

A new era of openness

Riviera's new 43 Open Flybridge has already won plenty of friends since its launch just two months ago.



*the way people use their
boats is changing*



It doesn't always work when the best features are lifted from a number of existing models and incorporated into one single boat. But Riviera looks like it has pulled it off with the introduction of its new 43 Open Flybridge.

The team at Riviera has realised that the way people use their boats is changing. These days flybridge boats are not just used for fishing; they are now being used extensively for entertaining and long-distance cruising.

With the release of the 43 Open Flybridge, the Riviera design team says it has produced a boat which appeals to people who have previously owned sport yachts and flybridge boats, and even owners of smaller craft such as runabouts. First-time boat owners are also a target audience, says Riviera.

As most flybridge owners will tell you, the onboard systems can be complicated, especially figuring out the configuration of the engine

room, and for first-time owners it can be totally confusing and daunting.

The 43 Open Flybridge has the distinct lines of a Riviera, but inside the design approach is very different to the Rivieras most people have come to know. It is a totally new design and, with the simplicity of its operation, the vessel appears to be the ideal all-rounder. Features such as its Volvo Penta IPS pod drives, digital switching and other easy-to-use and understand systems help remove much of the mystique that can be associated with a flybridge boat.

STELLAR LAUNCH

The 43 was launched at this year's Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show and, according to long-time Riviera Director of Brand and Communications, Stephen Milne, it was the best launch of a new Riviera at a boat show ever.

Nine 43 Open Flybridges were sold at the show – the first sold on the first day within an hour of the show opening – and at the time of writing, orders had been received for a further four.

Using Volvo Penta's IPS powerplants has allowed Riviera's New Product Design Manager, Alan Dowd to create a fuel-efficient, high-performance running surface around them. The Volvo Penta 600s are mounted well aft under the cockpit and the whole cockpit floor lifts up electrically to reveal a very neat and easy-to-get-around engine bay. There are no complicated manifolds or wiring and the only thing an owner would need to check before a day's outing would be the fuel, engine oil and battery levels, which are all easy to get at.

Just inside the cabin door is the digital switchboard. The CZone system controls all onboard electrics with just five individual mode switches that are all preset. For example, in the Night Cruise mode the running lights come on, the cabin lights dim and the TV and stereo are all preset. Similarly, in the Dock Unattended mode, everything is shut down except the bilge pumps – it's all that simple.

There is also a slave upstairs at the helm station; gone are the days when the skipper sends his wife or partner down to switch something on or off on the switchboard, where they are confronted by a complicated plethora of circuit breaker switches and labels.

Engine access for the Volvo Penta IPS pod drives is as easy as pushing a button to raise the cockpit floor.



Traditionally, Riviera flybridge models had a separate raised dining area and main cabin. Riviera has learned a lot from its sport yachts, on which people can open up the cabin to create one large and uninterrupted space in combination with the cockpit. So, on the 43 the rear cabin window lifts up to open up the entire cabin to the cockpit – all on the one level. It brings the outside in or the inside out, whichever you prefer.

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The main cabin is compact and boasts rosewood and high-gloss cherry timber cabinetry and, as is now the norm, there are large, all-round picture windows.

The large dining table seats six, with a U-shaped lounge on one side and two individual lounge chairs that slide across to the table. A storage locker that can be used for rods – or anything else for that matter – drops down from the ceiling, while up front opposite the galley, where there is normally void space, there is a large 'glovebox'.

Although the galley is down a step, it is still part of the main cabin. There is plenty of storage; a removable storage bin is located under the galley floor, plates and cups have their own racks, there's a spice rack, slide-out rubbish bin, dishwasher, fridge, microwave, cutting board and something a lot of powerboat manufacturers forget – yacht-style fiddles on the two-burner



Opposite: Plenty of natural light flows into the main cabin.

Opposite bottom: The forward cabin is likely to act as the master suite due to its superior head room and hanging spaces.

Below: The expansive aft cabin boasts sleeping room for three, plus its own ensuite.



stove. The fiddles hold pots and pans and stop them sliding around in a moving sea.

The 43 has a two-cabin, two-bathroom layout. The aft cabin can sleep three, courtesy of one single and one double bunk, although it doesn't have the headroom of the forward cabin, which the owners would probably choose as their own, with its walk-around, queen-size bed and cedar-lined hanging robe. The bathrooms are big, with frameless glass doors on the shower stalls.

STAIR-LADDER

The flybridge is accessed from the cockpit by what Riviera calls a 'stair-ladder'. As the name suggests,

it's half ladder, half staircase, but it is a big improvement on the traditional flybridge ladder.

The 43 has a new hardtop design that provides a 360-degree view and hand-holds in all the right spots. Instead of being flat, the new hardtop has a sweeping sheer and more depth to give it a very distinctive look. And before some of those diehard game fishermen in Florida get uptight about not being able to put a tower on anything but a flat hardtop, one keen offshore fisherman from Tasmania is doing just that with his new 43.

The helm station is set aft on the flybridge, with two swivel helm seats. The dash has an



automotive look and it, too, has a glovebox for odds and ends that opens forward. Raymarine E120 screens are standard, but there is space for two E140s. The control levers come to hand easily and the autopilot can be switched on or off without having to get out of the helm seat.

The IPS joystick is set on the left-hand side of the dash, so the operator can stand in the middle of the boat and have a good view of the corners when docking ... and we don't need to tell you how easy that is with IPS.

There's the usual wet bar with fridge and a small dinette in front of the helm station to complete what is a neat set-up. With the clears in place and the warm tones of the soft furnishings, the flybridge has a sports car feel about it.

SMOOTH RUNNING

I have always been an advocate of IPS drives, ever since I drove Volvo Penta's prototype in Sweden some years ago. The combination of the pod drives and Riviera's hull design makes this a very smooth running boat. It comes onto the plane seamlessly and runs without the need for trim tabs. Bennett tabs were fitted and they would probably come in handy in a heavy seaway to either drop the bow a little or raise it when riding the back of a wave over a bar.

On the day of the test, the Gold Coast Seaway had a few lumps in it and, on one occasion, as I waited for the thump when we came off the



I just sat there hands off and enjoyed the ride


back of the swell, I was pleasantly surprised – it didn't happen and the landing was soft. Outside, the sea was as flat as a tack and in these conditions the boat tracked as straight as a die at 14 knots (26km/h), without any helm correction

and, more importantly, the wake it was leaving was remarkably small for a 43-footer. I just sat there hands off and enjoyed the ride.

At 10 knots (18.5km/h) cruising speed, the 43 is using a total of 42lt/hr; the test boat was fitted with an optional 300lt fuel tank amidships which gives the boat a range of around 450nm (830km) using 90 per cent of the 2100lt of available fuel. How economical is that?

Push the controls to the stops and the speed jumps up to 30.4 knots (56km/h) at max revs of 3630rpm. At this pace, the fuel economy drops to 167lt/hr total and the range down to 344nm (640km). But there is no need to push the boat that hard for very long.

After safely docking at Runaway Bay Marina using the joystick, it was time to say goodbye. As is normal with all Rivieras, I went to lift up the gunwale section over the transom door to step out onto the swim platform. But it didn't want to lift up. Was it stuck? Then I worked it out; this was a new feature I'd missed. This section is an integral part of the door and folds down onto the front of the door, so the whole lot swings out of the way and is held in place by the standard catch on the transom – nifty.

The 43 Open Flybridge is a welcoming boat that is very liveable and heralds a new approach and new era for Riviera that will progress into some other innovative concepts and designs – and the boating fraternity will be the winner. 

SPECIFICATIONS: RIVIERA 43 OPEN FLYBRIDGE

Length overall:	14.46m
Length of hull:	13.61m
Draft (incl props):	1.13m
Beam:	4.576m
Dry weight (approx):	14,200kg
Fuel capacity:	1800lt (optional 300lt long-range tank)
Water capacity:	460lt
Holding tank capacity:	151lt
Generator:	Onan EQD 11kW
Sleeping capacity:	6-7 persons
Price:	base \$812,000 (\$955,000 as tested)

For more information, tel (07) 5502 5555, or go to: www.riviera.com.au.



The flybridge has an almost sports car feel to it and offers excellent visibility fore and aft.