



An Evolution of Success

Barry Thompson tests the very latest Legend 2500 hardtop from Rayglass and finds a boat that while replacing the market leading Legend 730, is a whole new concept in its own right.

Born from an amalgam of ideas from the builders, designer and customers, the Rayglass Legend 2500 is unquestionably the best trailerboat the company has ever released. If you thought the 730 was good, then you're going to fall in love with the 2500. Simply put, their best just got better!

Rayglass MD, Tony Hembrow agrees. "The Legend 2500 is by far the best boat we have done in years and while the 730 has certainly been a winner for us, the 2500 is an evolution that

epitomises everything that we feel is good about Rayglass. It's everything we have ever learnt from everything we have ever built".

The Legend 2500 is a replacement for the ultra successful Legend 730 which was released in 1995 and after almost 12 years was in need of a revamp. However the problem was that while the 730 was overdue for a major revamp or replacement, sales remained strong and it continued to dominate the GRP 7m hardtop market right up until

it was retired. "Having to replace the 730 was nervous territory for us" says Tony Hembrow. "The boat was always on back order and with a swing back into big diesel sterndrives and twin outboards there was a real demand for the 730 as it was always ideally suited to such power options".

Right from the start the Rayglass team knew whatever they came up with, it had to look like a Rayglass, albeit with a massive amount of change. The Legend 2500 has certainly carried on

From any angle with any power, the Rayglass Legend 2500 looks good.



Boat
Test

The 2500 Legend is a true weekender with exceptional comfort, space and handling all in one package.

the Rayglass heritage and even at a glance it's not going to be mistaken for anything else but a Rayglass.

The Rayglass designers were determined that the new Legend 2500 had to incorporate all that was the best from the Legend 730 and lots more. With the assistance of a group of experienced 730 owners who had done big hours in their boats, they detailed what was good, what could be improved and what was in need of changing in the 730. The end result was over 60 changes to the new model, from the thickness of the stainless bow rail to the totally new hull. Interestingly, there are no shared components with any other models in the Rayglass Legend range.

The hull is totally new and while overall the length is no different to a 730, the running surface is 300mm longer, due to the exclusion of the pod or bracket for the

outboards. The outboard/s bolt onto the same place as on the 730 and it also means that in the sterndrive version the engine is now moved out of the cockpit and into the new sterndrive module. "Where is the V8 engine?" you may very well ask when you first set eyes on the sterndrive version. Rayglass has very cleverly hidden it from view, with no cockpit engine box to take up good fishing space. The advantage of the sterndrive is you also get an extended full-width boarding platform, again another advantage for fishermen and divers.

Should you need to service the V8 MerCruiser, it's simply a matter of opening two hatches for easy access. This is not a totally new idea for Rayglass, but is a development on what has been standard on recent models for the last few years, such as the Legend 1950, 2150 and 2300.

A True Weekender

The Legend 2500 is for all intents and purposes a weekender that provides all the requirements to make it such. Head, shower, galley, accommodation and all-weather protection make the Legend 2500 a big trailerable weekend package. Naturally the first requirement is the hardtop and this is where a lot of changes have been made.

The windscreen is one of the most noticeable visual changes from the 730 with a single support beam in the centre (the 730 had two) and curved panels that improve forward vision for the driver and also present a softer style to the hardtop. The rake and height however remain the same, although there has been a lot of thought gone into the overall structural integrity of the hardtop. The covered length under the hardtop has been increased by



300mm, which also means the canvas aft back drop hangs at a steeper angle. Although there is a soft top option it is unlikely that many will be built as the trend for hardtops on a boat of this size continues unabated. In fact it's many years since Rayglass built a 730 with a soft top and many have since been back to the factory to retrofit a hardtop. Storage has also been increased dramatically in the Legend 2500 with a huge emphasis again placed on using every spare centimetre of the boat. Nothing's wasted and there is provision made for everything from the car keys and cellphone to the dive gear and a sizeable fish catch. There is a pair of 260-litre volume plastic moulded lift-out bins underfloor in the outboard version and a single in the sterndrive model. Suited for all your dive gear, they are also designed as fish



bins and in the twin bin option there's plenty for both. A neat secondary aft hatch means you can drop in your fish without having to lift up the main cockpit sole hatch.

The cockpit coaming sides are high with deep toe kicks and padded front panels and wide flat side decks which have all been designed with the fishermen and divers in mind. An aft locker in the outboard version gives easy access to the bilge and the raised tray that houses the batteries and filters.

The transom now incorporates a deep live bait tank to starboard and a moulded freshwater sink unit to port.

There is a rear seat option only. The forward seats are on moulded bases which while being very much the same as the 730's now have swivelling bucket seats both sides – great for watching the lures when you're trolling 50 miles off the West Coast. Storage under is copious and they also have for and aft seat adjustment.

The Legend 2500 has a dash area that is intelligently designed to accommodate twin screens such as 10" GPS/plotters and fishfinder displays. This still leaves ample space for instruments, switches and other necessary equipment such as the auto anchor system for the Maxwell Freedom 500.

A big difference between the Legend 730 and the Legend 2500 is the design of the dash top. The Legend 2500 has a much larger cut-out area above the companionway. Should you wish to shut the cabin off for privacy or security reasons there is a moulded panel (also used for the base of the forward berth) that fits in place and can be locked down.

The cockpit/cabin ratio has not changed from the Legend 730 as Rayglass wanted to keep the galley and separate enclosed toilet, both of which have been enlarged slightly. Two people can stand side by side in front of the galley, which has



been much improved with extras such as a moulded condiment rack, crockery storage, under-bench fridge, fold-out teak table and two-burner stove. This is a genuinely useable galley and not a token afterthought.

Like the rest of the Legend 2500, storage is plentiful under the squabs and in side trays. The 2m berths are longer than the Legend 730's and with an infill transform to a very large double berth, making this an excellent weekender boat for a couple.

Ride & Handling

The 2500 shares the same well proven hull of the 750 Protector, so it's been well proven over the past few years as a RIB. When compared directly to the 730, the extra hull length has made a difference to the ride and handling of the 2500 and while the 730 was good, the 2500 is a whole lot better. There's no substitute for length when it comes to what's on the water and this, coupled with some character changes to the strake positions, wider chines, increased waterline beam and finer forward entry has certainly produced a great riding hull.

At speed the Legend 2500 handles like a runabout and you can toss it around with the confidence that it will not give you a sudden fright or do something that it shouldn't. This is a very forgiving hull and a pleasure to drive.

We tested two Legend 2500s, one with a Mercury Verado 250, the other with a MerCruiser 300 and in both cases the packages were well matched. It gets down to a matter of personal choice as to which way you go. According to the specs, the hull is designed to take single or twin outboards up to 400hp or the largest recreational petrol/diesel sterndrives. Personally I see no problem with a couple of 275hp – 300hp outboards on the transom. This is a



Top Left:
The cabin has full standing headroom, galley, head and double berth.

Top Right:
A galley that offers everything you need for weekend cruising.



hull that will have no problem handling everything you can give it. For example, one of the first sterndrive packages to be installed was a 525hp MerCruiser, complete with silent running exhausts and a Bravo 1 performance drive. A 70mph plus boat is over the top perhaps, but the Rayglass design team are more than confident that their hull will handle the excessive horsepower. Interestingly, on our test the difference in top end speed was just 1mph, with the MerCruiser taking top honours. In our acceleration runs the Verado certainly had the low down wick, with a 7 second run to 30 mph, compared to 10 seconds for the sterndrive. The outboard would be the better option for trolling with its 3mph @ 500 rpm, compared to 4.5mph @ 600 rpm for the MerCruiser, caused by a combination of the MerCruiser's 20% higher idle revs and 26% higher gear ratio. Given that the majority of Rayglass Legend 730s were sold with sterndrives and about 30% of those with diesel packages, it is likely that the Legend 2500 will follow the same route,

although the recent advent of 275hp plus outboards may change the mix. Of the first eight boats sold prior to the NZ Boat Show the split was almost even between outboard and sterndrive. Hull #1 was fitted with a single Mercury 275hp Verado.

Destined to Be A Winner

The Rayglass 2500 was launched at the 2006 New Zealand Boat Show after two years of development and tooling to arrive at the finished product. For Rayglass it was never about deadlines, budgets or time constraints, rather deciding the boat would not go to market until it was 100% right and not before. It was therefore timely to have the first boat in the water less than two months prior to the show, rather than turning up with an untested prototype. The Legend 2500 is destined to be as big, if not a bigger seller than the Legend 730 and should spearhead the Rayglass name at the forefront of the industry for many years to come. The Legend 2500 carries the same bluewater heritage of the 730 but is even better.



Rayglass Legend 2500

Model	Legend 2500
Price As Tested	\$153,000 (OB) \$146,000 (IB)
Price Boat Only	\$115,000
Type	Hardtop
Construction	GRP
LOA	7.70m
Beam	2.45m
Height On Trailer	3.10m (with rocket launcher)
Deadrise	23 degrees
Trailerable Weight	2650kg
Engine Capacity	205hp – 400hp
Power Options	Outboard or sterndrive
Fuel Capacity	300 litres

PERFORMANCE

	Mercury 250 Verado	MerCruiser 300 Alpha drive
500 rpm	3.0 mph	4.5 mph
1000 rpm	6.5 mph	6.5 mph
1500 rpm	8.0 mph	9.0 mph
2000 rpm	9.5 mph	11.5 mph
2500 rpm	14.0 mph	17.5 mph
3000 rpm	17.0 mph	26.5 mph
3500 rpm	25.5 mph	32.0 mph
4000 rpm	30.0 mph	38.0 mph
4500 rpm	34.5 mph	43.5 mph
5000 rpm	39.0 mph	48.5 mph
5500 rpm	42.5 mph	
5800 rpm	47.5 mph	

All speeds recorded on a Lowrance GPS and rounded off to the nearest 1/2mph.

Notable Standard Equipment

Toughened glass screen, RPF buoyancy system, two-burner cooker, live bait tank, bilge pump, nav lights, and electric macerating toilet.

Notable Options on Test Boat

Navman GPS/Plotter, Navman Fishfinder

Engine

Make	Mercury	MerCruiser
Power	250hp	300hp
Model	Verado	Alpha drive
Cylinder Config.	In-line 6	V8
Displacement	2.6 litres	5.7 litres
Max rpm	6500	5000
Gear Ratio	1.85:1	1.47:1
Propeller	17" S/S	17" S/S

Trailer

Make	Hoskings
Braked	Yes
Suspension	Leaf
Rollers	Multi roller
Std Equipment	Submersible lights, fibreglass guards, jockey wheel.

Retail Price \$13,000

Manufacturer

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Boat Supplied by
Rayglass Boats Ltd

Boat Test

Top Left:
Tony Hembrow at the helm of his latest creation.

Top Right:
The Maxwell Freedom 500 winch is hidden away above a deep anchor locker.

Bottom:
The space in the cockpit doesn't differ between sterndrive and outboard.