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THE INNOVATION ISSUE

The Riviera 64 SMY blends tech and luxury.



A RIVIERA 64 SMY COMPLETES A FAST SOUTHBOUND RUN FROM SAVANNAH TO STUART, FLORIDA, THANKS TO TOP-NOTCH ENGINEERING. BY CAPT. BILL PIKE

SPECIAL DELIVERY

I was early afternoon when I joined the new Riviera 64 Sport Motor Yacht at St. Augustine's Beach Marina, just a stone's throw from where the swanky AIA, causeway crosses the Tolomato River. The boat had departed Savannah the day before, shortly after she'd been dropped off by a container ship into the briny. She was bound, as I understood it, for the salty little coastal town of Stuart, some 200 nautical miles south. Upon first catching sight of her, tied alongside a long dock out by the causeway, I noticed that much of her exterior was still sheathed in swathes of wide, white shrink-wrap tape—to protect rails, stainless fittings and other aspects of her carefully crafted, Aussie-built essence from damage. Stepping aboard, I noticed that much of her interior was fortified against the vicissitudes of high seas travel as well. Furniture was still wrapped in plastic, galley drawers were secured with the preventer latches that typify most genuine, bluewater cruisers and cushions and pillows were squished into lockers and drawers.

The welcoming committee consisted of two solid, seafaring types—delivery skipper Capt. Pete Liverani of Milford, Pennsylvania, and his mate, Felix Carcano of Carmel, New York. I immediately picked up on the fact that the two of them were best buddies who'd long ago dispensed of interpersonal niceties in favor of merciless but highly entertaining torment.

"Felix'll show you where to put your stuff, Bill," said Pete as he went up the stairway to the big, salon-like enclosed flybridge to crank our 1,550-hp MANs. At that moment, I was standing alongside the U-shaped galley on the main deck, at the rear of a salon that was virtually circumscribed with huge, sun-filled windows. Felix, a bulky fellow who'd just picked up my seabag, stood next to me. "But, watch out," added Pete, "he's prone to fallin' overboard."

The comeback from Felix was instantaneous. As he led the way toward the stairway to the 64's lower deck, he aimed a loud crack aloft. "Yeah well, I'm fat, so I float. So, what's the big deal, man?"

The delivery dock was ticking, of course. So, we soon returned the 64 to the open Atlantic, where a confusion of sea predominated, with wave heights topping out at about six feet. Nevertheless, the boat made a beeline down the coast, never wavering from the Garmin autopilot's steady guidance. And yeah, at 22 knots or so, the ride was a tad bumpy (which was to be expected under prevailing conditions), but it was also kick-back comfortable and virtually bone dry. The helm seat I occupied, between Pete in the co-pilot's spot and a wood-grained console under my right hand that sported a Twin Disk EC300 single-lever engine control with related Express Joystick, felt about as form-fitting as a high-end racing bolster.

Experienced delivery skippers are careful people. To avoid shifting sand bars and safely get from Ponce de Leon Inlet to our destination for the night—inlet Harbor Marina—Pete directed me to avoid what seemed like the shortest route and instead hang a hard left once we'd cleared the inboard ends of the Ponce jetties. I then proceeded, under his continuing counsel, to follow the marked channel south around a low-lying point and began idling back north up Ponce Cut. Although the route was lengthy, seriously shallow in spots and narrow, the boat was a pleasure to operate, even on a slow bell. She did not wander from side to side, there was no sluggishness in her helm response, and I eventually found



RPM	KNOTS	GPH	DB(A)	RANGE
650	6.9	4.3	63	2,480
1000	9.1	18.4	61	764
1250	9.5	39.3	64	374
1500	11.9	56.7	62	458
1750	22.4	82.6	64	419
2000	28.2	116.5	68	374
2250	32.5	142.5	71	352
2380	34.7	159.5	71	336

Fuel: 1/3 full Water: full Seas: calm
LOA: 69'8"
Beam: 19'1"
Draft: 5'6"
Displ: 54,255 lbs
Fuel: 1,777 gal.
Water: 198 gal.
Power: 2/1300-hp MAN diesels
Optional Power: 2/1550-hp MAN diesels



Clockwise from left: The salon/galley/dining area is a great social space; the mezzanine area between the salon and cockpit provides access to the master stateroom through a floor hatch; the king-sized berth in the master makes for comfortable accommodations.

I could steer with just my thumb and forefinger.

"Man," I said to Liverani, as we purred past Piddler Island, "this baby handles like a freaking Bentley!"

At the top of the Cut, however, a minor detour arose. In order to make a sharp, nearly 180-degree starboard turn within the boat's own length, so I could pivot around the end of a shoal and head down the Halifax River to Inlet Harbor, I pulled the EC300's "master" lever momentarily out of gear, thinking this would disable the control's synchronization. Many other controls—Gleaming, for example—tend to work this way. But, unbeknownst to me, no de-synch occurred, and my pivot became increasingly awkward, with master and slave levers obviously split, fore and aft, but both

engines still going in forward gear.

"You gotta hit the switch," said Liverani, noticing the issue and pointing toward the knob on the top of the EC300. I'd forgotten about this little Twin Disc fobbe, maybe because it's far from one of my faves. More to the point, in my opinion, having to deal with a sync selector switch complicates the life of the average boathandler. Being able to simply pull the master out of gear to de-synchronize is, by comparison, much simpler, faster and considerably safer, especially if a close-quarters-emergency situation should arise.

At any rate, docking the 64 at the marina involved no forgetfulness on my part. In fact, the experience was flat-out delightful, largely thanks to Riviera's precise coordination of a set of powerful

hydraulic bow and stern thrusters, two QuickShift transmissions capable of rotating shafts and wheels at incrementally slow speeds if necessary and the aforementioned groovy-but-not-quite-perfect engine control. I began the docking process at the helm, using the EC300's battery-smooth, single-lever sticks for the approach. Then I departed the helm for the auxiliary control station on the "Back Porch," behind the flybridge enclosure, to use the joystick to finish the job.

"Absolutely no turbulence whatsoever," I enthused to Liverani as I walked the 64 sedately across a rousing tidal current. Sightlines were fabulous—I could see the entire hullside, the entire slip—everything that was ahead or behind. Once Felix got himself onto

the dock and began specifying slight adjustments, fore and aft, I discovered I could easily put the boat within inches of where he wanted her—and keep her there.

"Truly amazing, eh?" Liverani suggested. And I had to agree. A couple of other savvy features announced themselves while we took on fuel. For starters, I was impressed with Riviera's installation of an Oceanic Systems Deck Gauge next to both port and starboard diesel fills—as, keeping track of what's in the relevant tank is both easy and safe. The digital LED displays even had dim-mode to preserve night vision. And then, there was the salty practicality of the exterior layout itself. And while Felix handled the fuel dispenser, he had plenty of room to stand on the side deck, with a beefy, hip-high



Dinner at "Off the Hook" with delivery skipper Capt. Pete Liverani and Felix Carcano caps off good day of running the 64 down the Atlantic coast.

rail for support. The running lights were positioned well aloft for increased visibility at night. And there were oodles of cleats and fairleads from stem to stern, making it unnecessary to overwhealm a midship cleat or cleats with too many mooring lines.

Dinner at the restaurant next door—Off the Hook—was superb. And I gotta say that, as a long-time Floridian who had never before waded into a plate of rock shrimp (broiled with butter and seasoned bread crumbs), the sweetly flavorful little devils were way tastier than Florida lobster, Maine lobster, stone crabs or just about anything else that'll swim onto a plate. The conversation around the table kept pace with the chow.

"Yeah, when I'm not delivering boats with this guy," said Felix at one point, aiming a nod Pete's way. "I'm what they call in New York State, a 'Bay Constable.' A water cop. Been doing it for 16 years now, can you believe it?"

"I was a bay constable, too—for about 20 years," Pete serenely observed. "Until I retired and got into full-time deliveries."

"Ha," Felix said, aiming a grin my way, "more like, until the judge finally caught up with him."

For one reason or another, we lingered long at "The Hook." It was late when my hosts adjourned to our 64's foredeck to pull just a little more shrink wrap tape from her bowrails and I retired to the engine room to check 'er out. The watertight door I used to enter, by the way, penetrated the after bulkhead of a utility room (with workbench, rod storage and Miele washer and dryer) right behind the master stateroom and was just one of two access points. The other was a day hatch in the teak deck of the so-called "mezzanine area," a lounge-and-table-outfitted space between the salon and the cockpit.

The EK turned out to be a total top-shelfer. My tape measure put

the headroom at 6 feet, and the distance between the two space-saving V-drive mains, with stainless-steel safety rails, was just shy of an ample 2 feet. There were a couple of equally powerful gensets, each a Cummins Onan Marine QD with sound shield. And, in addition, there was a profusion of lithium-ion house and auxiliary batteries nestled under the walkway deck plates, lots of acoustic and thermal insulation, a set of noise- and vibration-nixing oil-filled Satorque propshaft enclosures (with a SeaKeeper mounted between them), double-clamped throughhulls throughout and carefully holed and schematically laid out electrics. About the only thing I could find fault with was the lack of wrench-swimming space alongside the outboard banks of the engines.

I love sleeping on boats (always have). And I became an instant fan of the king-sized berth in the 64's master—it had been a long day. And the next morning, after a solid night's sleep and with

blasphemous disdain for the old-fashioned concept of the "sea shower," I took full advantage of the rain-style showerhead in the master heads' large shower stall. Once finished, I barreled out it up the stairway to the salon/galley/dining area and found that Felix, who'd spent the night in one of the two guestrooms sandwiched between the VIP and the master, was already making Black Rifle coffee in the compact, travel-style coffee press he carries with him on deliveries.

"Here you go, Bill," he said, offering a cup. "Hot coffee. Pete doesn't drink the stuff. Speak of the devil!"

We both heard the door of the VIP close authoritatively. Pete then came up the stairway and, without looking right or left, breezed through the salon to pick up and say goodbye to Pete and Felix in just shy of a New York Minute. But, before starting the trip back to St. Augustine, I did manage to take one last look at Riviera's new 64 Sport Motor Yacht from my Uber's back seat—she's an expertly engineered, precisely crafted, sweet handling luxury yacht, with undeniably robust, bluewater chops. No doubt about it. ☐