The master of Riviera's 43 Open Flybridge is well used both on the water and in the world of boat shows. And then, as I approached the boat, I noticed the sign: "Open for Excitement!"

The Riviera 43 Open Flybridge is an excellent example of Riviera's dedication to providing innovative and exciting designs. With its spacious living area and comfortable seating, this is a boat that is sure to make a lasting impression on anyone who steps aboard. Whether you're looking for a luxurious weekend retreat or a long-term cruising companion, the Riviera 43 Open Flybridge has everything you need to enjoy the open water in style.
boating, but these are a complete pain in the butt (to put it mildly) while fishing.

The second was the moulded cockpit. I can’t imagine any reader would disagree with my view about the importance of having your upper leg contact the side of a cockpit before your foot does. It’s why bluewater fishing boats have had overhanging covering boards around their cockpit periphery for generations. Securing your footing by locking your thighs under the overhanging is fundamental to comfort and safety while fishing at sea in any boat. Both hands are busy fishing, leaving nothing to hang on with when the boat moves unexpectedly.

I kept my thoughts to myself through a guided tour by the Riviera people, which very quickly revealed why this new model has been so well received. As a cruising/social/family boat, there is no doubt that it has a great deal to offer.

However, as BlueWater is tightly focused on fishing performance, it made the moulded cockpit and swim platform genuine concerns. After asking whether offshore sport and game fishing were seen as a serious role for the boat, and receiving an affirmative, it was time to discuss these anomalies. Neither of these concerns appeared especially difficult to deal with, as it turned out, they weren’t. The swim platform is an option theyconcluded non-fishing owners would consider, and adding overhanging timber covering boards (presumably in teak to match the deck) around the cockpit periphery wouldn’t be a problem either. We also agreed they’d actually make an already good-looking boat even better.

With that out of the way, we can now delve deeper.

**DESIGNED FOR IPS DRIVES**

Volvo Penta’s Inboard Performance System (better known as IPS — their version of the increasingly popular pod drive) is the only power option available for this boat.

Pod drives, like IPS and Mercury’s Zeus system, are rapidly achieving huge market acceptance and here we find another good reason why. IPS locates the engines much farther aft than conventional shaft drives do, and it leaves a substantial space amidships, which Riviera cleverly utilise with a spacious aft cabin set largely below the saloon.

In the bow, there’s the usual state room with a queen-size bed. It offers ample locker room, including a cedar-lined hanging space, and has a dedicated ensuite. This is all very nice, but whether you’d use it as the master stateroom becomes a very good question when the see shape of a bow stateroom is compounded to the sheer spaciousness of the aft (or more correctly amidships) one.

Admittedly, the ceiling in the aft stateroom is lower, although this is mainly above the bed — so the room doesn’t feel cramped. Large windows in the hull sides and a big skylight above the entrance from the saloon, supply plenty of daylight.
Above: The flybridge has its own wet bar and refrigerator, together with the lounge, will ensure the skipper always has company to enjoy the views while travelling.

Below: The entire cockpit deck conveniently runs on a hydraulic ram to enable easy access to the port of Volvo IPS 600 engines.

PORTABLE, FUTURISTIC 

with an LCD screen and touch pad beside the saloon door, this revolutionary system can operate, monitor every piece of electrical equipment and starboard. It talks the same language as Volvo’s IPS system, so engine parameters can be added to power supply, pumps, lights, entertainment and navigation electronics, refrigeration and climate control on C Zone’s ‘can do’ list. It’s also extensively programmable, allowing pre-set modes such as ‘safe at the dock’, ‘party lighting’ or ‘night-time fishing’ to be selected at the touch of a key pad. Wow! Saloon access from the cockpit is through a sliding glass door. To starboard in the cockpit, against the cabin bulkhead, there’s a comfortable lounge, which would be a great place to watch movies from. If this was my boat though, I’d prefer a tackle locker, freezer and rigging bench to occupy that space.

Above the lounge is a feature sure to win approval with the social set – a window opening out of the cabin. The bridge ladder is port and a while a bridge ladder is a bridge ladder, I thought this one notably easier than most to navigate – thanks to a sensible angle and big, chunky, step tread. You couldn’t quite call it a set of stairs, but I think it will keep those folks cautious about flybridge ladders very happy.

Speaking of the social set, our test boat had a flush-looking barbeque, centrally located in the transom moulding, beside a generous transom door. My (and your) thoughts are obvious here; this is where a livewell should go. Sure enough, replacing the barbeque with a livewell big enough for me to fish in is among Riviera’s options.

LEVITATING DECK!

Now, for something you don’t suspect until someone in the know shows you. The cockpit’s entire deck raises itself on a rams to reveal the dual of Volvo IPS 600s in all their glory. Anyone who has ever crammed into a tiny engine room to do fluid checks or carry out routine maintenance has to love having everything so easy to see and open to inspection; dipsticks, filters, drive belts – they are. However, that ‘sell-everything’ does present a concern for anyone intending to use a Riviera 43 Open Flybridge for heavy-tackle fishing.

As we all know, a heavy-tackle chassis applies considerable stress and strain to the deck, and that’s where the deck’s lifting mechanism comes into question.

For some buyers it would be a major drawback if a heavy-tackle chassis couldn’t be installed – as I was keen to hear what Riviera had to say about the matter. Alan Dowd soon provided the answer and again I quote: “If a game chair is to be fitted, the linear actuator needs to be upgraded to suit the additional weight on the floor. This is a custom option. All boats are laminated with an aluminium plate in the deck ready to fit a game chair base or table base. As the actuator is a fixed part that actually drives up and down, when the floor is down it is held in place by the actuator and hinges. In the case of a game chair being fitted, the larger actuator acts as a support strut directly below the chair base. The arrangement of the hinges, actuator connection to the hull and hatch, provides a triangulated hold for the floor.”

Upstairs, the so-called ‘open’ flybridge actually includes a moulded hatch and a full set of the very necessary covers, which are standard. Our test boat had a wet bar with refrigeration along the portside beside a moulded, lockable hatch closing off the ladder. Forward of the helm, a lounge with stowage underneath occupies most of the place.

Navigation and fish-finding duties in both test boat were taken care of by an integrated Raymarine package, displaying its wares on what, today, I suppose are the usual pair of 14-inch display screens in front of the helm. Raymarine’s suite included a 4kW radar and on ST30 360º Chartplotter, DSM-300 sounder and LP125 mapping GPS unit.

EFFORTLESS HANDLING

Out on the water, the 435hp Volvo IPS 600s will move the boat along effortlessly to a top speed around 31 knots, depending on load and sea conditions. Riviera claims a range of 340 nautical miles from the 1800 litre fuel capacity.

At speed, the IPS system’s electronic, variable-ratio power steering mode running the 43 Open Flybridge easy. We headed out through the Gold Coast Seaway and far enough east to see how she handled a mild, yet somewhat confused sea. She handled it as easily as if it were a boat a quarter the size. The boat’s motion at cruising speeds of around 25 knots was quite gentle and user friendly, too – although I didn’t get the opportunity to experience it under rougher conditions.

At low speeds within the confines of a marina, the IPS system’s joystick mode maneuvering into marina pons and fueling docks easier than playing a kids’ computer game. Volvo also offers an optional fishing mode with IPS. This allows more revs to be used than normally available on the joystick, greatly facilitating fish fighting and any other situation where more power becomes necessary for more radical moves than appropriate to a motorboat. Reflecting on Riviera’s 43 Open Flybridge, I had an uncharacteristic philosophic wandering, presuming, due to our returning to port to a tiny nose down. I was going to start so just because it is, or easily can be, a respectable Downriver fishing boat. As much as we observe fishing boats don’t like to admit, some of the best fun you can have in a boat doesn’t necessarily involve fishing at all – and that’s where this particular boat really shines. Sure it’s a fishing boat every bit as good on lots of other fishing classics. However, you’ll search long and hard among those boats to find one that will facilitate family and social boating, or be as comfortable a cruiser, as this one.

HIGHLIGHTS

Innovative amidships cabin configuration Extremely nice interior decor Great cruising/family/social boat that also fishes well