



Big Boat Review

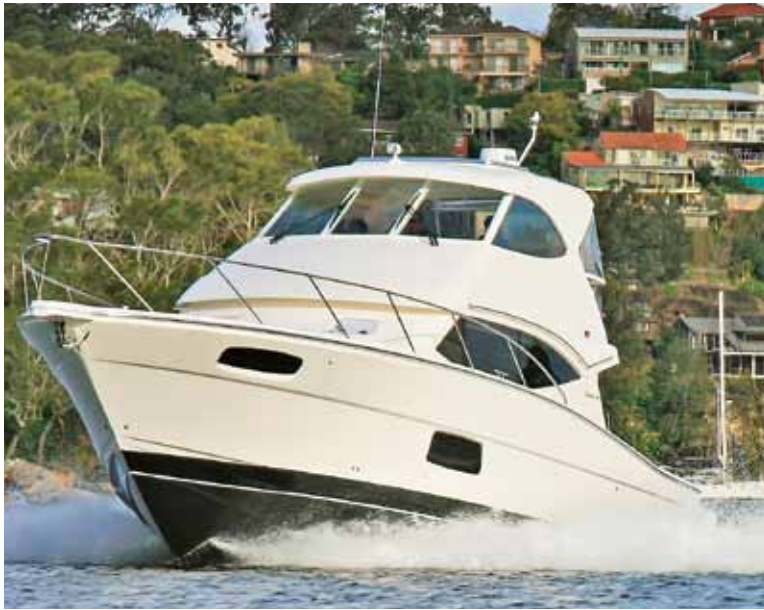
Compact convertible

Maritimo has managed to pack a lot of boat into its new 440 Offshore Convertible.





By Mark Rothfield



I can think of few better escape pods than the new Maritimo 440 Offshore Convertible.

LITTLE BIG BOAT

With three cabins and two bathrooms, it's a big boat writ small. One that can go anywhere or go nowhere, do everything you could possibly want or do absolutely nothing at all.

On waterways like Sydney Harbour, where we conducted our test, you can take in the bright lights of the Opera House then dine with the in-crowd at Darling Harbour. But you don't have to venture far to find 'nothing' either.

As we did, you just slip under The Spit Bridge and into Roseville Chase, part of the Garigal National Park. It's like entering *The Chronicles of Narnia* wardrobe to find a place full of trees, wildlife and peace within a stone's throw of a metropolis populated by four million 'baddies'.

Along the way, you're sure to enjoy the performance and handling born from Volvo IPS 600 drives, but equally you'll appreciate the features that enable you to simply stop.

In these nervous post-GFC days, the market is turning to affordable boats in the 40- to 50-foot range – and this one lies smack in the middle. The demographic is boaties who love both social cruising and fishing, and want something easily handled.

The 440 feels seamless, effortless in its design, but rest assured that wise heads have prevailed in piecing together the puzzle. Fitting an enclosed

There is much to be said for silence – the golden silence that comes when you're aboard a boat, safely tucked in a secluded anchorage, far from the madding crowd.

The kids are asleep in their bunks, victims of fresh air poisoning. Civilisation is but a faint glow in the night sky.

It's just you and the gentle lapping of water against the hull, as you pour a glass of plonk, pop a fat chunk of brie into your mouth and watch quietly as the moon rises over a nearby hillside ...

Just as the wine grapes needed the *terroir* (soil conditions) to be "just so", so do we. Inevitably, there comes a time when city dwellers must uproot themselves from hectic lives and become immersed in Mother Nature.

With three
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and two
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writ small



Wrap-around leather, widescreen television and good space utilisation makes for an effective social environment.



bridge with internal staircase is no easy task for a 44-footer, but then it wouldn't be a Maritimo without them.

HEAVENLY STAIRCASE

"If there's a lady who's sure all that glitters is gold and she's buying a stairway to heaven" – with apologies to Led Zeppelin – then she should

check out the 440's flybridge access. Those with replacement knees and a rickety back, like half the folk who can afford to buy luxury cruisers, will find the gently sloping teak stairway a godsend.

The man with the Midas touch, Maritimo CEO Bill Barry-Cotter, cleverly incorporated an upright fridge and storage in the otherwise space-consuming feature. The galley is aft as well, so it can serve the cockpit through bi-fold doors and the saloon dining area for outside dining.



Above: The space-wasting nature of a staircase is cleverly avoided by incorporating the refrigerator.

Right: The dry flybridge allows for added luxury appointments.

Beneath those evergreen Garigal foothills you can still watch the nightly news on the big flatscreen tele, pour a scotch from the bar concealed inside the saloon's forward bulkhead and kick back, boat shoes off, on the wrap-around leather lounge.

Three steps down, there's accommodation for six – the athwartships bed in the guest cabin turns into a double, with a single above. There's another single in the starboard cabin and an island double in the master stateroom.

You could take the family or a group of friends away for an extended stay, with no trouble at all. Or you and the spouse can run away to sea on your own.

The flybridge is essentially a second lounge area, with a timber table as its central theme. Being enclosed on three sides means it's dry; being dry means it can have luxuries like carpet.

By locating the helm aft, the skipper has good visibility forward as well as over the cockpit, while guests can stand on the overhang behind the chairs to look down on the action.

When driving, there's a slight obstruction of vision to starboard when turning, meaning the driver has to lean either forward or back.

Preventing the hull from leaning has arguably been the greatest design achievement, given that the centre of gravity is elevated by the enclosed bridge. Indeed, I must confess to having pre-conceived ideas about it being top-heavy, before taking the helm.

Keeping the saloon floor and roof height as low as possible is the key, though it doesn't feel cramped – quite the opposite, in fact. The big chines also apply stabilising pressure when underway.

BILL'S BOW

According to Maritimo's PR man, the hull design is a rare collaborative effort: "The bow is Bill [Barry-Cotter] and the stern is Volvo," he explained.

Not so long ago, that statement would've been beyond the wildest imagination ... like saying that Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott had formed government, like Michelangelo giving Rolf Harris a crack at the Sistine Chapel, or Shakespeare letting a tabloid journo loose on *Romeo & Juliet*.

But naval architecture is a team sport nowadays; a game for young players with university degrees and high-tech computer programs at their fingertips.

There's perhaps more bow-rise than I was expecting when running, which is compensated for by trim tabs, but hole shot is excellent and in a matter of seconds you're doing 20 knots (37km/h).

The IPS 600 drives are the ideal stimulus package, perfectly fitting the Bill, so to speak.

Twenty knots is the sweet spot for the diesels – they're purring at around 2700rpm, lapping up around 100lt/hr in total. She's good for 30 knots


(55km/h), but the real story is the low-speed efficiency, with 1000rpm delivering seven knots (13km/h) for six litres of fuel. Retirees take note.

CONE OF SILENCE

The bridge erased all traces of wind noise and chill on our test day. A few drops of spray hit the screens, but nothing else. It was pure delight to be ensconced in this cone of silence.

The 440 feels like a natty New York apartment, tastefully styled with high-gloss teak and oh-so-clever in its space utilisation. I couldn't help noting, though, that having gone to the trouble of building a great small boat, the demand at the Sydney International Boat Show was apparently for the bigger Maritimos.

Personally, I'd be more than happy with the 440, for it feels bigger and more capable than its dimensions would seem to dictate.

The term "convertible" refers to the flybridge, but it also has the potential to convert your life. To paraphrase John F Kennedy, ask not what you can do for this boat, but what this boat can do for you ... what together we can do for the freedom of man. 



SPECIFICATIONS: MARITIMO 440 OFFSHORE CONVERTIBLE	
Length overall:	14.8m
Beam:	4.68m
Draft:	1.10m
Dry weight:	14.5 tonnes
Fuel:	1800lt
Water:	400lt
Holding tank:	300lt
Standard engines:	2 x Volvo Penta IPS 600 435hp