



RIGHT: ENVELOPED IN CLEARS THE FLYBRIDGE IS CERTAINLY THE MOST CONGENIAL AREA OF THE BOAT FOR SKIPPER AS WELL AS GUESTS.

FAR RIGHT: A GENEROUS SIZE COCKPIT WITH GREAT FLYBRIDGE ACCESS AND OUTDOOR LIVING OPTIONS.

FOLLOWING MUCH PUBLICISED CLAIMS THAT THE COMPANY'S WOES OF THE PAST WERE WELL AND TRULY BEHIND THEM, THE BEST WAY TO REINFORCE THOSE CLAIMS WAS TO UNVEIL SUBSTANTIATING EVIDENCE. THE RIVIERA 43 OPEN FLYBRIDGE LAUNCHED AT THE RECENT SANCTUARY COVE INTERNATIONAL BOAT SHOW WAS EXHIBIT NUMBER ONE, THE FIRST CAB OFF THE RANK!

TEXT BY BARRY TYLER



In pre-event publicity the 43 was hailed as being so dramatically different from previous flybridge models, that it would prove once and for all that despite the upheaval of the previous two years, the company had still continued to produce boats and perhaps more importantly, had continued to develop new and better boats through R&D, that embraced the latest trends



Open Plan



in cruiser design and manufacturing. In marketing manager Stephen Milne's own words, "For us this boat typifies, reinforces, Riviera's commitment to the future. We have taken the humble Open Flybridge concept, an unashamed 'fishing boat' in many people's eyes, and have transformed it into a genuine family-orientated cruiser with all the features

and benefits befitting a luxury cruiser, that you can still fish from! The lifestyle features literally flow through from the cockpit to the saloon to the accommodation, and also up to the flybridge entertainment level," he said. I had to agree, for upon stepping aboard I soon discovered that there were indeed multifarious changes in genre and design thinking and certainly these began as Milne suggested, in what was a demonstrably larger cockpit area. The boarding platform was the usual convenient and user-friendly 'visual delight', complete with telescopic three-rung concealed dive ladder. The traditional Riviera transom door with its separate folding bridge above it had been replaced by a most innovative bridge or top, that hinge-mounted off the actual door itself. No more ill-fitting, rattling 'bridges' with troublesome protruding hinges, this bridge was so simple and innovative in the way it flopped over the top of the transom coamings and 'locked' into place – yet so effective in its operation. A 110% improvement over its predecessor! Another most obvious change was with the transom area itself, for the traditional, centrally located live-bait tank has been replaced by a well-protected entertainment module that included

TOP SPEED WAS 30 KNOTS WITH A PAIR OF VOLVO PENTA IPS600S.



TOP: THE VERY NATURE OF THE SALOON LAYOUT SEES A NICE OPEN FLOW FROM THE COCKPIT TO SALOON TO GALLEY TO ACCOMMODATION.

BELOW LEFT: THE MASTER CABIN IS SPACIOUS, ELEGANT AND EXTREMELY PRACTICAL.

BELOW RIGHT: THE MID CABIN HAS FULL-BEAM ACCOMMODATION FOR A COUPLE IN THE QUEEN-SIZE BERTH, AND ANOTHER PERSON IN THE SINGLE BERTH ALONGSIDE.

electric BBQ, sink, rubbish-bin and utensil cupboard. Fishermen fear not though, with a little improvising and a few dollars more, a suitable live-well can still be fitted alongside this central feature; which would go nicely hand-in-hand with the two kill tanks that were recessed into the cockpit floor, and the tackle cupboard recessed into the face of the mezzanine seat on the starboard side.

Riviera had done, I feel, a brilliant job too with the ladder access to the flybridge, for a lot of thought and effort had obviously gone into placing it in such a way that it impeded little on cockpit space, yet was still of practical use, whatever the sea conditions. Just the right rake, the generously-sized teak steps and the integral grab rails – all ensured a safe passage to the next level.

And what a level, again the harshness of this area had been softened dramatically, in line with their family-friendly 'philosophy'. Along with the 'flybridge' prerequisite of good visibility to each corner of the vessel, this level featured for the skipper and guests, two Pompanette helm chairs, and suede-upholstered

lounges port and starboard around a forward 'entertainers' table. There's the comfort aspect readily addressed, with seating for nine in easy reach of the table, or the portside bar module which included sink, hot and cold water and fridge.

For the skipper, a highly spec'd helm feature (which looked like it belonged inside the boat, so impressive was the dash design as well as finish) included two of the latest Raymarine E120W touch screen radar, sounder and GPS combo systems interlocked with a must-have accessory for today's new-age vessel, a CZone Onboard Management system. I must say I did appreciate one other additional very user-friendly helm feature – the actual curved front/top panels or covers of the imitation hide helm cover hinged and opened forward to reveal a huge full-width glove-box.

Enveloped in clears and boasting all these features plus a hatch over the staircase (which prevented you dropping in on the people below) and a veritable plethora of overhead and side grab-rails in all the right places, this was a safe as well as most congenial area of the boat for skipper as well as guests.



Open Plan Saloon

The very (open-plan) nature of the saloon layout where everything flowed nicely through from cockpit to saloon to galley to accommodation, offered a compelling feeling of spaciousness. Also contributing very much to this open-plan theme were the impressive Aritex stainless steel saloon doors and alongside these the raise and lower matching hopper window, which allowed easy interaction between the two areas.

Entering the saloon, to portside was the rather striking cherrywood bar and cocktail cabinet, with forward of this again a void large enough for two movable lounge chairs which could be moved over so as to accommodate a further two guests at the dining feature opposite. Effectively a six-person dining setting anyway, the focal point was a most impressive solidly-mounted cherrywood 'folding' table. Not too many 43-foot vessels boast a dining setting for eight guests!

Very 'Riviera' was the galley which was to portside and down a level from the saloon. Not a lower galley as we knew them in the past, this galley was longer and decidedly 'bolder'. By that I mean it or indeed the chef who worked it, was a lot 'closer' to the action in the saloon. Certainly the galley was more comprehensive too, with more bench space, more cupboard and drawer provision, a two-burner hob-top, a microwave convection oven, a garbage bin and separate pull-out drawer-style refrigerator and freezer.

Add to this the upstairs refrigerator and the refrigerator unit in the staircase module, and you have a serious amount of refrigeration capacity aboard this boat. And storage capacity also for complementing the generous drawer and cupboard provision in the galley was a void under the galley floor. Lift the floor hatch and cleverly the designers have included two lift-out storage bins suitable for foodstuffs. What a great idea, take them home with you when you step off the boat and next time you go down to the boat these bins can be re-packed and ready to go – before you leave home!

Finally décor; this was very much in keeping with the new-age theme of this boat. 'Warm' is a descriptive that comes to mind for in every aspect Riviera's team have seemingly made a determined effort to make this a very family-friendly boat. The padded mullions, the fabric concertina curtains, the aesthetically relaxing blend of cherrywood, plush suede and vinyl wall and ceiling panels, the contemporary galley, the wooden pelmets, the recessed wooden air-conditioning panels (this boat has 10.6kW of Cruisair air conditioning) rather than often unsightly grills, the starboard side 'coarse hide' front bulkhead cover that lifts to reveal storage for maps, remote controls and valuables – all contributed to what for me was a most ambient saloon.

Two Couples or Two Families

Sensibly Riviera has resisted the temptation to try and do too much, as regards accommodation allocation. Quite simply, it was either a two-family or a two-couple situation, unless that is you opted for the 'third' option of a lowering dining table which transforms the dining setting into a double berth. Cabin space therefore was sublime and none moreso than in the amidships cabin that I would venture to suggest, was unashamedly gleaned from the Riviera 4400 Sport Yacht.

I say unashamedly for why wouldn't you emulate this previously very successful formula that provided full-beam accommodation for a couple in the queen-size berth, and another person in the single berth alongside. The only difference was that in this instance, there was even more room. The only draw-back, if you could call it that, was with the height in a room that is in effect under the cabin sole (where the engines used to be) – it was hands and knees stuff to climb into bed. A situation I might add, I had absolutely no qualms or reservations about: why would you when the trade-off was this amount of space, this amount of accommodation in a room which boasted privacy, an overhead sky-light (recessed into

VERY 'RIVIERA' IS THE PORT SIDE GALLEY AND DOWN A LEVEL FROM THE SALOON.





THE COCKPIT SOLE LIFTS HYDRAULICALLY TO REVEAL TRANSCENDENT ACCESS TO AN ENGINE BAY.

the top of the forward saloon bulkhead), a full-length hanging wardrobe, wall mirrors, television, stereo, air conditioning, fixed-hull side windows, feature head-boards, plenty of cupboard storage, and a still relatively private (house) bathroom right outside your door. Décor was again a pleasant combo of what we found in the saloon!

I still haven't made my mind up about what Riviera describes as the master stateroom. Yes it has a queen-size island berth and a duplication of the above features, plus pigeon hole lockers, an overhead opening hatch and of course its own ensuite bathroom, but..... I still can't get that amidships cabin out of my mind. If this was my boat I reckon that would be my master stateroom. Whatever, the choice is up to the individual, for both rooms were of equal elegance, equal appeal, and equal practicality!

Breaking New Ground

Back to the cockpit and yet another very obvious change from previous flybridge models was the floating floor. With the press of a cockpit-located rocker switch this whole (well

sealed) floor lifted hydraulically to reveal transcendent access to an engine bay which included four Lifeline 200Ah 'house' and two 980CCA 'engine' batteries, the Victron Skylla 650W inverter, the Onan 9.5kW genset, and the (460-litre) water and (1800-litre) fuel tankage. If you were thinking like me that 460 litres of water was a little under-done then there was still plenty of room left in this engine bay, for an 'optional' water-maker.

As intimated before, the engine configuration in this instance was of the pod-drive variety, again breaking new ground for a flybridge model. Around the 43 to 44-foot mark appears to be very much the sweet spot for a pair of these 435hp, 5.5-litre, inline 6-cylinder IPS600 Volvo Penta diesel engines and drive systems and once again the package certainly didn't disappoint. Top speed was an average 30.1 knots and of course with the inherent economy of these engines, you could really cruise at anything from 20 to 26 knots. Confirming the economy factor at a 'cruise' speed, our readings showed the 43 actually became more economical the quicker the boat went, with the range increasing from 293NM at 14.2 knots at 2600rpm, up to 342NM at 26.2knots at 3400rpm.

As is the case with any marry-up between a hull and these engines and drive units, the two companies (Riviera and Volvo Penta) again worked closely together and the end result was a hull that accelerated well, went like the proverbial cut cat and it handled the swells well both uphill and downhill. It turned spectacularly also, with what was a surprisingly level attitude for a boat of this size, at this speed. What I especially liked though was the actual lack of fuss or sensation. That to me is the very essence of a good hull, when it does what it should seemingly without your even realising – it was what could be best described as robotically efficient in every aspect.

Conclusion

While the Riviera 43 Open Flybridge luxury cruiser was a definite breath of fresh air as regards design and innovation, it was certainly far from an effort by a bunch of new-age gobbledygook gurus out to inflict change regardless of consequence. This was a boat designed by a team who know and understand boating in the 21st century. Every change, every feature, was practical as well as user-friendly – for all the family. What more could you ask then, of a 14.46-metre flybridge cruiser with all the toys – extras such as search-light, flybridge rod-holder rack, teak flooring, BBQ module, platform extension, dishwasher, rear awning, roller blinds, painted hull, soft furnishings package – that cost less than a million dollars to put on the water!

P.M.V.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Design Name:.....	Riviera 43 Open Flybridge.....	Generator:.....	Onan 9.5kW.....	Helm Chair:.....	Pompanette.....
Year Launched:.....	2010.....	Inverter / Charger:.....	Victron.....	Upholstery:.....	Riviera Marine.....
Designer:.....	Riviera Marine.....	Air Conditioning:.....	Cruisair.....	ELECTRONICS	
Interior Designer:.....	Riviera Marine.....	Anchor Winch:.....	Muir Storm 1250.....	Autopilot:.....	Raymarine ST70 SPX.....
Builder:.....	Riviera Marine.....	Anchor:.....	Manson 20kg.....	GPS:.....	Raymarine LP 125.....
LOA:.....	14.46 m.....	Steering:.....	QL Volvo IPS.....	Plotter:.....	2 x Raymarine E120W.....
LWL:.....	13.61 m.....	Engine Controls:.....	Volvo IPS.....	Depth Sounder:.....	DSM-300.....
Beam:.....	4.57 m.....	Lighting:.....	Hella LED lighting.....	VHF:.....	Raymarine Ray 49E.....
Draft:.....	1.2 m.....	Paint (Topsides):.....	Awlgrip Tungsten Silver.....	Radar:.....	24NM Digital Radar.....
Displacement:.....	14,550 kg.....	Paint (Antifouling):.....	Wattyl.....	Entertainment Systems:.....	Clarion.....
Max. Speed:.....	30.1 knots.....	Hatches:.....	Bomar / Oceanair.....	Engine Instruments:.....	Volvo IPS.....
Cruise Speed:.....	28 knots.....	Windscreens/windows:.....	Alfab.....	Software System:.....	Raymarine.....
Construction:.....	GRP / Foam and balsa.....	Porthole Hatches:.....	Vetus.....	Switch Panel:.....	CZone.....
Fuel Cap:.....	1,800 litres.....	Heads:.....	Sealand.....		
Water Cap:.....	460 litres.....	Veneer/Plywood:.....	Cherrywood.....	Base Price of Boat:.....	\$AUS812,809.....
Engines Make:.....	Volvo D6 435hp.....	Stainless Steel Fabrication:.....	Riviera Marine.....	Price as Tested:.....	\$AUS951,130.....
Gearboxes:.....	Volvo IPS 600.....	Stainless Steel Doors:.....	Aritex Designs.....		
Propellers:.....	T2 Volvo Penta.....	Trim Tabs:.....	Bennett.....		

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