

this manner. The padding is not quite as thick as I would like to see but the seats are cut out underneath and have elastic webbing that is like a box spring to a mattress, and this works well to cushion one's hinder parts on nasty days. I know, I was out in some very strong winds, with waves breaking white and a nasty chop.

The swing out teak drink holders that are under the dash on the outboard sides come up for some criticism. They work well enough when they are out but in the in position they are right where my knee and I experienced some pain as a result. I should mention though, that the seats themselves can be backed off and slid on their rails a distance of about 6-in. This is not folding down to a half position but is like a car seat, moving forward and back. My only other complaint with the interior lies with the position of the single lever control which I felt was too high and therefore awkward to use. That's not a big deal really but everything else was just right for the pilot so it seemed to stick out.

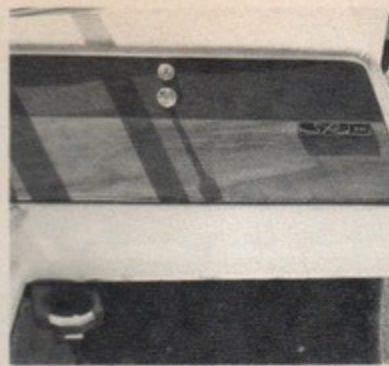
While the driving position was very good I must say that the boat rides very high (as a good deep vee design should) and I wished that the seating was a bit higher so one could see more of the water which lies immediately in front of the boat.

The handling of the Sea Ray is clearly one of its best features. The first thing that one notices is the way the boat will plane off. Even on fairly light throttle it will come up and plane off easily, and when you punch it for a skiing start, it really pops up fast. Although

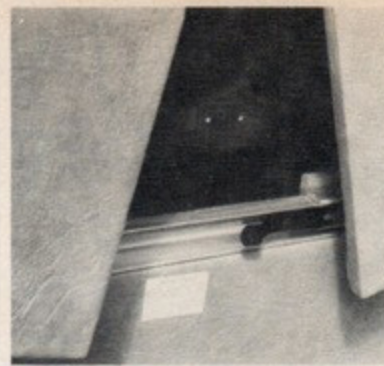
the boat has a 20° deadrise, it's wide and rather more flat at the transom than many of its competitors and seems to plane easily for this reason. Also the Mercruiser stern drive is in closer to the transom this year for faster planing. What really distinguishes the Sea Ray from many other boats is its hull design. Not only will it plane off fast with the trailer in but it never needs much trimming to maintain that performance. Several other boats in this class need almost constant attention to the trim in order to be steered. As the boat speed increases the effects of torque will make the steering tighten up and pull, usually to the left, and in some cases do it so hard that a person who is not very strong will not be able to control the boat. The Sea Ray is never like this, and only when moving at full speed is the trim even very important.

I found that the Sea Ray was a seakindly design. It handles most water with a grace that makes one forget that it is only 18-ft. 6-in. This is not to say that it is an offshore boat because it is not and couldn't be compared to a Sea Craft or a Donzi design, but for a wide range of conditions it will be a good balance of seakindly and efficient attributes that will make it desirable for many different uses, and locations.

The Sea Ray is built solidly and the glass on the bottom is said to be over 1/2-in. thick. When one is hammering into the waves at full speed it feels strong. The boat never flexes or vibrates and nothing comes loose. I expect that the Sea Ray will offer long trouble free service to its owner and the fittings and overall finish would



The offending teak drink holder.



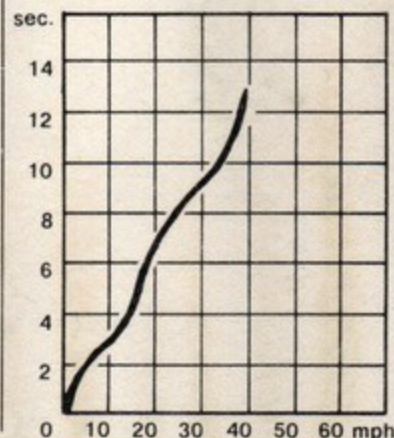
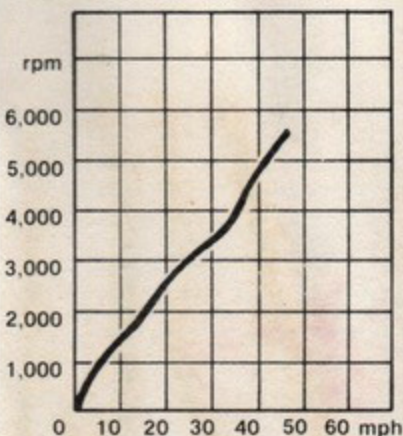
Seats are mounted on slides and are adjustable fore and aft.

seem to be appropriate to that end. This is expected to some extent though since the Sea Ray is a premium priced boat. You won't find one on sale in front of a service station, and you won't find it is worthless after a few season's use either.

As far as numbers go the Sea Ray performs with the rest of its competition. That is to say that it is closely comparable to the other boats in its size range that use the 165 Mercruiser. Top speed, measured by radar, was 38 m.p.h. as opposed to an indicated 42 on the boat's speedometer, which is quite adequate for this type of boat. It cruised at 25 m.p.h. at 3,000 r.p.m. and was quiet and smooth at this speed. Bare minimum planing speed was 16

m.p.h. at 2,200 r.p.m. and the boat was frankly, more comfortable going faster. I estimate that 3,000 r.p.m. will be the most effective cruising speed for covering long distances and getting good fuel economy. On our mileage loop the Sea Ray gave a figure of 5.12 m.p.g. This was in foul weather and as a two way average should be indicative of regular performance for most boaters.

For special purposes there are other boats that will handle certain tasks better than the Sea Ray, but for overall use, especially by a single boat family, or for trailer use in varying waters, the Sea Ray SRV 197 would be a very hard boat to beat.



Technical Data

Price as tested
(1977 version) \$13,245

Including the following options

\$80 side curtains
\$200 aft curtain
\$145 toneau cover
\$ 50 horn
\$ 65 windscreen wiper
\$310 full swim platform

(price includes freight and dealer preparation).

Hull Specifications
Length 18'6" centreline
Beam 96"

Draft with drive down 30"
(up 13")
Transom width gunnel 89"
(Chine 79")
Cockpit length 114"
(not including bow area)
Width at helm 74"
Depth at helm 30"
approximate weight 2,900 lbs.
(varies with options and engine)

Mechanical

Deadrise at stern 20°
Engine and drive 165 hp
Mercruiser I.O. w/power trim
Block 250 cubic inch
Chevrolet 6 cyl.

Propellor Mercury three blade
cupped, 17 pitch 15" throw
Fuel capacity 28 gallons
(U.S. measure)

Performance

Speeds
38 max. @ 4,700 rpm
25 @ 3,000 rpm
19 @ 2,500 rpm
6 @ 1,000 rpm (idle in gear)
Acceleration (time to speed)
0-16 mph (bare minimum plane)
4.22 seconds @ full throttle
0-38 mph (maximum speed
trimmed incl.) 10.77 seconds
@ full throttle

Speedometer accuracy @ full
speed and 3,000 rpm cruise
ind. 42 mph/actual 38 mph
@ 4,700 rpm
ind. 27 mph/actual 25 mph
@ 3,000 rpm

Fuel economy over mileage
loop, simulated cruising
@ 3,000 incl. full throttle
take off 5.127 mpg imperial
measure (represents typical
average).

* All speeds in statute miles per
hour as per tribar muniquip
radar.