

## tested Stratos 201XL Evolution



# You Say You Want an Evolution

## Stratos 201XL Evolution

**T**here are few other fishermen on the planet as knowledgeable and successful as Larry Nixon, who has had nearly 100 top 10 finishes in major BASS and FLW tournaments during his 32-year career. So when Stratos wanted to build the ultimate bass boat, they turned to Nixon to help with the design of the 201XL Evolution, a boat that will make you ask repeatedly, "Why doesn't every

BY ALAN JONES

boat have this?"

### Unique Factor

Most foot controls for trolling motors are tall enough to make anglers look like Captain Morgan when standing with one foot higher than the other, so Nixon asked for a recessed foot control for the standard 24-volt Minn Kota Maxxum. And to make sure it's comfortable for all anglers, there are two receivers for the bicycle seat pedestal. The front

deck is Nixon's office, so there is a padded deck to reduce leg fatigue, and the bow area features a taller gunwale to keep rods and loose fish in the boat.

The 201 Evo's signature feature is the giant center rod locker that holds four Plano-style tackle boxes in the lid. The locker is held open by hydraulic dams and can accommodate nine rods up to 8.5 feet long. The bottom of the compartment has adjustable dividers that help organ-



ize up to 20 portable tackle boxes. Not enough storage? Just to the left is another 12-rod locker that also has tubes to keep tips safe on rods up to 8 feet long.

## Performance

Powered by an Evinrude 250 E-TEC H.O. direct-injected two-stroke, the boat streaked across Table Rock Lake near Branson, Mo. at a cheek-rippling top speed of 78 mph. Because we didn't have the usual amount of gear in the forward compartments, there was a fair degree of bowrise when we jammed the throttle on takeoff. But we still had a decent time to plane of 4.9 seconds, and we reached 30 mph in 8.7 seconds. Once we got it trimmed up in flying mode, its fuel-efficient hull achieved good economy,

getting better than 3 mpg at wide-open throttle.

## Handling

The 201XLE's 1,800-pound hull has the proper heft to deliver a smooth ride in the chop. It is an easy boat to drive. We just trimmed it up until the standard hydraulic steering felt a little stiff, then trimmed it down until it got easy again. We then had the perfect trim for low-level lake flying at its ideal running attitude of 6 degrees. With the trim down a little, we were able to change directions very quickly, which will come in handy when cruising on lakes with lots of debris.

We sat higher than normal, which gave us better visibility, but still had more gunwale height beside us for a greater feeling of security. With its single-console design, there is no

shotgun rail for the passenger to hang onto or even a side-mounted grabrail because of the passenger-side rod ramp. Instead, there's a between-the-legs retractable strap to hang onto. The first-rate sculpted seats grip you well, but the side bolsters aren't so tight that they would be uncomfortable for those who hit the AUCE barbecue joints on a tri-weekly basis.

## Best Uses

The mission for this 20-foot, 9-inch-long, 8-foot-wide boat is to seek and capture bass. Captives will be well cared for by the 40-gallon Flow-Rite livewell with a removable divider and a swimming-pool-blue color inside for better fish visibility instead of the traditional black. The livewell also has a calming effect on fish. Instead of the usual aluminum lid, this year Stratos is using acrylic, which helps the water stay cooler on scorching summer days.

The best attribute of the 201XLE is that it is tournament-ready for a reasonable price without sacrificing anything in the process. With an MSRP of \$49,995, when paired with a Yamaha 150, it's as much as \$15,000 less than some of the most expensive bassin' war wagons.

## Preferred Setup

The 201 Evo' also comes in a dual-console configuration, providing passengers with extra protection on chilly dawn excursions. Stratos gives owners a choice of Mercury, Yamaha or Evinrude outboards up to 250 hp. All are compatible with the standard high-tech ACTIA digital gauges to provide drivers with a wealth of information about engine performance and fuel burn so they always know how much range they have remaining in the large 50-gallon tank. Although the gauges display the info in an easier-to-read analog format, everything is digital and the speedometer gets its information from a separate GPS antenna for greater accuracy.

## STRATOS 201XL EVOLUTION



### SPECIFICATIONS

Length	20 ft., 9 in.
Beam	8 ft.
Capacity	1,575 lbs.
Dry Weight	1,800 lbs.
Fuel Capacity	50 gals.

### PERFORMANCE

	mph	rpm	mpg	miles	dBa
Peak	78.2	5800	3	135	98
Cruise	40.7	3500	3.4	153	92
Time to Plane					4.9 sec.
Time to 30 mph					8.7 sec.

### POWER

Test	Evinrude 250 E-TEC H.O.
Cylinders	V-6
Displacement	3.4L
Weight w/outdrive	507 lbs.
WOT Range	4500-6000 rpm
Base Price	\$49,995

### VALUE-ADDED STANDARD FEATURES

Dual-axle custom trailer, Minn Kota 24-volt trolling motor, ACTIA gauges, Humminbird GPS/fishfinder, built-in cooler

### MUST-HAVE OPTIONS

Passenger-side console, tonneau cover, stern bicycle fishing seat

### BUILDER

**Stratos Boats, Inc.**

[www.stratosboats.com](http://www.stratosboats.com)

Circle 10 on reader service card, page 33

### FINANCING:

\$400/month based on 15% down for 15 years at 7.75% interest

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## Owner Feedback Darrell Reach, Kansas City, Mo.

PURCHASED AT SMITHVILLE MARINE, SMITHVILLE, MO.

### Why I liked it:

- Excellent livewell system
- Outstanding performance
- Great rough-water handling
- Abundant rod storage

### What I would change:

I would make the passenger security strap longer so riders don't have to lean forward

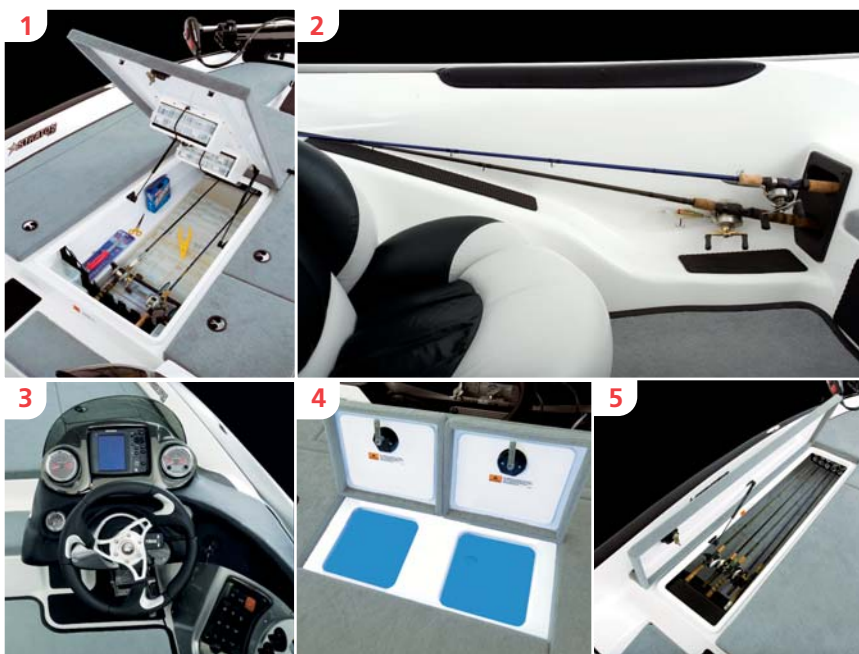
### Why I bought it:

During the week, I'm a detective in the robbery division of the Kansas City Police Department. On weekends, I fish in tournaments on the Joe Bass Team Trail and Anglers in Action circuit held on Truman Lake where I've been fishing for 30 years. Last year, my partner, John Bennett, and I won the championship on both circuits. This year we won the opening event on the Joe Bass Team Trail with a one-day stringer of 27.35 pounds. Despite the big catch, the livewell on my Stratos 201XL Evolution



kept them in perfect shape until weigh-in. Another great reason for choosing Stratos is its 2X Double Your Winnings program. So that means when we won that first event, instead of earning \$2,250, we took home \$4,500.

The 201XLE is the best boat I've ever owned. It's got all the performance I need without sacrificing fishability. The fantastic storage system keeps everything organized, so the gear I'm using most that day is always readily accessible. We've had it in some pretty rough water and it handled amazingly well. The ACTIA gauges are fantastic; the fuel and speed info is very accurate and easy to read. **BW**



## IN BRIEF: FEATURES

- 1 Padded front casting deck reduces leg fatigue
- 2 Passenger side rod ramp
- 3 The crew gets highly supportive seats and high-tech ACTIA gauges at the helm
- 4 40-gallon Flow-Rite livewell has divider and an acrylic lid to keep water cooler
- 5 Rod locker holds nine rods up to 8.5 feet long