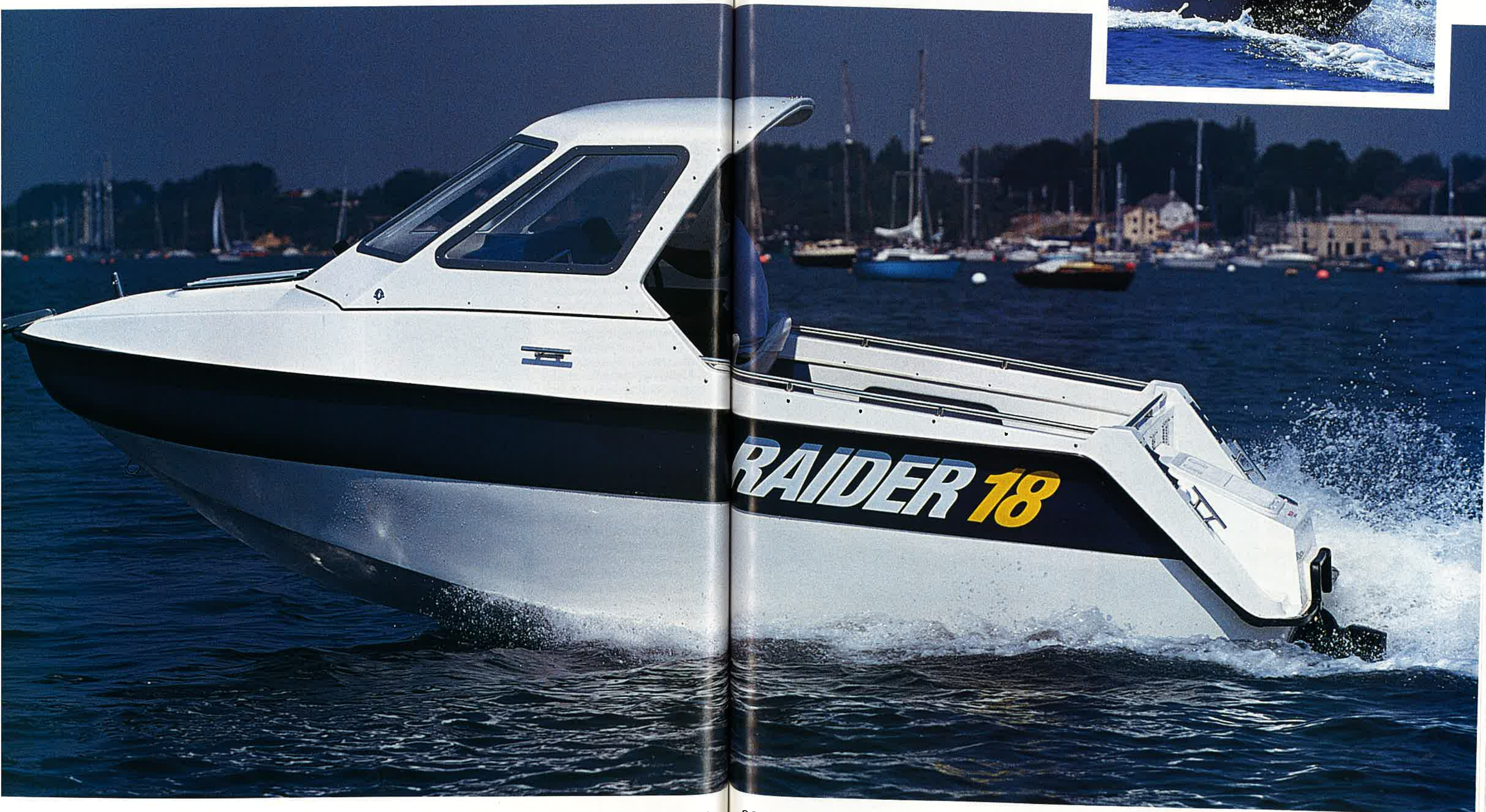


Raider 18

This budget British sports-fisher has few frills, unless you opt for them. We tried the hardtop version in both outboard and sterndrive guises.



Sensible no-frills craft will always have their place in the market. New models in this niche are few and far between, but here is a good example, and it is made in Britain.

Value-for-money boating is what the Raider 18 is all about. Even if you choose the slightly more expensive wheelshelter version rather than the basic open model, you are looking at getting on the water for £11,000 ex VAT with outboard power, or £15,500 ex VAT with a sterndrive engine.

An extensive options list allows you specify the boat to your own requirements if you are prepared to pay more.

Design & layout

Although this is fundamentally a practical craft, with consequently upright styling, the builders have managed to integrate some flair into it.

Broad beam, 3ft deep freeboard and standing headroom in the wheelshelter are not the best ingredients for sleek-looking boats, but the 18 is pleasing to look at. A choice of contrasting



Wheelshelter

The hardtop provides a comfortable covered helm position without impinging on cockpit space.

Although the sensible steering wheel does not offer any adjustment, the helm is

comfortable, with the throttle well placed and visibility good all-round. Fairly supportive swivelling pedestal seats ensure you sit firm, helped by a small footrest.

A simple upright dash houses the engine gauges plus some extra fittings and switches to suit owners'

preferences. There is still plenty of space for fitting additional electronic navigational and fish-finding equipment.

The seats have tidy built-in drinks holders and useful grabhandles on their backs, complementing the well-placed one above the cabin door.

Cabin

As standard, the cabin space is functional. The mouldings, sealed with a speckled finish, provide a forward storage area and two side lockers. A deck hatch offers good natural light. Two fire-extinguishers are mounted on the cockpit bulkhead.

From this, you can make the cabin as comfortable as you like by selecting from the extras, perhaps adding covers and cushions, a portable toilet and

some cooking facility.

Space is tight, as you would expect on an 18-footer with a spacious aft deck, but headroom is good when seated.



Cockpit

As in the cabin, the level of comfort offered by the cockpit depends largely on the level of trim you choose.

The sterndrive model has a very tidy aft seat arrangement, whilst side seats are an option on the outboard-engined boat. If you opt for coaming pads,

you get side lockers running the full length of the cockpit to supplement the large central locker under the sole. Without these, storage is limited, especially for small items.

For serious fishermen, a self-contained bait tank and rod-holders are optional extras.

If the weather turns nasty, a canopy can be fitted, extending aft from the wheelshelter roof.



BOAT REPORT

colourways to break up the white iRP allows owners some scope for individualising their craft.

The hull is stable and good build standards are evident in the cabin, wheelshelter and cockpit, with all

the fittings very well made and solidly engineered.

We tested hardtop Raider 18s with both of the power alternatives currently offered: one with a 90hp Mercury four-stroke outboard, the

other with a 130hp Mercruiser 3.0LX sterndrive. The builders tell us a diesel option is to follow soon.

Performance & handling

Whichever power source you go for, the Raider hull has very good seakeeping. It deals with moderate-sized seas without any trouble, making it easy for the helmsman to remain in full control at all times. And it is a sturdy boat in rougher water, shrugging off the waves and ensuring steady progress while giving confidence to the driver.

Because of the wide negative chines that are there to provide stability at standstill, as a stable base to fish from, the boat turns quite flat. But you get used to this.

Very little spray is thrown up onto the screen, which says something about the efficiency of the hull.

With a 90hp Mercury outboard on the transom, the boat's performance exceeded our expectations, topping out in excess of 30 knots, although 25 knots is likely to be quite sufficient for most users.

Response to the steering wheel is all right at higher speeds, but a bit heavy and less precise when the boat is off the plane.

The extra horsepower in the sterndrive installation pushes the boat to nearer 35 knots flat-out, but again a happy cruising speed is going to be around 25 knots.

This version is also far smoother, allowing the boat to be placed accurately. Tracking through turns is equally good, but the Raider feels better balanced. Our test boat had a fitted fuel tank forward of the floor locker, which helped, whereas most buyers who prefer an outboard engine will probably opt for the standard removable tanks, which store under the transom.

The outboard boat has the better pick up from standstill, but either version will surprise some sportsboats and would be ideal for family watersports.

A sure test of build quality is the amount of noise that emanates from a hardtop when the going gets rough. Our test boat was rattle-free, and had none of the resonance that can sometimes be

terms of accessibility.

The aft seating hinges right up to give excellent access. There is also a large inspection hatch in the raised section of the bathing platform, to help you get at the top of the engine.

Enginebay

On the sterndrive version of the boat, the engine installation is simple but very well executed, with all the basics catered for in



Decks

An integral split bathing platform makes for easy boarding from a pontoon. Moving forward into the

cockpit is helped if you specify a transom door as an extra.

Access to the foredeck is through the cabin hatch. A bow roller and mooring post comprise the standard fittings here.



Raider 18

BUILD

glass-reinforced plastic

RCD

build category C

DIMENSIONS

LOA

18ft 0in (5.49m)

BEAM

7ft 0in (2.13m)

DRAUGHT

1ft 0in (0.30m)

DISPLACEMENT

1300lb (591kg)

ENGINE

90hp Mercury outboard or
130hp Mercruiser 3.0LX
sterndrive

PRICE

from £7638 inc VAT without
engine, £12,925 with outboard or
£18,213 with sterndrive

BUILDERS & SUPPLIERS

Oceanique, The Waterfront,
Cobb's Quay, Poole, Dorset
BH15 4EL. Tel: 0700 701 0700.



present in a wheelshelter. The foam-filled hull obviously helps.

Conclusions

The Raider 18 is British, well designed, well built and most capable, whatever power source you choose. It is basic, but a commonsense approach to design has led to attractive pricing.

This is a craft that will find favour outside the role of fast-fisher, possibly including commercial uses. We do not doubt that it will have a long production life, especially given its stability.