

# BEST BOATS 2008

AT THE FALL BOAT SHOWS OVER 40 BOATS WERE IN THE RUNNING FOR EDITORS' CHOICE AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN NEW-BOAT DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION. HERE'S WHAT WE FOUND → BY BILL SPRINGER



**T**here was a lot to see in this year's Best Boats fleet. Multihull designer and guru Chris White, monohull designer Jeremy Wurmfeld, and I combed the docks at the Newport and Annapolis sailboat shows in search of boats worthy of SAIL's Editors' Choice awards for innovation and overall excellence. We walked the docks, familiarized ourselves with the fleet, and spent lots of time debating the merits of what we found—from cutting-edge innovation to clever ideas for a better way to run jibsheets.

## → EDITORS' CHOICE INNOVATION IN MONOHULL DAYSAILERS

Every year there are one or two boats that create a buzz at the shows. This year, a new breed of "daysailer" had people on the docks talking and gawking. But unlike the buzz boats of the last few years—big, traditionally styled daysailers (with modern underbodies and construction) the daysailers that debuted at this year's shows are far from traditional.

### BRENTA 38

The Brenta 38, designed by Luca Brenta, is one of the Italian sports-car equivalents that attracted attention at this year's shows. Its low freeboard, open transom, ultraclean lines, single-point mainsheet, invisible traveler, and even its metallic paint job are just plain cool (and head-turning sexy). The wide-open cockpit has dual helm stations and two "couches" for guests. I say "guests" because, every—and I do mean every—sail-trim function is controlled by push buttons near the helm: That means the helmsman is the only working crew position.



Push-button controls (left) and sports-car appeal



A sophisticated hydraulic system provides the muscle for everything from main and jib trim to traveler and vang control. A boat like this won't be everyone's cup of tea, but it does take the big-daysailer genre in a new direction.

The Esse 850, which debuted last year, is another attractive example of Euro-styled dayboats



## → EDITORS' CHOICE INNOVATION IN A CRUISING MULTIHULL

Offshore, under 40 feet



### MAHE 36

Fountaine Pajot launched three new cats this year. The smallest—the Mahe 36—caught our attention because it has excellent bridgedeck clearance to keep pounding to a minimum and the accommodation plan is the biggest of the few sub-40-foot cats available today. The saloon is large, has excellent visibility through wrap-around windows, and connects seamlessly with the cockpit through large sliding doors. The galley is excellent, and there are three private cabins in the hulls. The com-



Bigger than you'd expect for a 36-footer

pany built many boats under 40 feet in years past, but the Mahe 36 gets the nod because sometimes the best "new ideas" are actually new ways of executing old ideas.

## → EDITORS' CHOICE INNOVATION IN A PERFORMANCE BOAT

Offshore screamer



### AKILARIA CLASS 40

Are you one of those people who read the dramatic reports from the Around Alone and other singlehanded distance races and say "I wish I could do that"? The Akilaria Class 40 may be just the boat for you. It's built to the French Class 40 box rule, which was created by a group of designers, offshore sailors, and naval architects in an effort to create a boat for shorthanded offshore racing at a lesser price that can double as a cruising boat for speed-hungry sailors. This water-ballasted thoroughbred benefits from the considerable R&D performed on behalf of the professional offshore-racing circuit that's extremely popular in Europe, and its (relative) affordability could foster healthy classes (both crewed and solo) over here. This boat brings the awesome world of high-speed offshore sailing from the realm of "I wish I could do that" a lot closer to "I just may be able to do that."

## → EDITORS' CHOICE INNOVATION IN A CRUISING MONOHULL

We'd love to be able to identify one boat as the best, most innovative cruising monohull. The truth is that the level of fit and finish of all the boats we saw at the shows was good, but we saw no dramatic design breakthroughs.

### CROSSCURRENT 33

If the Brenta is a Lamborghini, the CrossCurrent 33 is a Ferrari. It's got the low-slung, wide-open teak decks of the Brenta, but it's billed as a "day racer"—a comfortable daysailer that can be raced. The Cross Current eschews push buttons for conventional lines and winches that require old-fashioned elbow grease to trim.

With our time-constrained lifestyles, it shouldn't be surprising that big daysailers have attracted interest here in the States. The cool thing is being able to choose between classic American and Euro-styled boats.



Fast and functional

→ EDITORS' CHOICE  
EXCELLENCE IN DECK DESIGN

### DRAGONFLY 35

Many trimarans have double-digit speed potential, but not all of them have the interior space and the fit and finish of the 35-foot Dragonfly 35. That alone would be worthy of mention. But the



Unfold and go

boat gets the nod for its deck design. Most notable is the folding mechanism, which has the outer hulls swinging back on beefy hinges on the main hull. The Dragonfly's hulls can be deployed (or retracted) and locked in place with a single winch-powered line. Other worthy features: a 17-foot kayak can be easily stored in an ama, and the cockpit is equipped with a backrest that hinges up to support a cockpit tent.

→ EDITORS' CHOICE  
EXCELLENCE IN ACCOMMODATION DESIGN

Three boats are worthy of mention in this category. We chose the Etap 28s because its interior is wide open to maximize the available space, the light woodwork and durable dark laminated sole are both stylish and functional, and the head, galley, and nav station are bigger than you'll see on most 28-footers. The accommodations of Tartan 4300 and Island Packet 465 stand out because they both provide superior headroom, comfortable nav stations, and excellent joinery.



Etap 28s



Island Packet 465



Tartan 4300

→ EDITORS' CHOICE  
EXCELLENCE IN SYSTEMS DESIGN



The keel cants and the windward rudder retracts

### FARR 11S

Lots of high-end, professionally crewed boats sport canting keels. What makes the Farr 11s so interesting is that it's a 35-foot raceboat, and, according to the folks at Farr, is designed with a canting-keel system that's easy to handle by mere mortals—in other words, intermediate sailors. The foil arrangement reflects the design team's experience with serious big raceboats. Instead of using two canard keels fore and aft of the canting keel, the 11s sports a pair of retractable asymmetric daggerboards athwartships, just forward of the keel arc. The boat is designed to be sailed by six to seven intermediate sailors, but you'll need to be switched on enough to know instinctively where the keel and daggerboards need to be set at all times. ♫

#### EDITORS' CHOICE INNOVATION AWARD CATEGORIES AND CRITERIA

There are three main categories in which we make Editors' Choice Innovation Awards and three subcategories in which we make Editors' Choice Awards for Excellence in a particular area.

- Innovation in a Cruising Monohull
- Innovation in a Multihull
- Innovation in a Performance Monohull

Innovation is defined as the utilization of new technological concepts or materials, or new thinking in design; or as the application to sailing-boat construction, design, or ergonomics of technology or design from other industries or disciplines unrelated to sailing. We define a cruising monohull or multihull as one in which one can sleep and cook a meal; there are no such constraints for performance monohulls and multihulls.

We reserve the right to present Innovation Awards to more than one boat in each category. Conversely, if the editors deem that no boat in a particular category meets the criteria, no award shall be given in that category.

#### EDITORS' CHOICE AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE

At the editors' discretion, boats that do not meet the criteria for an Innovation Award—i.e., they display superlative but not necessarily innovative design in one or more areas—may be singled out to receive one or more of the following awards:

- Excellence in Systems Design
- Excellence in Accommodation Design
- Excellence in Deck Design