

FLYING START

The new 43 is the vanguard for a whole new line of purpose-designed, pod-driven Riviera flybridge cruisers.

DAVID LOCKWOOD takes the reins



... the wonderfully oversized cockpit — deeper than a Riv' 47 — is something that Australian boaters will embrace



New teak ladder improve access to the flybridge, itself a capsule of clever design.



As with most things in life, boatbuilders live and die by their mistakes. But it's not as black and white as you might think. In a fickle market like this, designers are torn between sticking with their knitting and producing safe designs, or thinking outside the square. Eventually, however, no amount of playing it safe will delay the eventual need to invest in new-product development, to embrace the latest technology and, ultimately, inspire that market with a new-generation boat.

At face value, the designers behind Riviera's new 43 Open Flybridge appear to have built an evolutionary boat after having consulted their text books titled *Hits & Misses* and *Customer Feedback*. But step aboard and you'll discover a truly

revolutionary cruiser configured to carry Riviera's steady-as-she-goes offshore flybridge range into the future. Externally she's a modernised Riv, but internally she's something even more refreshing and, yes, inspiring.

Unlike the conventional shaft-driven Rivs that many of us are driving these days, the 43 is the first flybridge model — a vanguard for the Queensland yard — designed from the keel up for a pair of Volvo Penta's revolutionary IPS pod drives. The 51 with triple IPS that we tested a few issues back was an existing boat with pod-drive technology applied retrospectively.

As such, the 43 is a much smarter design that maximises the space gains from IPS or pod drives. It also looks the part in optional metallic Tungsten Silver livery that extends

from the hull sides to the flybridge dash panel. And there's a subtle but contemporary tweak and rake to the windscreen. The sum of all these parts results in a really pretty boat.

NEW HULL

Despite assumptions that the 43 is a reworking of an existing boat, the collaboration with Volvo Penta began at the start of 2009. And despite carrying the same beam as the 41, the hull is said to be an altogether new one in keeping with IPS demands for a smooth bottom — no prop pockets and no keel — and a measured amount of deadrise, which averages 17 degrees from midships to transom, and 15 degrees at the tail, which is quite deeply vee'd.

Of course, IPS is short for Inboard Performance System comprising rear-mounted twin diesel engines

coupled to independently articulating or steerable underwater drives with forward-facing propellers. With a joystick docking device and fly-by-wire technology, you can dock the boat intuitively by tweaking that joystick. But improved efficiency is the greatest gain.

Volvo Penta claims up to 30 per cent better fuel consumption than conventional shaft drives. On this 43, hull number one, it's more like 10 per cent compared with the Riviera 41, say boat number 46, which had a similar spread of gear and options. So there's room for improvement in future boats. We'll get to that.

The engines driving the 43, dubbed IPS 600s, use D6 donks producing just 435hp per side. This is modest power, since Riviera's 41 tested by yours truly in April 2007 had a pair of Caterpillar C7 460hp engines, and

The Riv' 43 is a new hull built specifically for the IPS pod drives.



the 41 is almost half a metre shorter in respect of moulded hull length. Interestingly, the 4.57m beam of the 43, which is the same beam as the 41, is a tad narrower than the old 40 of which 288 were sold. So the 43 is a lean machine.

As touched on, there is no deadwood keel. Instead, the 43 hull has a smooth running surface to ensure clean water over those forward-facing IPS props. Volvo Penta says the running surface was extended to provide support for the

diesel engines that, in pod-driven installations, are mounted back aft under the cockpit floor instead of forward under the saloon. Extra effort has gone into making sure the engine room remains watertight, too, with a new type of silicon seal without memory.

TRIED AND TESTED ENGINEERING

Engine access is via a push-button-lift cockpit floor and it's just brilliant. There's also a separate hatch into the adjoining utility space, with oodles of room around the generator.

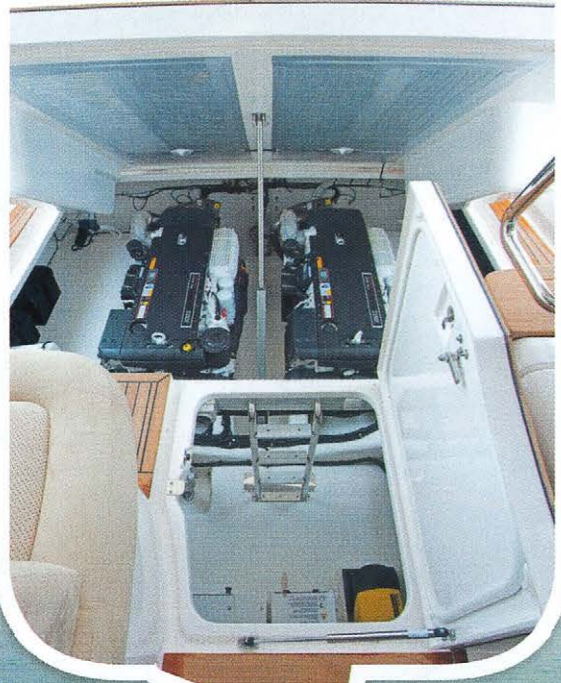
I noted a Delta T venting system with washable membrane, heavy-duty sea strainer for the generator — the engine pickups have internal grills in the pods — Racor fuel filters forward for the transverse tank on the centreline, and wing water tanks. The water gauge is part of the boat's so-called C-Zone (CAN-bus) digital electrical 24/240V system, but I'd have a second gauge in the galley as well.

The Victron charger has a 650W inverter for the AV



The cockpit is wonderfully oversized, and taking centre stages is the suitably appointed optional barbecue module with sink.

At the push of a button the cockpit sole rises for servicing the two Volvo Penta turbo-diesels.



Indeed, there's a lot to like about the 43 and it's a fitting flag bearer in the age of pod drives



Sport performance guaranteed. IPS pod drives raise manoeuvrability to new heights.



Flush-fitting and easy-clean galley, top, features a dedicated crockery drawer, inset, and convection microwave oven.



Fully loaded galley is down a step but does sweep back into the saloon for ideal entertaining.



system but upgrade it to a 1800W inverter and you can run the microwave oven and powerpoints for boiling a kettle, charging your laptops and so on, without needing the generator. An engineroom camera, feeding back through the Raymarine electronics package, and gurney with bow fitting were among the options fitted. You will want a tender and perhaps a watermaker, too.

With the rear-mounted engines under the cockpit rather than saloon floor, the 43 is also a quieter cruiser than its shaft-driven sister ships, something apparent when you're

cruising indoors. Who does that? If not travelling in the flying bridge, the family will find it pleasant enough reeling in the sea miles in the saloon. Either way, the common-rail fuel injection system on the D6 engines ensures there's not whiff of diesel smoke. And there was no back spray as per the dreaded station-wagon effect.

OUTDOOR IMPROVEMENTS

While such things add to the driving pleasure, a big improvement to my eyes was the reduction in the number of stainless steel supports

and framework that hold up the newly styled hardtop. As such, the sight lines are unfettered from the flybridge helm over the bow or back down to the cockpit. Indeed, the 43 would make an excellent gamefishing boat and we're told one is heading for Tasmania equipped for the purpose.

For family boating, a new wide-tread ladder — similar to that on the 47 Enclosed — makes accessing the bridge a breeze, while a new leather-topped dash includes storage space for personal effects and room to accept the latest wide-screen electronics. As with

[HIGHS]

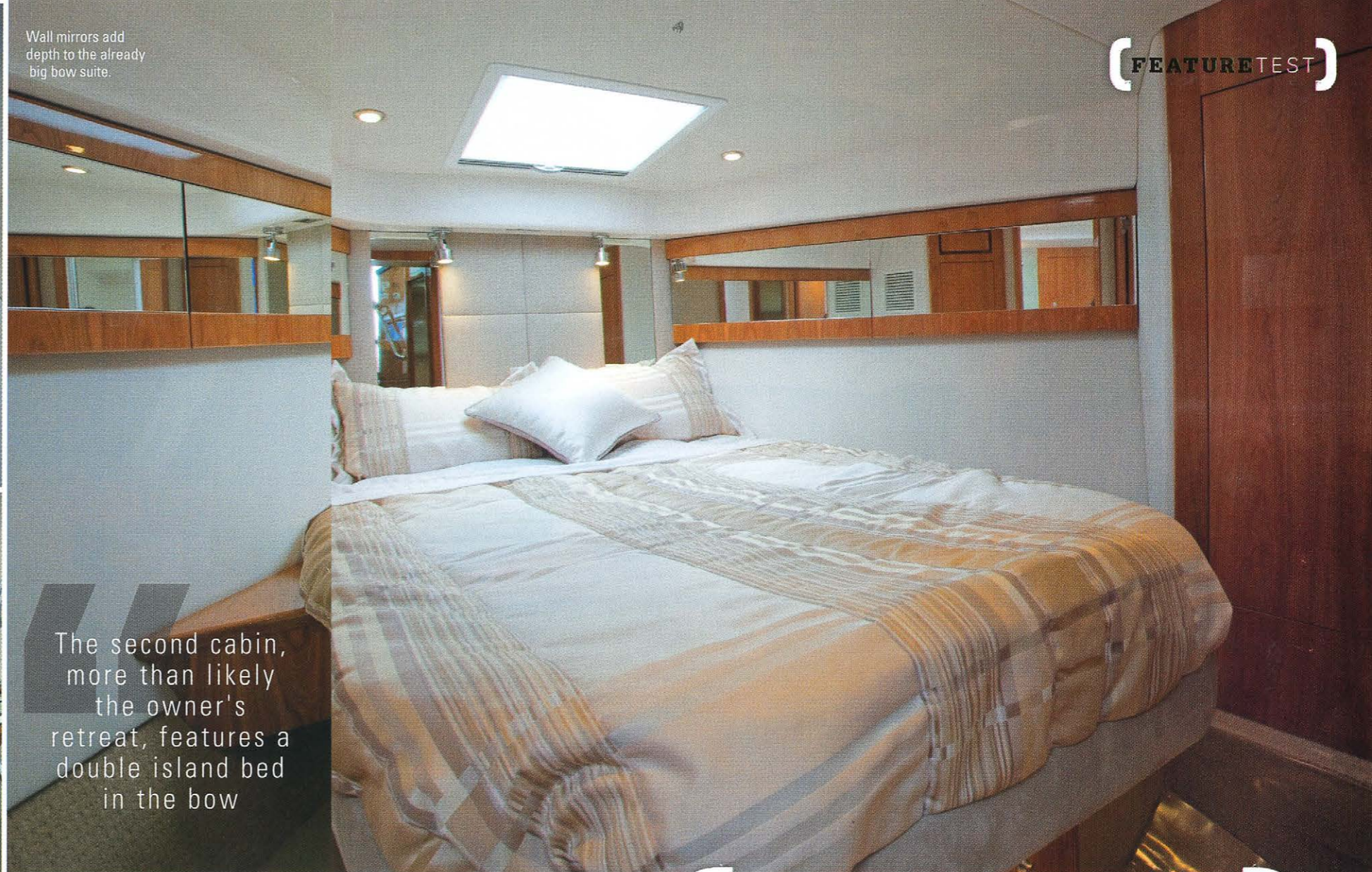
- › Reintroduces the wow factor and trumpets a new breed of exciting Riviera flybridge cruisers
- › IPS lift this flybridge to new heights, especially in manoeuvrability
- › Huge cockpit is a perfect stage
- › Innovation abounds
- › Fit and finish are five-star
- › The trim angle and power match produce a sweet-running 43

[LOWS]

- › Aft-cabin bunk mattresses a tad thin
- › Performance improvements will come from bigger props and less weight in the boat
- › Boat fell over in a few troughs
- › Only time will tell how waterproof the cockpit hatch seal is for the engineroom
- › Big ticket item, but you get what you pay for



Space saving pod drives allow for the inclusion of a full-width aft cabin.



The second cabin, more than likely the owner's retreat, features a double island bed in the bow



One of two opposing twin bathrooms.

all good flybridge boats, there's a fridge, a sink with solid-surface counter as per bigger enclosed-bridge Rivs, and the L-shaped lounge upholstered in man-made suede can be optioned as a double 'cruising' bed. The Pompanette helm chairs are sufficiently high-backed to be supportive. Back down on deck, options include a submersible boarding platform that can carry a tender and there's provision for a 300kg davit on the bow. The non-skid is the easy-fix dot pattern type, there are requisite swim platform and hot-cold shower, but the cockpit amenities centre is something else again. In place of a livebait tank was an optional hot-rock 240V barbie, sink surrounded by solid-surface counter, hatch to a garbage bin, and storage space.

LED lights lessen the DC demands at night. However, the rear-mounted IPS engines do swallow up a lot of valuable storage space, in effect the lazarette, on conventional shaft-driven Rivs. You still get a decent eutectic fridge/freezer moulded in under the ladder, side pockets, two underfloor bins with gulper pumps, and there are big tackle drawers under the mezzanine-level outdoor lounge, which has a stereo remote alongside. But you'll have to carry the crab traps on deck and think about where you put the deflated water toys. That said, the wonderfully oversized cockpit — deeper than a Riv' 47 — is something that Australian boaters will embrace. The aft-facing outdoor lounge on a mezzanine level hard

FASTFACTS

- ▶ The 43 is Riviera's first flybridge cruiser purpose-designed for IPS or pod drives.
- ▶ The boat's commodious cockpit will endear the 43 to serious fishers and outdoor entertainers. WA boaters will jump aboard.
- ▶ Mezzanine cockpit seating is a real plus on the 43 — the lounge is the best seat in the house or boat.
- ▶ Cruise of 23kts or 26kts gives the same 342nm range, based on 90 per cent of the 1800lt plus optional 300lt long-range fuel supply.
- ▶ The full-beam aft cabin is a first for a Riv' flybridge thanks again to IPS.
- ▶ The 43 is the new best-selling Riviera — "I can't remember when we last sold 11 brand-new models straight off the bat... it would have been back in the boom days," said Stephen Milne, Director of Marketing.



Early strong sales suggest the Riv' 43 with IPS will be a ubiquitous sight on Australian waters.

up against the saloon bulkhead is brilliant. Borrowing from the success of its Sport Yachts with their single-level indoor/outdoor entertaining decks, Riviera's new 43 has a hopper or awning window that swings open to create one big, flowing living area from cockpit to saloon. Open plan is the mantra — something not often attributed to flybridge cruisers.

INSIDE LIVING

Rousing views surround the interior saloon seating headed by a giant C-shaped lounge to starboard that can be optioned as a convertible double bed. As it is, it's a great daybed, a perfect solution to seating, and the high-backed lounges are wonderfully supportive. The twin tub chairs opposite can slide or roll across to create a serious dining setting for six or more. And with a fully loaded galley befitting of a 50-footer sweeping back into the

saloon, you can entertain with ease. Astute seafarers will note the fiddle rails surrounded flat surfaces and the generous buffet-ready bench space. Amenities run from a dishwasher to a convection microwave oven, drawer-style fridge and freezer, to cooktop with potholders, and pot-storage space. But lift the floor hatch and, as ever, extensive storage exists below the floor and in a number of lift-out tubs. The mounting space for the optional washer/dryer is here, too. Oh, and there's a storage hatch in the ceiling for rods, cushions, and so on.

In respect of accommodation, the Riviera 43 can sleep up to seven people if you must, but it gains from its aft engine IPS installation in a mighty way. Although there isn't full headroom, the aft cabin is full width — quite an achievement on a boat of this calibre — with a transverse double bed that can be

split into singles without much fuss, and a single bed sitting longitudinally before a panorama window opposite. Opening portlights offer natural cross-flow ventilation, but they're alarmed so you can't drive away with them open. And although the mattresses in the aft cabin were on the thin side, I'm told plusher bedding is forthcoming.

The second cabin, more than likely the owner's retreat, features a double island bed in the bow. It also has an en suite of trademark Riviera proportions. There is great attention to detail on the 43, too, with plenty of powerpoints, extractor fans, and natural ventilation. Fit and finish were five star, perhaps reflecting the fact that today's pared back Riviera — which is still in receivership — has the time to focus on quality before quantity like never before. With a twin bathroom and big aft cabin, the 43 will appeal to families foremost. 📍

Facts & figures

RUN DOWN

The upside of the IPS becomes immediate when I advance the throttles — the acceleration is swift. But as is wont to happen when you have a camera pointed your way, our sea trials involved some spirited slalom driving that was almost chided. But as a result, we nailed some lively images that ably reflect the boat's performance and, even when the hull fell on its side, it came back up once you pulled back the throttles.

The thing I like is the fact the natural trim angle sees the boat's forefoot sit right where it slices the swells without needing to call on the trim tabs. As such, there were no bad thumps and the boat is pleasantly dry. However, we predict greater performance gains in future. This was the first 43 out of the mould and, as Volvo Penta and Riviera told us,

there are weight savings and then scope for running bigger props in future. The 43 seen here has T2 props but T3s are the go for performance gains.

The official sea-trial figures were impressive, albeit similar to the 41 I tested with conventional Caterpillar C7 460hp engines and shaft drives. Top speed was about 29.5kts, cruise of 23.5kts costs about 120lt/h, and your range at this fast clip is about 350nm.

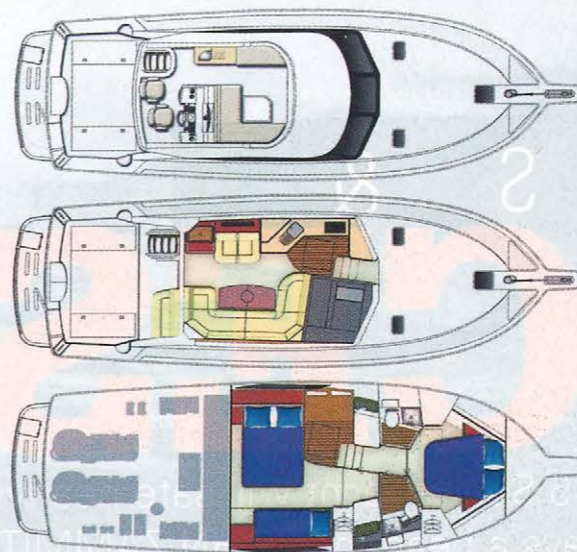
But manoeuvrability was markedly sportier with IPS drives. At low speed, with the 'boost' button depressed, the boat reacted swiftly to a push, tug, or twist on the joystick. Offshore, it felt determined. Tweed Heads was up ahead, Mooloolaba astern. Consider this a coastal cruiser, but with a big payload and all the gear aboard be aware that the IPS mightn't live up to its performance claims.

SEA TRIALS

Twin 435hp Volvo IPS 600 D6 diesels, 60% midships fuel (long-range fuel empty) and 50% water

RPM	SPEED	LT/H (COMB)	RANGE (NM)
1500	8.3kts	19	817
2000	10.2kts	42	459
2600	15.1kts	66	431
3000	21.7kts	106	388
3400	27.8kts	148	355
3630	30.4kts	167	344

LAYOUT



RIVIERA 43 OPEN FLYBRIDGE WITH IPS

PRICE AS TESTED

\$951,130 w/ twin Volvo Penta IPS 600s engines and options

OPTIONS FITTED

Extra air-con, Raymarine electronics pack, gurney, underwater lights, engineroom camera, digital TV, LCD TV in saloon, teak cockpit, dishwasher drawer, fridge in bridge, Strataglass clears, carpet and soft-upgrades, hull colour, rocket launcher, and more

PRICED FROM

\$812,809 w/ twin Volvo Penta IPS 600s engines

GENERAL

MATERIAL: GRP hull, cored decks and hardtop

TYPE: Moderate to deep-vee monohull designed in cahoots with Volvo Penta

LENGTH OVERALL: 14.46m

HULL LENGTH: 13.61m

BEAM: 4.57m

DRAFT: 1.13m

WEIGHT: 14,200kg dry w/ std motors

CAPACITIES

BERTHS: 6 to 7

FUEL: 1800lt plus 300lt long-range tank

WATER: 460lt

HOLDING TANK: 150lt

ENGINE

MAKE/MODEL: 2 x Volvo Penta IPS600s

TYPE: Six-cylinder four-stroke D6 common rail diesel

RATED HP: 435

DISPLACEMENT: 5.5lt

DRIVES: IPS w/ T2 props

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FINAL REPORT

A lot of thought has gone into the new 43 and that's been duly rewarded. Nine of the boats sold at the recent Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show, says Riviera, each priced around a cool million dollars, and a further two sold at the time of writing just after the show. And there is the Sydney International Boat Show opening late July. I think that market will appreciate it.

Evidently, some of the 43 buyers have been new blood to flybridge cruisers, attracted by the IPS joystick docking device, the design innovations, and the single-level living from transom to galley. Indeed, there's a lot to like about the 43 and it's a fitting flag bearer in the age of pod drives.

