



# la grande multihulls

The beating pulse of the multihull world is most acutely felt at its largest show, La Grande Motte on the South West Mediterranean coast of France, a place I attend annually to meet with designers, builders and of course buyers, reports **KEVIN GREEN.**

La Grande Motte is ground zero for the global multihull industry which France dominates, representing 75% of the entire global market with about 850-900 boats annually from giants like Lagoon, Fountaine Pajot, Catana and others; with only South Africa's Robertson&Caine (Leopards) coming close elsewhere. Mass producers aside, La Grande Motte is the place to see much more than this, thanks to a variety of niche builders that this year included slick performance boats like the daggerboard Marsaudon TS5, a stylish ITA 14.99, the powerful EOS 54 and the world's first folding catamaran, the Futura 54; among the many others.

Production cruising catamarans dominate so important premiers to note this year included the Bali 4.3 power catamaran, the Lagoon 46 and various performance orientated cruisers including McConaghy's first hull of the slick MC50. The Catana Group's Bali range reflects the strong demand for comfortable cruising boats, and this show had their flagship 5.4 which won best in category. Having sailed the Bali 5.4 for 400

miles during a delivery last year, I found it a comfortable and functional cruiser with the brand's renewed emphasis on sailing a success.

Another show winner was the the Sunreef Open 40 that took out the power catamaran award. Inspecting another Sunreef model, the new 60 at La Grande Motte again confirmed for me the high standard of finish and engineering on these Polish built yachts. The 60 footer from the Polish yard (under French ownership) that specialises in large vessels, ticks many boxes for a sailing catamaran and is firmly in the luxury category thanks to lavish furnishings with good practicalities such as a huge flybridge and crew quarters. Its upcoming larger sibling, the powercat Sunreef 80 debuts at Cannes 2019 and will have an immense flybridge for elevated navigation and lounge with spa pool.

Interestingly, another award winner was a modest trimaran from Danish builder Dragonfly with its redesigned 32 model. Given that trimarans are the fastest vessels on the planet, the

La Grande Motte is the show on the South West Mediterranean coast of France which is ground zero for the global multihull industry which France dominates, representing 75% of all production. *Image Kevin Green*



**FROM TOP:** Typical of a modern powercat, the new Bali 4.3 emphasizes both open and enclosed spaces while giving many frugal miles in displacement mode or at 23kts top speed in semi-displacement. *Image Kevin Green*

The new Dragonfly 32 is fun and portable, so an ideal trimaran for the sailor seeking some performance with convenience. *Image Kevin Green*

McConaghy's angular carbon structured MC50 looked right at home in La Grande Motte. *Image Kevin Green*

32 is an ideal starter boat for speedy sailors. Similarly, I received good sea trial reports from a fellow journalist who sailed the foil assisted Libertest 353 trimaran from Rega Yachts – a Polish/South African project that involved the respected Southern Wind Yard. Seeking more comfort on three hulls took me to Eric Bruneel's fleet of beautifully made trimarans, with the new Neel 47 proving particularly popular with visitors. As Eric has reminded me, trimarans have their weight centred and in a fast hull so are efficient on all points of sail.

### ASIAPACIFIC BOATS

Multihulls are built across many parts of the AsiaPacific and were well represented, either on the water or in the booths. Among the prominent Chinese builders attending this year included Aquila Boats, the performance HH yard and McConaghy's who brought hull number one of the sleek MC50. As already mentioned they are launching a power version of the MC60 as well. Named 59P, it's a light boat with the same loftstyle layout as the sailing version and has a top speed of 26kts from twin 370hp's. This is another creation from the pen of English designer Jason Kerr, more well known for his race boats. The MC50 yacht that I inspected during La Grande Motte had a lavish owner's hull and flybridge navigation with cool colours and promised premium performance.

Chinese Aquila had impressed me when I did a sea trial on its flybridge 44 powercat which sported pioneering bulbied bows and a quality finished interior. For 2019 this boat comes with new three cabin interior but retains the deck-level master cabin, a major attraction of this model. The yard's experience includes building Leopard catamarans and the Sunsail 38 models, so it wasn't surprising that American charter company MarineMax approached it in 2011 to build the Aquila range of power catamarans. The latest is the versatile style Aquila 32, a semi-open cockpit outboard motor design with huge swim platform (ideal for water



sports) and single double cabin. The 32 reflects the growing trend for simpler power – outboards that are more cost-effective and easily replaced.

Another Asian based builder is Seawind in Hoh Chi Minh City which has launched several new models recently including the stylish Reichel Pugh designed 1600 that garnered attention at La Grande Motte. This is a powerful performance-cruiser with a high level of detailed finish, as I found during a recent sail test. Also launched recently has been the the Seawind 1260 blue-water cruiser, along with its first daggerboard model in 2018, the 1190.

Asia's emerging answer for those seeking sailing performance comes from the Chinese HH yard, which continue to create elegant performance boats to rival the Gunboats, so it was good to meet up with them to discuss their upcoming sailing catamaran, the HH 50 that company spokesperson Tin Lan Huang talked me through. Creating a sporty feel, outboard

The Italian ITA 14.99 uses carbon structures, slim hulls and has an owner's layout. *Image Kevin Green*

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helm stations are used and curved daggerboards generate lift as well as enhanced windward capabilities. Interestingly, both carbon and e-glass GRP versions are available for the build. A new concept 56 powercat is also on the drawing board, penned by the credentialed Morelli & Melvin design house. Gunboats are now made in La Grande Motte by new owner The Grande Large Yachting Group which recently launched the Gunboat 68. This company's most prominent marque is the legendary Outremer catamarans which included the revamped



51 and 45 at the show but pontoon gossip alluded to a new 55 model in 2021.

Solving the width problem of multihulls is what Triac Composites (Vietnam) have done with the new Rapido 50 trimaran, a scale model I inspected at A booth onshore at La Grande Motte. The world's fastest yachts are trimarans but the downside is inside space and of course berthing, so new approaches to both of these negatives are welcome. Triac boss, the renowned trimaran Australian specialist Paul Koch, engaged South African designers Morrelli & Melvin to create this ocean going sailing yacht that has folding amas. A smaller version of their conventional R60, yet the R50 can halve its beam (10.38m down to 5.5m) to reduce marina costs. A similar design to the Danish made Dragonfly, these boats offer performance with four comfortable berths. Talking with company boss Paul Koch, who has been based in the region for over a decade, addressing the need for thrilling boats is his raison d'être. "We beat a TP52 to windward during Hamilton Island race week last year, which shows the capabilities of our trimarans." A Hong Kong resident was a recent recipient of their last boat launched.



**TOP:** The powerful new EOS 54 comes from the pen of Christophe Barreau, who is synonymous with fast cruising catamarans but this one has more crew protection and a semi-custom build that can be tailored to owners. *Image Kevin Green*

The Futura 54 folds its hulls using hydraulic rams, making it ideal for the inland waterways of Europe as well as coastal hops. *Image Kevin Green*

reaching double-digit speeds during my sea trial. Another prolific French company is Nautitech, who have a long history in catamarans so it was good to meet new boss Gildas Le Masson, a former Beneteau manager, who is determined to shake the Rochfort builder up. "My main priority is revamping our Nautitech 46 to launch at Cannes 2019 and increasing production from 75 to 100 boats this year," he told me.



Another likely best seller that debuted at La Grande Motte was the Lagoon 46 sailing catamaran, part of a continual revamp of the range that included the final demise of the hugely popular Lagoon 380; a boat that I particularly enjoyed over the years. The standard of finish inside the Lagoon 46 was outstanding, something that sealed the deal for American visitor Peter Moore who told me about his buying decision while we sailed hull number one along the coast from La Grande Motte. Another quality production contender is the new Privilege Serie 5 Hybrid that gleamed in the sun at the show. Powered by Torqueedo Deep Blue Hybrid drives outputting 50kw and a powerful sailing rig, this French marque continues its quality innovation.



**TOP:** Marsaudon Composites changed ownership last year which has given the French builder and owner Samuel Marsaudon renewed impetus as this powerful TS5 performance cruiser designed by Christophe Barreau testifies to. *Image Kevin Green*

**ABOVE:** A classic modern sailing catamaran, the Leopard 45 has been revamped for 2019 with remodelled interior but continues with the signature foredeck cockpit. *Image Kevin Green*

Not to be outdone, industry giant Fountaine Pajot had most of its range on show, including the excellent entry-level Lucia 40 but was keeping the wraps on its new

### MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Production cruising boats in the 40-50ft is the bulk of the market, a place where buyers are flocking to from monohulls and from gas guzzling sports powerboats. Leading contenders in this market are the French Bali range.

Among them is the already mentioned flagship 5.4, a vast sailing yacht yet with performance. For 2019 their power catamaran 4.3 equally gave more of the same – three huge living areas and a frugal consumption while

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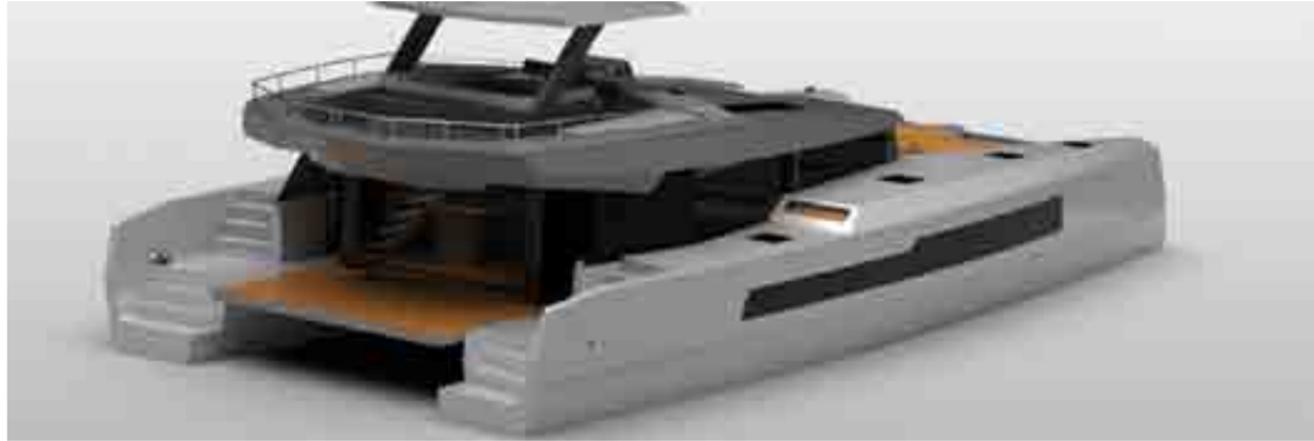
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**TOP:** Sistership powercat to the 60 is the upcoming MC59P with twin 370hp's from China based McConaghy Boats.

**ABOVE:** Smallest cruiser at the Show, the 34ft Aventura also has a powercat sistership – all built by STGI in Tunisia with internal designs by the Lasta Studio (that did the Bali range). *Image Kevin Green*

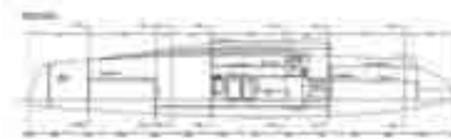
45 model until Cannes 2019. Good news for petrol heads is its upcoming powercat version of its grand bateau, the Alegria 67 with (300hp shaft drives). Clearly a superyacht, was my conclusion during a walk-through last year. The Alegria 67 is ideal as a crewed vessel thanks to commercial standard galley in the hulls and the dedicated entertaining space in the saloon. South African Leopard had a strong fleet at the show despite no new boats but the revamped Leopard 45 sailing cat that I found to be surprisingly agile looked good with its updated saloon while alongside its fast powercat PC43 continues to draw buyers.

The other big production news at the show was a busy booth with the name Excess splayed across it where I met commercial director Thomas Gailly of CNB to discuss the details of the first models, the 12 and 15, that

will debut in Cannes 2019. Shrugging aspersions that these came from the same moulds as Lagoons – “we only use the nacelle” – this new marque is set to make a big splash as the Beneteau owned builder CNB ramps up production facilities at Bordeaux in preparation (and moves monohull production over to the MC Yachts facility in Italy). Intended as a sportier version of its market leading Lagoon brand; the new catamarans will range from 37-50ft. Designed by industry leading designers VPLP, it was interesting to meet up with this prolific duo (Vincent Lauriot Prevost and Marc Van Peteghem) to discuss the multihull scene and specifically their Excess design. “Most catamarans are centred around being comfortable while there are also extreme performance versions, so we conceived Excess as being in the middle ground between them,” Marc Van Peteghem told me over a coffee.



## THE KEY TO MAXIMUM PERFORMANCE



### + Specifications

LOA	12.80 m
MAIN HULL - BEAM OA	3.55 m
BEAM DWL	1.06 m
SAILING WEIGHT	Approx 3,500 kg - 3,700 kg

**Venom** designed by **Tony Grainger** and under construction at **ACM Yachts**, explores the boundaries between high performance cruiser and lightweight racer. The fine main hull of the R42 has just enough creature comforts below decks for cruising, while the ultra-lightweight composite construction, ensures she will be in the action at the front end of major race series.

Hull construction is **DuFLEX Composite Strip Panels** cored with 15mm **Divinycell H80** structural foam laminated with 200grm carbon unidirectional reinforcements to provide extra stiffness for increased performance. The DuFLEX Strips were planked over temporary frames to create the hull shell.

The more compound sections of the main hull were constructed with Divinycell H80 plain foam, in a variety of thicknesses, and **Divinycell H100** and **H200** have been used in specific high load areas to provide extra toughness in this high speed hull.

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