

by Erwin Bursik

BOAT REVIEW



IT'S been a number of years since Derrick Levy of Boating World last allowed me to play with and review one of the new models that Riviera of Australia had brought onto the world market. I was thus extremely excited to get an invitation to board one of the latest craft from the Riviera factory and head out into Cape seas from Hout Bay harbour.

I was due to review the Riviera 43 Offshore Express early in May. Fortunately, the Cape granted me a magnificent sunny May day — with but a light wind wafting through — in which to ride the ocean on this very impressive craft.

I had already read many reports on the Riviera 43 Express, with pictures, plus watched video clips on the craft on the internet. They all served to increase my desire to get aboard her and experience for myself the sights and sounds as I opened her throttles. I could just imagine her response — surging up onto the plane as she headed for the open ocean and the western horizon out of Hout Bay.

When I eventually experienced those myriad sensations, I was a very happy and excited chappie.

The last two Riviera craft I reviewed were the Flybridge 37 out of Richards Bay and the 47ft Flybridge running out of Durban. They are both exceptional craft with distinct variations in ride and performance. I expected the 43 Express to perform somewhere between the 37 and 47 — but I was in for a big surprise.

As I mentioned earlier, pictures whet one's appetite, but seeing the Riviera 43 Express lying at her mooring in the Hout Bay Marina was another experience altogether. Then again, it was only when *Zingela*, as she has been named, thundered past and around me while I was on the photo boat that I really got the full impact of her — awesome!

No words can describe the unbelievable sensations of hearing, seeing



and feeling this craft, almost 50ft in overall length, perform right in front of my eyes. At times she was only four to five metres away from me, running at over 20 knots. In fact, just trying to write about the moment rekindles the exhilaration of the experience.

From a technical perspective — and trying to separate human emotion from this review — watching a craft ride the prevailing sea at every conceivable speed and direction provides me with as much if not more knowledge of her hull-over-water performance as actually getting behind the wheel and skippering her myself.

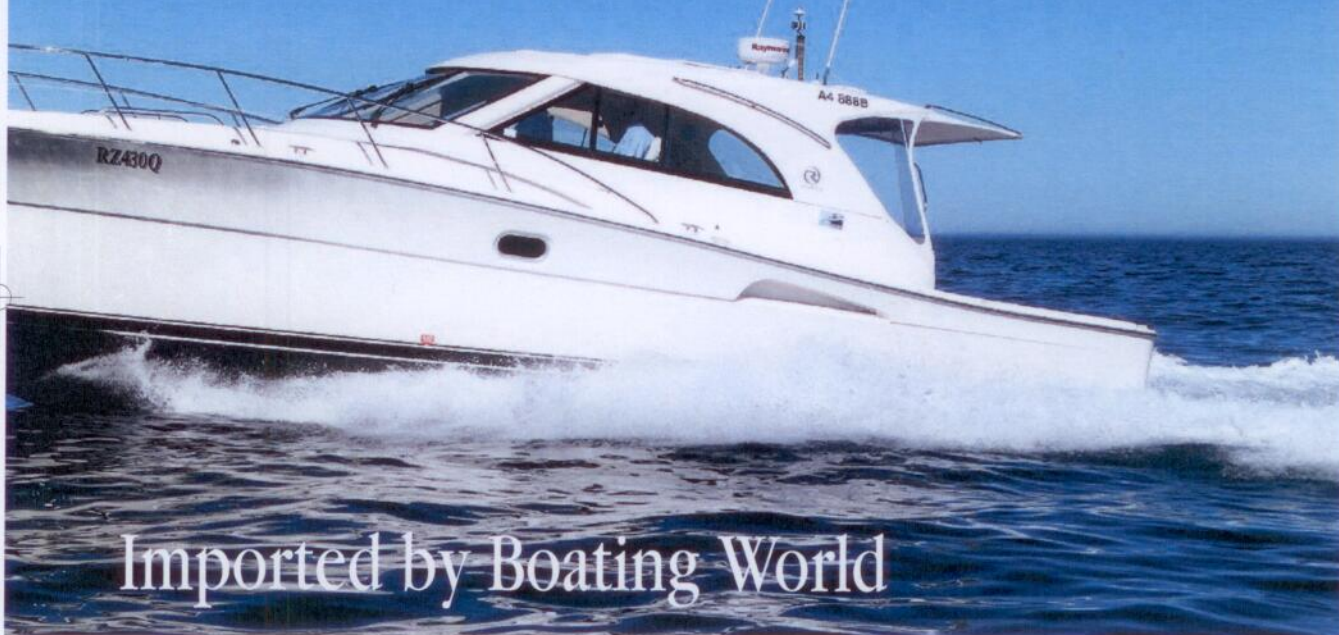
The Riviera 43 Express is powered by twin Volvo Penta IPS 500 D6 diesel engines pushing out 370hp per motor. The IPS system, simply put, denotes



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IN MOTION

The Riviera 43 Offshore Express



Imported by Boating World

the propulsion units that extend through the hull and run twin counter-rotating, forward-facing propellers (*see picture of unit overleaf*). This means that the propellers, like those on an aeroplane, pull the craft through the water instead of pushing it like most conventional outboard motors or shaft drive engines.

To accommodate this propulsion system, the hull of the Riviera 43 has a specifically redesigned shape to attain the required weight balance for optimum performance.

With this drive system, both conventional twin lever electronic controls and an independent Volvo IPS computer-controlled intuitive joystick can be used. The joystick provides for one-handed manoeuvring of the craft in and

out of tight marina berths.

Also on this craft as, an optional extra, a Volvo IPS "gamefish function" has been interfaced with the electronic controls. This means that the mere flick of a switch will enable greater manoeuvring response while gamefishing.

The entire redesign of this craft has, in my opinion, dramatically changed the ride dynamics of this craft when compared to the other Rivieras I have skippered. It's different in a positive way, but I won't say better. It's just that there are different dynamics involved in a shaftdriven craft compared to those with IPS power.

Once aboard *Zingela* and at her helm I switched my mind to assimilation mode, trying to match what I was experiencing with what I had wit-

nessed a short while before and with what I had experienced on other Riviera shaft-driven models. It was not an easy task and it's even more difficult to put these views on paper.

First and foremost, however, the feel and sound generated by the IPS engines is totally different. The hesitation when climbing through the power curve on a shaft-driven boat was absent on the Riviera 43 Offshore Express, as was the shuddering resulting from fast acceleration on the long shaft and big props. When I opened up her throttles she slid out the hole rather than climbing out and achieved her revs and speed very quickly. Above all, she accomplished this more smoothly than a shaft-driven craft. She feels more like a large outboard-powered craft, but





with much less engine noise.

The smoothness of this exercise, from zero to a very good speed, was unbelievable. There are many reasons for this, both in the hull design and in the computer-controlled hydrodynamics of the underwater propulsion unit that ensures maximum torque. One also has to take into account how the water flows along the hull at different speeds that makes steering progressively easier, especially at lower speeds. It's far too complicated for me to fully understand, but the bottom line is that she was an absolute pleasure to drive.

The ocean was relatively flat with a low swell and short chop, so I had no big seas in which to run the craft. Therefore I had to make my own bouncy water in which to judge how she responded in that regard.

With her new design the Riviera 43 Express seems to sit and ride a lot more

pronely than earlier models, and I found her to be remarkably stable laterally. This might be because *Zingela* does not have a flybridge which would add a pendulum effect to any craft's ride. By the way, there is a Riviera 43 Open Express flybridge model available for a purist sportfishing application. *Zingela's* owner, Paul Anley, uses her for both cruising as well as tuna fishing off Cape Town, and as such he opted for the model without a flybridge.

This craft has already had some wonderful days out in the deep, successfully targeting the big yellowfin tuna the area is renowned for.

This leads me to the next aspect I want to report on — the way she fishes at trolling speeds and the wake she creates at specific troll speeds. This is the first IPS-driven sportfishing monohull I have been on and I was very keen to determine the style of wake both the hull and motors of this craft generated.

At idle, 600rpm, we moved at 3.5 knots — a speed that could be further reduced if the gamefish function was used. This brought the speed down to under 2 knots and the wake generated was minimal.

Up it to around the 5½ knot mark — the general speed for pulling deep-div-





ing lures and when fishing for sailfish — and her wake, especially the motor wake, was extremely light and the hull wake was not really significant, thereby providing a lot of clean water in which to run lures.

Right up to 8½ or 9 knots — the top-end of marlin lure trolling speeds — her wake held well and provided many patches of clean water in which to run one's spread. Over this speed, and presumably affected by rougher water, the two wakes spread quite widely.

Backing up on a big fish was practical using the normal throttle controls, but slipping side-to-side was a little more difficult. When I was told about the gamefish function and learnt how to operate the craft using this feature — it provides more torque and bite at the bottom end of the torque curve — she came alive while undertaking this set of manoeuvres, totally satisfying me in this regard.

The Riviera 43 Express has a top speed of 32 knots at 3 500rpm. I didn't push her to the full, but ran back into Hout Bay at 29 knots and 3 400rpm. It was a beautiful, smooth ride with the engines seeming to love this easy run across the flat water.

On the way back Derrick Levy asked me to sit on the aft-facing lounge seating and allow Greg Alice, the craft's



skipper, to take control of the helm. It was a strange experience — total comfort, no wind, no exhaust fumes, not much noise and a magnificent view of the craft's wake as it spread out towards the majestic mountain peaks that front the entrance to Hout Bay.

The last aspect of this craft's operation that needs to be discussed is the hand-held joystick control which assists in manoeuvring the craft into moorings via a computer. The skipper merely twists the top of the joystick for directional manoeuvring and moves the stick to increase or decrease power. It's very easy and very positive to use, making a difficult task remarkably easy.

As the Riviera 43 Express does not have a flybridge, the helm station has been designed as a prominent feature of the saloon area, commanding a comfortable port-side position. It is beautifully designed and equipped, not only for appearance's sake, but also to make it very practical and comfortable for both the skipper and the person sitting next to him.

Also in the main saloon area is a comfortable L-shaped couch with a drop-down table and very easy access to the large fishing deck.

I have already remarked on the aft-facing couch which provides maximum comfort to those on rod duty, watching



the lures while waiting for a strike. My only concern is that it's so comfortable it might have a serious soporific effect on the fish watchers!

As standup fishing is the norm in Cape Town, the lack of a fighting chair was not surprising, but its absence made for a generous sized aft deck. This area, with its substantial gunnels and teak flooring right to the outer edge of the hull at deck level, makes it very easy to work big fish brought alongside.

A cooler box is situated under the aft-facing settee seat, and a circulating livebait tank is neatly built into the centre of the transom.

To provide very easy access to the entire engine room, almost the entire back deck can be electronically raised at the touch of a button.

In the lower saloon area there's a well-equipped galley and a sumptuous L-shaped leather lounge/dinette suite with a timber table that can be converted to a bed, if required.

Up forward, the master cabin with its walkaround queen-sized bed is beautifully appointed and has a private entry into the heads. This shower, basin and toilet facility is very spacious and has been tastefully decorated. Another stateroom featuring a queen-size berth and a single berth is incorporated aft of the downstairs saloon area, offering complete privacy if needed.

The entire below deck area is air-conditioned, ensuring that even in the tropics, when the craft is at anchor or at moorings, those aboard can socialise or sleep in cool comfort.

I am thrilled to see that in this, one of Riviera's latest craft, the standard of construction and support of the visible finishes is as good and robust as the first Riviera I reviewed and was so impressed with over a decade ago. Indeed, Riviera's very high standards have been maintained.

I did a lot of looking and feeling behind the "pretty skin" to satisfy myself that the quality of old was still being retained in this age of things disposable. Not only is the construction of the finishes and fittings perhaps even more robust than in the past, but the finishes ie: the pretty skin, is even more beautiful than before.

New owners Paul and Joy Anley, son Justin and daughter Megan are sure to derive many hours of pleasure at sea aboard *Zingela*. They will be the envy of many, I'm sure, and deservedly so, for this is a beautiful boat.

So much goes into the Riviera 43 Offshore Express to make her the craft she is, that try as I might I cannot do her full justice in the limited space I have available. The only way to really appreciate this majestic craft is to get Derrick or Greg to show her to you in person — enjoy! 🐟