Smooth operator

A great entertainer and family boat in one, Riviera's new 45 is a consummate performer.

By Mark Rothfield
Photography:
Lou Martin
“Good morning, it’s 10 o’clock and a brumby six degrees in the city,” chirped the radio jock as I cruised down the Sydney Freeway. Nothing ‘good’ about it, I decided, as a sombre sky foretold of rain and a southerly gale strove to dismember the roadside trees.

Awaiting at R Marine Pittwater’s cozy waterside base, however, was a sultry change. Amidst the gloom, the glossy new Riviera 45 positively glowed and upon opening the cabin door, a blast of tropical air lured me like a moth to the flame — agent Bruce Mitchell, bless him, had earlier cranked up the heater.

The large saloon windows and glass companionway door invited natural light into the cocoon and invoked a sense of openness and airiness, while creamy leather, cherrywood trim and (optional) Amtico flooring lent further visual warmth.

Joinery and varnishing work clearly highlighted the world-class craftsmanship – both human and robotic – that now exists in Riv’s Gold Coast factory.

As I rubbed life back into my hands, my eyes keenly devoured the layout – plush L-shaped lounge to port; dinette diagonally opposite; C-shaped galley at the same level, allowing communal contact between the chef and guests, with fridge, freezer and dishwasher drawers residing under-bench so as not to obstruct the aesthetic flow.

On the accommodation deck lay three double cabins — one with bunks, another with singles that convert to a double – plus two head compartments, including an ensuite for the fore’ard stateroom.

There’s a machinery room amidships, just for’ard of the fuel tank, containing hotwater system, air-con compressors, bilge pumps, battery chargers and freshwater manifolds. stuff owners can check without poking their heads under the bonnet. It’s accessible from the port cabin or a galley floor hatch.
Inside the vessel, though, is not where you'll find the 45's top selling feature – one must venture outside to the cockpit to behold the fibreglass staircase leading to the helm station.

SAFER FOR OLD SALTS

As a nation, we're getting older, fatter, less mobile, and thus Riviera has taken steps (scuse the pun) to simplify flybridge access. It's better than a Jenny Craig voucher and the stairs are also safer to use in sea conditions.

Just as 50 feet is about the minimum size vessel for an internal stairwell, the 45 cunningly gets away with its moulded external design. Apparently, it required five attempts to reach the ideal compromise between climb angle and cockpit encroachment, with handrails being added to further enhance security.

Bruce nonchalantly scaled the stairs to summon the C9 Caterpillars, while I tended to the lines and fenders, mentally noting the ease of access to the side decks and boarding platform, the effectiveness of the new non-skid dot pattern as well as the substantial bollards.
Several bursts of bow thruster helped us out of the pen and into clear, if nuffled, water. The Cats were veritably purring, as though relishing the chance to inhale the moist, chilled air through the integrated topside vents, while politely burping fumes via under-hull exhaust ports.

An idle speed of 700rpm brought a respectable six knots over the ground, and 900rpm took us to the eight-knot speed limit that governs the upper reaches of Pittwater. With another nudge on the electronic throttles, the twin 575hp turbo diesels whisked the 18-tonne hull onto the plane with nary a pause or bow lift.

Running surfaces, including the prop tunnels, which afford a shaft angle of 11 degrees, come courtesy of Frank Mulder. Efficiency is his hallmark.

An ocean cruising speed of 17 knots was recorded at around 1900rpm, thence came the turbo influence and, soon after, a sweet spot of 2300rpm for about 80 per cent engine load. Fuel rate, thus, is a moderate 160 litres per hour.

At 2530 clicks, the Cats were spent, delivering 29.7 knots at 220 l/h. Noise levels on the bridge were exceptionally quiet and the ride as smooth.
as a Sinatra melody. Pretty impressive for the smallest engines on offer, with Cummins QSMLIs (660hp) and Cat C12s (715hp) being optional.

In very tight turns, the 45 showed deft manoeuvrability and lightness on the helm. Only a few knots of boat speed were washed off, and there was a perfect amount of heel and slide.

As we slid past Barrenjoey and into open waters, I glanced to my left and noticed the
It's quite a trick for a full-bowed, high-volume hull to ride so well.

Hamlet of Patonga snoozing away in a Broken Bay backwater. “Best damn fish’n’chips on the east coast,” I remarked to Bruce, obviously preaching to the converted.

With our lunch stowed in the galley, I pointed the 45’s bow upstream and soon we stormed into America’s Bay. It’s a large, sheltered refuge boasting sandy beaches and a natural waterfall. Nice symmetry there, too – Riviera Marine began

Above: Brisk performance of 29.7 knots is available from standard 575hp Caterpillars.

Left: The 45 is also set up as a capable sports fisher.
life in the Pittwater suburb of Mona Vale and is now taking America by storm.

US INFLUENCE

The American influence is unmistakable in the current product. The hardtop, for instance, is slimmer and more streamlined in the US fashion, which, in turn, conveys a more open feel to the bridge. Similarly, the high cabin line gives abundant headroom in the saloon and engine room.

The 45 has its helm to port, whereas give-way rules dictate that the driver ideally needs clear vision to starboard. Aside from being 'left-hand-drive', the secondary benefits are that the portside saloon bulkhead gets an opening window and the icebox has unimpeded access.

After an impromptu feast, we dumped the mooring and headed for home. The wind had increased to 30 knots, yet the Riviera charged headlong into it at 25 knots, giving an apparent wind across the deck of 55 knots. There was barely the slightest shaking in the clear, and they remained bone dry, thanks to the chines shedding spray low and wide.

It's quite a trick for a full-boxed, high-volume hull to ride so well, but the weight distribution and electronic tabs did the trick. The cockpit floor became damp, yet the scuppers cleared all residual water — sportsfishermen will appreciate it when backing up, plus they get toe kicks under the coaming lockers and the option of a livewell.

Overall impression: A superb entertainer by day and comfortable family boat by night, all in the classic Riv mould — and at a handy size. A boat I'd truly consider buying if there was a spare mill floating about.

SPECIFICATIONS RIVIERA 45

| LOA: | 15.62m |
| Hull length: | 14.7m |
| Beam: | 4.8m |
| Draft: | 1.19m |
| Dry weight: | 17,850kg |
| Fuel: | 2,300 litres |
| Water: | 500 litres |
| Power: | 2 x 957hp/623kW diesels |
| Generator: | Onan EQD 11kW |
| Gearbox: | Twin Disc Quick Shift |
| Price: | $1,010,000 (as tested) |

Base price is $899,000, although once you add electronics, dishwasher, washer/dryer, bow thruster, clears, teak flooring, TV etc, the cost nudges seven digits. Cummins diesels add $37,000, while the C12s are $50,000 dearer.

It was a lousy day to be out, unless you're a turbo diesel, but precisely the sort of weather you can be caught in if when a weekend turns sour. To its eternal credit, the Riv turned the rough into the smooth, the wet to dry, the cold to warm. Bit like Queensland really — beautiful one day, perfect the next.