



## INTELLIGENT DESIGN

MALIBU BOATS PROVES THAT ITS WAKESSETTER 20 VTX CAN BE SMALL AND SPACIOUS.

**T**HE DESIGN ENGINEERS AT MALIBU BOATS were given a major task: Build a tow boat that can fit into most garages but still has plenty of space for friends.

What designers came back with was the Wakesetter 20 VTX, a sporty boat with uncommon room and slick styling. The Wakesetter had a removable swim platform and a forward-swept tower that folded down so the boat could fit in tight spaces.

While it might fit in the garage, it probably won't spend much time there because the 20-footer is too much fun to leave at home.

### TOW SPORTS

The 20 VTX may be the smallest in the Wakesetter lineup, but even the most experienced boarder will have fun behind the Malibu. The boat's Power Wedge allowed wakes to be tuned for beginners and more advanced riders.

Our Test Team this year consisted of intermediate riders, the typical buyer for the \$55,725 boat. Thanks to the power-activated Wedge, the wakes were sized perfectly to each rider's ability. The wakes were clean and well angled, allowing our riders to perform a variety

of tricks behind the boat.

The drivers were split on whether they liked the new gauge at the dash, which simulated the wake size when the Wedge was in a given position. One driver found it useful while the other wished the gauge was in better sync with the Wedge. Our workmanship inspector especially liked that Malibu used tanks instead of bladders for the ballast. Not only did it provide for a cleaner look in the compartments, the tanks were easy to empty and fill.

Takeoff power in the V-drive was as good as it comes, thanks to the 383-horsepower Hammerhead engine. The engine was a \$4,500 upgrade over the base engine and worth the money. The power was strong throughout its operating range and the throttle response was one of the best we've seen in a tow boat.

Once on plane, our testers said the top of the windshield was in their line of sight while driving and they found themselves having to look around it. The observer, on the other hand, had one of the best views in the boat. She noted it was easy to change ropes because of the tower's low profile, although the line sometimes got caught in the board racks when the team turned around to pick up the rider. That's no

different than any other tow boat with racks.

Overall, the team praised the Wakesetter 20 VTX's functionality. "The boat delivers what it promises," said our lead test driver.

### PERFORMANCE

When it comes to top speed on a tow boat, it's usually not worth noting. But the Wakesetter hit 48.9 mph at 5,200 rpm, which was on the upper end for the breed. From a standing start it took a little more than 15 seconds to reach that speed, another testament to the engine.

At a wakeboarding speed of 22 mph, the engine was turning a relatively tame 2,250 rpm. Bump the throttle forward a bit and the 20 VTX was running 40 mph at 4,000 rpm. Our testers noted how quiet and smooth the boat ran at all speeds.

It came on plane in less than 4 seconds and ran from 20 to 40 mph in 6.2 seconds. Putting the 20-footer through its paces on the Colorado River in Parker, Ariz., it handled slaloms at 20 and 30 mph with ease. Tracking was perfect and the boat went directly where our driver pointed it. The steering was appropriately responsive, especially when it came to









## TEST RESULTS: MALIBU BOATS WAKESSETTER 20 VTX

### TEST CONDITIONS

Temperature/humidity	88 degrees/30 percent
Wind speed/water conditions	1 mph/flat

### HULL INFORMATION

Deadrise at transom	10 degrees
Centerline/beam	20'8"1"
Hull weight	3,200 pounds

### PRICING INFORMATION

Base retail Malibu 320 LCR/Vortec 8100 engine	\$43,500
Price as tested	\$55,725

### ENGINE & PROPELLER

Engine	Hammerhead 383
Cylinder type	V-8
Cubic-inch displacement/horsepower	383/400
Lower-unit gear ratio	1.5:1
Propeller	Acme four-blade 13 1/2" x 19"

### OPTIONS ON TEST BOAT

Upgrade to Hammerhead 383 engine (\$4,500), Power Wedge (\$2,000), billet tower speakers (\$1,800), Sony CD stereo system with Rockford Fosgate speakers (\$1,275), custom wakeboard racks (\$875), Rockford Fosgate 10-inch subwoofer (\$650), bow ballast option (\$500), Rockford Fosgate four-channel amp (\$475) and billet chrome glove box door (\$150).

### ACCELERATION

3 seconds	19 mph
5 seconds	31 mph
10 seconds	43 mph
15 seconds	47 mph

### MIDRANGE ACCELERATION

20-40 mph	6.2 seconds
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### RPM VS. MPH

1000	.6 mph
1500	.8 mph
2000	16 mph
2500	25 mph
3000	32 mph
3500	37 mph
4000	40 mph
4500	44 mph
5000	47 mph

### TOP SPEED AT RPM

Radar	48.9 mph at 5,200
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### PLANING

Time to plane	3.9 seconds
Minimum planing speed	14 mph

### FUEL ECONOMY

At 30 mph	NA
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### FUEL CAPACITY

	45 gallons
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### TEST CONDUCTED AT (ELEVATION)

Parker, Ariz. (450 feet)

### MANUFACTURER

Malibu Boats, Dept. PB, 1 Malibu Court, Merced, CA 95340, 209-383-7469, [www.malibuboats.com](http://www.malibuboats.com).

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**WHAT WE LOVED:** The wide-open feeling in the cockpit and the luxurious-looking dash.

**WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:** The tower raised a couple of inches so our testers won't bump their heads.

picking up a fallen boarder from the water.

On our test day, the water conditions weren't ideal but the boat had a soft landing going through wakes. The solid windshield did an excellent job keeping the spray off the driver.

## WORKMANSHIP

Malibu may be a production builder but that doesn't stop the Merced, Calif., company from addressing small details on its boats. Take the Wedge, which Malibu redesigned for 2007. Rather than brass and aluminum, the builder used stainless steel parts to eliminate rusting.

The stainless didn't stop there with exhaust tips made from the metal and even stainless-steel Malibu logos screwed into the hullsides. The boat was done in red and black gelcoat with the tribal graphics in vinyl. A beefy rubrail protected the vibrant work.

Access to the engine couldn't get any easier than the 20 VTX. Two engine hatches opened to reveal a stowage compartment, which could be easily removed to get access to the motor that was through-bolted to the stringers. Wiring under the dash was done in premade looms and, like the engine compartment, was properly supported.

Also worth noting was the workmanship that Malibu put into the various stowage compartments. Everywhere we looked we couldn't find any exposed wood, a credit to the team building the boat at the plant.

## INTERIOR

For a boat measuring just 20 feet without the swim platform and 8 feet wide, the 20 VTX had a surprisingly roomy cockpit. Credit designers for building a lounge that ran from the port side and carried along the rear. The driver's seat moved fore and aft, and swiveled to the side. If that wasn't enough room in the cockpit, Malibu also created a large bow seating area.

Taking a cue from the automotive industry, Malibu created a dash like that of a high-end sports car. High on the dash, Malibu placed a large, lighted speedometer that also showed the Pro Speed Control. A neat feature on the boat were LED underwater lights off the transom, which can be turned on and off at the dash.

Malibu also installed LED lighting inside the boat so it could shine at night. For tunes, the 20 VTX had Rockford Fosgate speakers in the boat and on the tower. The Sony stereo system stored up to 16 hours of music and could be controlled at the helm or from a remote on the transom.

## OVERALL

The designers continue to push Malibu in new directions. Whether it's creating a boat that can fit into a garage or coming up with new gauges to enhance the driving experience, Malibu continues to succeed year after year. **P**

Clockwise from top left: Malibu used a combination of digital and analog gauges and put a lighted speedometer that showed the Pro Speed Control in the center. With a J-shape seating arrangement, the cockpit was spacious. Rockford Fosgate speakers were mounted on the tower. The steering wheel hub denoted Malibu's silver anniversary.

