, together with electrical switches and warning lights.

Behind the driver's seat, passengers are taken care of by a three/four person bench seat, again with convenient handrails. Cave lockers port and starboard take loose items, though those next to the rear seat need a fiddle or lip to stop things falling out. The drink holders here are a vital item, that we don't always find, even on fast boats. The builders have obviously given thought to the problem of stepping into a deep cockpit without trampling on the rear seat, but the little step they have come up with is neither one thing or the other. Inviting when you first see it, it turns out to be too small to be useful, but it is an idea that should be followed through.

The cabin is reached through a sliding Perspex door. On your left is a



Left: the St Tropez top, and Volante below. Above: laid out for speed, the helmsman and navigator's position on the St Tropez. Below: 730 Mercruiser horses squeeze into the engine bay.



SWEET REVENGE

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◀ compact galley, with cooker and fridge. Headroom here is close to standing. Opposite is the toilet compartment, with WC and sink. Forward is a semi-circular settee and table, which convert to a double berth, while forward again is another double.

Out in the cockpit, lifting the sunlounger reveals two black beasts. The 365 hp Mercruiser 454 Bravos are a tight fit, but you can still get to most of the service points.

So how does this potent monster perform? Well, the top speed we could crank out of it was 54 knots, equating to 62mph, but this was with stainless cleaver props on. Revenger reckon that a pair of chopper props will give more lift, and help the boat over the magic 65mph. Out at sea we were blessed with the kind of conditions that make test drivers smile and salesmen wince. A south-easterly 4-6 had been blowing for two days, leaving a big swell, and some nasty short ones on top. At times our photo boat was disappearing in the holes, and at the end of our runs we had to stop and look around for it. To be quite honest, these were not the sort of conditions most owners would venture out in, but the Revenger claims a pedigree the equal of any other, and we were determined to put this to the test.

Once you had gathered your nerve to push on over the hump, the 31 cut its way to windward with occasional crashes, but an overall smooth ride. Across the waves the narrow beam left it rolling a bit, but downwind it was just great fun. We set tabs and drives to a neutral position, and concentrated on the helm. The steering was precise and confidence-inspiring, allowing you to drive round or over the waves at will. The bows had enough lift not to bury in the backs of the rollers, and the cut-away forefoot did not trip you up when running down their faces. All in

all an exciting but predictable ride, showing that the boat would be more than able to look after itself and its crew in more moderate conditions.

Volante 25

This purposeful sportsboat is a development of the earlier *Mediterranée*. Principal differences are a windscreen, and more sophisticated appointments. Basic details include two bucket seats and a bench seat in the cockpit, a sunlounger aft, a huge cushioned foredeck for sunbathing, with a stowage area beneath that could just about serve as a sleeping space if you were desperate. Power comes from a single engine — a 330hp Magnum Alpha One on our test boat, but any option of Mercruiser is available.

Good detail points include the optional freshwater shower that stows in a neat locker in the side deck aft, the five sensibly-sized cleats, the tie-down points in the underdeck stowage to stop things being thrown about, and the grab handles next to the passengers aft — so often the driver has to slow down because his guests can't keep body and soul together behind him. More details include the ski lockers port and starboard, a table that can be set up in the middle of the cockpit, and an electric cool box that locates neatly under the rear seat. Also here is the manual back-up bilge pump, with its handle stowed in a neat purpose-made recess.

The engine hatch lifts up easily on gas struts, and reveals an installation that owes much to the company's racing background. This includes stowage on the bulkhead for a spare prop, a huge battery, bolted down in a strong box, stowage for a spare two-gallon fuel tank, two lights — showing

an understanding that breakdowns can occur at night — and battery switches protected from a careless foot, or spanner. We also noted the flat floors moulded into the chines outboard, to allow you to stand and work. With all this, we were surprised to see the fuel line was just reinforced plastic, with no shut-off valve installed. Revenger have said they will rectify both these points. Finally, the space is painted out red, to keep it smooth and clean, and encourage tidy working practices.

Out on the water, the Volante showed a smooth but electrifying performance. Top speed was quoted at 62 mph, but as our radar gun was being used on the other boat, we were unable to verify this. The conditions outside the harbour were really too much for a boat of this size, but we have driven its near identical stablemate the *Mediterranée* in only slightly smaller waves, and can vouch for the handling and ride. If you are after a performance sportsboat that will take almost anything in its stride, then this is in a class of its own. ■

St Tropez

LOA	32ft 1in (9.75m)
LWL	26ft 0in (7.92m)
Beam	8ft 6in (2.60m)
Draught	2ft 6in (0.66m)
Weight	3 tons
Power	Up to 800hp
Fuel	140gal (635l)
Water	40gal (180l)
Price	£68,000 ex VAT

Volante 25

LOA	25ft 4in (7.65m)
LWL	20ft 4in (6.20m)
Beam	7ft 4in (2.20m)
Draught	1ft 3in (0.40m)
Weight	1500lb (680kg)
Power	330hp
Fuel	40gal (180l)
Water	7gal (35l)
Price	£22,730 ex VAT

Builders:

Revenger Boat Co, Forward Buildings, 46 Windsor Road, Slough, Berks. Tel: 0753 25496.

