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# RIVIERA

## TO THE POWER OF TEN

A decade into new ownership, Australian brand Riviera continues to go from strength to strength. The just-released 78 Motor Yacht is the latest emphatic statement from the Gold Coast yard, and **Hillary Buckman** just happened to be there when the veil was lifted for the first time.

It has been ten years almost to the day since Australia's largest luxury motor yacht boatbuilder was pulled from the uncertainty of receivership by Longhurst Marine Holdings – perhaps the most fateful (or fortuitous) day in the yard's 42-year history. It has certainly come a long way since its humble beginnings in Sydney in 1980 (the fledgling builder relocated to the Gold Coast in 1981) and its very first 38 MKI model, which now boasts over 5,800 yachts around the world.

There's no question the steady hand of Rodney Longhurst – a family man, boating enthusiast and experienced entrepreneur – has had a profound impact. His no-big-risk, no-rush approach has not only brought the brand back to full strength with enviable

stability, it has also bolstered Riviera's presence in international markets by stepping up the quality and diversity of the Riviera fleet.

"We're focused on being specialists in our model size range from 39 to 78 feet across five distinct collections, and that is where Riviera is very strong," begins Longhurst.

"Twenty years ago, our largest motor yacht in production was the 48 Flybridge and the smallest a 3000. Since then, we've seen the trend move toward larger motor yachts, which is due to the significant advances in design and technology across our range."

Riviera's complete package from design to customer care has led to greater ease of use, says Longhurst, which helps Riviera owners become better boaters.

**Above: Riviera's state-of-the-art production facility at Coomera on the Gold Coast is the largest of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere, producing 24 models ranging from 39 to 78 feet.**





Of course, on larger motor yachts, you can accommodate more people in greater space and luxury, too. “Our facility is capable of building even larger motor yachts,” he teases, “but we’re focusing on our existing size range of premium motor yachts.”

Walking along the marina dock at Riviera’s state-of-the-art Coomera facility, you can’t help but be impressed with the quality of the yachts moored there, from a 395 SUV to a 72 Sports Motor Yacht, all undergoing final quality checks before delivery to excited new owners.

However, on *Ocean’s* visit in early March, among all the gleaming yachts moored

alongside each other, one yacht stood out. A significant step for Riviera, and a significant statement of the Longhurst decade, it was Riviera’s new flagship, the 78 Motor Yacht. She’s something completely new in Riviera’s collection, but more on her later.

This expansion of the Riviera range coupled with accelerating global demand – not to mention recent supply chain issues off the back of the pandemic – can be a tricky thing to manage. Still, Longhurst and Chief Executive Officer Wes Moxey are confident the Riviera vision is right for today and into the future.

“While we have significant demand across our expansive range, we’re making sure we are

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welcoming new and long-term owners to the Riviera family,” Longhurst reassures. “We are always reviewing and improving efficiencies and processes across all our operations. The current capital works program is scaling up our on-site facilities to handle today’s Riviera motor yachts, some of which are considerably larger than a decade ago.”

**Above: March 2022 marks the ten-year anniversary of Riviera under the stewardship of Rodney Longhurst. Family time with wife Ulrike and sons Jonas, Samuel and Bennett aboard their Riviera gives him a keen appreciation of what owners want.**

**Below: A key part of owning a Riviera is the opportunity for cruises and to rendezvous with the Riviera fleet at spectacular locations.**

Longhurst confirms they are nearing completion of their new Lamination Centre, the largest building on the 16.8-hectare Coomera site that will, he says, deliver a state-of-the-art centre of excellence for creating larger motor yachts. The yard is also making significant investments in advanced and robotic machinery to further enhance efficiency and quality, but it’s not all about the tech.

“The scale of our investment in people is hugely important, and we are constantly training and up-skilling our ever-growing workforce, now 900 strong. We’re also continually growing our team through our award-winning training and apprenticeship program. As we scale up, we are doing so appropriately to allow us to achieve the high-quality parameters we set for ourselves with every motor yacht we build,” he confirms.

Riviera yachts are increasingly finding their way overseas, with currently around 60 percent of each year’s production destined for international owners. Riviera makes a point of gleaning feedback from owners and its network of representatives to inform design iterations and improvements. “Understanding what people want to see us introduce in the future is part of our commitment to constant refinement,” Longhurst says, “and our passion for creating extraordinary motor yachts that provide our owners with the ultimate boating experience.”

The new 78 is perhaps a timely example of that drive. “It’s absolutely built on the designs of the best of Riviera,” Longhurst enthuses. “She has DNA from the 68 and 72 Sports Motor Yacht with some shared design and engineering. This well-proven path provides us with absolute confidence in the 78 Motor Yacht. She incorporates new thinking and design, underpinned by proven foundations.”

The 78 also marks the first collaboration with Italian designer Luca Vallebona, who Longhurst, Moxey and the senior Riviera team got to know over several years. “He has reviewed and provided input to many of our current designs,” says Longhurst.

“Our relationship is built on respect and understanding of what’s needed to steer Riviera’s course to the next level. Luca offers a fresh set of eyes from a designer with extreme creative talent, and he also mixes in superyacht circles – this brings in some interesting design elements and innovative thinking for motor yachts our size.”

Vallebona has brought his experience to bear in spades. “At the beginning of our collaboration, I had many conversations with Rodney and Wes to help me understand the Riviera philosophy and what was required,” he says.



**Above: A recent \$10-million expansion of Riviera’s 14-hectare site includes a new Lamination Centre and the installation of new CNC and laser-cutting equipment.**

**Left: Each boat is comprised of many thousands of individual parts precisely cut to shape.**

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“My brief was to ensure the design of the 78 Motor Yacht maintains a strong sense of Riviera styling. She must look like a Riviera while still creating something new and different. We decided to do something contemporary but not the showroom styling you see, especially in some European designs.”

Stepping aboard, the swim platform provides the first impression of something special, and it’s an impression that doesn’t diminish as you tour the yacht.

There’s a full-height engine room, a single-level saloon that stretches from cockpit to windscreen as one coherent space; a huge

upper entertainment deck; a full-beam master amidships below and a VIP and two guest twin/doubles too.

“The main deck is always special in a Riviera and is probably one of the elements that gives Riviera a significant advantage. You see this in the alfresco decks of the Sport Motor Yachts and SUVs,” Vallebona enthuses.

“Going forward from the aft deck to the interior of the 78 is an incredible space. We worked hard as a team to find the right balance in the interior design and achieved a really good outcome. We introduced new concepts and they look superb. What I loved in this project,” he adds, “is the way we are mixing our different cultures – the Australian and the Italian.”

It all leads to whether this collaboration is a conscious decision to increase appeal to a European market, but Longhurst counters with typical worldliness. “While Riviera’s popularity in Europe is growing,” he says, “we believe the 78 offers universal appeal to motor yacht owners seeking a Riviera experience on a grand scale.”







**Left:** The new flagship 78 Motor Yacht is capable of cruising with eight people for more than 1,000 miles with a top speed of around 30 knots.

**Below:** Riviera's uncompromising commitment to excellence permeates the 78 Motor Yacht, from the superb joinery and finishes to the top-quality engineering.



Few would disagree – and indeed, early sales numbers prove Longhurst correct. “The 78 has been so enthusiastically received that availability is out several years, demonstrating the trust existing owners have in Riviera. We have expanded our team to reduce the build times for the 78,” Longhurst offers.

That said, Longhurst points out that advances in the 78's engineering and performance will make their way into future motor yacht development. “It's something we've been pursuing vigorously over the past ten years,” he concludes. “The next generation of yachts will always be driven by a collaboration of our vision and the wish list from our experienced owners.”

It's easy to forget that it has only been a decade since Riviera found its future. In a statement at the time of the acquisition in March 2012, Longhurst said: “Throughout this unprecedented cycle, the Riviera brand has retained its integrity and defied industry trends.”

Only a fool would suggest that ten years on that statement doesn't still ring true. As for the 78, well – you'll just have to wait until the next issue of *Ocean* to peer into all her secrets. [O.rivieraaustralia.com](http://O.rivieraaustralia.com)

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