



Riviera 43 Open Flybridge

TRADITIONAL TOUGHNESS AND SOPHISTICATED ENGINEERING COMBINED

BY ROGER MCAFEE

RIVIERA HAS BEEN BUILDING BOATS in Australia since 1980 and began exporting them to the U.S. in 1983. In 1985, Riviera exported its first vessel to Europe, and by 1990 the company had launched its 1,000th vessel. The company, which now builds boats in the 33- to 70-foot range, has, in the past 10 years, been the recipient of numerous boating and environmental awards, including, in 2008, the Australian Boat of the Year, as judged by the Boating Industry Association of New South Wales.

While the builder was hit hard by the recession, it recently emerged from bankruptcy as a going concern. The Australian court order related to Riviera's emergence from bankruptcy has been confirmed by the U.S. courts, so it is operating as a going concern in North America.

The newest offering, the Riviera 43 Open Flybridge, completes the company's evolution from a builder of capable, rough, rugged open-ocean

sportfishers paying lip service to the cruising boater to a builder of sophisticated cruising vessels that can still perform well as open-ocean sportfishers.

We tested the new 43 in the Atlantic Ocean, just off Ft. Lauderdale, the day after the Ft. Lauderdale International Boat Show. The boat was displayed in the show and likely had hundreds of people tromp through it, yet it looked pristine — a tribute to the finishes

selected by the builder. Every latch and hinge on every door and drawer worked flawlessly, and since I arrived a bit early for the test, there was plenty of time to check every one of them.

The vessel's exterior finish is excellent, with gelcoat showing a high shine without a hint of hazing anywhere. The cockpit floors and the deck have molded-in nonskid surfaces, and the cockpit itself didn't show the slightest sign of wear and tear, even after five days of boat show punishment.

Access to the cockpit is through a transom door off the swim step, or over port and starboard gunnels. The cockpit sole, as one would expect from a builder steeped in ocean sportfishing, is uncluttered and ready to accept either fighting chairs or loungers. The cockpit sole hinges open to allow machinery

service. For cruisers, an outdoor barbecue is available, built into the transom and covered with a hinged lid, so as to not interfere with fishing.

INTERIOR SPACES

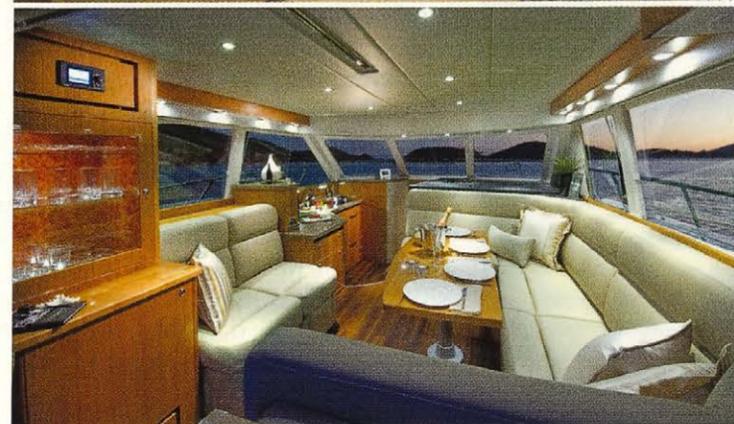
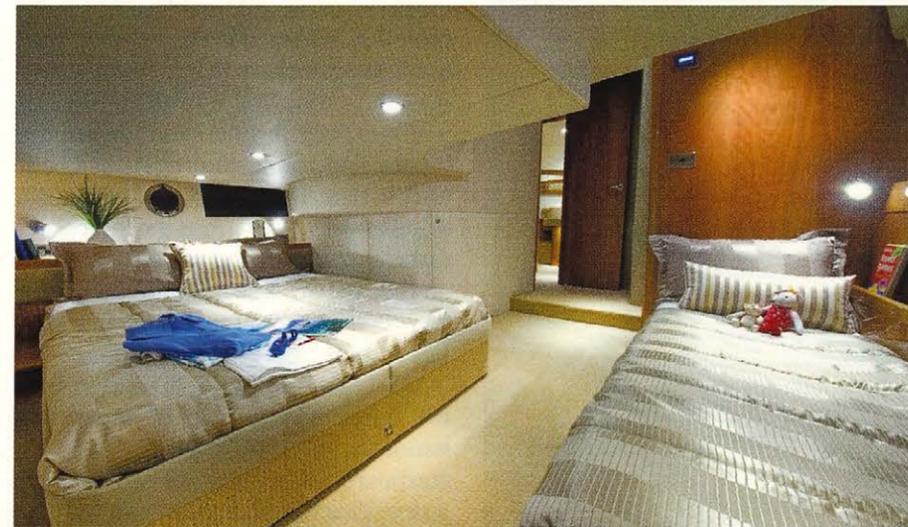
A set of polished, stainless steel framed sliding glass doors provides entry to the bright and airy salon. The brightness comes thanks to a huge expanse of glass, which wraps around the windscreen area and back to near the aft end of the salon on both sides. This, combined with what is almost a solid glass aft salon bulkhead, floods the vessel with light. Even on a dull day, there would be plenty of interior light.

The interior of the 43 has more usable salon living space than other vessels of the same size, because there is no interior helm station. The vessel is operated and controlled from the flybridge. To starboard is a comfortable leather-covered U-shaped dinette, complete with a pedestal high-low table. There is plenty of settee space around the table for a half-dozen guests. To port upon entering the salon is a wood-finished bar and entertainment center, complete with a back-lit, glass-door hutch. Forward of that, directly across from the settee, looking like a two-seat sofa, is a pair of chairs that can be pulled separately and become two more dining chairs.

The galley — with a sea rail system along the back splash and a solid countertop complete with a molded lip to confine spills to the counter — is located forward of the port-side sofa and down a step. It is clear Riviera's designers are also boaters. The sea rail and countertop lip establish that, but the location of the dish storage cements it. All routinely used dishes, including cups and saucers, are stowed in a drawer below the galley counter and fitted into a custom insert that holds them securely as the boat bashes through a running sea.

Accommodations are down and forward of the galley. The traditional queen master is in the forecabin. There is plenty of storage, including a cedar-lined hanging locker and an en suite head, complete with a separate shower stall. The real surprise, however, is the

An Inside Look



TESTER'S OPINION
"This new Riviera 43 Open Flybridge, while not forgetting the traditional toughness demanded by serious sportfishermen, is a very sophisticated and well-engineered cruiser."



With no interior helm station, the 43 has more salon space than other vessels of the same size. The mid-cabin stateroom (top) has lots of room, too.



Riviera 43 Open Flybridge



SPECIFICATIONS

LOA (swim platform to bow roller tip)	47 ft., 5 in.
Beam	14 ft., 10 in.
Draft	3 ft., 11 in.
Dry weight	32,100 lbs.
Fuel	476 gals.
Water	122 gals.
Holding tank	40 gals.
Engines	Twin Volvo IPS 600, 435 hp

CONSTRUCTION

The hull and deck construction is solid hand-laid fiberglass below the waterline and core materials in the hull topsides and superstructure.

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Twin 435-hp Volvo Penta IPS 600 diesel pod drives, 9.5 kw Onan genset, Racor fuel-water separators, Volvo Penta electronic steering, stereo/CD player w/iPod capability, fresh- and saltwater cockpit washdowns, emergency bilge pump, two insulated fishboxes w/pumpouts, top-loading freezer, anchor winch, tackle locker under cockpit sink, 45-lb. anchor w/180 feet galvanized chain, spotlight, battery chargers, digital systems monitoring system, IPS joystick control, air conditioner, remote fuel shut-off valves and more.

OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT

FRP hardtop, flybridge enclosure, teak cockpit and mezzanine, rod holders, dishwasher, 32-in. LCD high-low TV in salon and more. See dealer for full list of options.

BUILDER

RIVIERA, Coomera, Queensland, Australia;
riviera.com.au

WEST COAST DEALERS

Emerald Pacific Yachts, San Diego; (619) 497-2993; epyachts.com

Emerald Pacific Yachts, Seattle; (206) 587-0660; epyachts.com

Van Isle Marina Yacht Sales, Sidney, B.C.; (250) 656-1138; vanislemarina.com

mid-cabin stateroom.

Volvo IPS pod drives, being so closely coupled to the twin 435 hp engines, allow all machinery to be mounted farther aft in the hull than with a traditional shaft drive, and Riviera designers took full advantage of that feature. They have created one of the largest mid-cabin staterooms in a boat of this size. The stateroom, under the salon and accessed from the forecabin, features a queen bed to starboard and a single to port. Except for directly over the beds, the stateroom has full headroom.

Mid-cabin staterooms tend to be a bit dark, but a pair of large hull windows, one to port and one to starboard, allow plenty of light into the space. That method of naturally lighting a cabin placed in what used to be the engine room is not unique to Riviera. However, the builder designed an elegantly simple system to allow natural light into the room from overhead. In the flat, horizontal space that would be part of the dash if the vessel had an inside helm station, under the sloping windscreen, Riviera installed a window so that light coming in through the windshield floods the cabin below. The window is protected by bars in case anything falls on it.

Fit and finish throughout the vessel is excellent, and the soft pieces are well stitched and comfortable. All surfaces wipe clean quickly and easily, and the overall feeling on board, while at the dock, gives one the impression of being on a much larger boat. All cabinet wood finishes are light colored, adding to the open, airy feeling. All of the stainless on board is well finished and properly welded, a feature Riviervas are becoming known for.

PERFORMANCE

We fired up the Volvo IPS 600s and our decibel meter at the same time and noted a noise level of 67 decibels. A normal conversation is 70. A low interior noise level is another benefit of the IPS drive, since all machinery is located under the cockpit. Throughout our test, the noise level remained lower than in a similar boat with a standard shaft drive.

The Riviera staffer at the helm, with a twist of the joystick, eased away from

the dock and started down the no-wake fairway to open water. Visibility from the flybridge was superb. At no-wake speed, the vessel responded quickly and precisely to the helm. The helm station itself is located to the aft of the flybridge, so the helmsman can look over his shoulder or partially turn in his pivoting helm seat and see what's happening in the cockpit — a must for any offshore sportfishing boat.

At 1000 rpm, we made 5.5 knots and burned 1.9 gph. We upped the rpm to 1500 and burned 5.1 gph at 7.5 knots. At 10.7 knots, the twin Volvos were at 2000 rpm, and we burned 12.0 gph. When we jumped to 15.5 knots, we burned 19 gph at 2500 rpm. At 22 knots, the engines ran at 3000 rpm and we burned 26 gph. Wide-open throttle, 3500 rpm, brought us to 28 knots and 44 gph.

All speeds were GPS measured, and fuel-consumption figures came from the engine computers. During our tests, we ran with full tanks and five people on board. The wind was about 20 knots, and we had a 4- to 5-foot running sea. We ran into a head sea at full speed, put the waves on the stern and on the beam, and concluded that the Riviera had not lost any of its traditional high-speed open-ocean capability as it morphed from an open-ocean sportfisher to something with more cruiser comforts.

The flybridge itself is well laid out, with comfortable seating for at least six guests, a table, a wet bar, a refrigerator and plenty of storage.

On our return to the dock, the helmsman took the way completely off, cranked the helm all the way over and, keeping it there, slowly accelerated to full throttle. There was no cavitation, skipping or shuddering. In other words it was a non-event. Just the way it should be.

This Riviera 43 Open Flybridge, while not forgetting the traditional toughness demanded by serious sportfishermen, is a very sophisticated and well-engineered cruiser. The interior layout, including the expansive mid-cabin, is very clever, and the fit and finish throughout is as good as on any yacht in the market segment. Visibility is excellent, and there's plenty of room for entertaining, both inside and out. ♡