

TWO NEW RIVIERAS ON THEIR HOME WATERS OFF AUSTRALIA SERVED AS AN IDEAL TEST PLATFORM TO DETERMINE, ONCE AND FOR ALL, WHETHER PODS OR STRAIGHT SHAFTS, SPORT OR FLYBRIDGE YACHTS ARE SUPERIOR. ♦ BY DANIEL HARDING JR.

Judgment Day

RIVIERA 575 SUV

LOA: 60'8"
BEAM: 16'10"
DRAFT: 4'3"
DISPL.: 53,400 lb.
FUEL: 925 gal.
WATER: 198 gal.
STANDARD/TEST POWER: 2/1,000-hp
Cat 12.9s
OPTIONAL POWER: Volvo Penta D11s
GENERATOR: 21.5-kW Onan
WARRANTY: 2 years workmanship,
7 years hull structure
BASE PRICE: \$1,745,900

| RPM | KNOTS | GPH | RANGE | dB(A) |
|------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| 600 | 6.5 | 2.9 | 1,867 | 68 |
| 1000 | 9.6 | 11 | 727 | 72 |
| 1400 | 12.2 | 29 | 350 | 72 |
| 1800 | 19.2 | 54 | 296 | 75 |
| 2100 | 27.6 | 86 | 267 | 79 |
| 2350 | 30.2 | 100 | 251 | 88 |

TEST CONDITIONS: Air temperature: 77°F; humidity 60%; seas: 1' or less; wind: 10-15 knots; load: 694 gal. fuel, 100 gal. water, 4 persons. Speeds are two-way averages measured w/ Raymarine GPS. GPH estimates taken via CAT monitoring system. Range is based on 90% of advertised fuel capacity. Sound levels measured at (lower) helm. 65dB(A) is the level of normal conversation.

RIVIERA 57 EB

LOA: 60'8"
BEAM: 16'10"
DRAFT: 4'1"
DISPL.: 66,000 lb.
FUEL: 1,057 gal.
WATER: 198 gal.
STANDARD POWER: 2/900-hp
Volvo Penta IPS 1200s
OPTIONAL POWER: 900-hp Volvo Penta IPS, D13 shafts
GENERATOR: 21.5-kW Onan
WARRANTY: 2 years workmanship,
7 years hull structure, 5-year limited warranty of Volvos
BASE PRICE: \$2,059,000

| RPM | KNOTS | GPH | RANGE | dB(A) |
|------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| 600 | 5.9 | 2.6 | 2,158 | 62 |
| 1000 | 9.8 | 11 | 847 | 65 |
| 1400 | 12.4 | 29 | 406 | 72 |
| 1800 | 19.6 | 53 | 352 | 73 |
| 2100 | 26.8 | 88 | 290 | 74 |
| 2350 | 32.6 | 89 | 348 | 77 |

TEST CONDITIONS: Air temperature: 77°F; humidity 60%; seas: 1' or less; wind: 10-15 knots; load: 1,057 gal. fuel, 198 gal. water, 3 persons. Speeds are two-way averages measured w/ Raymarine GPS. GPH estimates taken via Volvo Penta monitoring system. Range is based on 90% of advertised fuel capacity. Sound levels measured at enclosed bridge helm. 65 dB (A) is the level of normal conversation.



“Hollllddd ... three ... two ... one ... *BREAK NOW!*” crackled the command over the VHF. My fingers pressed into the leather helm seats just a bit as our Riviera 57 enclosed bridge banked hard to port at full throttle, peeling away from the Riviera 575 SUV that moments before was running abeam a mere half a boat length away. Heeled over hard, I glimpsed out the port windows and saw nothing but deep, green ocean. These high-speed, expertly choreographed maneuvers were part of an exciting photo shoot resulting in the images presented on the previous page.

“That certainly was dramatic,” exclaimed Riviera’s in-house marketing guru, Stephen Milne, over the VHF. “Do you think you guys can get a little closer, safely?”

Capt. Mark Lawson lifted the mic to his face, took a breath, and in a deep Aussie accent proclaimed, “Oh yeah, we can get closer.” I couldn’t help but recall how Lawson had summarized his job description just a half hour earlier. “I’ve been seatrialing all the Rivs for 17 years. Every day’s a new boat, and I try to break them before they get to an owner.” During his tenure he had never been able to cause any serious harm to a Riv; I was hoping he wouldn’t break that streak on this day.

A half-dozen high-speed passes—and zero collisions—later, we had an action-packed photo shoot (and video for www.pmymag.com) in the can. Now it was time for the *real* fun to begin.

The mission at hand was simple, yet ambitious. We aimed to put an end to the age-old, dockside debate over which was the superior setup: a flybridge boat or a single-level sport yacht, a boat with



Note the excellent forward sightlines from the 575’s helm (top). The forward VIP is bright, large, and inviting on both the 57 EB and 575 SUV. (above).



Different wood options in the galley provide the feel you’re after (top and second from top). The flybridge of the 57 EB can fit eight guests (above).



Check out a video of our test 575 SUV and 57 EB dancing atop the Coral Sea at www.pmymag.com/sept16.



Riviera encourages buyers to visit its 358-acre facility in Coomera, Australia, to see how its boats go from plywood mockups to world-class cruisers.

straight shafts or pod drives. Our platforms for resolving this debate were perfect—a Riviera 57 Enclosed Bridge and a Riviera 575 SUV. Both boats boasted a nearly identical hull shape and similar main deck accommodations.

The 57 EB featured a spacious flybridge and 1,100-horsepower Volvo Penta IPS 1200 drives, while the SUV was paired to straight-shaft 900-horsepower Caterpillar 12.9s. It was a debate (or shall I say, one of the many debates) that a colleague and myself had been having a few months back, during our many hours together at the Sanctuary Cove Boat Show and the Riviera Festival of Boating. “If you’re on a long cruise, you can’t beat the sightlines from a flybridge,” I’d offer. “Yeah,” he’d counter, playing devil’s advocate, “but then you end up sitting up there alone driving while your family and friends are spread out below. Then there’s the risk that comes with having guests climb up and down in rough seas.” Hmmm, his points were well taken. Then we’d volley the pod versus straight-shaft debate. We would (for once) agree that pods had inherent benefits, but we understood why purists stay loyal to the proven shaft-and-rudder propulsion combo.

Enter, stage left, our straight-shaft 575 SUV—the co-star of the show. There was a lot to like about this boat. The entertainment-friendly cockpit, serviced by a cooking station and aft galley with a fully opening cockpit window. The saloon, dressed in immaculate cherry joinery—the result of 10 to 12 coats of varnish—featured seating for seven adults, not including two in the helm

seats. Down below was a roomy VIP forward, full-beam master amidships, and a guest stateroom with bunk beds that I would be more than happy to take on a cruise to the Whitsundays.

The antagonist in our play, the new 57 EB (which weighed almost 13,000 pounds more than the 575), boasted a similar main-deck layout, sans the lower helm. The enclosed bridge, though—man, that space has a lot to recommend it. From the enormous expanses of glass surrounding it, to the space for as many as eight guests to mingle, the bridge feels a lot like the skylounge of a city skyscraper.

Our proving ground to test these vessels would be an unusually calm Coral Sea, bathed in warm summer sun. With the stage set, and both contenders pacing in their corners, it was time for the opening bell of this heavyweight bout. **DING, DING.**

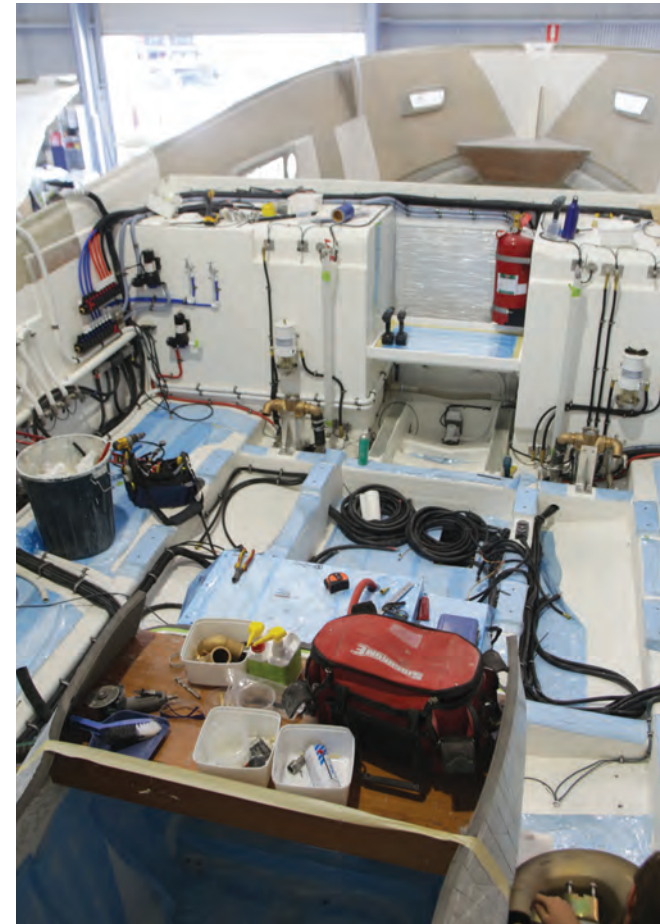
TOP SPEED

During two-way averaged speed runs, we saw the 57 EB edge out the 575 SUV with a top end of 33 knots, whereas the SUV showed a lot of heart, managing to crest 30 knots.

WINNER: The pod-powered 57 EB.

SIGHTLINES

Express-style sports cruisers often suffer the stigma of reduced sightlines. This stereotype is not unfounded: There are plenty of sleek cruisers with short, raked windshields that force their drivers



The engine room of the 575 is prepped for the engines to be placed.

to slouch, as if on a couch, to see forward. The 575 doesn’t suffer this problem, and came out strong with full-sized windows around the helm and saloon, allowing the helmsman to see his surroundings from sitting (straight up) or standing. The lower SUV also provides an enhanced feeling of speed.

That said, it’s hard to beat the high ground. The plush, elevated platform of the 57’s enclosed bridge seems to bring the horizon that much closer to the helmsman’s eye.

WINNER: The sightline reach of the 57 EB was just too much for the 575 SUV to overcome.

SOCIABILITY

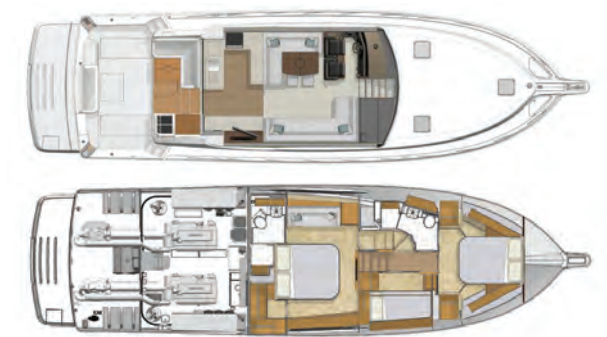
While running the 57 EB, the captain and I were stationed at the helm, while the remaining members of the test crew lounged in the saloon, swiping at their phones as the world passed them by.

On the 575 SUV, the single-level saloon encouraged everyone aboard to interact and share a few laughs. And isn’t that why we go boating in the first place?

WINNER: The 575 SUV literally brings guests closer together.

HANDLING

This battle was closer than expected, as the straight-shaft powered 575 SUV went toe-to-toe with the pod-powered 57 EB. In the end, there can be only one winner, and the pods allowed the EB to make smoother and tighter turns throughout the speed curve. Its



The 575 SUV (top) shares the same accommodations as the 57 EB (bottom).

slow-speed handling began to show boat during the at-sea crew transfer from the 57 to the 575. Thanks to joystick control, we were able to pull up within a foot of the stern of the 575 with confidence that we wouldn’t connect. This allowed us to step easily from one swim platform to the other, instead of making a leap of faith.

WINNER: The 575 SUV proved that straight shafts won’t go quietly without a fight, but the pods have easily as many pros as cons. The 57 EB gets the nod.

ENGINE ROOM ACCESS

The mechanical space on the 575 SUV was tight. There wasn’t much room outboard, and about 2 feet between engines. Access to service points was good, and it was nice to see the battery boxes placed high above water level.

WINNER: The 57 EB’s pods were placed a little farther aft, creating more space forward of the engines.

ACCELERATION

Like a drag racer, I pulled the throttles of the EB into neutral and waited until the SOG registered 0.0. I glanced behind me and then forward at the sun glinting off the flat ocean. (*Damn, I love this job*, I thought to myself as I threw the throttles to the pins). The EB (without trim assist) hopped onto plane in seven seconds and reached WOT (32.6 knots) in 22 seconds. Now, acceleration like that isn’t something most boaters will ever use, but it’s nice to know it’s there. The 575’s straight shafts also turned in similar, albeit slightly slower, results, taking 12 seconds to reach plane and 21 seconds to WOT.

WINNER: The 57 EB edged out the 575 by only a few seconds, but as they say, winning is winning.

Weeks after one of the most enjoyable, hair-raising tests I’ve done in a while, after my Aussie tan had faded, after hours spent poring over my notes and re-reviewing our test data, I must admit that I still can’t definitively answer which boat was better. Sure, the 57 EB edged the 575 SUV in a number of categories—five of six, to be exact, albeit most of them narrowly—but the fact is you can get the 575 SUV with pods, or you could get the 57 EB with straight shafts. The choice is yours.

The only thing I’m absolutely sure of is this: If you find yourself faced with choosing between the 575 SUV and the 57 EB, you can take solace in knowing that only *you* have the truly right answer. Both boats are winners. □

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