

Rodman Spirit 31

The 31's unique transom is certainly eye-catching, but how does the rest of the boat compare?

REPORT BY MARK TURLEY



ONE-OF-A-KIND TRANSOM

View footage of the Spirit 31 on test at www.motorboatsmonthly.co.uk

The brief...



This Spanish builder decided to fill the gap between its popular sportsfishers and its upmarket Muse flybridge boats. Rodman has kept a keen eye on the price tag of its Spirit line-up, which is all very admirable but on the downside it can mean things end up being a bit basic. We stepped aboard for a closer look. **Mark**

LOA 31ft 1in (9.5m)
PRICE from £117,000
TOP SPEED 24.5 knots
BUILDERS Rodman Polyships
ENQUIRIES RBS Marine, Tel: 01243 512 101
www.rbsmarine.com

The new Spirit range from Rodman kicks off with this 31, with 12.8m (42ft) and 11m (36ft) versions in the pipeline for next year. The new line-up is meant to provide a more luxurious alternative to Rodman's sportsfisher range, which have proved popular as general-purpose cruisers. So what can these boats offer that sportsfishers can't?

Design & build

Rodman has entrusted the design of its Spirit range to Fulvio de Simoni, who is the very same guy responsible for the plush Muse line-up.

And, as well as the initial trio of sedan models, there will also be open sports cruiser and flybridge versions too. Kicking off with the smallest can't have been easy as the yard laid another constraint on Simoni's plate – the hull length had to come in at under 8m (26ft) because in Spain boats above this length fall into a heavier belt of tax. The design team got around this by creating a length-cheating 4ft extension to the transom that carries the bulk of the cockpit. Some ingenious arcs of seating can be shunted around on tracks, allowing the transom to open up and form a huge bathing platform with the seats arranged to face each other.

However, there is no getting away from the fact that this is a 26ft hull, and even though there has been an attempt to recover some internal space by giving the boat a very broad bow, the accommodation still feels sub-30ft. This isn't helped by Rodman's choice of power – the shaftdrive set-up encroaching into the midship's region, where a stern drive or even a V-drive would leave more space to play with. That said, the 31 has two separate sleeping quarters – a forecabin with an offset double and a lobby area that has a single berth tucked down its port side. The toilet compartment opposite is adequate in size and rather than the usual mouldings there is stained oak joinery,

which gives things a lift. The sideboard-style galley looks sleek, clean and modern and in proper Rodman style the joinery seems fairly solid even if it looks a bit lightweight. Rodman tell us the helm, just ahead of the galley, is going to be modified to accommodate a two-person bench seat. This is good news, as although the L-shaped dinette offers a good view out of the side windows while seated, a second pair of eyes facing forward is always useful. Of course, it would be better to have a reversible seat at the dinette, but there isn't a lot of space to achieve this and Rodman has tried to keep the 31 as attractively priced as possible. Small embellishments like

this obviously fuel production costs, and the Spanish yard has opted to invest its money in the 31's hull structure and engineering, which remain as well found as ever. But one area Rodman should have spent a bit more time and money on is joining the wheelhouse and cockpit together. The basic two-part sliding patio doors mean you lose out on what could be the boat's most attractive feature – a large, sociable through cockpit/saloon. A slightly more sophisticated door system that opens the whole lot up would pay big dividends and we're glad to hear that this is now being considered for future boats.

PHOTOS: WILLIAM PAYNE

“Move the seats apart to create a huge watersports area”



Outside

Unique seating creates a very versatile deck

The roundabout seating arrangement, which runs on inset tracks and locks into several different positions, might look like a gimmick but it actually makes for a very roomy, flexible cockpit. The other advantage to being able to move the seats clear of the bathing platform is that you end up with one huge watersports area, great for

sunnier climes where everyone is in and out of the water.

The seat bases double up as **stowage** but there is also a lazarette tucked under the cockpit. This is a useful size accessed via a gas strut-supported hatch, but the steering gear needs boxing off or a loose item could jam things up.

The table – a rather cheap one it has to be said – can be moved inside and out. Although on our test model the two-part patio doors could slide from one side to the other, this still left half of the entrance closed. However, we have been told that on future

boats this door arrangement will be replaced with a new system so that the wheelhouse can open up a lot more to the cockpit via a pair of bi-fold doors.

Access to the **side decks** and over the chunky coaming to the pontoon

is easy thanks to decent moulded steps. The chunky gunwales with handrails set into the cabin roof make you feel safe, too. The side decks get pinched by the coachroof as you near the bow but a flat and non-slip area right forward help when manoeuvring around deck.

An electric windlass comes as part of the **Weekend Pack**, which also includes things like a microwave, hot water on tap, and foredeck sunbed cushions. The mooring hardware is made up of three sets of quite reasonable-sized cleats.



FOREDECK



ROUNDBOUT SEATING



VERSATILE COCKPIT

FORWARD CABIN



Inside

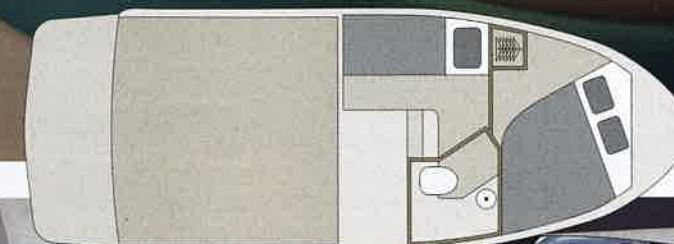
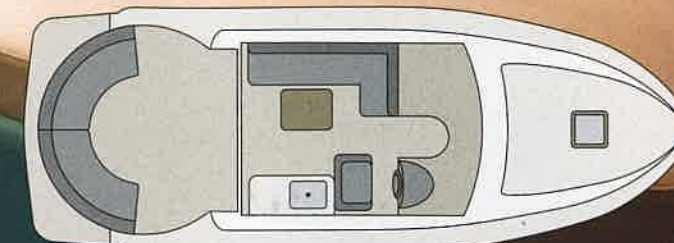
If you like simple styling, you'll love this fitout

The **wheelhouse** is light and bright with good headroom, and the stained oak joinery gives a bold splash of colour. But it feels a bit minimalist because there isn't much detail worked into the fitout. For example, the **console** across from the helm is simply a large angled stretch of moulding. A few trays and a chart holder would not only help break it up, but would be incredibly useful as well. The **table** is quite uninspiring, too. It extends and can be taken outside into the cockpit, but the colour is a bit on the bland side and there are no nice fiddles to it.

On the plus side, the **dinette** is surprisingly comfy and offers a decent view – although not forward – and has the benefit of a couple of deep drawers set into its base. The top of the **galley** unit hinges back to reveal an electric hob and decent-sized sink, while tucked behind the double cupboard doors there is some shelving and a few drawers. A microwave can also be fitted as part of the range of options packages.

A couple of steps take you down to the lobby with its **single berth** along the port-hand side. It's perfectly possible to sit up in bed and read from this berth and there's a cupboard for your things, with further storage within the base of the bunk. The **toilet compartment** can be found opposite, where a holding tank is fitted as standard. The ceramic basin helps give the mouldings here a lift, as do the wooden cupboard doors. The handy wash bag-sized shelves are another useful feature.

Shelves also feature in the **forecabin**, with a two-tier set-up running down either side helping to make up for the lack of drawers (there's only one large hanging drawer locker set to port). The double berth is angled over to starboard and just about works in terms of shape, even if it isn't squared up to the mirrored headboard. The large void within the moulded base of the berth will swallow plenty of gear but it would have benefited from being lined out.



WHEELHOUSE



GALLEY



TOILET COMPARTMENT



MIDSHIPS BERTH



Performance & handling

The Spirit's bluff bow and 26ft hull length gave us a slight cause for concern when we first clapped eyes on it – was there a danger it would be wet, clunky and get pushed around like a boat in its mid-20s rather than early 30s? Our spin around the Solent from Chichester to Southampton proved we were wrong on all

counts. OK, so there wasn't much wind but if spray was going to find its way aboard it would have done and the ride was commendably easy and smooth, even compared to many a 30ft-plus hull. We repeatedly took it over the wake of the considerably larger photo boat at full throttle, and we didn't get a single slam, rattle or squeak. Rodman is clearly still in the habit of building solid boats and the single

screw and rudder was very responsive while being stable at the same time. On test the Volvo Penta D4 300hp hit a moderate top speed of just under 25 knots, with cruising revs of 3000-3200rpm delivering a well-mannered 20-odd knots. If you want to take things a bit steadier, ease back to around 1800rpm and the hull is happy to jog along at 16 knots without running too bow up.



From the helm

A two-seater modification for the helm is a must

At the moment there's only enough room for the skipper in the helm seat, but the yard says it is going to modify this, creating a double seat with a drop-down arm. This is all well and good but as there is no fore and aft adjustment, skippers who are a bit bulkier in the size department might find the seat a bit close to the vertical wheel.

The console is adequate and tidy, easily accommodating all the usual engine gauges, ready-use switches and electronics, and there's also enough space for a plotter above the wheel. Visibility forward is fine with a clear view over the console and bow, and apart from when you put the helm hard over you'll get excellent visibility down both sides and astern.

Specification & value

When we first saw the press release for this boat a few months ago we had our head turned by the price – less than £120k for a two-cabin 31-footer is not bad at all. However, it isn't quite as simple as that because it doesn't translate into 31ft of useable volume despite that huge overhang creating a great cockpit.

In terms of size to price it is more akin to a 28-footer than a 31, and if you opt for twin diesels, add in the *Weekend Pack and a few other must-haves, then you will easily nudge past the £150k mark. This still isn't a bad price, but not as reasonable as we first thought.

Technical data

KEY DIMENSIONS

BUILD	GRP
RCD	B
LENGTH OVERALL	31ft 11in (9.48m)
HULL LENGTH	26ft 11in (7.95m)
BEAM	11ft 0in (3.36m)
DRAUGHT	2ft 0in (0.60m)
AIR DRAUGHT	9ft 0in (2.74m)
DISPLACEMENT	5.9 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	100gal (450l)
WATER CAPACITY	24gal (110l)
WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	9in (23cm)
HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 6in (1.98m)
FORECABIN BERTH	6ft 2in x 4ft 6in (1.88 x 1.37m)
MID CABIN BERTH	6ft 5in x 2ft 2in (1.95 x 0.66m)

PERFORMANCE

Engines	Single Volvo D4-300 diesel
Configuration	4cyl, 3.7lt, 300hp @ 3500rpm
Conditions	Wind Wly, Force 3, sea calm
Load	Fuel 50%, water 50%, crew 3

RPM	KNOTS	GPH	LPH	MPG	RANGE	NOISE
2500	12.5	5.3	24	2.36	189	79
2800	16.9	6.8	31	2.48	198	80
3000	19.6	8.1	37	2.42	194	80
3200	22.2	10.0	45	2.22	178	81
3450	24.5	12.3	56	1.99	159	84

Range figures quoted above are in miles based on standard fuel tanks and include a 20% margin. GPH & MPG refer to imperial gallons. These figures may vary due to weather conditions, air, water, engine temperature, crew numbers, hull fouling, fuel quality and other issues. Noise readings in dB(A) were taken in the saloon.

PRICES

STANDARD BOAT with single Volvo D4-300	inc VAT £130,000
BOW THRUSTER	£3335
WEEKEND PACK	£4450
HEATING	£2550
BATTERY CHARGER	£622
SHOREPOWER	standard
SYNTHETIC TEAK DECKING	£4250
ANTIFOUL (five coats)	£1424

BOAT AS TESTED £146,630

*Weekend Pack includes hot water capabilities, electric windlass, mooring equipment, microwave and sunbed cushion. Price includes UK delivery and commissioning.



Enginebay

Rodman offers several inboard engine options in both single and twins. This is a good move because this sort of boat is likely to end up being used in any number of ways – perhaps even inland. So owners with a view to pottering can save themselves money by opting for a single 200hp Nanni while the most potent installation comes with a pair of Volvo D3 220hp units. In between, there's a single D4 rated to 225hp or 300hp (as tested). Twins start at 170hp D3s.

The enginebay is tucked under the cabin sole but for checks and servicing there is a gas strut supported hatch in the cockpit, which allows you to drop down into the rear of the compartment. The filters are then close to hand and there is loads of room outboard to get to the auxiliaries.

THE VERDICT

Rodman has always built strong boats and this is no exception, even though the yard is clearly trying to steal a march on its competitors by keeping a tight rein on the purse strings. That is fine to a point but to our mind the 31 will endear itself to a whole lot more people once they modify the cockpit/wheelhouse access and really open the boat up.



Meet the family



Rodman Spirit 36, from £190,000

LOA: 36ft 0in (11.0m)
The 36 hasn't been launched yet but it will follow a similar format, with extra room for a full midships cabin and twin shaftdrives.



Rodman 870HT, from £106,750

LOA: 29ft 2in (8.90m)
Easy accessible side decks and large cockpit. Similar forecabin to the Spirit 31 but galley is down rather than part of the wheelhouse.

The rivals



Jeanneau Leader 9, from £126,000

More hardtop than fully enclosed wheelhouse but there's plenty of sheltered inside/outside space and two well-appointed light cabins. Stern-drive powered. www.jeanneau.fr



Aquador 28C, from £160,000

The stern-drive-powered 28C boasts full walkaround decks and four berths, while the HT model has a great midships cabin. [MGM Boats, www.mgmboats.com](http://www.mgmboats.com)