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**PNG MARINE PLAYGROUND MARK RICHARDS PROFILE SYDNEY SHOW PREVIEW
DIESEL OUTBOARDS BUYING SECONDHAND CRUISECRAFT CENTRE CONSOLE**



SPORTY PROPOSITION

Riviera has downscaled with the launch of the new 395 SUV, its first under-40ft boat in a decade.

By Mark Rothfield



There's strong competition in this sector from European and US builders

If the definition of extravagance is foie gras, washed down with Hill of Grace, aboard a Riviera 72, and indulgence is Coffin Bay oysters with Clare Valley riesling on a 5400 Sport Yacht, then happiness, arguably, is the new 395 SUV.

Riv's new baby was created by the same Michelin-rated 'chefs', yet remains quintessentially comforting, manageable and affordable – like a flame-grilled steak and cold beer in front of a flickering pub fire, while a bloke with sideburns croons *Khe Sanh*.

There may be less 'wow' factor, compared to its larger siblings, but more 'now' factor. You feel better connected to the sea, rather than riding aloft and aloof in the first-class lounge. It puts fun into driving and freedom into weekends.

Plenty of space for outdoor activities in the 395 SUV's cockpit.

Of course, long ago, before men ate quiche, 40 was where life began and boat size ended for most sports-cruising couples. Anything larger was a bitter pill to swallow when berthing.

In the post-joystick era, though, sports cruisers have become supersized, and buyers hungrier for luxury. Bracket creep saw 50ft become the entry-level 'par'. Suddenly, though, Riviera is shooting for birdie again with its first new sub-40ft model in a decade.

The 38 Open flybridge was its last foray of this ilk. Launched in 2008, early-GFC and pre-receivership, it clocked out after four years. Which then begs the question ... when recent model development has focused on being bigger and better, why be smaller and better?

SMALLER, CHEAPER

The answer comes from dealers, who prompted the Gold Coast builder to deliver them something compact and convenient, crucially with one less digit on the price tag. There's strong competition in this sector from European and US builders, but



they're hoping for a convergence of buyers, from those scaling down in search of something easier to run, to an inspired new generation of younger first-timers.

Riviera marketing director Stephen Milne claims the 395 is more than a new model – he says it steers the entire concept of luxury SUV cruising into fresh and exciting waters. A bold statement, perhaps, when really it's simply a return to Riv's vintage form – some of its finest work over the years has been in the 40-45ft range.

What Milne means is that there's a high degree of refinement and big-boat thinking writ

small in the 395's hull – a generous barbecue unit, foredeck sunbed, raised bulwarks, plus modern wizardry such as Glass Cockpit navigation, C-Zone digital switching and joystick control.

It all makes for a tidy package, blending the seaworthiness and cockpit space of a flybridge with the SUV's single-level lifestyle. That said, a flybridge Sports Motor Yacht variant is also set to debut at the 2018 Sydney International Boat Show.

BIG FOR ITS SIZE

It's an odd feeling to step aboard the 395 after testing a string of larger pearls, and Milne

occasionally chided me for referring to it as 'little'. Yes, it's a small Riviera, but not necessarily a small 40-footer.

In the brochure's words, the design team "elected to go wider, creating a revolutionary new broad beam hull ... that makes so much more possible". There's also a good amount of topside and foredeck height so, aesthetically, it balances out quite nicely.

Unlike the larger models, the hull has no Mulder heritage – still, the in-house team has done well in juggling the demands of stability, planing ability, ride softness, cornering and tracking.



Power comes from twin Volvo Penta D6 IPS 500 turbodiesels developing 370hp apiece, which punch the 12,500kg hull onto the plane in seconds, topping out at 31 knots (57km/h). They hold a minimum plane at slightly over 10 knots (18.5km/h) for 2000rpm and offer decent mid-range zip.

LONG RANGE

The burn ratio between mid and maximum revs is interesting, translating to only marginal difference in overall range. At seven knots (13km/h), for example, the SUV can cover 1160nm from a 1500lt tank, which drops to just 230nm at 12 knots (22km/h), but then rises to 295nm at full speed.

In other words, there's a wide 'sweet spot' and you're not penalised heavily for giving it stick. The hull doesn't mind a bit of punishment either, as I found out while throwing the 395 around



Luxury for less than seven figures – saloon (above), master cabin (right) and midships cabin (opposite).



there's a wide 'sweet spot' and you're not penalised heavily for giving it stick

like a 20-foot runabout during an offshore filming session.

It was mostly throttles to the metal, the variable-rate steering providing precise response. The electronic trim function makes a significant difference here, with the button easy to find on the portside throttle. At times, I inadvertently had the hull running too flat, resulting in the windscreen copping some heavy spray during hard turns.

More time behind the wheel would inevitably improve rapport between hull and helmsman although, at any rate, the wipers expediently cleared the breach.

The sporty performance started me thinking about the SUV analogy, given its motoring connotations as a school-run specialist. For mine, the 395 is more like a tasteful dual-cab.

The beam of 4.26m, some 30cm wider than the old 38's hull, is most notable in the cockpit. With 7.7sqm at its disposal, the area begs to be fished from, entertained in, or used as a launching ramp for kayaks or paddle boards.

An inflatable tender can be strapped upright to the boarding platform rail, while a barbecue

moulding with sink takes centre stage on the transom, which also incorporates storage for fenders and a small outboard. Forward, to port, is a two-seater lounge with folding table, shaded by an overhang, awning and Riviera's signature hopper window.

Entering the saloon, you find an aft galley to starboard serving both the adjacent dinette and cockpit. Atop its solid-surface bench is a single-element electric cooktop and single sink, while below is a drawer fridge/freezer and Samsung microwave.

They've devoted space immediately ahead of the galley to a double, inwards-facing lounge. Possibly this could have faced forward, like the helm lounge, to extend galley room. A TV resides flat inside the starboard dash when not in use.


DASHING DASH

Personally, I'm not a fan of the left-hand drive configuration. However, the two-tier dash is handsomely presented with twin Garmin screens, central Volvo Penta display, and conveniently placed switch bank. Sunroof hatches reside above the helm and lounge.

The interior palette is contemporary and conservative European in style, with pale American Oak timberwork and cream Sunbrella upholstery. The fabric can apparently repel a red wine spill – God forbid it's Hill of Grace. If needed, the L-shaped dinette converts into a double berth.

Five more can sleep in the two staterooms below, comprising a master cabin forward with queen-size walk-around double berth and a surprisingly roomy full-beam midships cabin with three single berths. Finally, there's a single bathroom afforded both day and en suite access.

Construction and finish befit the rigorous standards set by Riviera, starting with underfloor foam in bow areas through to the double-moulded hardtop. You can be assured of an isophthalic gelcoat and vinylester outer layer, along with cored decks and cabin top.

It's a boat for its time, which will stand the test of time. And therein lies possibly the biggest attraction of this 'little' Riv – the 395 SUV has the quality, resale confidence and ownership benefits that the brand bestows, but with a price tag that leaves enough change out of \$890,000 (as tested) to have your cake ... and eat it too. 

Above: A stylish two-tier dash, with twin Garmin screens and Volvo Penta display.

It's a boat for its time, which will stand the test of time



RIVIERA 395 SUV	
Length overall (inc swimplatform):	13.27m
Beam:	4.26m
Draft:	1.13m
Weight:	12,500kg
Fuel capacity:	1500lt
Water capacity:	390lt
Berths:	5 plus 2
Power:	2 x 370hp Volvo Penta D6-IPS500
Priced from:	\$848,900
Price as tested:	\$887,841
More information: Riviera Australia, tel: (07) 5502 5555. Web: riviera.com.au.	