

# Riviera 38 Mk11

Report By Peter Webster



**F**or Riviera founder and Managing Director, Bill Barry-Cotter, there is more than a little sentiment attached to the release of the Riviera Mk II. This is basically the model that launched the Riviera Marine

manufacturing complex, today ranked as the biggest boat building operation in Australia.

That's no mean feat, either, when you consider the very first Riviera, a 38 footer, was launched in Pittwater from Mariner Keys in June 1981. From that time, Barry-Cotter's Riviera

Marine has grown at a rate that has dumbfounded all of the experts, and left most of his competitors floundering in his wake.

In all, Barry-Cotter has built some 300 cruisers in five years, ranging in size from 30 foot through 52 feet. Currently, the factory is tooling up for new models at both ends of the spectrum. There's an exciting new 28 footer ready to come down the line in the next month or so, along with a striking new 70 footer destined to highlight Riviera's overseas drive for export markets.

But it was the basic 38 footer that started the whole train in motion. With his usual genius for packaging, Barry-Cotter built the first 38 footer with twin Chrysler turbo marine diesels, small capacity but fuel efficient engines that gave the Mk I model a top speed of 22 knots and an extremely

economical cruise speed of 17-18 knots. But the Chryslers soon gave way to more powerful Cummins and Volvo installations, and the boat settled down in this configuration. More than 30 cruisers were subsequently launched.

Interestingly enough, it was the development of the Riviera 44 that gave rise to the notion that it was time the 38 was upgraded. With the 44 footer, Barry-Cotter and designer Max Whitton developed what is universally agreed to be the best looking Riviera in the range.

More to the point perhaps, it also set new standards of seaworthiness and seakindliness, and quickly became the benchmark by which other Riviervas were being judged. But at the time, Barry-Cotter was also committed to developing the 34 footer (plus variations in the smaller cruisers) and

there simply wasn't space left in the factory, nor the manpower to switch over to upgrading the 38 footer which, it must be pointed out, was still selling very well. Importantly, it was still holding up the bridge between the economical 34 footers (then packaged around the S90-120K mark) and the 44 which came in from S200-250K, depending on engines, electronics, etc.

Last year, following the introduction of the acclaimed Passagemaker 46 footer and before that, the charismatic Grand Banks 36, the necessary space and manpower became available to carry out the revamp on the boat that started it all.

## Design

Viewed from a wharf from (say) 100 metres or so away, the most obvious difference in the Mk II model and its predecessor is the sheer line — the

new model now looks like a small 44, and is easily distinguished from the Mk I 38 footer. In fact, from a few hundred metres away, it requires a trained eye to pick the difference between the new 38 Mk II and the 44 footer. The proportions are aesthetically pleasing and judging by the increased volume below (especially in the forward cabin area), practical as well.

The changes, although subtle, have had a marked effect on the whole craft. Whilst it is still clearly one of the Riviera family, it now belongs to the larger more affluent side of the family, and cuts the ribbon connecting it to the lower priced 32-34 footers. This is more than just one-up-manship too, because in the rehash, Barry-Cotter has changed every single moulding, and rethought the distribution of weight around the craft, especially in regard to the major components such as the fuel

*The Riviera 38 Mk II retains the traditional layout so favoured by Australian boat owners.*

and water tanks, and the engines. Moving this equipment around by amounts of 50-100 mm may not seem like a big deal, but when it is appreciated that the combined mass of the engines might total three tonnes, it can be seen that the placement of these weights is critical to the ultimate trim and/or running angle of the craft.

Too much weight forward and it will run bow down; too much weight aft and the reverse will be the case — it will forever run inefficiently, bow high. Getting these weights right is the name of the game, and few have achieved such success as Barry-Cotter's Riviera Marine.

For the factory, the opportunity to retool the 38 footer gave them the

**TBM  
RETRO  
BOAT TEST:**  
Unchanged, as  
first published,  
written and  
photographed  
by Peter  
Webster in  
December  
1986