

Va Va Valiant

RIB designers have been very busy of late. Suddenly all that rubber is being tarted up for those who need greater style than the sturdy workhorse RIB can offer. The Valiant Vanguard 750 is one very feasible option. Simon Everett reports.

The modern RIB customer wants space and comfort. The ability to batter through a force 9 is not so vital, so gone are the jockey style seats. They're yesterday's news and not at all de rigeur. In come plush, deeply upholstered sofas straight from a polished, marble-floored hotel foyer.

These craft are designed to turn heads, to make a bold statement as they strut their way across a bay. Or better still, they'll lie at anchor in a sun-drenched corner while the occupants sip condensation-misted flutes of Chablis.

The decks are swathed in half a forest of Asian hardwood, with teak picking up the theme of the Wilton twist in your Jaguar back at the marina. Comfort underfoot, that time-honoured hallmark of an upmarket boat is invading the RIB world and it's no bad thing. After all it needs a proper shipwright to fit a wooden deck, not a pimply youth with a grinder and a mastic gun.

Inside

On the Valiant, the teak is carried through the length of the boat from stem to stern. Even the bathing steps are teak-laid and it reinforces the notion that bare glass fibre decks are becoming the preserve of hard working yacht club safety boats.

The bow is open and spacious, despite two longitudinal lockers and there's a clever infill to turn the entire area into a sun terrace, sheltered from the afternoon breeze by the voluminous tubes.

The stem is topped off with a fairlead and roller, which looks so substantial, it wouldn't be out of place on a warship. A rope locker is placed right below the bow, ready to catch any loose rope, but there needs to be a cut-out for the rope so the lid can shut flush when tied off.

The tubes themselves are substantial. They form a gallant, upswept curve at the bow to make a high fo'c'sle, but without the block-like commercial angles that destroy the looks of so many work RIBs. Sloping aft the tubes sit squarely on the water at the stern with a short, stubby overhang. The volume >



If it were a toothbrush it would be silver-plated with counter-rotating bristles and a velvet case

Fat 'Pete Burns' style lips are a very comforting 60cm all round



of the tubes is such that they don't require an exaggerated extension aft to provide buoyancy from a following sea, although a tapered or cone extension would look nice. Along either side, both inboard and outboard, a full-length lifeline ensures you always have something to hang on to. Large, moulded rubber, combination cleat handles are spaced evenly on the thirds, and the tops of the tubes are protected with colour matched rubbing pads.

In the stern the beam to beam sofa is framed by the radar arch, giving a semi-enclosed feel. It's handy for sticking

This package is not about fuel economy; it's about nailing the throttle to the stop and revelling in that gorgeous supercharger whistle

things like navigation lights and GPS or VHF aerials onto and visually the arch definitely adds a little something.

Fuel economy from the new breed of electronically managed engines is supposed to be great. But don't be stupid. This package isn't about fuel economy, it's about having the throttle nailed to the stop and listening to that beautiful, low whistle from the supercharger.

I guarantee you this. If you have life in your body, you will not be able to resist the temptation of pushing that throttle forward. Because although 250hp is not uncommon for a modern outboard, this engine is so special because of the way it puts those horses to work.



The smooth, finely adjusted throttle is so good you won't want to let go



Nailing the throttle exacts an immediate response. The power comes in with a mighty surge, like a surfer's wave building on the shore. It's like opening all the circuits in a power station at once. The thing just delivers power in the same way that flicking a switch produces light. It's just awesome.

Acceleration is not just fast, it's as close to instant as I've seen. On the Valiant we went from a standstill to 20mph in something under two seconds, which means that if everything isn't nailed firmly down it will end up in a jumbled mess in the stern sheets.

The boat handles it all with quiet confidence. It's as though it's seen it

all before and knows exactly what to do. The bow just comes straight out of the water and reaches for the distant horizon, like an outstretched hand grasping for something to hang onto. Meanwhile the sensation turns an otherwise sedate, well-mannered and responsible driver into a demon.

With this much grunt on tap, it's just as well the Valiant hull is stiff enough and efficient enough to handle it. The Valiant, mated with the Verado, is a bit like a swan swimming against the tide. There's a world of frenetic, high-powered thrashing going on unseen, while above the water all is grace and serenity. ▣

It's heavy and it's pricy but the superb Verado puts this boat in a different league



The boat just sits firmly planted on the water and gets on with the job of converting all that supercharged energy into forward motion. Standing against the back pod, one hand on the wheel and the other on the utterly gorgeous, fly-by-wire throttle control, the wind-blast did its best to rip the flesh from my cheeks. It was fantastic and but for the windscreen deflecting the greater part of it, I might have been too battered to continue.

We went from a standstill to 20mph in under two seconds, which means if your kit isn't nailed down, say goodbye

Even so, the console is a bit of a let down on a boat aimed at the style council. There's just a space, featureless except for an ice chest. I suppose the

Champagne will stay chilled, but surely it could be better placed ahead of the console. That way the helm position might be afforded a bit more elegance. At the moment it's like an Aston Martin with the door lining missing, which simply isn't good enough.

But the helm's true redeeming feature is the gear/throttle linkage. It sits out on its own stanchion and is without question the best throttle I have ever used. The detents are smooth yet precise. The ability to make fine adjustments is easy and the whole thing is silky smooth.

The Valiant Vanguard itself is a competent, family pleasure boat and a very capable large yacht tender. But as a package the Verado raises this boat into a different class. With the best part of 60mph on tap, there are very few roles it couldn't fill. It makes a good boat potentially great and seals the deal in my book. This thing represents a truly memorable driving experience. It's very, very nice . . .



The leaning post allows a very natural action stance



For ✓

- Glorious helm controls
- Massive performance
- Great noise
- Genuine leisure appeal

Against ✗

- Bog-standard console

Specification

LOA	7.49m
Beam	2.85m
Weight	773kg
Tubes	60cm
Power range	150hp - 300hp
RCD	Category C
People capacity	22
Price (as tested)	£38,000

Contact

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