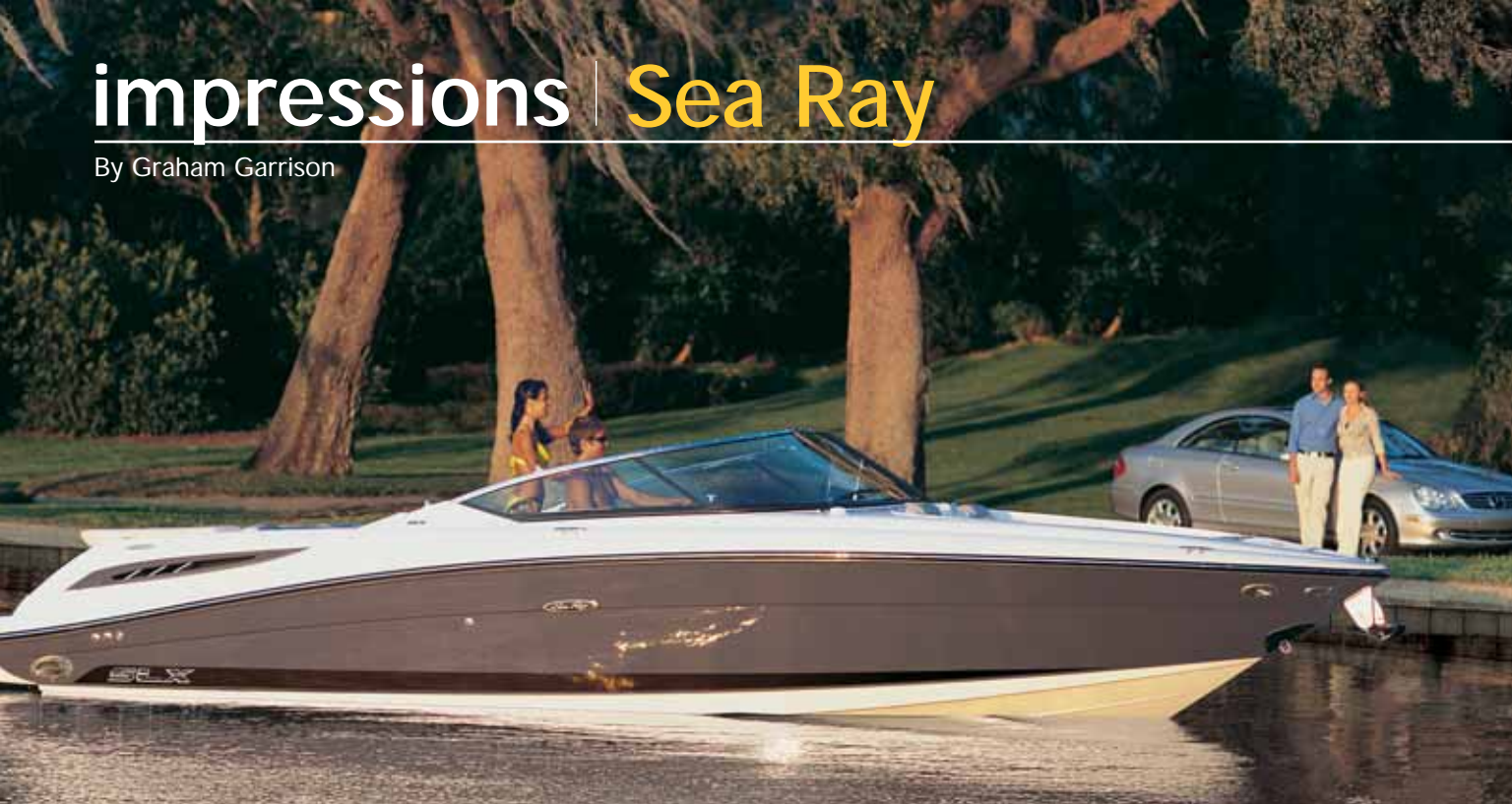


By Graham Garrison



Family Treasure

Sea Ray's 270 SLX is a high-end bowrider that members of any generation can appreciate.

The keys to your dad's flashy sports car were never handed over without careful consideration. You had to earn it, respect it, and hold it in high regard. The car wasn't just another Point A to Point B vehicle ... it was your father's baby. And if you didn't treat it as such, your privileges would soon be revoked.

You get that eerie flashback as you gently steer Sea Ray's new 270 SLX out of the slippery river current and up to a docking space at Sea Ray's island-for-a-headquarters in Knoxville, Tennessee. The flashback isn't solely because you're handling a pristine and pricey bowrider and want to be careful. You've also got your dad on board, who happens to be flinching as he used to do during your driving lessons when he kept pumping the imaginary break. But no worries, he's taught you well over the years, and with a slight turn of the wheel and the right amount of

throttle, you've docked Sea Ray's answer to the convertible speedster.

The SLX in the 270's name may as well stand for "sleek, luxurious and x-citing." The target customer is someone who can afford a cruiser or better, but is in the mood for something a little smaller but just as classy. Sea Ray pulled out all the stops with a three-piece design, plush vinyl and top-notch electronics and hardware on the 270. About the only thing you're sacrificing is the ability to overnight effectively, but it's an intended trade-off for more boat to enjoy in the open.

So when you get the call that the 270 SLX is available for a test spin, you don't hesitate. Well,

only long enough to pick up your dad on the way. He can appreciate a finely crafted boat as much as you, and Sea Ray makes some of the best around. You figure it's only fitting after he let you take the family sports car for a spin that you return the favor. Besides, what's a better way to catch up with dad than taking a road trip to kick the figurative tires and light the fires?

About the only thing not working out today is the weather. You woke up





to overcast skies, and although the bottom hasn't fallen out of the sky just yet, it's looking like it might any minute, so you dispense with the pleasantries at the dock and shove off with Sea Ray representative Gary McCloud as your guide.

Thank goodness the river is wide. You spend the first few minutes idling out while gawking at the helm panel. Standard on the 270 SLX is a wealth of what other bowriders would consider high-priced options, if they're even available. A Navman 5500 chartplotter with a 5-inch color display sets the tone for the rest of the electronics, from SmartCraft diagnostics to finely crafted gauges. Not that it matters with an overcast sky, but the dark dash makes reading the gauges easy in sunny weather.

At an open stretch of water on the Tennessee River, you start to prod Gary for a chance to gun it. Gary, a long-time resident of the Knoxville area, waits till you've cleared another bend, then gives you the thumbs up. The handling is everything you would expect from such a smooth-looking vessel. The 270 SLX hits a top speed of 50.5 mph, and gets up to

30 mph in 9.6 seconds. You spin it around, something you'd have gotten grounded for with dad's sports car. But the water has a different set of rules, and no traffic to worry about today, so even dad has a smile on his face as you make a few figure eights. The 270 seems to anticipate your moves, and with power-assisted steering, it's not hard to straighten things out and get back on course.

The pleasure cruise is being powered by a 425-hp MerCruiser 496 MAG with a Bravo III drive. Engine options go as low as 300 hp, but as Gary notes, this is the kind of boat where you want the best performance you can get. A smaller engine wouldn't be able to handle as much acceleration and handling as you've just experienced with the 496 MAG, and if you're going to fork out the money for a boat of this caliber, you might as well go all the way with the engine package.

You glance over at dad and notice he's tapping his fingers on the fiberglass. He wants to drive. You gladly oblige, and while he's getting comfortable with the controls (always a slow and steady learner) you check out the 270's creature comforts.

THE VERDICT

Sea Ray's 270 SLX delivers as a top-tier bowrider. From fit-and-finish to seating to performance, you get some of the best features in its class. The enclosed head could use some more headroom, and the price is up there, but you definitely get what you pay for with the 270.

Sea Ray 270 SLX

LOA 28'6"

Beam 9'

Weight 5,800 lbs.

Fuel 94 gal.

Top Speed 50.5 mph

(w/425-hp MerCruiser 496 MAG
Bravo III Drive)

0-30 mph 9.6 seconds

Decibels @ Idle 66 dB-A

Decibels @ 30 mph 88 dB-A

Decibels @ WOT 94 dB-A

Base Price \$67,826

(w/300-hp MerCruiser 350 Magnum
Bravo I)

Price As Tested \$86,303

(w/425-hp MerCruiser 496 MAG
Bravo III Drive)

Hull Warranty 5 years

NMMA Certified? Yes

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The cockpit's U-shaped lounge is enormous, not your typical bowriding three-seater, but large enough to handle six comfortably. That's one of the advantages of having a 28-foot-6-inch frame to work with. Even the bow seating is large and deep enough to sit while cruising, and a prime place for refreshments at idle or low speeds. The sun pad is not only spacious, it's also convenient, with a fiberglass storage area and walk-through portion to the swim platform.

Careful detail went into accommodating onboard guests. Boarding is made



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easier with the transom walk-through, or you can use the molded steps starboard side at the wet bar. When hanging out in the cockpit, access to wet bar features like the carry-on cooler storage means guests don't have to shuffle to a different seat cushion, just use a side door. A sink, room for an optional fridge and stainless-steel cupholders round out the wet bar.

The passenger console houses a head compartment with sink, shower and pump-out. Access is past the portside bucket seat. You've got wiggle room if you're sitting down, but standing room is cramped at best for anyone pushing 6 feet.

The 270 SLX has a base price of \$67,826 without some of the upgrades. That's not cheap, but you know you're getting a top-of-the-line vessel anytime you see the words Sea Ray painted across a hull. Sometimes you just have to splurge, like your dad did for his joy ride back in the day. Now it's in your hands to take your waterborne cruises to the next level with a luxurious ride in the 270 SLX and create a legacy of your own. 

For more boat tests, visit www.boatingworldonline.com.