



COME FLY WITH ME

AFTER 30 YEARS IN THE GAME YOU'D THINK RIVIERA WOULD BE RUNNING OUT OF IDEAS, BUT AS **ANTHONY TWIBILL** DISCOVERS, THEIR LATEST MID-SIZE FAMILY FLYBRIDGE IS ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL NEW TWIST ON A WINNING FORMULA.



Just when you thought the run of new ideas coming out of Australia's Riviera must surely be due to dry out, the company has launched yet another ripping boat bristling with new thinking. Launched in May at the Sanctuary Cove Boat Show, Riviera's 53 Enclosed Flybridge represents the latest evolution in the Aussie brand's ongoing interpretation of what local luxury boating enthusiasts are looking for in a modern boat.

For a brand that almost came unstuck in the GFC barely three years ago, you might have expected Riv to put their head in the sand during the toughest period in their 30-year history and slow down on new development. But the 53 is a testament to their never say die attitude up in Coomera. Had Riviera not experienced the recent financial hardship and challenge of reinventing its business to bring about a genuinely new generation of luxury boats – driven by what local owners are really looking for – then boats such as this brilliant 53 Flybridge would, in my opinion, simply not exist.

So what's to like? If sleek European-built flybridge style or single-level sports yacht living is more your boating thing, then the 53 Flybridge may not be your boat of choice. Despite its sophisticated and luxurious appointments on board, this is a boat in the lineage of the big Riv 'battlegown'. However, if the latest sportsfisher-styled flybridge with 'all the comforts of home' is your idea of luxury boating, there's a lot to like with the 53.

For current Riviera owners, the new 53 will be some kind of boating nirvana – even owners of larger Rivs such as 56's and 61's will be amazed with the space and versatility this new design accommodates. For the many aspiring owners who consider the big "R" brand a dream

within reach, this may well be the new hero boat of our times.

Blending traditional flybridge and modern sports yacht characteristics, what stands out most on the 53 is just how much Riviera packs in. Designed from the keel up using their three-dimensional CAD software system, Riv's design team have optimised the boat to make the most of the space made available from Volvo IPS pod drive technology. Although the first model to arrive in this new generation is designated a 53, it's closer to 60 feet in overall length.

Riviera's concept design manager, Neil McCabe, says the 53 retains this distinctive Riviera flybridge styling while incorporating a new generation of technology and comfort.

"The 53 combines contemporary thinking with traditional elements," says McCabe. "There is a lot of boat for its length. For instance, the new Riviera 53 offers more cockpit length and beam than a Riviera 61."

A trained eye will see numerous style cues taken from Riviera sports yacht and flybridge models of recent years, such as the huge freeboard and flared bow. It is clear from this all-new flybridge design that there are bound to be smaller and larger variants along exactly the same lines.

The 53 is the first Riviera flybridge in



THE NEW 53 IS THE FIRST RIVIERA TO OFFER FLEXIBILITY OF CHOICE IN POWER WITH A RANGE OF DIFFERENT POD DRIVE AND ENGINE PLANT CONFIGURATIONS AVAILABLE – UNUSUALLY REFRESHING FROM A PRODUCTION BOAT MANUFACTURER.

PRETTY FLY
Top left and right: big on the outside, even bigger on the inside, the Riv 53 Enclosed Flybridge packs in plenty of features for a mid-size motor yacht. Bottom right: Gentlemen, start your engines ... the Riv's helm just oozes sports car cool.



THE 53'S EXPANSIVE MAIN DECK IS THE CULMINATION OF RIVIERA'S CURRENT THINKING, BRINGING PLENTY OF LIGHT AND FRESH AIR FROM THE HUGE AFT COCKPIT RIGHT INTO THE MAIN SALOON

LIVING LARGE
The expansive sofa in the main saloon creates plenty of space for dining and family relaxation. Bottom left: located aft, the galley becomes a real focal point at the junction of the deck and the saloon. Top right: the master stateroom has a generous amount of headroom, approaching two metres.

the 50-foot range to offer a full-beam master stateroom, with king-size – yes, a full king bed and a large ensuite. Vitality for the 53 (and unlike the much smaller 43 Flybridge IPS, which is somewhat wanting for headroom in the full-beam master) this boat has headroom to spare, approaching two metres in the master thanks to the substantial freeboard in the new flared hull design. As such, when carried skyward to the very top of the enclosed flybridge, this is one towering design for Riviera in more ways than one.

The boat is the first in its size range to offer an enclosed flybridge with spacious seating for a party of 10, with flybridge access via an internal staircase. There is also a huge opening sunroof akin to Riviera's sport yacht designs to make the most of sunny skies, with opening side windows too.

The boat Ocean tested was set up with a forward helm position with two white leather helm chairs for driver and companion. It was kitted out with all the latest Raymarine electronics for navigation and a triple-installation of Volvo Penta pod power and IPS docking controls alongside Volvo's impressive engine monitoring system.

A newly custom designed Riviera helm wheel finished in leather – not out of place in a European luxury sports coupe – points to the boat's performance potential in the auto-influenced, carbon look helm station that we are seeing on the latest Riviera models. Potential owners may opt for a rear helm position with bungees forward, and there is reportedly an Open flybridge version yet to come.

The new 53 is also the first Riviera to offer flexibility of choice in power with a range of different pod drive and engine plant configurations available – unusually refreshing from a production boat manufacturer. This new model has been entirely designed around the

now proven and efficient pod drives. And while Volvo IPS are the current leader, Riviera still provides choice of manufacturer to owners when specifying their 53 Flybridge. So if you're a premium MTU power enthusiast or a CAT lover, you can still couple with a ZF 4000 pod drive transmission with twin counter-rotating Nibral (Nickel, Bronze, Aluminium) propellers facing aft, instead of forward as they are on the IPS system. Alternatively, owners can go the Volvo IPS triple 600 or twin IPS 1200 series route, or could choose the Cummins Zeus pod system. It is entirely up to the owner and the new 53 has been designed to accommodate all.

Riviera's Stephen Milne who heads up marketing says the new 53 is close to being the perfect flybridge boat for its size, but he doesn't credit Riv alone for this feat. "It is the sum total of extensive feedback from experienced boaters all over the world," he says. As the guardian of the Riviera brand, you can well expect Milne to say such, but the evidence is on the water.

"The vessel's lines are designed to be both powerful and noble, with a strong sheer forward and raised topsides creating the freeboard of a much larger vessel", he says.

"It creates a very strong presence on the water," agrees Riviera's design



CLEVER COCKPIT
Left: A huge built-in BBQ is the star lifestyle attraction on the aft deck. Below: Everything opens and shuts from the galley hopper window, to the hydraulic lift cockpit floor providing access to the triple Volvo IPS engines.



manager Neil McCabe. "The 53 feels like a big boat, yet will be easily handled by two people."

Wide side decks and easy-feed hawse holes (another customer-inspired innovation, which I think are brilliantly practical and beautifully executed) make berthing a breeze, while a dedicated docking station on the starboard side of the flybridge, and another to port on the aft cockpit deck below, give the skipper clear vision aft when docking. The design around pod drive technology means that irrespective of what manufacturer a owner specifies, the skipper has fingertip joystick control of close quarters manoeuvring and docking, so this big boat can genuinely be cruised by an experienced boating couple.

How does she perform at sea? The 53 features hull lines that run pretty much directly aft from its maximum beam, creating a powerful lift and planing surface with good stability underway. I am told the 53 is a hull design that draws much from the excellent dynamics of Riviera's 5800 sport yacht, the finest running hull of any Riviera I have driven to date. Driving the new 53 Flybridge off the Gold Coast as the very first media test review, the sensation is familiar and inspiring. That effortless forward urge when you plant the throttles of the triple 435hp Volvo IPS, the relative lack of transition from displacement to planing, and the accurate turn-in and follow through in half circle turns from lock to lock is as I hoped.

The boat, as big as it is for any 50-footer, really does inspire driver confidence when at sea and that's what you need for recreational boating. Unlike some flybridge boats, it does lean into a turn, which personally I like,

as some designs today turn dead flat even at full lock, which I honestly find unnerving. With a top end approaching 35 knots flat out, and economical cruising even at a fast 25 knots, compared to any similarly powered twin with shaft driven screws this boat is a passage making pleasure delivering a range around 400 nautical miles, depending on engine options, from its 3,500-litre tank.

With the engines positioned way aft under the cockpit floor, with quiet underwater exhausts directly through IPS legs, and with good insulation to boot it's also very quiet for an enclosed flybridge boat where every noise from below somehow makes its way up top.

Heading downstairs, the 53's expansive main deck is the culmination of Riviera's current thinking, bringing plenty of light and fresh air from the huge aft cockpit – which doubles as the best spot on the boat with a large barbecue set into the transom – right into the main saloon living space through a sliding glass door and a hinged hopper window. A U-shaped galley, located to port clear of passing traffic, is positioned looking aft over the cockpit, now a stalwart Riviera feature since the 56 flybridge launched in the mid 2000's.

Opposite the galley to starboard is a wet bar featuring icemaker, drawer fridge and freezer, and a floor to ceiling pull out pantry. Here a chic internal staircase leads to the enclosed flybridge above, its floating teak treads mounted on gleaming stainless steel rails complementing the contemporary interior of the main deck.

Forward of the galley is a C-shape dinette to port, that can convert into a double berth with a drop-down table, facing a C-Shape lounge to starboard with social setting for up to ten. A widescreen 50" TV on electric lift rises from the forward dash on the port side to entertain the masses.

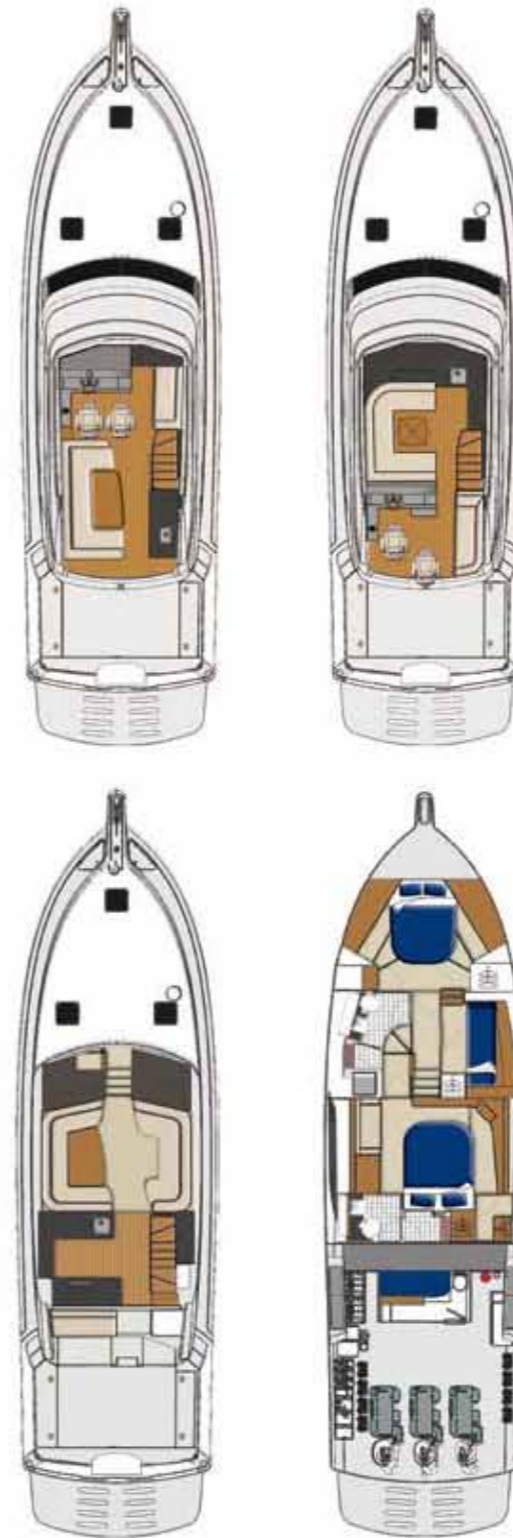
When the party is over, downstairs a stunning full-beam master stateroom with king-size bed set amidships and framed by huge designer hull windows on either side providing an amazing view over the water. Inset, are port and starboard alarmed opening portholes for fresh air. A separate ensuite with non-slip tiled floor is set slightly below the level of the master cabin to contain water and a vanity unit with surface-mounted porcelain sink (typically found on much larger boats), with an easy-to-use vacuflush toilet completing the amenities. A large cedar-lined walk-in robe complements the master, which features a multitude of storage set behind Riviera's gloss woodwork. The interior design theme throughout the 53 features a combination of glossy varnished wood and fabric panelling, to create a soft 'feel' with visual styling to match.

Forward of the master stateroom is a guest stateroom, with queen size bed and wardrobe, and a third cabin with two single berth bunks. A separate ensuite serves the guest accommodation and doubles as a day head, making the boat well suited for larger families, or holidays involving two couples with children.

Keeping it cool across all decks is a massive 96,000 BTU capacity air conditioning system for the new 53 reflecting the increasing use of Riviera's boats in tropical conditions, particularly Queensland, the Top End and throughout the Pacific. All venting and ducting is discretely hidden behind glass cabinetry.

After launching close to 4,800 boats over the past 30 years, the word from Riviera is that this is their best yet. With 'quality at a price' sought more than ever by boat buyers confronted with so much choice from global boating manufacturers, and at entry prices not seen for years, new boat buyers have all the power with our dollar on a high. Faced with a deck stacked well and truly in favour of the buyer, the smart luxury boat builders are motivated more than ever to reinvent their offerings to stay ahead of the curve. With the 53, Riviera has done exactly that. ○

www.riviera.com.au



BUILDER	Riviera
COUNTRY OF BUILD	Australia
LOA	18.20 m / 59' 8"
BEAM	6.13 m / 16' 10"
DRAFT	1.25 m / 4' 10"
DISPLACEMENT	22,300 kg (dry)
HULL	GRP
ENGINES	Triple Volvo IPS 600
OUTPUT	435 hp each
FUEL CAPACITY	3,500 litres
WATER CAPACITY	740 litres
BERTHS	6-8 persons
GENERATOR	Onan EQD 17.5 kw/50Hz or 21.5 kw/60Hz
PRICE AS TESTED	\$1,928,728



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