



Launch of the new Riva 102 Corsaro Super



Pierfrancesco Favino, Ferretti Group CEO Alberto Galassi and David Beckham at Riva's 180th anniversary gala in Venice; poster for Riva The Persuaders!

VIVA RIVA!

Riva's ongoing 180th-anniversary celebrations include spectacular launches, a glamorous gala dinner, new Riva Lounges and an action-packed short movie starring David Beckham, each honouring an alluring brand that has enticed the rich and famous since the 1950s.

WORDS JOHN HIGGINSON PHOTOS RIVA / FERRETTI GROUP

When David Beckham attended Riva's 180th anniversary gala in Venice, he wasn't only there to add stardust and glamour to the black-tie event. Certainly, the England football icon – who literally wore a black tie – does attract publicity as one of the world's most recognisable sporting figures.

While partly due to his looks and media savvy, Beckham's global appeal is also due to a long and successful playing career, winning 115 caps for his country – over half as captain – and starring for iconic clubs in England (Manchester United), Spain (Real Madrid), USA (LA Galaxy), Italy (AC Milan) and France (Paris Saint-Germain).

However, the 47-year-old was also invited to Riva's glamorous gala at Gran Teatro La Fenice because he's a Riva owner *and* because he starred with Italian actor Pierfrancesco Favino and Ferrari F1 driver Charles Leclerc in *Riva The Persuaders!*, the short film that debuted that evening.

Alberto Galassi, CEO of Ferretti Group and a long-time Riva owner, was a loyal viewer of *The Persuaders!* action-comedy TV series of the early 1970s starring Roger Moore and Tony Curtis.

Even though he's a Board Member at Manchester United's rivals Manchester City, Galassi was delighted Beckham agreed to star in a film that features high-speed action in Ferrari and Maserati cars then Riva yachts against the backdrop of Monaco and the Côte d'Azur.

"I feel very lucky to have David Beckham as a friend and as the star of a Riva production. David is not only a British style icon and one of the world's most admired celebrities but also a passionate Riva owner," Galassi says.

"When we invited him to take part in *Riva The Persuaders!* he immediately jumped on board with great enthusiasm. This enthusiasm shines through in the short film and I believe is one of the reasons for the great response and millions of views it's receiving on social media."

BRAND BEYOND BOATING

In fact, 2022 marks several anniversaries for Riva, including 200 years since the birth of founder Pietro Riva and 100 years since the birth of Carlo Riva, his great grandson, who passed away in 2017.

It's also 60 years since the launch of the iconic Aquarama, which sold a staggering 784 units from 1962 to 1996, and was honoured at the gala evening on Venice's Grand Canal. In front of the Riva Lounge at the Gritti Palace, an Aquarama was showcased on a floating platform beside the new Anniversario, an 18-boat, limited-edition series honouring the 18 decades Riva has been afloat.

The boat has been further honoured in *Riva Aquarama*, a new book of photographs published by Assouline to celebrate 'the 60th anniversary of the launch of the most beautiful boat of all time'.

The brand's visibility in wider culture was documented two years ago in the *Riva In The Movie* short film starring Favino and a 300-page



Beckham and Favino during filming; Charles Leclerc on a Rivamare, one of Mauro Micheli's three favourite designs for Riva



Riva Lounges in Porto Cervo (top left and bottom right) and Sarnico (top right); the temporary Riva Privée in Cortina D'Ampezzo (bottom left and middle)

book paying tribute to the 69 films Riva yachts had appeared in.

Riva's appeal beyond boating – much like Beckham's beyond football – is also reflected in the growing series of Riva Lounge and Riva Privée 'destinations' offering cocktails and branded products in hotels, restaurants and clubs in the likes of Venice, Monte Carlo, Formentera, Mykonos and Palm Beach.

Each is decorated in classic 1950s *Dolce Vita* style and features hallmark details found on Riva yachts as well as the brand's aquamarine and mahogany colours, with the newest Riva Lounge launching in Porto Cervo in late June and open until September 4.

And if you need to see a slice of the brand's history, there's a 3,200sqft permanent Riva exhibition at the Lake Como International Museum of Vintage Boats, where the seven historic boats include the vintage *HaLu* from the 1930s, two Series R models, a rare racer fitted with Guzzi engines and a Florida with special Scottish Madras upholstery.

"Riva is really something else," Galassi says. "It's the only nautical brand everyone knows, even if they're not interested in boats."

THE LEGEND, THE ART

Galassi became CEO of Ferretti Group in 2014 but his connection to Riva spans almost five decades and he understands as well as anyone what makes the brand so special. He owns a Rudy and an Aquarama, and was close friends with Carlo Riva, but his attachment to the brand began back in 1974, when he was 10 years old.

That's when Galassi's father and his friend bought a Riva Rudy, a model launched in 1972 and later owned by the likes of actor Sean Connery and Jackie Stewart, the three-time F1 world champion.

"My first connection to the Riva myth is linked to childhood, with the enchantment and amazement typical of that phase of life. I'll always carry in my heart the magical moment when this marvellous motorboat was delivered to the dock of our family home on the Adriatic coast," he recalls.

"As a child, I was used to spending time on the beach, so I remember the sense of freedom I felt the first time we left the shore behind us and ventured out into the open sea. That indescribable feeling is the same one I still have today, no matter which yacht I'm on. And the Riva Rudy is still ours – I could never part with it."



The new limited-edition Anniversario and an Aquarama in Venice; the Riva display at the Lake Como International Museum of Vintage Boats



Cantieri Riva in Sarnico on Lake Iseo was founded by Pietro Riva; Carlo Riva transformed the brand in the 1950s and 1960s

Childhood memories aside, Galassi believes Riva is the yachting brand that comes closest to true art on the water, possessing DNA that puts qualities like elegance and style above trends and fashions.

The models' clean lines, luxurious styling and detailed craftsmanship are renowned, drawing eyes wherever Rivas appear across the world. And the timeless appeal of Rivas means loyalty to the brand is often lifelong, as though each owner is buying more than a yacht.

"I'm a great lover of art, from which I constantly draw inspiration. One of my favourite artists is Lucio Fontana, a man of such genius that he managed to make his art appear simple at first glance, while containing a very rich, almost inexhaustible universe of meanings," says Galassi, an experienced art collector.

"Riva is art. Each new model is a masterpiece, a unique work of art that enchants with its design, its beauty, the novelty of the solutions on board. Riva is also a way of life, a way of experiencing the sea, a badge of elegance you wear as an owner.

"When I look at my Aquarama, I see a true work of art, the result of the genius of Carlo Riva and the all-Italian ability to model masterpieces. I see tradition, innovation and performance, all amalgamated by a timeless beauty I know will never tire me or any other owner. And behind all this is a history in which quality has always been an obsession, as proven by the 22 coats of varnish that the craftsmen of Sarnico apply before a boat is ready."

Art is also the driving force behind Mauro Micheli, who has designed all of Riva's yachts for almost three decades since co-founding Officina Italiana Design in 1994. He attended an art-focused high school in Bergamo and then the Accademia di Brera in Milan, only learning yacht design after joining Riva in 1984.

"I never imagined I'd stay with the same brand for almost 40 years. In fact, I didn't even think I would be a yacht designer – I studied art," Micheli smiles. "But for me, a boat like the Aquariva is like a sculpture."

MAHOGANY LADIES

Part of Ferretti Group since 2000, Riva currently produces models across four ranges: Open (27-88ft), Sportfly (66-88ft), Flybridge (90-130ft) and Superyachts upwards of 50m (164ft).

The yachts are built across three shipyards including the seven-hectare La Spezia facility, home since 2004 to all 76-130ft models including the brand-new 102' Corsaro Super and upcoming 130' Bellissima. On Italy's east coast, the eight-hectare Ferretti Group Superyacht Yard in Ancona is where Riva's steel models have been built – including four units of the 50Metri – since 2014.

However, the most iconic Riva facility is the four-hectare facility in Sarnico on Lake Iseo in the inland province of Bergamo, northeast of Milan, and where all smaller models from the Iseo (27ft) to the 68' Diable are produced.

It's where Carlo Riva transformed the brand after the Second World War, but Sarnico is also where the business started in 1842 when his great-grandfather Pietro was commissioned to repair fishing boats devastated by a storm, later establishing a shipyard with his son Ernesto.

At the start of the 20th century, the business continued under the leadership of Serafino, Ernesto's third-born son. In the 1920s, following the First World War, the shipyard started to focus on racing boats, with highlights including a Riva AZ 3 winning the 431km Pavia-Venice race in 1930.

Carlo Riva joined the family business from a young age and took the lead following the Second World War, launching its first production boat, the Corsaro, in 1946, followed by the Ariston and twin-engine Tritone in 1950 then the Sebino and Florida two years later.

Gino Gervasoni, husband of Carlo Riva's sister, joined the management team in 1950, while designer and naval architect Giorgio Barilani was another key addition in 1956. Yet the company's real stars were the 'mahogany ladies', as Carlo Riva liked to call his beautifully varnished range of models.

The current Riva shipyard in Sarnico, where the brand builds its smaller Open and Sportfly yachts from the 27ft Iseo to the 68' Diable





Riva owners have included Anita Ekberg (top left), Prince Rainier III of Monaco (bottom left), Brigitte Bardot (middle), Sophia Loren (top right), and Peter Sellers and Britt Ekland

Riva embodied *La Dolce Vita* on the water in the 1950s and '60s as it became the boating brand of choice for royalty and celebrities, its appeal only heightened by the 1962 launch of the Aquarama, whose early owners included Sophia Loren.

Anita Ekberg had a Tritone, as did Prince Rainier and Princess Grace of Monaco. Peter Sellers and Britt Ekland owned an Ariston. Brigitte Bardot had a Junior, while Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton used one as a tender for their 46m *Kalizma*.

“Carlo Riva boats will always and forever be the most beautiful and desirable in the world,” Galassi says.

However, by the late 1960s, Carlo Riva started to ease out of the business. In 1969, he sold the company to American firm Whittaker while remaining as Chairman and General Manager. Composite production started with the Bahia Mar 20 and Sport Fisherman 25 in 1970, but he resigned the following year, handing over the reins to Gervasoni, his brother-in-law.

“I had the good fortune to know Carlo well and I’ll always be grateful for sharing part of my journey with him. For me he was a mentor, an inspiration and an example of dedication and ingenuity,” Galassi says.

“He was obsessed with excellence and very strict with himself before he was with others, a quality that took his boats to the top of the world. He was not only a brilliant boat builder and a master of style but also a revolutionary industrialist and a pioneering entrepreneur to whom our country owes much. Riva is part of the heritage not only of the boating industry but of Italy.”

DESIGN & LEADERSHIP

Riva highlights from the 1970s included the Superamerica flybridge model, which launched in 1973 and had a 20-year production run in sizes from 42-50ft. In the 1980s, launches included the Corsaro 60 in 1982, while newcomers included a junior hire who would develop into Riva’s key designer for the following decades.

Micheli was in his mid-20s and had little interest in boats or design when he won a competition in 1984 to become an assistant designer in Riva’s technical office, with the art student going on to work alongside the esteemed Barilani and interior designer Mauro Pagani for many years.

Even Gervasoni was impressed by Micheli’s ability to draw freehand, although the-then CEO eventually left the yard in 1989, so ending the Riva family’s 147-year involvement in the company a year after it was bought by British group Vickers, which included Rolls-Royce.

The 58’ Bahamas, presented in 1991, was the first yacht Micheli worked on. Three years later, he teamed up with Sergio Beretta, a multi-lingual businessman and lawyer, to form Officina Italiana Design, which has since designed all Riva yachts.

“It’s natural,” says Micheli, when asked about the responsibility of designing for such an iconic brand. “It comes from my own instinct.”

Riva moved into its second golden era after returning to Italian ownership in 2000 when Ferretti Group bought the shipyard from Stellican, a London-based private equity firm.

Micheli worked closely with Norberto Ferretti, the Ferretti Group



Under Ferretti Group, Riva’s facilities expanded to La Spezia (top) in 2004 and Ancona (bottom) in 2014; the 110’ Dolcevita is among Mauro Micheli’s favourite designs

founder and then-Chairman, who would step away from the business soon after China’s Weichai Group became the majority shareholder of Ferretti Group in 2012. One of the pair’s early dockside discussions led to the development of the Rivarama, a 44ft one-cabin cruiser that launched in 2002 and sold 140 units.

However, when asked for his three favourite designs for Riva, Micheli first names an earlier model, the Aquariva, the retro 33-footer that has sold 260 units when combined with the Aquariva Super, which is among Riva’s current Open models.

“Aquariva is like a car design,” he says. “I’m proud because it has been produced for over 20 years with hardly any changes to the original design.”

His other two favourites are the Rivamare – the 39-footer that launched in 2016 and sits above the Aquariva in the Open range – and the then-flagship 110’ Dolcevita, which debuted at the Monaco Grand Prix in 2018 before turning heads at that year’s Cannes Yachting Festival.

“I love the Rivamare and also the 110’ Dolcevita, which is totally different, a big boat yet has also had great success in the market.”

Beretta, Micheli’s business partner, says Riva’s unique heritage is ingrained in the design studio, but that the brand and its boats keep evolving, reflected in the move into larger sizes, new technologies and design changes. Last year, hard tops even began appearing on Open models, firstly as an option on the Dolceriva (48ft) and 56’ Rivale, then as standard on the new 68’ Diabale.

“Every year, new elements become part of the new Rivas,” Beretta says. “With each model, we try to include a contemporary touch, and this becomes part of the brand. Riva is still classic, but it’s a dynamic brand that’s always evolving, not stuck in the past.”

Beretta pinpoints the flagship 50Metri as an example of Riva’s timeless style, saying it doesn’t have the attention-grabbing features of

many similar-sized superyachts but will stand the test of time.

“Riva boats don’t go out of fashion. For example, I think the 50Metri gets more appreciation the more time passes. It was designed with that intention, not to be flashy but long lasting in its appeal.”

Although the scale of the 50Metri distances it from Riva’s classic mahogany runabouts from its first golden era, the brand’s first steel megayacht provides a continuation of Carlo Riva’s vision and ambitions.

In the 1960s, his designs included the Caravelle (74ft) and Atlantic (88ft) series built in the Netherlands, while other designs included the 100ft *Vespucci* built by CRN in 1978. However, he passed away two years before first 50Metri was unveiled in 2019.

“One of my greatest satisfactions in work coincides with an equally great sorrow, because unfortunately Carlo was never able to see the Riva 50Metri, the crowning achievement of his dream of the steel and aluminium superyacht,” Galassi says.

“When I talked to him about it, he told me, ‘Make her beautiful and make her different, so you recognise she is a Riva’. I think he’d be extremely proud of this unique work of naval art.”

Carlo Riva gave the brand an unrivalled legacy in yachting. And with the company now well into its third decade under Ferretti Group, the signs are strong that Riva is in good hands as it navigates its way towards its 200th anniversary.

“Without a doubt, Riva will maintain its global appeal in the coming decades. Riva is a timeless icon of beauty, which has passed through various eras, gaining more and more fans and acclaim,” Galassi says. “‘I’ve got a Riva’, ‘I’ve seen a Riva’. These are words that will always make the heart beat faster.”

www.riva-yacht.com
www.ferrettigroup.com

Ferretti Group organised a lavish private premiere for the first Riva 50Metri in Venice in June 2019



Sergio Beretta and Mauro Micheli of Officina Italiana Design; Aquariva (33ft), Rivarama (44ft) and the Rivale (52ft) all sold in triple figures

