

## BOAT REVIEW: RIVIERA 45 OPEN FLYBRIDGE CONVERTIBLE



Australian boatbuilders are riding a tidal wave of support after taking the bull by the horns, investing in new technology and making a concerted effort to build smarter boats to beat the raft of imports. It wouldn't surprise if our biggest luxury boatbuilder, Riviera, launches its public float next year after it defied the doomsayers and surprised the soothsayers at the East Coast boat shows where it sold record numbers of new boats. It was all aboard the big Australian.

The pre-season splash comes despite successive interest-rate rises, falling real-estate prices, a shaky share market and changes to superannuation laws attracting

massive investment. So it proves, yet again, that Australians place great value on their recreational and lifestyle pursuits and that, providing the homegrown product meets the grade, we love to buy Australian.

Following Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show in May where it sold 30 boats for \$34.4 million, Riviera backs up with sales of 42 boats valued at more than \$53 million in Sydney, plus three more boats at the time of writing and doubtless more to come after subsequent water tests post boat show. But it was the boatbuilder's investment in new product development that accounted for the lion's share of the action.

At the Sydney International Boat Show,

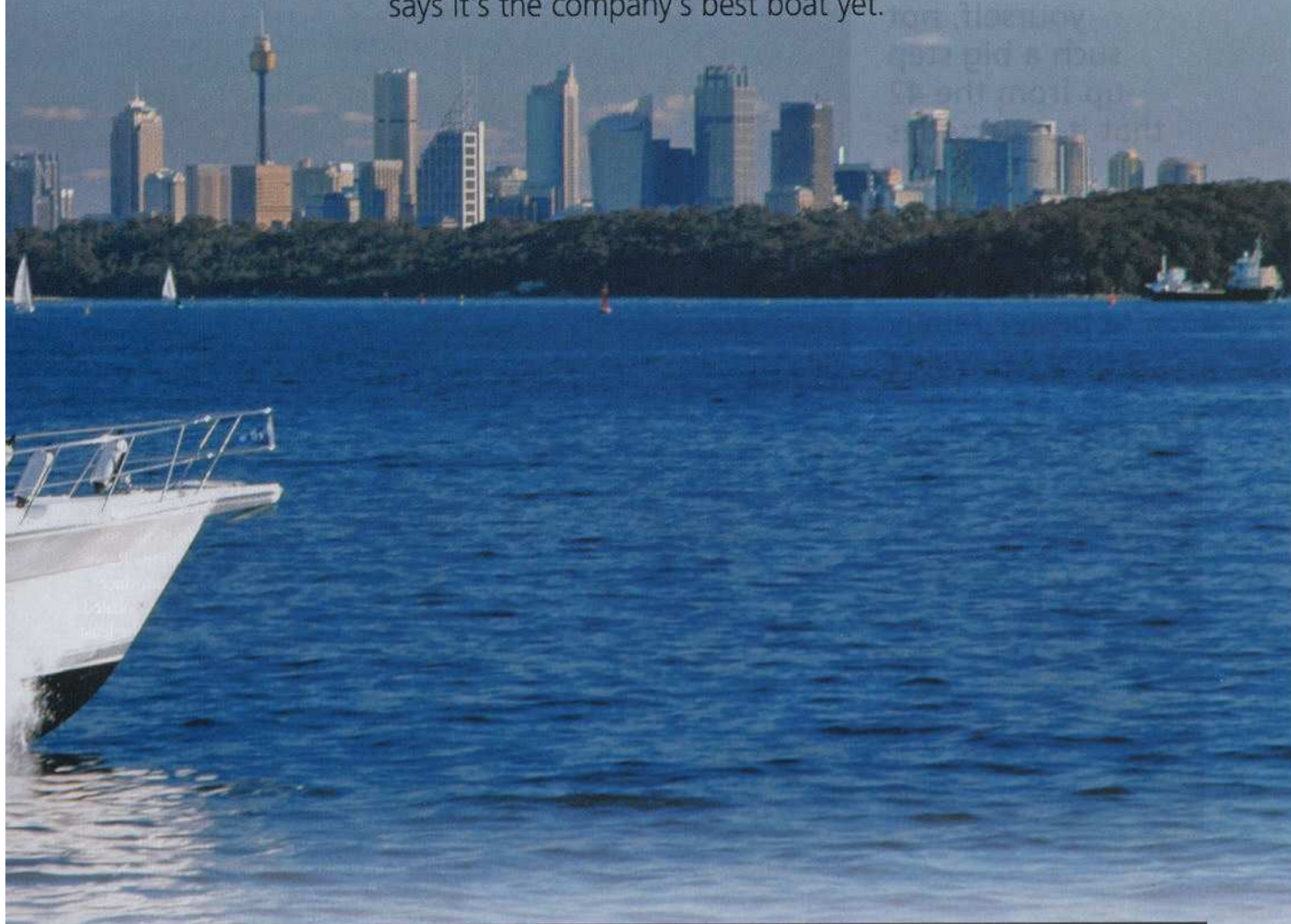
Riviera accounted for 12 sales of its new 4400 Sport Yacht costing \$880,000 each; seven sales of its new 47 Enclosed Flybridge cruiser costing \$1.25 million each; and the subject of this story, the new Riviera 45 Open Flybridge Convertible costing about \$950,000 with all the bells and whistles, was a big hit with six sold.

It is this writer's considered opinion that the new 45 is a real world beater, one of the finest flybridge cruisers from Riviera since the management buyout in October, 2002, but a great flag bearer for other reasons, too. You see, the 45 goes a long way to extending the life and appeal of flybridge cruisers at a time when sportscruisers and sportsyachts



# RIVIERA'S FINEST

Premier Australian luxury boatbuilder Riviera has a new world-class 45 Open Flybridge Convertible on the water. Already breaking sales records, David Lockwood says it's the company's best boat yet.



appear to be stealing the limelight: A really big 45, it's a great boat for spending serious time and more than just a sunny Sunday aboard.

While I managed to join the heaving throngs on the 45 at the Sydney International Boat Show, it was outside the confines of Cockle Bay that the new craft showed its true colours. Even though the ocean was agreeably calm, so-much-so thoughts soon turned to cruising north had I more time. I could easily discern the smooth, dry ride and the feeling of real solidity in the traditional handmade solid-fibreglass hull with cored decks and superstructure. After all, I stepped aboard the 45 from our Riviera 42 during a

week away.

If you are intimate with the badge, thereafter one finds a boatload of new developments, fresh design features and welcome evolutionary details. It's only after running our Riv' up and down the coast for some years, living aboard for weeks at a time, and fishing during the season that we discovered niggling details. It's as though Riviera is a mind reader, as many of these bugs have been ironed out in its new 45.

I'm talking about pesky things, like the way water finds its way through the zips on the clears in the flybridge (all clears leak in a storm) and continues inboard to eventually wet the floor.

Instead, on the new 45, you'll find a venturi system so that water drains overboard and your floor stays dry. With many such details, the 45 is a crowd pleaser that will appeal to pre-existing and new Riviera owners.

What's more, the 45 remains a manageable owner/driver boat, not too big to park and wash yourself, not such a big step up from the 42 that it supersedes that fuel bills send you packing and, with three cabins, you have a better family boat, as well. Greater fuel and water capacities will appeal to us serious cruising buffs and bluewater anglers, the latter destined to love the new cockpit with toe kicks as well.



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Importantly, the ageing baby boomers and well-heeled grandparents are not forgotten. There's a moulded staircase to the especially big flybridge instead of a ladder, and extra-wide sidedecks leading to the bow. For entertaining, a new opening saloon window creates a terrific indoor/outdoor stage, while the engineering and electrical systems hit new highs... but, hey, I'm getting ahead of myself.

#### SOLID AS A ROCK

The new 45 has the company's latest hull shape designed in consultation with Dutch naval architect Frank Mulder that, but for a squarer transom, is virtually identical to the Series II 47 sistership. That is to say the running surface has half tunnels or scalloped mouldings to accommodate the propellers and allow the shaft angles to be reduced from about 14 degrees to 11 degrees.

It's been Mulder's mission to get the Rivas running flatter but it seems, at times, he's taken them too far. Since they have a bluff stem instead of a raked one, the boats can push a lot of water when run too flat. But the new 45

travels exactly where you want it without the use of trim tabs, the bow cutting through the water when it needs to but otherwise riding just clear of it. As such, this is a dry boat and a dashing one when it's up and away.

These tunnels optimise performance from the standard-issue Caterpillar C9 575hp electronic diesel engines. There are engine options - the bigger ones appealing to the American market where Riviera sells half of its production - including Cummins QSM11 660hp diesels or bigger twin 715hp C12 Cats. I look forward to running a 45 with the Cummins, their exhaust elbows are more compact, which should open up the spacious engine room some more.

Engineering is, in fact, a real highlight of the new Riviera boats.

The 45 has a fully lined engine room that will be easy to keep clean and spot leaks, with a surfeit of servicing room once you get past that exhaust elbow thanks to the watertanks being mounted under the cockpit and a separate forward utility room under the galley that harbours items like air conditioning units, battery charger and inverter (whose fans are hopefully silent), hot-water service and plumbing systems.

Access to the engine room is via a dedicated hatch at the foot of the saloon door and not under the old swing-out sink - another big improvement - with the Racor fuel filters forward on the bulkhead, since the standard 2300lt fuel tank is now located forward of the engines where it has the least impact on trim, and the optional long-range tank aft. There are new integrated engine vents and tidier installations all round.

Riviera is using a 24V instead of 12V onboard DC system that saves on wiring and, thus, weight. With a standard-issue inverter you can watch TV, even with the (optional) Bose Lifestyle system, use the microwave and run the icemaker without having to start the supplied Onan EQD 11kW generator, whose exhaust and cooling water now exits the transom for less gurgle in the cabins.

The boat is lighter thanks to the latest resin-transfer moulding (RTM) technology using enclosed moulds to make things like the deck hatches and flybridge hardtop. RTM parts are 40 per cent lighter compared with conventional moulded items and, thanks to



**Clockwise from opposite top:** There's a moulded staircase to the especially big flybridge, and wide sidedeck access to the bow; Portside galley features Corian counters and microwave to name a couple; A dry boat and a dasher when up and away; The bunk cabin to starboard.





## HIGHS

- World-class engineering
- Boat travelled really well through the water, with exactly the right trim angle
- New closed-moulded components reduce weight and improve the finish
- Cockpit is mindful of anglers
- Moulded staircase makes flybridge more accessible
- Wide walkaround sidedecks will appeal to crew
- Hopper or awning window creates a big indoor/outdoor stage
- Galley has the latest drawer-style fridge and freezers and, along with the dinette, is virtually on one level for optimum social discourse
- Three cabin and two heads, plus trundle bed and optional bed in the bridge means you can sleep 10 aboard
- Optional long-range fuel tank, desal, washer-dryer and standard-issue inverter make for a real liveaboard
- Not too big to run yourself

## LOWS

- It costs more than a million dollars when fully optioned and fitted out for serious cruising and fishing
- Toe kicks tracing the cockpit need non-skid to ensure good footing when fighting fish
- Single beds in second cabin don't seem quite right, perhaps being a tad too low.
- Not everyone will like the low-slung lounges and more minimalist saloon
- The wide walkarounds reduce saloon space and the moulded staircase, though a boon, is steep

a better glass-to-resin ratio, much stronger. It's here, with the creation of new mouldings, that Riviera has made its biggest investment.

### CLEVER DECKS

Above decks, the boat has been expressly designed using CAD modelling software. A new sheerline and the subtly harder, sharper and squarer mouldings are in keeping with latest design trends and, to my eye at least, the boat has a classic more than contemporary look. There are also portholes in the hull sides - for more light down below - a new RTM hardtop and wraparound tinted windscreen that together change the lines to that of, dare I say it, a more American boat.

The new dot pattern non-skid promises to be easier to clean than the old moulded stuff and, I'm told, will be easier to repair. The boarding platform is in keeping with the new generation Rivas and includes a handrail. The marlin door opens outwards, and the right way, too.

Anglers will welcome the new cockpit that lets them lean into the sides without hitting their toes on fibreglass. But the toe kicks that Riviera uses could do with some of that dot-patterned non-skid. The above-deck cleats won't be so welcome by hardcore anglers as social crew, but the central livebait tank, optioned up to take a barbie if you're purely a pleasure boater, and the (lift-out) underfloor fish boxes are real hooks.



The staircase allows for a bigger and better portside cockpit bait/food freezer and sink, which can be turned into a bait-rigging or party centre depending on your needs. Ditto the options of factory-fitted cockpit table or fighting chair, outriggers and more.

The moulded ladder to starboard, with a nice big storage locker behind, allows Riviera to fit one of its signature hopper or awning windows in the saloon bulkhead. Swing the big stainless steel framed window open and the indoors and outdoors meld, doubling your day living space and creating

a bigger entertaining area. Further details include trick new LED cockpit lighting and low-draw navigation lights.

### BEST BRIDGE YET

Climbing the staircase instead of ladder to the big flybridge is now a single-handed affair. You'll find seating for four around a lunch or cocktail table forward of the excellent portside helm, whose big moulded dash has been designed to twin 12in screens and Palm Beach-style split throttles as preferred by hot-dogging game skippers.



## RIVIERA 45 OPEN FLYBRIDGE CONVERTIBLE (PLATINUM)

### PRICE AS TESTED

The Riviera 45 Open Flybridge Convertible, hull No. 1, was selling for \$1.09 million w/ twin 575hp C9 Caterpillar diesel motors and options

### OPTIONS FITTED

Bowthruster, long-range fuel tank, Raymarine electronics pack, digital LCD TV in saloon, rocket launcher, teak cockpit, dishwasher drawer, water purifier, fridge in bridge, washer/dryer, Strataglass clears, flybridge carpet, teak cockpit, Amtico saloon floor, half rear awning, delivery to Sydney and more

### PRICED FROM

\$899,485 w/ twin Caterpillar C9 575hp diesel engines

### GENERAL

Material: ... GRP hull and cored decks and hardtop  
Type: ..... Moderate-to-deep vee monohull w/ half prop tunnels, keel and underwater exhausts  
Length overall: 15.62m inc. bowsprit and boarding platform  
Hull length: ..... 14.70m  
Beam: ..... 4.80m  
Draft: ..... 1.19m  
Weight: 17,850kg (dry w/ std motors)

### CAPACITIES

Berths: ..... 6 (+ 2 + 2)  
Fuel: ..... Std 2300lt (plus long-range 1000lt tank)  
Water: ..... 500lt  
Holding tank: ..... 151lt

### ENGINE

Make/model: ..... Twin Caterpillar C9 ACERT  
Type: ..... Fully electronic straight-six, four-stroke diesel engine with fuel injection, turbocharging and aftercooling  
Rated HP: ..... 575 at 2300rpm  
Displacement: ..... 8.8lt  
Weight: ..... 946kg each  
Gearboxes (Make/ratio): ..... Twin Disc M6 5061 A  
Props: ..... Four-blade Teignbridge nibral 24 x 24 bronze

### SUPPLIED BY

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Do consider the optional double bed in the bridge formed with the aforesaid dinette. We find it indispensable on our 42 for catching 40 winks after coming off a driving shift or for passing the time on a slow fishing day. The double bed's bigger in the 45 than the 42 so you can actually sleep up top on hot nights.

Add the trundle bed in the saloon and you can accommodate 10 aboard if you have the linen.

There's also a better-integrated amenities centre with fridge, sink and drinkholders, and a better clears enclosure in general. The sight lines from the portside helm, with abundant mounting space for the must-have electronics plus a separate sound system, are improved thanks to new hardtop requiring less support struts. The red night light is a nice touch.

With the obligatory bowthruster, this is an easy boat to berth and, by my reckoning, a nice nimble craft for a couple or family to run.

Despite its big flybridge, the 45 feels really stable thanks to a low centre of gravity derived from weight savings in the right places, such as the RTM hardtop, and the beamy 4.80m wide hull, plus the amidships fuel supply.

### CRUISING COMFORTS

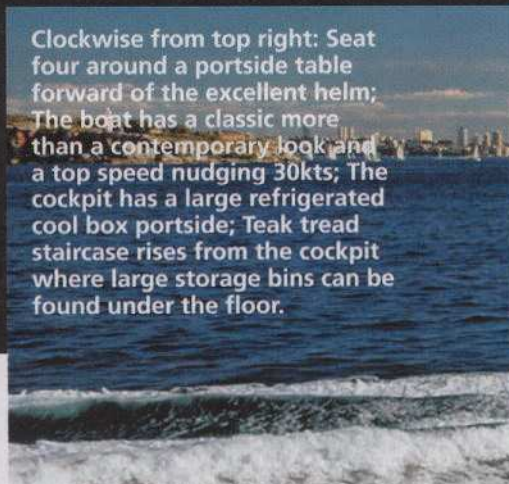
Indoors, the cherrywood joinery has a blemish-free mirror finish thanks to the latest Italian robotic varnishing system. The demo boat also had the optional Amtico (hard-wearing mock timber) floor instead of carpet in the saloon. This will lead to an easier boat to keep clean. Open the hopper window and the throng can waltz indoors and out without having to worry about the wear and tear on saloon carpet or washing the runners. Eventually, Amtico does need resurfacing, however.

The low-slung lounges are on the same level as the dinette, thereby encouraging social discourse, and all seating enjoys terrific views thanks to deep picture windows. A rod locker is incorporated into the ceiling liner, the saloon door opens outwards so you have unfettered access to the AC/DC panel, and it features a new at-a-glance ship's lighting and plumbing plan. The nearby wet bar boasts an icemaker/fridge and grög locker.

The U-shaped galley to port, down just a half step, has beautiful big Corian counters and food-prep spaces from which you could serve a buffet. There are two drawer-style fridges and a freezer, a neat spread of chic appliances from recessed two-burner electric cooktop to a nice big microwave oven, and an optional dishwasher. Storage space is boosted by the subfloor utility room that has space left over for stashing provisions. Access to it is via a floor hatch or a side hatch in the cabin.

Most 45 owners will fit a Miele washer/dryer in the companionway, in the excellent linen press, and (with that) a desalinator. The interior is, of course, fully air conditioned, and all hatches have insect and shade screens. The new portlights help with natural lighting.

Clockwise from top right: Seat four around a portside table forward of the excellent helm; The boat has a classic more than a contemporary look and a top speed nudging 30kts; The cockpit has a large refrigerated cool box portside; Teak tread staircase rises from the cockpit where large storage bins can be found under the floor.







"The hydraulic steering system means you can drive the boat with one finger, the new rudders are balanced and vibration free, and there's an underwater exhaust that, with the electronic motors, ensures the 45 runs, trolls and idles pretty much fume and soot free."



The three-cabin and two-head layout is especially family friendly, with a forward stateroom with island berth, portside cabin with single berths that can be converted to a second double, and a bunk cabin for the kiddies to starboard. As ever, the heads are a highlight, with wonderful separate shower stalls, an improved floor plumbing, Vacuflush loos, and upmarket porcelain washbasins on moulded vanities. A real liveaboard indeed.

### DRIVE TIME

The 45 jumped out of the ocean and ran naturally level but without pushing too much water. At a smooth cruise speed of 23kts at 2200rpm the C9 Caterpillar engines consumed 162lt/h for a safe range of about 300nm from the standard 2300lt fuel tank.

But the demo boat embraced the current trend to carrying more fuel and water than boats of this size did in the past and, as such, you can go even farther.

With the optional 1000lt long-range tank under the cockpit floor, the boat's range was boosted to at least 420nm. Sydney to the Gold Coast is a 384nm jaunt, so there's now no need to refuel at the Coffs Harbour Fisherman Co-Operative. You can be tied up in Southport in less than 17 hours after clearing The Heads. Way to go.

Top speed nudges 30kts, water is a decent 500lt - I'd want a desalinator and gurney on my 45 - and the 151lt holding tank (switch on the dash for easy emptying) will suffice. The demo boat could also do with one of those Australian-made telescopic ADC davits and a RIB on the bow, plus outriggers.

Besides improved straight-line performance, the handling is a real highpoint. The hydraulic steering system means you can drive the boat with one finger, the new rudders are balanced and vibration free, and there's an underwater exhaust that, with the electronic motors, ensures the 45 runs, trolls and idles pretty much fume and soot free.

After spending a week on our superseded Riviera 42, I'm calling the 45 Riviera's best boat yet. It's mindful of our wants and wishes, backed by after-sales support - there's now a 1800 number for 24-hour service - plus owner events and rendezvous, not to mention proven resale value. And with three cabins, timeless lines and engineering for the long run, the new 45 looks like a good lifestyle investment in the long run.