

By Michael Verdon



## Eye Of The Tigé

The new RZ4 is an excellent family towboat that offers a solid design with some gee-whiz features you won't find on any other V-drive.

Assuming you're planning to do it the right way, building a wakeboard boat that does double-duty as the family bowrider is a task requiring careful consideration. Instead of sticking 300-pound ballast sacks and a tower onto a sterndrive-powered boat that's never been meant to handle such weight, or trying to convert a wet direct-drive hull into a party platform, you could take a page from Tigé's playbook. The new RZ4 is a boat that's been designed to serve multiple missions effectively.

The RZ4, as *Boating World* discovers during a test on Possum Kingdom Lake in Texas, has all the right amenities for a party of four guys. The test occurs during a two-hour window of calmness in a week of torrential rain — so it's not only fast and furious, but also sweet. With a 24-foot overall length, the RZ4 is easily the largest boat in the Tigé lineup, and it's been

designed to compete against family towboats like the MasterCraft X-45 and Correct Craft's 236 Crossover — large V-drives with the space and creature comforts to please any group, plus better towing capabilities than other similar-sized sterndrives.

The test RZ4 — with its expanded "razor-edge" bow, curved tower and extreme black hull with yellow accents — isn't your typical waterborne station wagon, although it has seating for 17. And it certainly strikes a unique pose at the dock. Tigé has a total of 11 different gelcoat colors that can be mixed and matched to the custom-colored four exterior sections. That could give the RZ4 a number of different dock attitudes, ranging from a conservative stone color with pacific blue stripes to bright orange with black stripes — not unlike a real tiger. Essentially, you get plenty of latitude for personal expression with this particular towboat.

But the customization for this boat goes well beyond the paint job. *BW*'s test boat is fully decked-out with much of the options list — including such unnecessary-but-still-nice goodies as the underwater transom light, a transom display remote and a billet mirror bracket. Options like the Tigé Speed Set, a 900-pound factory-installed ballast system, an anodized Z-series wake tower, and the Tower of Power sound system are geared toward serious wakeboarders. In terms of its engine, the RZ4 has the upgraded 400-hp, 6.0L GM Vortec MPI with EFI. Other power plant options for the RZ4 include a 315-hp, 5.7L carbureted GM Vortec; 320-hp, 5.7L GM Vortec MPI; 340-hp, 5.7L GM Vortec MPI; and a 360-hp, 5.7L GM Vortec High Torque.

Even if you opt for the no-frills version, the RZ4 still has some design benefits that set it apart from its competitors. The two biggest are its TAPS<sup>2</sup>



Trim Tab system and the Convex V hull. Although they aren't new to the RZ4, they are unique in the V-drive world. Essentially, the TAPS<sup>2</sup> is a 20-inch-wide trim tab located on the boat's stern that allows for variation in the size of the wake. The TAPS<sup>2</sup> control runs from one, for slalom wakes, to eight, for a giant slope for serious wakeboarding.

Most inboard boats have a downward angle at the transom — or “hook” — to create a stable plough-like effect, while using ballast systems to tweak the wake. But Tigé has a Convex V hull shape that curves upward at the transom. This design works in conjunction with the TAPS<sup>2</sup> plate for trimming the boat to create eight different wake sizes. While trim tabs and sloping hulls are nothing new to many bowriders and center console fishing boats, the Tigé “combination” is a novelty in the inboard power world, providing a more efficient design. Instead of digging in at the stern with the hook, the boat can also be trimmed for different water conditions to achieve a softer ride. It's also different from stern drives because the inboard power and the fins under the hull deliver better tracking and more responsive steering.

And, it works quite well. The TAPS<sup>2</sup> system delivers a smooth ride from setting one through the giant wake produced by setting eight. Except for when you cut through the occasional wake, it's tough to see how the boat performs in rough-water

conditions, but it certainly feels less rigid and bumpy than other V-drive hulls you've run. It really is a well-mannered boat, with a lot of “give” in the hull. Plus, it's a blast making the tight, controlled turns that only an inboard-powered boat can deliver.

It's a pleasure to drive with the optional Speedset cruise control. Tigé designed the Speedset like the cruise control on your car, so you can either dial in a speed ahead of time and the boat automatically moves to that speed, or you can program it on the fly. It's an intuitive system to use, with “Faster” and “Slower” buttons positioned near the throttle so it's accessible with your throttle hand, which is handy if you're doing a lot of towing. In a more abstract sense, the Speedset is representative of the RZ4's overall design — a piece of equipment that not only looks cool, but is also highly functional in its design.

Ditto with the RZ4's “Tower of Power” sound system. It's an elaborate setup that's sure to blow most other stereo systems off the lake. But if you really want to get the party started, the system includes a Clarion Marine CD/MP3 audio head unit, Wet Sounds XS 200-watt coaxial speakers (six), Wet Sounds 10-inch XS 350-watt subwoofer, Kicker ZX 700-watt power amp, Kicker 350-watt power amp, Wet Sounds Pro 60 PRO-Axial tower speakers and digital driver remote, an optional digital transom remote, auxiliary audio input, optional iPod integrated adapter, and optional Sirius satellite radio.

## THE VERDICT

The Tigé RZ4 is a high-end, family-oriented towboat that's been loaded with lots of user-friendly technology. The combination of the TAPS<sup>2</sup> trim system and Convex V hull set it apart as a multifunctional boat. And with a price tag that's significantly less than competitors, even with a long list of options, the RZ4 should be a big hit with families who have a serious wakeboarder in tow.

## Tigé RZ4

**LOA** 24'

**Beam** 8'6"

**Weight** 4,485 lbs.

**Fuel** 48 gal.

**Top Speed** 43 mph

(w/400-hp, 6.0L GM Vortec MPI)

**Time To Plane** 5.5 seconds

**0-30 mph** 7.7 seconds

**Decibels @ Idle** 60 dB-A

**Decibels @ 30 mph** 88 dB-A

**Decibels @ WOT** 92 dB-A

**Base Price** \$57,500

(w/320-hp, 5.7L Tigé GM Vortec multiport EFI)

**Price As Tested** \$63,111

(w/400-hp, 6.0L GM Vortec MPI)

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That's a lot of hardware, but the speakers are well-distributed throughout the boat and on the optional anodized tower. The towers are designed in-house to look like part of the package, and in the RZ4's case, the swept-back design with forward-angled supports adds some curves to the boat's straight lines. The towers are constructed from heavy-gauge Schedule 40 aluminum pipe, with machined hinges and footings for zero rattling. They're designed tall so there's no head banging, and even with the optional bimini, you have full use of swivel board racks. The ratchet-handle bolts also let you fold away the tower for storing the boat in the garage.

The layout also has a lot of good seating and storage space, from the bow to the stern swim platform. The front seating area has two 20-by-51-inch lounges on either side, with a 15-by-21-inch opening for storage. The storage space runs all the way along the port gunwale to the stern, and the bat-wing design of the bow includes two 10-by-15-inch steps that make getting off the boat easier. The mid-cockpit area has a U-shaped lounge that measures 19 by 92 inches on the port side, a 19-by-73-inch center, and 19 by 47 inches on the starboard side. The helm seat is a VisionAir Mesh from Attwood that's been styled to keep air flowing, but with lots of support and comfort. It works well with the black console, oversized gauges and ergonomically placed throttle. The console also includes a digital depth finder,

an air/temperature gauge, and digital instrumentation with analog displays.

The RZ4 leaves some room for improvement, however. The GM Vortec is squeezed tightly into the engine compartment (which, on the plus side, has storage spaces on either side), and the rubber at the bottom of the cup holders seems somewhat chintzy.

Otherwise, fit and finish is strong throughout the boat, with nice touches like the pop-up cleats, oversized ski mirror and stainless-steel intake grills on the stern. However, a lot of the RZ4's strengths lie in those things you don't see. It has an all-composite stringer system that, along with its monocoque build process, gives the boat a solid feel. A two-wire CAN bus system keeps things simple behind the helm, and allows for throttle-by-wire electronic shifting. Tigé uses Penske Extreme Composite Panels for its core floor and engine-mount material, and the boat receives extra marks for the 27-by-77-inch removable swim platform. Two 6-by-22-inch storage spaces on the boat's transom are another feature that sets the RZ4 apart from the pack, and illustrates how Tigé obsesses over details.

Taken together, it all adds up to a better-performing boat. So, whether you're in the market for a family run-about or simply looking for a muscular wakeboat, the multifunctional Tigé RZ4 will more than fulfill either role. 

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