



ISLAND PACKET 349
Domestic Boat of the Year



JEANNEAU SUN ODYSSEY 490
Import Boat of the Year

2019 BOAT of the YEAR

Hail to the Chiefs

Monohulls, catamarans and a trimaran too! In a fleet dominated by some of the world's largest high-volume production boatbuilders, 22 boats from six nations gathered along the shores and on the waters of Chesapeake Bay to compete in the model year 2019 edition of *Cruising World's* coveted Boat of the Year awards. When the spray had settled after sea trials conducted in breezes both light and boisterous, a worthy selection of winners in eight separate categories were crowned. Topping the list of champions was a pair of overall winners for 2019: The Island Packet 349 is the Domestic Boat of the Year, and the Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 490 is the Import Boat of the Year.

Story by Herb McCormick, Photos by Jon Whittle

Every year, it seems, the list of nominees for our annual Boat of the Year competition takes on a collective identity of its own. In the years following the great financial crisis of nearly a decade ago, there was a rash of imports from all points on the international compass rushing in to fill a vacuum left by many U.S. builders that were either outright casualties of the distressed economy or scaling back operations until the smoke cleared. It was difficult to tell what the future held.

Then, for the next several editions of Boat of the Year, the big stories were often the big cats — specifically, the huge influx of catamarans that seemed to dominate the new-boat market as well as the docks of the U.S. Sailboat Show in Annapolis, Maryland, where BOTY judging takes place each year.

So, what was the overriding theme for model year 2019? Well, it was a year dominated not by boutique builders focused on a relatively limited run of high-quality heirloom yachts (though the Hylas 48 will certainly play that role for a select few lucky owners, as will the Tartan 395 and Wauquiez Pilot Saloon 42), nor by a herd of stampeding cats.

No, 2019 will be remembered as a year for an influx of production boats from some of the planet's largest high-volume builders. And their aim, in a couple of notable instances, wasn't just to make a splash in the market, but to take no prisoners while doing so.

How else would you explain the very similar strategies of the massive German boatyard Hanse, and the aggressive approach of the French builder Jeanneau, both of which covered all the bases with fresh launches in the 30-foot sector (the Hanse 348 and the Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 319), the 40-foot range (Hanse 418 and Sun Odyssey 410) and even the 50-foot category (Hanse 548 and Sun Odyssey 490)?

And not to be outdone over there in the "kitty corner," how about Lagoon Catamaran saturating the market with a sweet Lagoon 40 and a Lagoon 50? Heck, taken together, these three builders — Hanse, Jeanneau and Lagoon — accounted for nearly half of the 22 brand-new boats introduced in Annapolis last fall. Add in a couple of cool boats from another set of perennial French production builders (the Beneteau 46.1 and the Dufour Grand Large 360), and a pair from Denmark's prolific X-Yachts (the Xp 55 and X 49) and you've got what you might call a juggernaut.

That's not to say there wasn't some real innovation and forward thinking, and a lot of that came, perhaps not surprisingly, in the two dedicated multihull classes. A trimaran, the Neel 51, was one of the Annapolis show's real head-turners, and more cats from South Africa (Leopard 50), Vietnam (Seawind 1260) and, naturally, France (Bali 4.1, Catana 53, Fountaine Pajot Astréa 42) ensured that there was plenty of variety for those who enjoy their sailing on more than one hull.

As always, judging took place during and after the show in Annapolis, in a process with two components: dockside visits and sea trials. At the dock, our three-man panel of independent judges considered each boat's layout and design, construction, systems installations, safety factors and livability. Underway, the judging team performed anchoring and emergency-steering tests, and put each boat through its paces under power and on all points of sail. For details on the judging team, sailing conditions, methodology and motoring tests, please see pages 96 and 97.

And in the pages that precede that wrap-up, check out the composition of the individual classes and their respective winners. Yes, it was a big year for foreign builders, but with it came a welcome return to the winner's circle from Island Packet, one of America's best-loved brands. You can call it a win-win situation.

CIRCLE OF WINNERS

- 78 Domestic Boat of the Year
- 79 Import Boat of the Year
- 80 Best Midsize Cruiser Under 38 Feet
- 82 Best Midsize Cruiser Over 38 Feet
- 84 Best Full-Size Cruiser Under 48 Feet
- 88 Best Full-Size Cruiser
- 90 Best Cruising Catamaran Under 50 Feet
- 92 Best Cruising Multihull Over 50 Feet
- 94 Best Value
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Happy Return



Let's get this out of the way right off the bat. In a resounding return to national prominence after a change of ownership that resulted in a few seasons of sitting on the sidelines, Island Packet Yachts has returned, and in a big way. Its comeback boat, the 37-foot-10-inch **Island Packet 349**, is Cruising World's **Domestic Boat of the Year** for 2019.

"The firm's new owners, Darrell and Leslie Allen, were longtime Island Packet dealers in San Diego," said Tim Murphy. "They've bought the rights to all the designs, and they've got the molds. This new boat was based on the hull of the old Island Packet 36, with the addition of a sugar-scoop transom and

continuation of that."

What, exactly, does that mean? Well, rest easy, Island Packet fans, original founder and designer Bob Johnson remains a consultant, and his iteration of a full keel will still grace the underbody of IP's yachts. But the Allens are open to tweaking the interiors of their boats, which is something new, and — holy cow! — your IP no longer needs to have the famous ivory gelcoat. Yes, you can identify with each other. It feels like it's going to be a

lot of other tweaks, large and small. Say what you will about Island Packet, but they've got a very, very devoted following, and this feels like a company that's going to stay very well connected to that group. I wouldn't call it a 'cult,' but they're sailors who really identify with each other. It feels like it's going to be a

Longtime fans of Island Packet will be glad to see the familiar profile and sheer line remain (above). The interior plan is extremely welcoming to a cruising couple (below).



"The sail plan is terrific," Murphy said. "It has a really nice solent rig with an inner headsail for short tacking, but when you're on a longer reach, you have a code-zero-style reacher that's right there and very accessible. I think the sail plan makes up for all the wetted surface of the full keel. During our sea trials, in only about 8 knots of true wind, the boat labored a bit under the jib, but once we put out that reacher, it really lit up. I was pleasantly surprised by how well it sailed."

"The saloon doors have proper hatch locks that are very clever," said Alvah Simon. "The benches were long enough to sleep on, which cruisers do. The placement of the winches and sheets is good. They have a traveler forward, and a proper binnacle with a single wheel. The lifelines are high and coated, which is something I always like. Everywhere you go on the boat there's a stout, shiny rail to hang onto; there are no finger jammers or knuckle breakers in there. It's all very nicely done. The whole boat will make an elegant, heavy, easy to handle, safe home. It's old fashioned, and I mean that favorably."

"The deck is cluttered, but in a good way," said Ed Sherman. "Everything there is a useful component. For example, there are lots of handholds. Looking at the deck, I envisioned the mold that had to be created to make it. It has to be one of the most complex molds that I have seen in the world of composite construction. Lots of indents, lots of curves, but the glasswork is beautiful. I love the boat. It's very different than anything else we looked at this week, especially compared to all the very contemporary designs with twin helms and wide transoms. But it's among the most well-built boats we inspected for 2019."

So, there you have it. Welcome back, Island Packet. We missed you. Nice to have you back on the water.

Sun Worship



Sometimes a boat comes along that does so many things well, and is such a downright joy to sail and maneuver, that its excellence simply cannot be denied. In 2019, one such yacht — a blend of innovation, intelligence and execution — rose to the top over a slew of worthy competitors. In a year when production boats ruled the roost, the **Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 490** — designed, conceived and built in France — took on and surpassed all the others, and in doing so, has been named 2019's **Import Boat of the Year**.

That the 490 took the overall prize without winning an individual category is noteworthy. But the Philippe Briand design sealed its trip to the winner's circle in a devastating display of sailing prowess during Chesapeake Bay sea trials conducted in a stiff northerly gusting well over 20 knots. The yacht was comfortable, easily handled and hauled the mail. The judging panel agreed

unanimously that it was a championship performance.

"They've done so many really nice things," said Tim Murphy. "It's easy to move around the split backstays. Going forward, it's the same with the inboard shrouds. And in those very gusty conditions, those twin rudders really worked. The boat answered its twin helms throughout the test sail. It was a real treat to sail."

"This series of Jeanneaus marks their eighth generation of boats," he continued. "They've built 18,000 boats by

THE PHILIPPE BRIAND DESIGN SEALED ITS TRIP TO THE WINNER'S CIRCLE WITH A RIPPING GREAT SAIL.

now, so this is a big company that's put a lot of boats out there. They're very aware of their market and their competition. And I really think they know what their potential owners are looking for in a yacht."



After a cold front passed through, the Jeanneau Sun Odyssey took flight in a fresh northerly (above). The interior is open, modern, light and airy (below).

"The deck access forward from the cockpit to the coachroof is one of the most revolutionary things I've seen on new sailboats," said Ed Sherman. "The cockpit is spacious and uncrowded. At the helm, it's one of the few boats where you can see the engine instrumentation. The company representatives made a big deal during our dockside inspections about how quiet the interior is underway. My decibel tests confirmed that. It wasn't BS. Motoring along, at slow rpm we recorded 66 decibels and a speed of 5.6 knots. At fast rpm we made 8 knots, which is perfectly adequate, and only recorded 69 decibels. I loved it."

"On some boats during powering tests, I throw the helm over and they're immediately unstable," said Alvah Simon.

"Not the 490. This thing

was a sled, it just turned right on a track, with authority. And once we'd raised the sails, just look how it stood up to its canvas. The ergonomics in the cockpit, including the winches, were nothing short of perfect. And I've always been skeptical about the chines on modern boats, but not anymore. They had the courage to take the chine the full length of the waterline where it actually creates more stability and even lateral resistance. Once you heel to 10 degrees, it digs in and stays there. I think that's what explains the stability. I'm not sure it would be as effective when scaled down to models with shorter waterlines, but with 49 feet they have the space to make these ideas work. This thing is truly a player. I think they've got a winner here."

Indeed they do, Alvah. Indeed they do.

Island Unto Itself



It's always good to see the marine industry introduce solid boats in the 35-foot range, an excellent size for a cruising couple to sail, manage and maintain efficiently, and one that sometimes gets short shrift in any given calendar year from builders focused on larger vessels with more lucrative profit margins. For 2019, four entries (the Dufour Grand Large 360, Hanse 348, Island Packet 349 and Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 319) vied for the title of Best Midsize Cruiser Under 38 Feet.

"I think we have three boats that are natural competitors to each other, and then a fourth boat that's a little bit apple versus oranges, comparatively speaking," said Tim Murphy. "The Dufour, Hanse and Jeanneau all cost under \$200,000, and are very close on their displacement/length ratios, right around

200. That means you can expect similar performance and comfort characteristics. With a price tag of \$330,000 and a D/L ratio of 278, the Island Packet is the outlier in this group."

The panelists liked the Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 319, but perhaps because of its shorter length, they did not feel it matched the features of its rivals. Alvah Simon was impressed by the

THE TWO FINALISTS HAD PASSIONATE DEFENDERS CHAMPIONING THEIR VIRTUES.

Dufour Grand Large 360, particularly its interior layout. "I liked the two-stateroom accommodations plan," he said. "I couldn't figure out which was the owners cabin. They were both spacious and equally balanced." However, neither the Jeanneau nor the Dufour advanced beyond preliminary discussions.



This Midsize Cruiser class was one of the year's strongest, with four solid contenders. Judge Ed Sherman made a strong argument for the Hanse 348, which he believes will attract lots of young families (far left). With a familiar sheer line and Hoyt jib boom on the foredeck, the latest Island Packet remains true to the brand (above left). The Dufour Grand Large 360 sports a purposeful, contemporary profile (below left). In a fresh October northerly, the Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 319 showed a nice turn of speed (above).

That's because the other nominees in the group had passionate defenders. Ed Sherman championed the virtues of the **Hanse 348**.

"I liked it a lot," Sherman said. "I liked the dual wheels in the cockpit. At first I thought twin wheels on this size boat were kind of ridiculous. But when we sailed it, they were great. The ergonomics in the cockpit area were terrific. I like the fact that it was a three-cabin boat. There was enough room down below to have a good time with a small family, and I think that's their target market, and it definitely addresses that. The systems installations and the fit and finish were all perfectly acceptable. And it sailed very well. I'm a Hanse 348 fan."

As it turned out, Sherman and his fellow judges were not

quite through with the Hanse (see page 94).

Simon countered Sherman's endorsement with his own strong assessment of the **Island Packet 349**. "On our test sail, I recorded speeds over 7 knots," he said. "Island Packets have not always had a great reputation for their sailing prowess, but this boat had beautiful Quantum sails and performed very well. The on-deck flow is good, and so is the nonskid. The pushpit and pulpits with seats and cleats were very well executed."

"Yes, it costs more than the Hanse, and the Hanse may deliver a peppier sail," he added. "But I think this new iteration of the Island Packet is breaking free from its old mold; the company has evolved and improved. I think this is a builder moving in the

right direction, and I'd like to find a way to help them. So, yes, compared to the Hanse it may take a little longer to get there. But when you're cruising, not racing, what's important is getting there. When you're talking about making long boards of 1,000 miles to the Galapagos, or 3,000 miles to the Marquesas, this boat can do that. To me, that's what makes it a handy little pocket cruiser, although we used to reserve that term for Pacific Seacraft Flickas and very small boats. By today's standards, this is a pocket cruiser, and it's a very good one. For me, for that reason, it rises right to the top of the stack."

It was up to Tim Murphy to cast the deciding vote, which went to the **Island Packet 349**, thereby earning it this year's title of **Best Midsize Cruiser Under 38 Feet**.

Here Comes *the Sun*



In terms of length overall, the four boats in the Midsize Cruiser Over 38 Feet class were tightly compressed, with one coming in at just under 40 feet (Tartan 395), another measuring in just shy of 43 feet (Wauquiez Pilot Saloon 42), and the remaining pair almost identical at 40 feet 6 inches (Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 410) and 40 feet 8 inches (Hanse 418). But from there, those contenders split tacks in several directions, and gave the judges plenty to consider before coming to their ultimate conclusion.

Alvah Simon was mightily impressed by the fold-out transom on the Wauquiez Pilot Saloon 42, one of the fleet's two raised-deck entries in 2019. Wauquiez is far from the only builder to accentuate this feature, but with an integrated swim platform, shower, boarding station and life-raft storage, "They've added 5 to 7 feet to the boat in terms of enjoyable and useful space, and that's a brilliant leap forward."

The panel enjoyed a sensational sail aboard the Tartan 395, and made special note that it was fantastic to have designer Tim Jackett and the Tartan crew once again a force in U.S. boatbuilding. With its carbon rig and twin headsails, the 395 topped off at over 7 knots in a fresh Chesapeake Bay northerly. Like Island Packet, Tartan is another American builder that has returned with a bang after a short hiatus.

The Hanse 418 was one of three models from the

German builder in the 2019 BOTY field, and it also received strong feedback from the judges. In particular, said Simon, "In my notes I wrote that their emergency tiller and emergency steering system was 'best in show.' In fact, it was the best I've seen in many years. It was light on the helm, the visibility was good and it's truly a viable way to get yourself home if

things go wrong."

Once again, however, the judging team found Jeanneau's mix of price point, performance and innovative features to be a potent combination. "This Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 410 is another domestic product, built in Marion, South Carolina," said Tim Murphy. "They've retained several themes we saw on the 490, including the

With clean lines and a straight bow, the Hanse 418 was one of three new offerings from the German builder (below). Along with the Hylas 48, the Wauquiez Pilot Saloon 42 was one of two entries for 2019 with a raised saloon (bottom). The Hanse and the Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 410 (opposite, top) shared similar lengths and price tags. In a fresh northerly, the Tartan 395 (opposite, bottom) performed well.



walkway where you come aft of the helms and then go out-board and up a sloping deck. You still have that almost hip-level pushpit. It's a very safe transition from the cockpit to the foredeck."

Simon also found the entire cockpit configuration intriguing. "They've done a very subtle thing, which is to slightly offset the companionway hatch and the cockpit table, so they've sort of created a favored passage forward there as well. Then, on the 'unfavored' side, they've found a very simple solution. Instead of installing a big 8-foot cushion that's going to take up the whole corner and blow away, they just put a little head pad up on the cabin bulkhead. It's a very smart, comfortable space. And I thought, these are simple and beautiful solutions. And you see that kind of thinking throughout the whole boat."

THE CONTENDERS SPLIT TACKS IN SEVERAL DIRECTIONS AND GAVE THE JUDGES PLENTY TO CONSIDER.

Finally, Simon also compared the sailing characteristics with that of its larger 49-foot sibling. "The stability is impressive," he said. "We sailed hard and turned hard, and always stayed under control. We just had total and instant response. We weren't going to round up at all. It wasn't a question. So it's a really nice boat that performed well. In a lot of ways, this was Jeanneau's year."

Truer words couldn't be spoken. For 2019, the Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 410 is CW's Best Midsize Cruiser Over 38 Feet.



All-Oceans *All-Star*

As with so many classes in this year's Boat of the Year competition, the judges faced a real quandary in determining **Best Full-Size Cruiser Under 48 Feet**. All three nominees — the **Beneteau 46.1**, **Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 490** and **Hylas 48** — came in within 2 feet in length of one another. The Beneteau and Jeanneau were incredibly similar, with identical price tags (\$520,000) and almost exact displacements (hovering around 24,000 pounds). By comparison, the Hylas was considerably heavier (34,000 pounds) and more expensive (\$830,000).

"The **Beneteau 46.1** and the **Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 490** are straight-up production boats," said Tim Murphy. "This Beneteau is very much in keeping with what we expect from that



builder; it's a fine boat. But that Jeanneau is an exemplary expression of what high-production yards are capable of, and we ultimately recognized it as such (see page 79)."

Murphy also summarized where the **Hylas 48** stood in the marketplace. "It's more of a boutique boat. It won't be produced in the same quantity as the others. And it's directly aimed more toward the actual bluewater sailor."

And as an example of a long-range voyaging vessel, for Murphy and his colleagues, they basically found it irresistible.

"You can feel that extra displacement in the motion of the boat," Murphy said. "It felt very stiff in a good way. There was a lot of traffic on Chesapeake Bay during our sea trials, but there was a very comforting motion as the boat punched through the wakes. It felt like kind of an old-school cruising boat. And the center cockpit is very nicely set up with winches right next to the helm to each side. You could easily go sailing by yourself on this very substantial yacht without any problem. Impressive."

"This is a sort of retro design, like a lot of Hylases I've looked at over the years, and that's not a negative comment," said Ed Sherman. "I've always been amazed how well the Queen Long boat-yard does. This was built by a very experienced Taiwanese workforce, and they're

artisans. They take what they do very seriously, and they do a very good job. They put metal plates in the laminate as backing for winches, and they're using stainless steel, not aluminum. I'm feeling really good about that.

"The service access is also great," he continued. "They have hatches and doors that open up and give you beautiful access to all the key service points you'll need to get to. And it was terrific sailing it. It's very traditional. Yes, the center cockpit is a little hard to get in and out of, but once you're situated, it's very comfortable. I could see spending a whole lot of hours in this cockpit. All the sailhandling controls are right

This Full-Size Cruiser class showcased two outstanding examples of modern production boatbuilding: the Beneteau 46.1 (below left) and the Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 490 (below right). But as a true bluewater voyager, the Hylas 48 (opposite) was hard to beat.



by the helm. The electric winches make furling and setting sails very easy, even the screacher. This would make a wonderful boat for an experienced couple."

"The stainless work is just

incredible," said Alvah Simon. "It's thick, it's heavy, it's gusseted. The pushpit, the pulpit, the stanchions, the lifelines — there's just no give. They're excellent. There are just so many

things that reflect quality and attention to detail. Yes, it's more expensive than the other boats in this class. But there's real value there too. It's solidly put together. It's a very elegant-looking boat. For

a couple who want and can afford this style of bluewater cruiser, it's a sweet ride."

There wasn't much more to say. Quite simply, the **Hylas 48** is 2019's **Best Full-Size Cruiser Under 48 Feet**.



Sea trials occurred over the course of four days. On all 22 boats, the judges tried out the anchoring system (above left), and during motoring tests, measured sound levels at two different revolutions per minute.



Tim Murphy takes frequent measurements on each vessel, and deliberations often hinge on the numbers (above right). In the end though, it's all about the sailing, and Ed Sherman and Alvah Simon enjoy a breezy morning sail.



Boat of the Year includes five days' worth of dockside inspections at the U.S. Sailboat Show in Annapolis, Maryland (top right). A favorite test for Alvah Simon is to gauge the difficulty of reaching the mainsheet winch on the cabin top from the helm (top left). Sea trials following the show take place rain or shine.



is not the usual galvanized steel but carbon. So they're really making efforts to get the weight out of the boat. Of course, that comes at a cost, and you're paying a premium. At \$1.4 million, this is the most expensive yacht in this year's fleet."

Under sail in about 12 knots of wind, the Xp 55 registered solid 8s of boat speed on and off the breeze — good numbers. But the Hanse 548, in less optimal conditions, also got the panel's attention. "We had a pretty darn nice sail," said Murphy. "In about

"IN TERMS OF PERFORMANCE, THE HELM WAS JUST SCARY HOW BALANCED IT WAS."

6 knots of breeze, our speeds were nearly the same as the wind speed. We were seeing 5.8 and 6, and the sailing felt really sweet. It's a very, very pleasant boat to sail. And at \$800,000, you get a lot of boat for the money. I think price points are important factors in this class."

Had the judges completed their sea trials for the week on the Xp 55 and the 548, they would've had some fine moments to remember. But — and there's no other way to put it — nothing compared to the sheer exhilaration they discovered aboard the X-Yachts X4⁹. We'll let them describe it in their own words.

"We'd had a day and a half of light air, and when we stepped aboard, I was afraid we wouldn't have enough wind to sail," said Murphy. "But then the breeze filled in a little. True wind was 5.2, and I scribbled in my notes, 'Boat speed 5.7, 6.' We were in not very much wind, and we were exceeding it when

The Hanse 548 will get up and go (top left). The X-Yachts Xp 55 is a true performance thoroughbred (above left). But the X-Yachts X4⁹ delivered the week's best ride (above).

we steered above 90 degrees apparent! This boat just lit me up. It was absolutely joyful, and it would be a



"X" Marks the Spot

In 2019, yachts over 48 feet were eligible to compete in the unlimited Full-Size Cruiser class, which drew three entrants (including two from the same builder): the X-Yachts X4⁹, X-Yachts Xp 55 and the Hanse 548. All three could also fall under the classification of performance cruisers, and they provided the judging panel with some of the best pure sailing experiences during this year's round of sea trials.

In fact, observed Tim Murphy, "The 'p' in the



X-Yachts Xp 55 stands for performance — the hull forms in the company's Xp line have less wetted surface compared to the firm's full-on cruising boats. The hull here is epoxy, but the internal grid that X-Yachts is known for

great passagemaker for that reason."

"Without question, it was the best-sailing boat we tested this year," said Ed Sherman. "In terms of actual performance, the helm was just scary how well balanced everything was. It was even quick under power — our fast cruise speed was over 8 knots, which I consider pretty good.

It was one of the quietest boats too, below 70 db. People need to understand that a lot of that is indicative of the quality of the build — no vibrating doors or rattling stovetops. That's just not happening on this boat."

"My impression during the dockside inspection was fairly positive, but sailing the boat reaffirmed those

feelings," said Alvah Simon. "It reinforced why we must always test-sail the boats. The sailing was just fantastic. It was a joy, and I think that's what people who purchase this boat will be buying into, the joy of sail."

Perhaps it seems counter-intuitive, but despite the difference in size, and even the difference in cost — the X49

comes in at \$850,000, or half a million less than its X-Yachts class sibling — the judges felt the smaller offering was the more enjoyable boat to sail, and it wasn't close.

It made their final decision a simple one. In unanimous fashion, the judging panel proclaimed the X-Yachts X4⁹ the **Best Full-Size Cruiser** for 2019.



From top: The wide-open floor plan on the Bali 4.1 is a serious party platform, but its sailing prowess was a surprise. The latest offering from Fountaine Pajot does a lot of things well. The Lagoon 40 scored high marks during dockside inspections. But the judges felt the Seawind 1260 was the best pure cruising boat (opposite).

Riding the Wind

With four boats that shared many common characteristics, the **Best Cruising Catamaran Under 50 Feet** class was one of 2019's most competitive. The quartet of yachts — the **Bali 4.1**, **Fountaine Pajot Astréa 42**, **Lagoon 40** and **Seawind 1260** — all came in at under 42 feet and recorded fairly similar displacement/length ratios. Other than the Seawind, in varying percentages each model was destined for duty in the bareboat charter trade. They were all very versatile yachts.

With a spacious layout incorporating a “garage door” that, when opened, transforms the entire living area into a seamless, inviting wide-open floor plan, the **Bali 4.1** is an ideal platform for living aboard and entertaining. “I thought that space was fantastic, and I was shocked at how well it sailed,” said Alvah Simon. But safety expert Simon also felt the

“LOOK AT THOSE STAINLESS-STEEL WELDS ON THE SEAWIND 1260. THEY’RE JUST MIND-BOGGLING.”

anchoring system was inadequate for full-time cruising, and the yacht did not advance in the competition.

The **Lagoon 40** scored high marks from the judges in the dockside inspections, and with a price tag of \$400,000, it cost significantly less (anywhere from \$60,000 to over \$200,000) than its competitors. With solid systems installs and top-shelf equipment, and plenty of aesthetic improvements over previous



Lagoons, that represented real value. But out on the water, where opinions are often swayed, the remaining two cats advanced with the judges.

As the deliberations continued, the two-boat battle was on.

The **Fountaine Pajot Astréa 42** is a boat that does a lot of things well, which reflects the dual purposes it will address: a boat that will be put in charter in some instances, and serve as a dedicated cruising boat in others. The judges spent a lot of time discussing helm stations; like many contemporary cats, the **Astréa 42** employs a wheel to starboard that’s raised from the cockpit.

“On the **Astréa**, we have a kind of modified bulkhead helm station that’s split into two, so you’re sitting behind a wheel with engine controls on one level, then you step around a pedestal, and there’s a walkway through to all the sail controls,” said Tim Murphy, who found the arrangement well-reasoned and efficient. It separates the two functions — driving and sailhandling — but keeps them in close proximity, even for a solo sailor. Everyone agreed it was a smart solution, coupled with a good layout and solid performance.

So, the question became: Did the **Astréa** meet its stated purpose, for private ownership and for chartering, as well as the **Seawind 1260** addressed its design brief, as a dedicated liveaboard cruiser without charter aspirations?

It was a question that



elicited spirited remarks from all the judges.

“Let me start with the Fountaine Pajot,” said Ed Sherman. “They did a lot of things really right. In terms of systems and wire labeling, all the workmanship was top-notch. I thought the glued-in keel concept was excellent. It made a lot of sense to me.

“But the one thing about the Seawind that I loved was the dual helms, as opposed to the **Astréa**’s single wheel,” he added. “It’s the whole visibility thing that we see on many cats, where the helmsman’s view is compromised on one tack or the other. That wasn’t an issue on the Seawind. And

the builder is doing a great job. You look at the stainless steel and the polished welds everywhere on the boat; it’s just mind-boggling.”

“These are both good boats,” said Simon. “But I think, given their respective missions, that the Seawind did a better job as a true cruising boat than the

Astréa did as a dual cruising/charter boat. Maybe barring places like the Northwest Passage and Cape Horn, to me the **Seawind 1260** is a boat that can take people pretty much anywhere in the world. I think it’s the clear winner as the **Best Cruising Catamaran Under 50 Feet**.” So did his mates.

One Cool Cat



In the quest to determine the **Best Cruising Multihull Over 50 Feet**, it soon became apparent that the contenders were nicely split between two sets of quite similar vessels. On one hand, you had two evenly matched 50-footers: the **Lagoon 50** and the **Leopard 50**. On the other was a pair of 50-foot-plus vessels, each of which crested the million-dollar price tag: the **Catana 53** and the fleet's lone trimaran, the **Neel 51**.

The two "Ls" are produced by a couple of the world's biggest catamaran builders, France's Lagoon and South Africa's Robertson and Caine. Both produce hundreds of cats each year, many of them bound for the world's largest charter fleets (the Leopard is also available in a dedicated charter version that's marketed as the Moorings 5000, while Lagoon says a solid 40 percent of its new 50's production run will be charter boats). Finding much to like about all four boats, and recognizing they were all conceived with different purposes in mind, the judging team decided to consider the **Lagoon 50** and the **Leopard 50** in a separate category: **Best Charter Boat** (see page 95).

That left the big cat and the big tri, dedicated long-range cruisers that Tim Murphy said squared up against each other very well. "I think the Neel and the Catana are very fair competitors against each other," he said. "They're not billed as 20-plus-knot thoroughbred racing multihulls, but they're very quick. They're promising 10 or 12 knots, but

day after day. I think they'll both achieve that. They both do a lot of really good things where their sail plans can be set up for knocking out those ocean miles. They're really miles-per-day boats, where you're going to see those 240-mile daily runs I think pretty regularly."

So there we have the similarities, and they are clearly impressive ones. What about the differences?

Well, perhaps obviously, trimarans and catamarans are inherently different, a point Alvah Simon made when discussing the **Neel 51**. "The builder had charts showing righting moments, stability curves and polar diagrams, and I like that because you can believe science, you can believe data," he said. But Simon also remarked that above and beyond the impressive figures, there's a tactile difference between a cat and a tri, one you can feel: "This

"WITH THE NEEL 51 AND THE CATANA 53, 240-MILE DAILY RUNS WILL HAPPEN REGULARLY."

is a good boat. It's a good concept, and it makes for light, fast multihull sailing, with easier motion, easier speed and easier sailing too."

There was a lot to like about the **Catana 53** as well, and Murphy sang its praises. "Catanas are built to be cruising boats for liveaboard sailors who want to sail fast and have fun," he said. "The construction of the boats isn't at the leading edge of technology, but they use technology well. It's Divinycell core, vinylester and E-glass



Clockwise from left: Thanks in part to its daggerboards, the Catana 53 is a spirited sailboat. The fleet's lone trimaran, the Neel 51, presents a striking profile. The Leopard 50 is also marketed as the Moorings 5000. The Lagoon 50's flybridge offers terrific views.

through most of the boat, but then they use carbon at structural points along the way. They've got good placements of crash bulkheads. I think it's a nice use of technology without being extreme.

"We had a whole lot of fun sailing this boat," he continued. "We saw 10 knots with the screacher up, and it was pretty sweet. Visibility from the helm, a topic we've been visiting with all the multihulls, was excellent. There were some nice things about the way the mainsail was set up, with double triangulated blocks and tackles on soft shackles that can be moved outboard so you basically end up with a really beautiful vang built right into it. I can just imagine doing lots of ocean miles that would be really lovely."

In the end, it was little things that tilted the scales. For instance, said Ed Sherman, the Catana was "very quiet with the engines running. With 3,000 rpm we were under 70 db in the main saloon." For the **Catana 53**, that relative silence was golden, and a reason it's 2019's **Best Cruising Multihull Over 50 Feet**.





Compact Cruiser



Value. How does one determine it? Price is most certainly a factor. In the case of new boats, and our Boat of the Year competition, it means something more. As sailors, we wish to recognize good boats that not only are affordable but offer other, tangible rewards. The ability to get couples and families out on the water, to have a weekend escape, to take them on coastal vacations and even maybe a sabbatical to the islands, all without breaking the bank. For 2019, the judging panel determined that one boat had the potential to do these things better than the rest, which is why they awarded the **Best Value** prize to the **Hanse 348**.

One of three boats with a

price tag under \$200,000 (the others being the Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 319 and the Dufour Grand Large 360), during sea trials the Hanse 348 wowed the judging team from the get-go. "In only about 8 knots of breeze, we were seeing 5.7 knots upwind and pointing very nicely, and even registered 6.5 knots once we cracked off," said Tim Murphy. "It's a pretty sweet little boat."

Alvah Simon agreed. "When we looked at it on the dock, I put a star next to it in my notebook and wrote, 'Good first impression, nice interior, fairly good layout.' That continued when we went sailing. The winches were well-placed. The basic cockpit ergonomics made things nice. It's a relatively little boat with twin helms. At first I thought there wasn't room for them, but on a boat like this with a wide beam aft, they actually create space rather than take it up. They divide the working area up from the social area in a smart, safe way. Hanse isn't the only builder to do

this, but it's a concept that's been developed, and their take on it is quite good. It's just a winning idea."

But nobody on the judging panel was more impressed than Ed Sherman. "I really loved this boat," he said. "It had the most room of any boat in the Midsize Cruiser Under 38 Feet category. The helm area is just terrific. I thought the cockpit table and the multifunction display case just had a look of quality. It was really nice, with a compass right there in the middle. There were good, sturdy stainless-steel rails to

rest your feet on. I like the fact that it had a three-cabin layout and a single head. Pretty terrific, in my opinion. They use some composite through-hull fittings that we've seen on larger boats. I'm in love with those, just from a maintenance perspective.

"It was just a lot of fun to sail too," he added. "I think it represents huge value for a young family that's starting out in sailing and wants a nice, competent coastal cruiser. I'll leave it at that." And that was more than enough.

The self-tacking jib on the Hanse 348 makes upwind sail-handling a breeze (above). There's plenty of natural light flowing into the clean, contemporary saloon (below).



Room to Roam



There was certainly no lack of fine catamarans launched in 2019 that will soon be introduced to charter fleets around the globe and, in the years ahead, will shepherd many a happy crew on countless memorable vacations. French builders have seemingly made a cottage industry of placing roomy, well-appointed, comfortable cats into the charter trade, and this year they upped their usual ante with a host of new offerings from Bali, Lagoon and Fountaine Pajot. But when our judges were asked to decide which cat they'd choose among them all if they were off on a charter trip, their pick as the year's **Best Charter Boat** was the **Leopard 50**, aka the **Moorings 5000**.

The renowned South African builder Robertson and Caine has been supplying cats exclusively to The Moorings and Sunsail fleets for many years now, and between longtime naval architect Alex Simonis and The Moorings' own marketing maven Franck Bauguil, it's a collaboration that has the process down to a science. Put another way, this team knows how to manufacture fun. Their new 50-footer will deliver it in spades.

"It's already been determined that over the next five years there's going to be 200 of these built, so there's no question about the commercial viability," said Tim Murphy. "They have a 15-year track record of following



through with their plans; they know exactly what goes into the boats. It's probably going to be built with 5,000 or 6,000 man hours. Robertson and Caine know precisely what they're doing, and they do great work.

"Everyone involved did a really good job of following through on the design criteria set out for charter catamarans," he continued. "The visibility and traffic all the way through the boats; the communication from the helm station down and back to the social spaces; the safety and comfort of the cockpit, saloon and staterooms — all these things are addressed and implemented very, very well.

"One of the themes we have are the different kinds of social spaces you can create on a cat, specifically one of this size. There's the outdoor aft cockpit; inside the bridge deck, or in the saloon; forward of the coachroof; and up on the hardtop. Four spaces. The goal, specifically for chartering — when you have different couples, or groups of people like families — is having different spaces to have social interactions. And



No doubt about it, the Leopard 50 is a big, rangy 50-footer (top). Down below, the staterooms are sumptuous, inviting and perfect for a sailing vacation (above).

then, of course, there's the component of sailing and running the boat. So the test is how all these different spaces interact. Of all the nominees, I felt the Leopard/Moorings was the most successful at developing each of these social spaces, and integrating them. There's a flow in this boat through the living spaces that's independent of the sailing functions. So the social spaces are really unified in

that way. Not only that, but going up to the sun deck you have a dedicated stairway up to that area. It's completely separate from the sheets and halyards, and the helm. Once you're up there you're surrounded by seating and rails, so you're centered in that space the same way you would be in the cockpit."

What more is there to say? Well, other than "pack your bags."

BOAT	LOA LWL	BEAM SAIL AREA¹	DISPLACEMENT² DRAFT (SHOAL / DEEP)	D/L SA/D³	PRICE⁴	WEBSITE PHONE
Bali 4.1	39' 9" 38' 11"	22' 861 sq. ft.	19,621 lb. 3' 8"	148 18.9	\$570,000	dreamyachtsales.com 844-328-7771
Beneteau Oceanis 46.1	47' 11" 43' 5"	14' 9" 954 sq. ft.	23,356 lb. 5' 9"/7' 9"	127 18.7	\$520,000	beneteau.com 410-990-0270
Catana 53	55' 9" 53'	28' 2" 1,184 sq. ft.	32,480 lb. 4' 10"/9' 10"	97 18.6	\$1,350,000	catana.com +33 468 80 1313
Dufour Grand Large 360	35' 2" 29' 8"	11' 7" 763 sq. ft.	12,291 lb. 5' 1"/6' 3"	210 19.4	\$190,000	dufour-yachts.com 352-871-0362
Fountaine Pajot Astréa 42	41' 3" 41' 3"	21' 7" 770 sq. ft.	25,760 lb. 4' 1"	164 14.1	\$645,000	fountaine-pajot.com +33 546 35 7040
Hanse 348	34' 1" 31' 4"	11' 5" 630 sq. ft.	14,551 lb. 5' 1"	211 16.9	\$190,000	hanseyachts.com 978-239-6568
Hanse 418	40' 8" 37' 5"	13' 8" 936 sq. ft.	21,605 lb. 5' 9"	190 18.9	\$285,000	hanseyachts.com 978-239-6568
Hanse 548	53' 3" 48' 8"	16' 7" 1,485 sq. ft.	43,652 lb. 7' 3"	166 19.2	\$800,000	hanseyachts.com 978-239-6568
Hylas 48	47' 11" 42' 4"	14' 6" 1,373 sq. ft.	34,423 lb. 6' 6"	203 20.8	\$830,000	hylasyachts.com 786-497-1882
Island Packet 349	37' 10" 31' 5"	12' 6" 763 sq. ft.	19,300 lb. 4'	278 17	\$330,000	ipy.com 727-535-6431
Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 319	32' 1" 30' 11"	11' 4" 512 sq. ft.	11,244 lb. 6'	191 16.3	\$160,000	jeanneau.com 443-808-2944
Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 410	40' 6" 39' 4"	13' 1" 865 sq. ft.	17,417 lb. 7'	127 20.6	\$275,000	jeanneau.com 443-808-2944
Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 490	47' 3" 43' 5"	14' 8" 1,188 sq. ft.	24,890 lb. 7' 4"	136 22.3	\$520,000	jeanneau.com 443-808-2944
Lagoon 40	38' 6" 38' 6"	22' 7" 875 sq. ft.	24,001 lb. 4' 5"	188 16.8	\$440,000	cata-lagoon.com 443-454-2213
Lagoon 50	48' 5" 46' 11"	27' 7" 1,701 sq. ft.	45,921 lb. 4' 7"	209 21.2	\$900,000	cata-lagoon.com 413-454-2213
Leopard 50	50' 6" 48' 11"	26' 5" 1,716 sq. ft.	45,415 lb. 5' 3"	173 21.6	\$950,000	leopardcatamarans.com 954-926-8050
Neel 51	51' 51'	29' 2" 1,799 sq. ft.	30,865 lb. 5' 10"	104 29.3	\$1,100,000	neel-trimarans.com 860-536-7776
Seawind 1260	41' 41'	22' 3" 1,014 sq. ft.	18,077 lb. 3' 8"	117 23.6	\$500,000	seawindcats.com +84 2838733630
Tartan 395	39' 6" 33' 3"	12' 10" 794 sq. ft.	17,000 lb. 4' 10"/6' 2"	206 19.2	\$450,000	tartanyachts.com 440-392-2628
Wauquiez Pilot Saloon 42	42' 8" 38' 8"	14' 3" 972 sq. ft.	23,615 lb. 5' 5"/7' 1"	197 17.9	\$650,000	dreamyachtsales.com 844-328-7771
X-Yachts 4⁹	49' 6" 44' 7"	14' 9" 1,128 sq. ft.	28,440 lb. 7' 10"/8' 11"	143 19.4	\$820,000	x-yachtusa.com 860-536-7776
X-Yachts Xp 55	56' 6" 48' 9"	15' 8" 1,878 sq. ft.	37,088 lb. 8' 2"/9' 4"	143 16.2	\$1,400,000	x-yachtsusa.com 860-536-7776

(1) Sail area is working sail area. (2) Displacement values are for light ship; D/L=(D/2,240)(lwl/100)³. (3) SA/D = SA/(D/64)²/³. (4) Prices are quoted by builder with standard Boat of the Year equipment inventory; prices reflect currency values as of Oct. 31, 2018. For draft figures “/” denotes alternative options; “-” denotes variable draft on one boat.

Besides the obvious numbers used to describe a sailboat — length, beam, draft and sail area — *CW*’s Boat of the Year judges sometimes rely on sail area/displacement and displacement/length ratios, as well as decibels for sound while motoring, to compare similar vessels. One caveat, because sailboat design and building materials change over time: The design ratios work best when looking at boats of a similar era rather than comparing, say, a 1975 cruiser to a modern boat of similar size.

Let’s start with displacement/length. Displacement is a measure of how much water a particular hull form displaces, and length is, well, length. In general terms, the lower the D/L ratio is, the less water is being displaced for a given length, which would indicate better performance. Performance, though, often reflects speed, but not necessarily comfort underway. Long-distance cruisers might get there fast on a boat with a very low D/L figure, but they might not get much sleep along the way because of the boat’s lively movement in a seaway.

Sail area/displacement is a ratio that affects how much

horsepower a particular sail plan has to push a vessel. Most cruising boats today will have an SA/D number in the high teens and low 20s, with the higher the ratio indicating a more powerful rig. Again, the numbers can deceive. The trend today is toward sail plans with non-overlapping jibs. Boats sail just fine upwind, but the minute you bear away, the relatively small jib quickly becomes ineffective. This, in turn, has been a boon for the suppliers of colored sails, such as code zeros and cruising spinnakers.

Lastly, our BOTY judges measure the sound or decibel levels aboard every boat when motoring. Why? First, it’s hard to sleep on a loud boat, and if the crew can’t stay rested, it can lead to all sorts of other problems. Second, silence doesn’t come cheap. Besides a lack of proper sound insulation, rattles and creaks caused by poor construction can all contribute to the din. To put things in perspective, 50 db is equivalent to a quiet conversation at home, and 60 db is akin to background music at a restaurant. Noise in the upper 70 db range can be considered annoying; above 80 db, noise can become harmful after long exposure.

BOAT	MOTORING			FAST MOTORING			SAILING	
	RPM	SPEED (KNOTS)	NOISE (DECIBELS)	RPM	SPEED (KNOTS)	NOISE (DECIBELS)	WIND SPEED (KNOTS)	BOAT SPEED (UPWIND/REACHING)
Bali 4.1	1,800	6.4	67	2,700	7.5	72	6	3.6/3.1
Beneteau Oceanis 46.1	2,200	6.9	67	2,800	8	70	10-12	7.6/8.9
Catana 53	2,200	6.8	65	3,000	9.6	68	12-14	7.3/10.2
Dufour Grand Large 360	2,400	6.1	70	2,700	6.8	74	4	2.1/2.4
Fountaine Pajot Astréa 42	1,800	6.2	61	2,500	8	63	6	3.4/3.8
Hanse 348	2,400	5.5	68	3,000	6.5	71	7-8	5.7/5.4
Hanse 418	1,800	5.4	65	2,400	7.4	71	5-6	4/4
Hanse 548	1,800	6.9	62	2,300	8.3	66	7-9	6/6.8
Hylas 48	2,200	7.4	74	2,700	8.1	76	8-10	5.7/5.5
Island Packet 349	2,200	6	69	2,800	7	73	8-10	4.7/7
Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 319	2,000	4.5	62	2,900	6	66	15	6/5.6
Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 410	2,000	5.6	67	2,800	7.2	71	16-20	6.4/6
Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 490	2,000	5.6	66	2,800	8	69	16-20	7/7.6
Lagoon 40	2,000	5.3	61	2,600	7.7	67	12-14	4.5/6.2
Lagoon 50	2,200	6.5	68	2,800	7.5	75	8-12	5.8/8.3
Leopard 50	2,200	8.2	70	2,800	9.2	74	8-9	4.5/4.7
Neel 51	2,000	7.7	68	2,400	9.2	73	4-6	3.5/4.3
Seawind 1260	1,800	5.2	66	2,700	8.5	71	3-4	2.5/4
Tartan 395	2,000	6	68	2,700	7.4	72	10-15	4.3/7.1
Wauquiez Pilot Saloon 42	2,400	6.3	69	2,700	7.5	72	0	n/a
X-Yachts 4⁹	2,000	6.4	62	2,800	8.4	69	4-5	3.3/5.9
X-Yachts Xp 55	1,700	6.4	63	2,700	9	70	12	8.1/8.6

All boats equipped with inboard diesel engines.

Ed Sherman is the vice president of educational programming for the American Boat and Yacht Council and is the former chairman of the marine technology department at the New England Institute of Technology in Warwick, Rhode Island. An experienced racer and cruiser and Boat of the Year judge, Sherman is the author of four technical marine books, a frequent contributor to *CW* and other boating publications, and often works with boatbuilders, marine surveyors, field-service staff personnel and engineering staffs in the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia.

Cruising World editor-at-large **Tim Murphy** grew up living aboard a 41-foot ketch and sailing along the U.S. East Coast and the Bahamas. At age 18, he earned a 100-ton U.S. Coast Guard license and has worked around boats ever since, delivering them,

writing about them and teaching people how to use them. An independent writer and editor based in Rhode Island, he is the co-author of *Fundamentals of Marine Service Technology*, as well as hundreds of articles. He is the owner of a 1988 Passport 40, *Billy Pilgrim*, which he is outfitting for extended voyaging.

CW contributing editor **Alvah Simon** is a veteran cruiser and award-winning author whose harrowing, best-selling book about spending a winter locked in ice above the Arctic Circle, *North to the Night: A Spiritual Odyssey in the Arctic*, is a modern classic.

A two-time circumnavigator, Simon is currently based in New Zealand with his wife, Diana, and their 36-foot steel cutter, *Roger Henry*. Decades of sailing on small boats and tight budgets in far-flung corners of the world have honed his sense of practicality, simplicity and safety.



Tim Murphy



Ed Sherman



Alvah Simon