

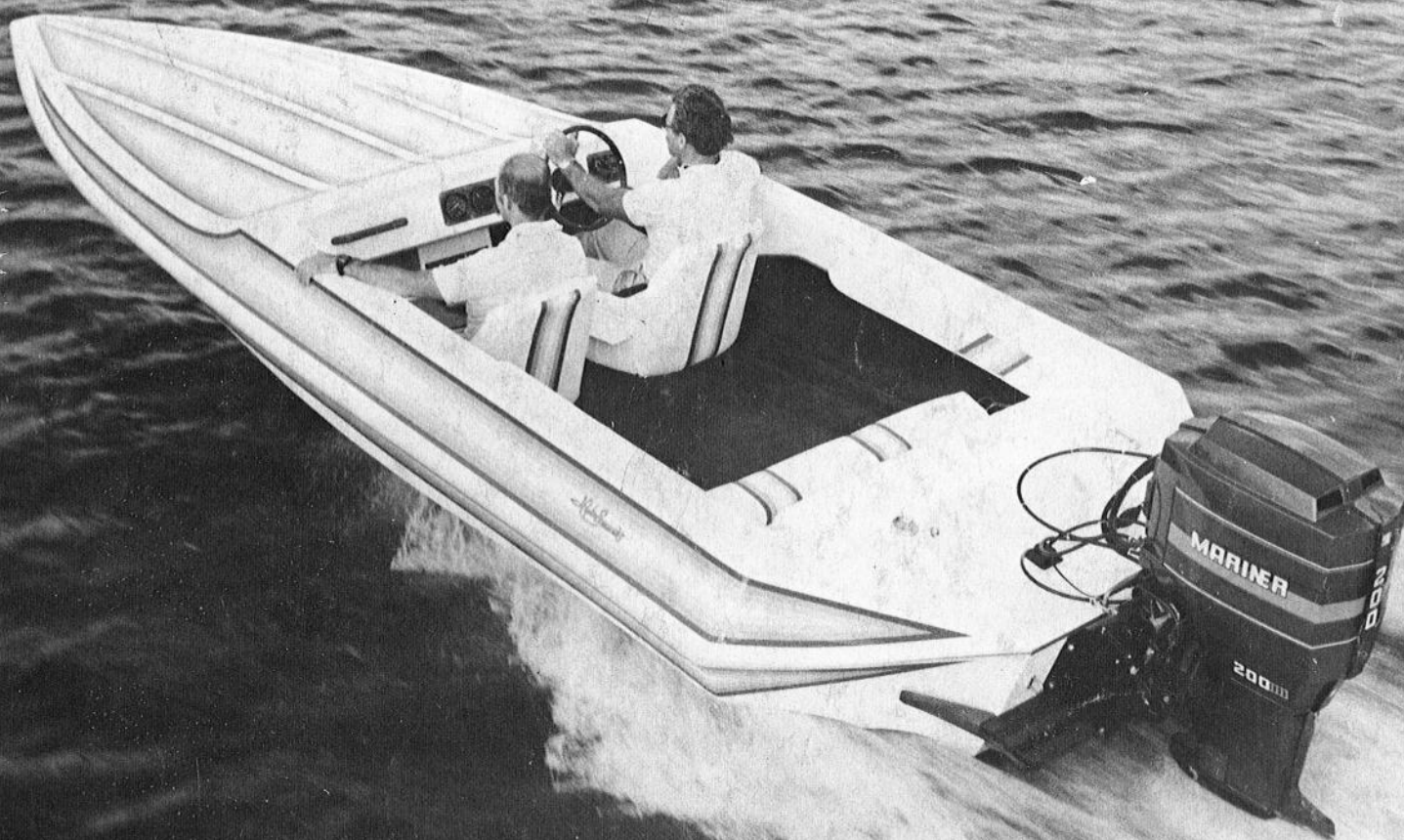
BOAT TREE

MACHINE

BACK MATES

JOHN YOUNG - LEFT 428 / 441

# The Stream Takes a New Course



HydroStream says goodbye to metalflake and hello to a completely remodeled 20-footer



Interesting things are taking place at Hydro-Stream, as the company tries to regroup and retain its image as the leader in high-performance outboard-powered runabouts. Admittedly, the Minnesota-based builder is playing catch-up, which explains its drastic changes in style and the rash of proposed new models that will be unveiled before year's end.

When we first spotted the 20-foot Vegas at last year's Chicago Boat Show, we thought it had been delivered to the wrong booth. Were it not for HydroStream's patented front-end styling, we'd never have known it was a Pipkorn original. Gone were the metalflake graphics of the 1960s and '70s that had become so synonymous with HydroStream; in their place was a sensational five-color gelcoat paint scheme that would've blended in perfectly among the custom builders on the West Coast. In addition, the deck had been completely retooled without the twists, dips and contours that had been so familiar on 'Streams of the past.

In our opinion, the facelift is long overdue. The metalflake graphics—which are still available—seemed gaudy in comparison with modern trends, and although we appreciate the fact that the deck contortions were incorporated for performance considerations, they didn't help the lines any. Fortunately, in the transition, HydroStream's special brand of performance is still evident; the only difference is the packaging, which is vastly improved. Welcome to the 1980s, HydroStream.

The world of high-performance outboards is changing. One look at this year's outboard-powered test boats and you'll know what we mean. The age of the modified tunnel has arrived, and companies like Eagle, Eliminator, Laser, SleekCraft and Stoker haven't taken over where HydroStream, Allison Craft, Switzer and Checkmate left off.

But HydroStream has no intentions of conceding the reputation it worked so hard to build. It has been keeping an eye on the fast-developing Mod VP tour, and presently has a new X-bottom hull on the drawing board that should be chasing checkered flags soon. The company recognizes that a competitive racing program

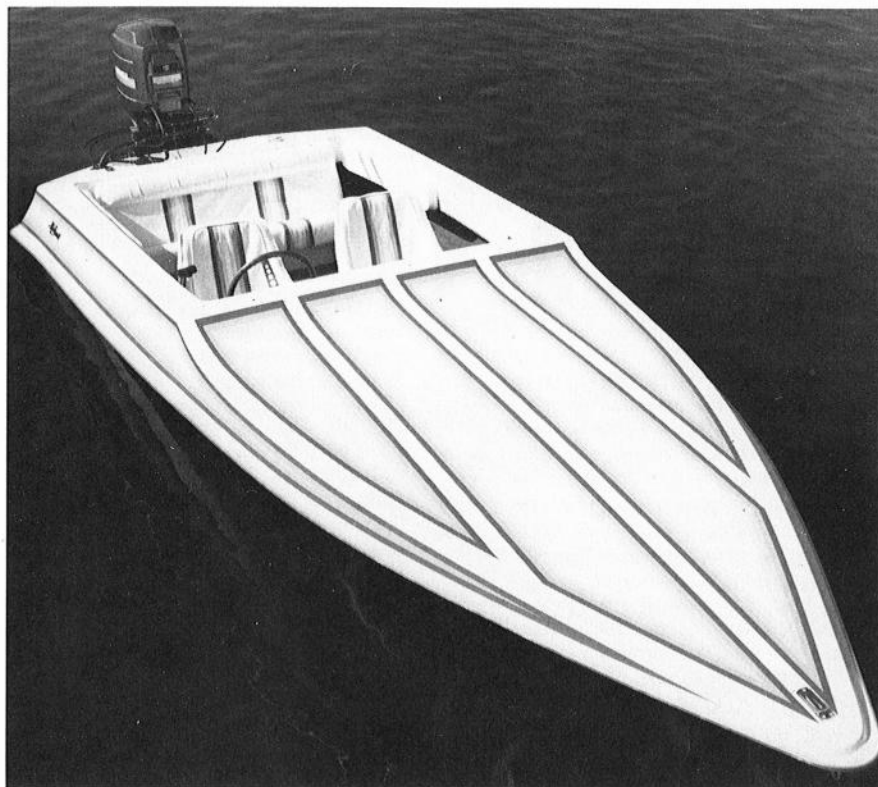


hinges on the development of a tunnel bottom entry, and while it foresees outstanding crossover potential for its new center-pod race boat, HydroStream isn't willing to abandon its true V-bottom models, either.

Only time will tell if today's performance-conscious outboard enthusiast is still interested in a true V-bottom. There's little doubt that many are going to opt for the modified tunnel, because it's faster, has a smoother ride and provides more high-speed stability. Nevertheless, HydroStream doesn't see boats like the Vegas going the way of the dinosaur, and neither do we.

Spinning a 28-pitch Chopper, our Mariner 200-powered test boat planed in a rapid 2.57 seconds, with minimal bow rise. Acceleration of zero to 22 mph in three seconds, zero to 40 in five and zero to 55 in 10 is exceptionally quick, and could've been even better, but it took precious midrange time to lift the motor and move it out. Throttle response is excellent coming out of the hole, and continues throughout the entire rpm range.

In mildly choppy water, we pushed the Vegas to a 74-mph radar reading. Had water conditions permitted, it might have bucked 80. At full throttle,



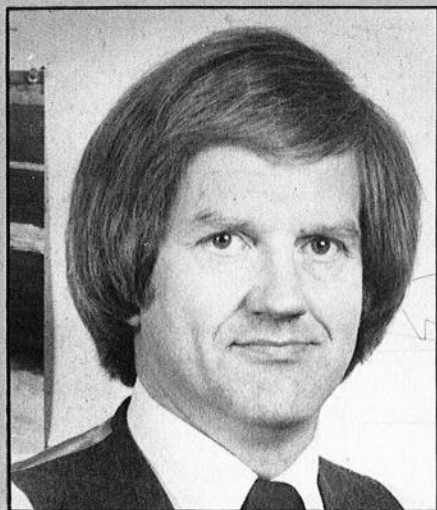
we could raise the engine and trim it out to a point where the boat chine-walked noticeably, but the condition didn't become a major concern until we passed 70 mph. At speeds in the

mid to upper 60s, the Vegas was responsive, controllable and well-mannered.

HydroStream has always enjoyed more top-end controllability than

## Howard Pipkorn: A Knack for the Unusual

Gather a group of high-performance outboard fiends together, and at some point in the conversation Howard Pipkorn's name will come up. The pit stories about Pipkorn are legend; some are true, most are at least partly



fabricated. And although he admits to marching to a different drummer, Pipkorn's accomplishments can't be denied.

Most would be surprised to know that Pipkorn holds a degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Minnesota Institute of Technology. Actually, Pipkorn's strong engineering and design background shouldn't be the least bit surprising considering that HydroStream creations have held just about every V-bottom closed-course, straight-away and marathon record at one time or another. "HydroStreams have always looked unusual, but every inch of the deck, sides, transom and bottom is there for a reason," says Pipkorn. "We're in the performance business, and it takes something out of the ordinary to make it work."

An accomplished driver in his own right, Pipkorn was also instrumental

in plotting the rules that governed outboard racing in the 1970s. Among his long list of accomplishments are several national and world championships in both V-bottom and tunnel competition.

Most family runabout manufacturers shy away from outboards, because the profit in the engine room goes to the dealer, not the builder. Pipkorn, however, has built his business using clamp-on punch alone because, as he says, "that's what we understand and do best." And it's been good for the sport's most zany competitor. HydroStream produced approximately 1,400 boats in 1979. Then the economy went kaput, and so did the outboard performance business. But 1984 is a fresh beginning, and Pipkorn says the company will be changing like never before. An active race campaign is planned, and new models are on the way. It should be interesting to watch.

most of its true V-bottom competitors, because it incorporates an eight-inch-wide pad down the center of the keel and a gull wing in the chine section. It's also important to realize that although the Vegas measures an even 20 feet down the centerline, the running surface is substantially smaller due to its Pinochio front end and four-inch transom notch. In fact, the

Vegas's bottom profile more closely resembles a 17- or 18-footer than a 20.

In the slalom course, the Vegas held a tight, true arc, but we detected a minor tendency to slide at higher speeds. In/out trim adjustments affect turning controllability more than changes in height, but we could get the engine up far enough to cause cavitation. Dual Ride Guide steering

is included standard, and is necessary to counteract the Mariner 200's torque curve.

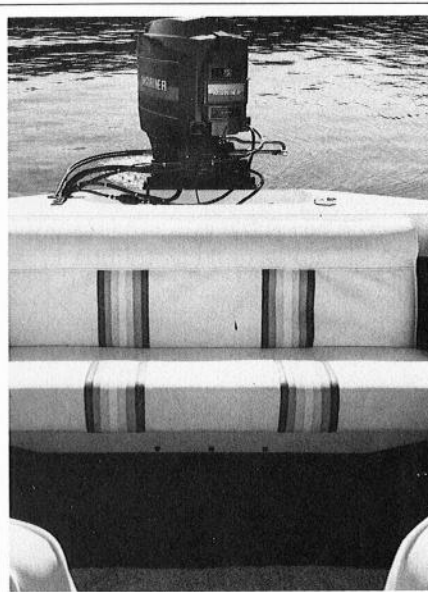
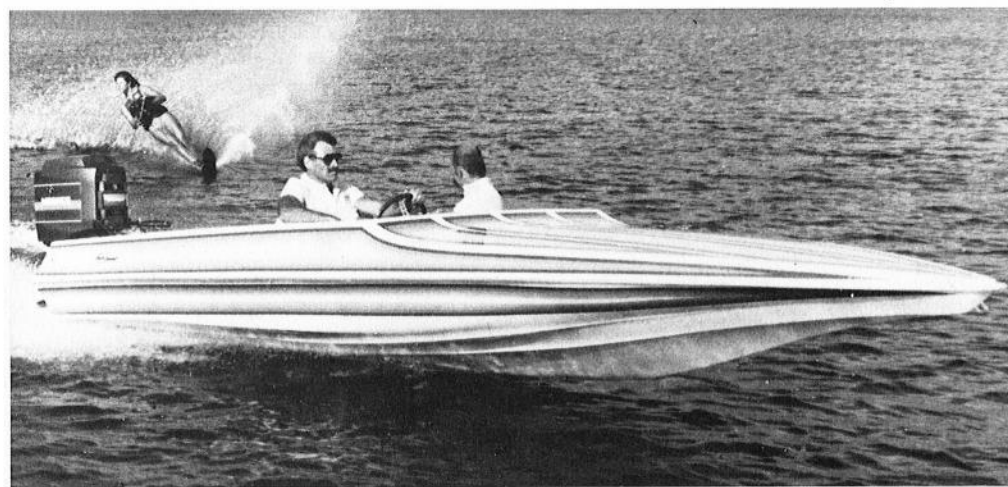
Perhaps the strongest justification for keeping high-performance outboard-powered V-bottoms alive is their ride comfort advantage in swells. In our reports on the new-generation modified tunnels, we've commented that air-entrapment bottoms may handle better in light chop and small rollers, but when you're operating in swells, the V-bottom is still the safest and most comfortable form of transportation on the water. The Vegas is definitely the driest 70-plus-mph outboard we tested this year, if for no other reason than its 20-inch measurement from the chine to the top of the deck.

And the V-bottom also affords better passenger comfort for recreational boating, because you don't have to contend with an irregular tunnel configuration in the cockpit. The Vegas comes standard with two forward-facing bucket seats and a full-width couch aft.

When HydroStream introduced its new gelcoat graphics, it also seized the opportunity to change its upholstery styling. The Vegas's interior arrangement was simple, eye-catching and functional. The seats were color-coordinated with the gelcoat, and included a clean-looking white base with vibrant red, orange and yellow accent piping. We found the buckets more supportive than most, due in large part to the rolled foundation at the edge that gave our legs additional support and prevented us from sliding on the cushions. Our only complaints were that the seats aren't adjustable, and none of the plywood bases were coated to prevent moisture rot.

The rear couch is wide enough for three adults, and includes pillow cushions top and front like those in the buckets. The gunnel padding was better than average, and featured accent stripes that matched the pattern on the seats. HydroStream's carpet installation was first-rate, and extended all the way forward and up the gunnel storage compartments.

Storage space was limited to the 10-foot racks on the sides and a special lockable center console under the dash that was furnished with two teak drink holders. Large accessories like water skis, lifejackets and coolers could be stored under the deck, although lightweight items will bounce back into the cockpit. There





was approximately 20 inches of clearance forward, which isn't enough for overnighting, but you can slip under the deck for temporary protection from the elements if need be.

One of the ingredients that has made HydroStream among the country's leading high-performance builders is its lightweight construction techniques. The company has done an exceptional job of holding weight down without sacrificing structural integrity. For example, our Vegas test machine tipped the scales at only 1,500 turn-key pounds, and was laminated with a combination of

woven roving, cloth, mat, coremat and balsa. A standard 20-foot family runabout with a 350-cubic-inch I/O generally weighs twice as much, and this has a dramatic effect not only on top speed potential but also on fuel economy and towing.

We only detected a slight amount of cloth transfer in the bottom, and the hull didn't flex at all in rough water. HydroStream also gave careful consideration to the deck, which, although substantial, looks much longer in our frontal-view photos than it actually is. Mold work on the deck was flawless, and the gelcoat luster so brilliant

that even with a white base, it mirrored the cloud formations overhead.

At present, HydroStream's new-look interior and exterior appointments are a \$1,350 option, but as far as we're concerned they should be standard equipment. The price of two-cycle V-6 outboard iron is escalating, and by the time you add a \$775 hydraulic engine jack, the bottom line on the Vegas is in excess of \$16,000 with a trailer. That's big bucks for a 20-foot outboard, but the styling, performance and workmanship make it a worthwhile investment. **PB**

## From The Test Team...

*"This is the best-performing HydroStream I've ever tested, and the company has supplied us with some gems in the past. The hull tracks well and accelerates crisply, and 70-plus upstairs is more than enough for safe recreational boating. The hydraulic trim plate is a worthwhile investment, because it allows you to use a prop that accentuates the high-speed potential, yet you still have enough low-end torque to pull skiers. In addition, the Vegas is more sensitive to prop position than most high-performance outboards. Trimmed for maximum speed, the 'Stream will chine-walk if you keep the throttle down. The handling is superb at 65, fair at 70, but why push? If you insist on really getting with it, wait until HydroStream introduces its new Mod VP tunnel. For general-purpose performance boating, however, I think the V-bottom still has an edge. It carries a payload better than a tunnel, recovers better in swells, and the cockpit benefits are obvious."*—Bob Nordskog

*"For a company that's just getting into multi-color graphics, HydroStream has done an exceptional job with its new gelcoat designs. The striping was perfect, and the mold work flawless. Move over, Eliminator. The color coordination inside and out is modern, refreshing and tastefully done. Marine Engineering continues to be one of the leaders in the rapidly-growing lift plate business, and judging by the workmanship standards on our test unit, it's easy to understand why. Rigging detail on the Vegas will vary from dealer to dealer, so pay attention before you take delivery. Access to minor services is a breeze, and the Mariner 200 is a very reliable powerplant. My only suggestion is a larger fuel tank, because a mere 20 gallons just isn't enough for prolonged full-throttle use, even in this efficient high-performance charger."*—Norm Teague

*"HydroStream's new California-style graphics are a welcome addition; they change the company's image from an off-the-wall maverick to a contemporary high-performance builder. Pipkorn has always been intent on maintaining a unique profile, and although the '84 deck contour is more conserva-*

*tive than that of past models, there's still no question about who designed it. The new seats are not only eye-catching, but they're surprisingly comfortable and quite supportive. Space for stowing accessories is adequate, although you won't find provisions for an ice chest or floor ski storage. As is the case with most HydroStreams, cockpit amenities are kept to a minimum, because the name of this tune is performance, and frills just mean additional weight."*—Dick DeBartolo

*"Even with a high-speed-oriented prop, the Vegas had good low-end torque for pulling skiers. The wake is clearly defined, with low crests that recreational slalom skiers shouldn't have any difficulty crossing. Boarding and debarking are awkward, because of the unique transom design, but the custom-made teak steps do help and are an option you shouldn't be without. The only person on the ski test team who complained was observer Dick DeBartolo, because the passenger's seat doesn't swivel. Even if it did, the Mariner V-6 towers so high above the transom that it's difficult to monitor skiers when they're directly behind the boat."*—Wade Worley

*"I think we're going to hear more from HydroStream in the next 12 months than we have in the last three years. It's obvious that Pipkorn & Co. are determined to get back in the fray, and if the new Vegas is an indicator of things to come, HydroStream is on the right track. Nobody has to convince me that Mod VP tunnels are better suited for the die-hard, high-performance buff, but let's not put the V-bottom to rest just yet. The Vegas has a lot going for it. Whip the lake up with even moderate rollers, and it's going to go right around a Stoker, Laser or Eliminator tunnel, and the passengers aren't going to look like they just got out of the shower, either. Also, if boating isn't a solo excursion for you, the V-bottom is still less sensitive to heavy payloads and varying water conditions. HydroStream made a wise decision to keep its V-bottoms in the line; I think that's a move the company won't regret as time goes by."*—Mark Spencer

# Performance Data:

## HULL SPECIFICATIONS

Model	Vegas
Bottom configuration	Deep V w/pad
Deadrise at transom	16 degrees
Length	20'
Beam	89"
Hull weight as tested	1,490 pounds
Passenger capacity	800 pounds
Base retail price	\$12,745
Retail price as tested	\$15,225

**STANDARD EQUIPMENT:** Marine carpet, stainless steel bow and stern eyes, lockable center console, two forward-facing buckets with rear bench seat, dual Ride-Guide steering.

**OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT ON TEST BOAT:** 20-gallon fuel tank (\$210), teak swim steps (\$145), Deluxe Special Edition Package including interior, gauge panel, teak grab rail, running lights and switch panel (\$600), custom five-color gelcoat graphics (\$750), Marine Engineering hydraulic transom jack and set-back plate (\$775).

**OTHER OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT:** Mooring cover, windshield.

**INSTRUMENTATION ON TEST BOAT:** Speedometer, tachometer, water pressure and fuel gauges.

**COLOR OPTIONS:** Exterior: single, two-tone or multicolor gelcoat graphics, metalflake. Standard interior: red, camel, off-white or charcoal. Optional black or white with red, orange and yellow stripes; gray or white with three shades of blue stripes; almond with three shades of brown stripes.

## CONSTRUCTION/WORKMANSHIP

Fiberglass lay-up	4
Bonding of hull and deck	5
Mold detail and finish	5
Rub rail installation	3
Deck hardware	none
Windshield installation	none
Dashboard instrument layout	4
Controls placement	5
Electrical wiring installation	4
Fuel tank installation	4
Fuel tank location	4
Seat comfort	4
Cockpit mobility	5
Access to minor services	5
Volume of storage space	4
Access to storage space	5
Interior styling	5

## ENGINE AND PROPULSION SPECIFICATIONS

Make/model	Mariner 200
Cylinder type	V-6
Cubic-inch displacement	142.2
Maximum horsepower at rpm	200 at 5,600
Prop	14 x 28 Chopper
Prop material	stainless steel

## MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Top speed, calibrated speedometer	74
Top speed, stock speedometer	74
Top speed, radar	72
Top speed, timed 1/8 mile	72
Maximum rpm, calibrated tachometer	5,900

Maximum rpm, stock tachometer	5,800
Time to reach plane	2.57 seconds
Minimum planing speed	16 mph
Distance to stop from 35 mph	165 feet
Decibel reading, 35 mph at 50 feet	85 db(A)

## PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Tracking, low speed	5
Tracking, cruise speed	4
Tracking, high speed	3
Throttle response, low speed	5
Throttle response, cruise speed	5
Throttle response, high speed	4
Slalom course, 20 mph	4
Slalom course, 30 mph	4
Slalom course, 40 mph	4
Right turn	4
Left turn	4
Ease of steering	3
Steering response	4
Overall maneuverability	4

## GENERAL PERFORMANCE CHARACTERISTICS

Shifting of passenger weight	5
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Docking maneuverability	4
Visibility coming on plane	4
Visibility at speed	5
Rough-water ride attitude	4
Hull recovery in rough water	4
Ride comfort	4
Ease of boarding and debarking	5

## WATER SKI EVALUATION

Take-off power	5
Tracking consistency	5
Throttle sensitivity	4
Visibility coming on plane	4
Visibility at speed	5
Wake	4
Ease of boarding and debarking	3

## FUEL CONSUMPTION

25 mph consumes 6 gph = 4.16 mpg
35 mph consumes 8 gph = 4.37 mpg
45 mph consumes 9 gph = 5.00 mpg

## ADDRESS OF HULL MANUFACTURER

HydroStream Boats  
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St. Paul, Minn. 55112  
(612) 633-3402

