

2012
REVIEW



To borrow a phrase

once used by Oldsmobile, Bennington's 2575 QCW is not your father's pontoon boat.

Pontoons have evolved dramatically over the years, adding luxurious interior features, the latest electronic appointments, third logs, and increasingly potent engines. Power options, for the most part, have involved engines that screw onto the transom, so Bennington's 2575 QCW is rather unique in offering an I/O arrangement – in the case of our review boat, a MerCruiser

350 Magnum tucked neatly into its centre log.

The results of this marriage between aluminum hull and big-block power are nothing short of eye-popping. Bennington has always been known for offering a superlative product, but the combination of huge torque, blistering performance, and a wide-open, clean transom set this 28-footer in a class of its own.

The exterior styling of Bennington's upscale Q series further sets the 2575 QCW apart from its competitors. The forward-sloping bow fence gives this pontoon an elegant and sporty

appearance that's quite unlike that of other pontoons. It clearly makes a statement, but does admittedly eat up a bit of bow deck space in the process (ever accommodating, Bennington also offers I/O power in its SL and RL series for those who prefer a more traditional fence configuration).

Approaching the 2575 QCW from the dock, you can't help but notice that wide-open stern, with only a stainless ski mast to confirm you actually are looking at the back of the boat. The expected outboard is nowhere to be seen,



Bennington

2575QCW I/O

By Craig Ritchie

providing an unusually clean line of sight and an inviting, open entry. Step aboard the integrated, fiberglass swim platform with its telescoping ladder, then through the neat stainless rail gate, and you find yourself faced with a tough decision. Do you carry forward into the main cockpit, or pause to claim one of two rear-facing super loungers that are perfectly positioned to enjoy the sun? I couldn't resist, and took a few minutes to carefully evaluate these super-comfy seats. The seat cushions provide great support while gently sloped backs invite you to lay back and forget about the world. A perfectly-placed grab handle provides security and a convenient assist point when you do decide to get up, while a deep beverage holder in the arm rest keeps a cold drink within easy reach. Pick the seat to starboard and you'll find a remote control for the stereo just below your right hand. The upholstery treatment is typical Bennington, with plush cushions and neat stitching that is some-

what reminiscent of the interior of an exotic sports car. You'll find a pair of stereo speakers facing the seats, plus two more on the transom just above the swim platform.

Because our review boat came equipped with Bennington's Elliptical Sport Package and was built with water sports in mind, the rear loungers make the perfect place to spot a skier or catch the tubing action. The floor in this area is a synthetic non-skid with a teak-look finish – a practical choice that allows tired tubers or boarders a place to dry off without soaking the deck carpet. The floor is slightly raised, concealing that beefy I/O, so when moving forward between the twin loungers, one steps down to enter the main cockpit.

The upscale décor established by those rear loungers sets the tone as you enter the main salon where the thick and soft deck carpeting deserves special mention for simply feeling so great underfoot. The overall layout follows a

proven footprint with an L-shaped lounge to port opposite the helm, and two equally comfy L-shaped loungers up front. What's particularly interesting is the entertainment centre located immediately aft of the helm seat, where a useful fiberglass sink occupies a neatly-sculpted console with a couple of cup holders, a 12-volt accessory outlet, and storage space below. It should be mentioned that there are at least 21 cup holders scattered around this boat, so there's always a spot nearby to keep refreshments close at hand. LED lights in the cup holder bezels makes them easy to spot when the party continues after dark.

The helm station itself sits on an elevated platform, where a truly spectacular driver's seat with pull-down armrests offers a commanding view of the entire boat and its surroundings. A spacious, molded console capped by a small but surprisingly effective windshield provides a full complement of instrumenta-



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3)

1) Rear-facing super loungers aft invite you to spot a skier, catch the tubing action or just lay back and forget about the world.

2) A spacious, molded console capped by a small but surprisingly effective windshield provides a full complement of instrumentation, including a tachometer, speedometer, Sony stereo controller, Garmin GPS Map 431s and a convenient 12-volt power receptacle.

3) With its enormous wrap-around lounge, stereo speakers and movable beverage holders, the spacious bow area may be the most inviting spot onboard.

BENNINGTON 2575 QCW I/O

LOA:	28' 1"
Beam:	8' 6"
Pontoon Diameter:	25"
Center Pontoon Diameter:	32"
Dry weight:	4,032 lbs.
Fuel capacity:	235L / 62 US gal
Passenger capacity:	13
Power (max):	425 hp
Power (as reviewed):	MerCruiser 350 Mag, 350 horsepower
Price (base):	\$68,600
Price (as reviewed):	\$72,596

Quoted setup may not be exactly as depicted in photos. Prices are subject to currency fluctuations and do not include freight, PDI or additional optional equipment.

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tion, including a tachometer, speedometer, Sony stereo controller, Garmin GPS Map 431s and a convenient 12-volt power receptacle. Below the main panel, a neat row of rocker switches provide convenient control of the horn, navigation lights, docking lights, interior lights, exterior lights, cup holder lights, underwater lights, centre bilge, blower, master power, plus an accessory switch. The beefy tilt wheel offers a wide range of adjustability so that you can keep an eye on everything regardless of how you adjust the seat.

Opposite of the helm station, an L-shaped lounge to port terminates in a convenient rear-facing cushion at its forward end, providing yet another spot to watch tubers in action as well as helping define the boat into three distinct seating areas. Adults in the main cockpit can enjoy conversation while the kids play in the bow and the sun-worshippers do their thing astern. This approach makes the most of the 2575 QCW I/O's 28-foot deck, creating the impression of it being a much larger boat than it really is. Even when fully loaded to its 13-passenger capacity, it never seems crowded. A portside locking entry gate and Bimini top overhead further serve to define the boat's cockpit space.

"That's been a real key to the popularity of pontoons," says Bob Spencer, Regional Sales Manager for The Dockside Group, Bennington's distributor in eastern Canada. "You can go out on the lake and the kids

aren't confined to a seat. They can get up and play, you can have your son fishing off the front while the daughter's swimming off the back. When you look at what the designers can do with the space in terms of layout and furniture, it's more like taking a piece of your house out on the water. When you consider that at the same time, you can also have performance that's comparable that of a traditional fibreglass boat, then pontoons like the 2575 QCW become even more compelling."

The spacious bow area may be one of the most inviting spots in the boat, with an enormous wrap-around lounge, stereo speakers, multiple movable beverage holders, and truly cavernous storage – not only in the seat bases, but in the form of an in-floor ski locker as well. Beverage holders mounted in moveable bases provide added convenience.

The 2575 QCW I/O rides on a pair of 25-inch tubes straddling a central 32-inch pontoon. This three-log platform provides the big boat with all the stability one would expect, along with surprising agility underway. But the real treat comes after idling out of the no-wake zone and putting the hammer down. That's when that 350 Magnum's massive grunt comes into play, bringing the hull to life and planting a smile across the driver's face. This is when you quickly forget you're driving a 28-foot boat that weighs more than 4,000 pounds. Having the weight of the engine buried lower in the water almost certainly contributes to this by positively altering the boat's centre of gravity.

Acceleration with the MerCruiser 350 Magnum was decisive, easily reaching cruising speed in just a few seconds with six aboard and a half-tank of fuel. While the boat is rated to handle up to 425 horsepower, the 350 Magnum was a well-balanced choice, providing an enjoyable performance boost over the MerCruiser 5.0L standard power, with Bravo 1 drive.

With its eye-catching good looks, smile-coaxing performance and high quality construction, Bennington's 2575 QCW I/O stands alone as an innovative and unique pontoon design. With luxurious amenities and spirited acceleration and handling, plus tremendous passenger capacity and storage space, it's an easy boat to like. It's little wonder we see more of them gracing Canadian lakes every year. 📷