

# Best Boats Nominees 2017

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After racing ahead for some time at breakneck speed, the boatbuilding industry seems to have entered a period of refinement—which is probably a good thing. In recent years the sailing public has been witness to everything from lounging areas springing up in places never before heard of to twin helms on 30-footers and full-foiling performance aboard everything from beach cats to “cruising” multihulls. However, keeping up that kind of pace can just as easily lead to gimmicks as it can to real innovation. At the same time, “refinement” is hardly a dirty word. Whether it’s turbocharging a classic or extending a tried and true concept to a different LOA, the boatbuilding industry knows that neither the sea nor *SAIL*’s Best Boats judges suffer fools gladly. Here is a look at this year’s crop of nominees, keep an eye out for the winners in our upcoming December issue.

## Monohulls Cruising



## Beneteau Oceanis 41.1

An evolution of the successful Oceanis 41, the Beneteau Oceanis 41.1 picks up where its predecessor left off to provide a sporty cruising boat toward the middle of the company's extensive fleet. Upgrades include 1,200lb less displacement in the interest of speed and more room in the master stateroom forward: the latter has been made possible by the decision to place the mast farther aft. Twin wheels allow for clear sightlines forward as well as easy access to the boat's dropdown swim step. Sailplan options include everything from overlapping genoas to a 95 percent self-tacking blade jib. During our sail test in Miami, the boat proved peppy in light air.

Beneteau, [beneteau.com](http://beneteau.com)



## Beneteau Oceanis yacht 62

Beneteau's new flagship, the Oceanis Yacht 62, is a product of the combined efforts of the builder, the designers at Berret Racoupeau and Italian stylist Pierangelo Andreani. The result is a thoroughly modern cruiser with chines aft, twin rudders and a well-balanced sailplan. Other features include a Beneteau trademark mainsail arch, minimal overhangs and an aggressive combination anchor roller/A-sail sprit forward. Aft, the drop-down swimstep reveals a dinghy garage, while the cockpit is subdivided into separate sailing and lounging areas, providing plenty of room for the both the sailors aboard and their guests.

Beneteau, [beneteau.com](http://beneteau.com)



## Catalina 425

The Catalina 425 incorporates all of the storied company's hallmark features, including a functional, spacious cockpit, a comfortable, carefully detailed interior and solid build quality from stem to stern. The deck includes twin helms on performance pedestals, and the hull features six large fixed ports for lots of light and visibility. A self-tacking jib and jib traveler are standard, with main and jib sheets led to the helm for efficient short-handed sailing. Other features include a watertight StrikeZone collision bulkhead forward; the DeepDefense rudder system for failsafe steering; and a T-Beam MastStep structure, which offers all the benefits of both a deck-stepped mast and a mast stepped on the keel.

Catalina Yachts, [catalinayachts.com](http://catalinayachts.com)



## CNB 76

With 76ft of LOA to play with, it's hard to make a sailboat that isn't impressive. But the CNB 76 is about a lot more than just bulk, being a luxury yacht in the truest sense of the word, and coming with a double headsail rig that makes the boat easy to sail in everything from a gale to a drifter, even shorthanded. Other practical features include a voluminous dinghy garage, twin rudders, a retractable anchor roller and the option of aluminum or carbon spars. The raised saloon provides an uninterrupted view of the outside world, even when seated.

CNB Yacht Builders, [en.cnb-yachts.com](http://en.cnb-yachts.com)



## Dehler 34

Dehler has carved out a strong position in the midsize performance-cruiser market, and that position has only been made all the stronger with the introduction of the sharp-looking, Judel/Vrolijk-designed Dehler 34. According to Dehler, the boat is as “changeable as a chameleon,” in the interest of adapting to a wide range of sailing styles. Options include an all-teak deck and shoal keel for cruisers, or a “competition” version that boasts a carbon rig, deep T-keel, a deeper high-aspect rudder and laminate sails. Customers also have the choice between a tiller and double wheels. Talk about some fun decision making!

Dehler, [dehler.com/us](http://dehler.com/us)



## Discovery 57

An evolution of the Discovery 55—a boat that has any number of circumnavigations to its credit—the Discovery 57 carries on the company’s tradition of creating the ultimate adventure boats for sailing couples. To this end, the Discovery 57 has been made easier to sail than ever, with a double-headsail rig, twin wheels in a raised central cockpit and a sea-kindly Ron Holland-designed hull. The latter, in particular, is a feature that is often overlooked aboard today’s cruisers. To Discovery, however, crew safety and comfort are as important as speed.

Discovery Yachts, [discoveryyachts.com](http://discoveryyachts.com)



## Dufour 460

The Dufour 460 replaces the successful Dufour 450 with a completely new hull, deck and interior, and a design that carries additional beam aft in the interest of maximizing volume throughout. The 460 also features the company's forward galley placement, a Dufour innovation that has proved quite popular with the sailing public. Other features include chines aft, to provide additional stability, and a single, high-aspect rudder set well forward for maximum control in all sailing conditions. The rig is available with either a self-tacking blade jib or 108 percent genoa. A fixed sprit is also available for flying an A-sail.

Dufour Yachts, [dufour-yachts.com](http://dufour-yachts.com)



## Hallberg-Rassy 40MKII

Sweden's Hallberg-Rassy is well known for its conservative-looking, rock-solid bluewater cruisers, but that doesn't mean the company isn't capable of staying in step with the times. In addition to a taller, more powerful rig, this 40ft passagemaker includes larger portlights and two new hull windows to bring more natural light into the saloon. There are also new low-profile ventilators topsides—in keeping with the styling trends pioneered farther south—and another 6in of headroom belowdecks.

Hallberg-Rassy, [hallberg-rassy.com](http://hallberg-rassy.com)



## Impression 45

Part of Elan's Impression cruising line, the Impression 45 includes enough interior space to provide a nice solid "big boat" feel, while remaining easy to handle with minimum crew. Twin helms and a split backstay aft provide uncluttered access to the boat's large swim step at anchor, while chainplates close alongside the cabtrunk provide for a clear passageway forward. Moderate overhangs at both the bow and stern, along with deeper bow sections than we're used to seeing these days, suggest a more forgiving motion in a seaway.

Impression Yachts, [impressionyachts.com](http://impressionyachts.com)



## Italia 12.98

The Italia 12.98 boasts the same traditional lines as the Italia 13.98, only in a slightly smaller package. Like its big sister, it offers performance to burn, with its lightweight construction, powerful rig and aggressive, lead T-keel. The accommodations, however, remain elegant and well appointed, while the traditional reverse transom drops down into a large swim platform that is easily accessible through the split backstay and twin wheels. This is a boat that will not only take care of you on a cruise, but also do well on a racecourse.

Italia Yachts, [italiayachts.it](http://italiayachts.it)



## Marlow-Hunter 47

The Marlow-Hunter 47's deck-saloon design provides a lot of boat within the confines of its LOA. Belowdecks, the dining area to port faces a very generous C-shaped galley to starboard. Forward of that, a pair of cabins flank the passageway leading to the owner's cabin in the bow, in a layout reminiscent of a powerboat (no doubt the touch of the company's new owner, powerboat maven David Marlow). There is also no quarterberth aft beneath the boat's large cockpit. Leave it to Marlow-Hunter to re-think sailboat design this way! Topsides, the Marlow-Hunter 47 couples the company's tried-and-true mainsail arch with its equally tried-and-true B&R rig. It's an interesting boat that's well worth a closer look at this year's boat shows.

**Marlow-Hunter LLC, [marlow-hunter.com](http://marlow-hunter.com)**



## Moody DS54

A larger version of the DS45, which captured a good deal of press with its unconventional approach to sailboat design a few years back, the DS54 offers much the same—a “one level living” concept, in which little more than a sliding door separates the cockpit from an expansive, light-filled saloon, which then transitions down to the galley and cabin spaces. The “working” portion of the cockpit, which includes twin wheels, is slightly raised aft, and the boat's twin-headsail rig is well suited to shorthanded sailing.

**Moody Yachts, [moodyboats.com](http://moodyboats.com)**



## X-Yachts X4

The second installment in X-Yachts's new "X" range, designed to combine excellent sailing capabilities with a modern, spacious interior, the X4 looks similar to some of those boats built by its Gallic and Mediterranean competitors, with blunt ends, a plethora of windows and ports, and wider sections aft. Nonetheless, the X4 is still all X-Yacht, with a deep, aggressive, encapsulated lead keel, discontinuous rod rigging and Spectra halyards standard. The hull is also vacuum-infused in epoxy to ensure maximum rigidity and strength, and there is a nice big main traveler recessed into the cockpit sole—right where it should be.

X-Yachts, [x-yachts.com](http://x-yachts.com)

## Monohulls Performance



## Alerion Sport 30

The Sport 30 takes the Alerion concept of classic lines and sparkling performance to a new level through the use of a vinylester-infused hull with a foam core and carbon structural grid combined with a carbon-fiber rudder and belowdeck headsail furler. For those looking to really make a statement, both on and off the racecourse, there are also the options of a carbon sprit for flying an A-sail, an Edson wheel and Ocean Volt electric propulsion. As is the case with the entire Alerion line, the boat's traditional good looks are matched by the the boat's overall build quality.

Alerion Yachts, [alerionyachts.com](http://alerionyachts.com)



## Elan E4

A product of the same Slovenian company long known for its skis and snowboards, the Elan E4 draws from the organization's long history of building raceboats to provide a good turn of speed, whether racing or just daysailing. The boat's wide transom, chines and twin rudders promise excellent control even when the boat is hard pressed, while an aggressive T-keel supplies the necessary righting moment to stand up to the boat's rig. Other go-fast features aboard this Rob Humphreys design include a retractable sprit and a nice, big traveler set in the cockpit sole immediately forward of the twin helms.

Elan Yachts, [elan-yachts.com](http://elan-yachts.com)



## Italia 9.98

While the Italia 13.98, winner of a *SAIL* 2016 Best Boats award, may have been a wolf in sheep's clothing when it came to performance, the Italia 9.98 is all wolf. Designed to do well under both ORC and IRC, the hull and deck are constructed in vinylester and E-glass, with structural carbon reinforcements for additional stiffness. The aggressive T-keel is lead, in the interest of further lowering the center of gravity, the 9/10th tapered, double-spreader rig is aluminum, and the boat can fly either an A-sail or conventional spinnaker. Wheel steering is available, but we love that tiller!

Italia Yachts, [italiyachts.it](http://italiyachts.it)



**J/112e**

Carrying J/Boats's "E" designation for "elegance" and "evolution," the J/112e is an all-new design that strives to balance comfort, good looks and performance with an eye toward racing, "sport cruising" and family sailing. To this end, V-shaped sections forward, a long waterline and a low center of gravity serve to provide a smoother motion in a seaway. Equipped with J/Boats's trademark offset retractable bowsprit and a well-thought-out, ergonomic cockpit, the boat is also a pleasure to race, whether offshore or around the buoys. Finally, a carefully sculpted cabintrunk and deck score points aesthetically, whether underway or at anchor.

**J/Boats Inc., [jboats.com](http://jboats.com)**



**Salona 380**

The latest of a series of performance-cruisers produced by Croatia's AD Boats, the Salona 380's hull layup includes layers of carbon in high-load areas and a robust stainless subframe to support the keel, shrouds and mast, creating a stiff, durable whole. Topsides, twin wheels, a German mainsheet system, full-width main traveler and a large, ergonomically optimized cockpit speak to the boat's potential on the racecourse.

**AD Boats Ltd., [salonayachts.com](http://salonayachts.com)**

## Multihulls Cruising



## Balance 526

The latest in the well-crafted and equally well-thought-out Balance Catamaran line, the Balance 526 combines performance with a rig that's easy to handle for shorthanded sailors and practical accommodations for comfort afloat. Balance cats are more than just good-looking boats: it's the details that set them apart, and the 526 is no exception, as is evident in such features as an "all-weather" helm that includes a sliding hardtop and cantilevered wheel for escaping the elements. Systems have also been configured with easy repair and maintenance in mind, an often overlooked but important aspect of a boat's overall cost of ownership.

**Balance Catamarans, [balancecatamarans.com](http://balancecatamarans.com)**



## Bali 4.0

A product of France's venerable multihull builder Catana, the Bali 4.0 places a greater emphasis on comfort and space while retaining a respectable performance potential. Like its predecessors, the 4.3 and 4.5, the accommodations are wide open, with the cockpit and saloon on the same level with no bulkhead between them—only an immense folding door that can be swung out of the way to create a single, expansive living space. There is also a sunbathing area on the coachroof and a forward cockpit, complete with dining area. The result is a boat that is as pleasant to relax aboard at anchor as it is to sail.

**Bali Catamarans, [bali-catamarans.com](http://bali-catamarans.com)**



## Bavaria/Nautitech 46 Fly

Bavaria and Nautitech have taken the same “open” concept pioneered by the Best Boats-winning Bavaria Open 40—which maximizes the sailing and socializing space by placing the saloon and cockpit at the same level—and made it 6ft longer. Unlike the Open 40, however, the new 46 Fly offers an expansive flybridge and an elevated lounging area to take the open space concept to a whole new level, both literally and figuratively. Beyond that, the aggressively angular style looks just as good, if not better, at a bigger LOA.

**Bavaria Yachts, [bavaria-yachtbau.com/catamarans](http://bavaria-yachtbau.com/catamarans)**



## Fountaine-Pajot Lucia 40

The Fountaine-Pajot Lucia 40 is all about fun afloat, with an airy, light-filled accommodation plan that blurs the lines between the deck, cockpit and interior, creating an abundance of living space. The galley is cleverly positioned so that the countertop is equally accessible from both the cooking area and the dining area in the boat’s expansive cockpit. There is also a dedicated lounging cockpit forward of the cabintrunk, which will make for a great place to watch the world go by, whether at anchor or during a leisurely sail. It would be hard to imagine a more comfortable yacht for either cruising or chartering in such sun-drenched destinations as the Med or the BVIs.

**Fountaine Pajot, [catamarans-fountaine-pajot.com](http://catamarans-fountaine-pajot.com)**



## Gemini Freestyle 37

The latest evolution of the Gemini 105Mc, the Gemini Freestyle 37 eliminates the saloon/cabintrunk found on most multihulls this size, and in its place offers a massive cockpit that can be kitted out pretty much any way you like—think lawn furniture, bean bag chairs, whatever your heart desires. This kind of flexibility, in turn, makes the boat perfect for use as anything from a family daysailer to a commercial day-charter boat. An optional hard top is available. There's also a small space for getting out of the elements below and a compact lounging cockpit forward.

**Gemini Catamarans, [gemicatamarans.com](http://gemicatamarans.com)**



## Lagoon 42

Dramatic styling and a wealth of lounging and living space may be what many sailors first notice about this boat. Equally important, though, is its sailing ability—during our sail trial this past winter the boat proved to be heck of a lot of fun even in a drifter, conditions that for many cruising cats can be a real Achilles heel. The naval architects at VPLP also moved the mast aft just a touch, opening up the foretriangle and reducing the size of the main in the interest of making the rig more easily manageable for smaller crews.

**Lagoon, [cata-lagoon.com](http://cata-lagoon.com)**



## Lagoon 450S

An evolution of the successful 450, the Lagoon 450S SporTop catamaran includes a new saloon, cabins, rooftop, helm station and deck top layout, all with an eye toward maximizing comfort and ease of use afloat. As a practical matter, infusion molding construction techniques coupled with a VPLP design provide performance under sail, while the boat's trademark large cabintrunk windows admit an abundance of light into the saloon.

Lagoon, [cata-lagoon.com](http://cata-lagoon.com)



## Leopard 45

The Leopard 45/Sunsail 454 replaces Robertson & Caine's successful Leopard 44 and can be configured for either three or four couples for use in either private ownership or charter mode. Accommodations have been completely overhauled and a skylight has been added to the saloon to admit yet more natural light. The exterior lines also diverge from the more curvaceous shapes found in past Leopards, while a sleek new hardtop encompasses the entirety of both the aft and forward cockpits.

Leopard Catamarans, [leopardcatamarans.com](http://leopardcatamarans.com)



## Seawind 1160 LITE

A product of Australia-based Seawind, the 1160 LITE shaves weight off the company's well-established 1160 by losing some of the earlier boat's joinery work and swapping out the original diesels for a pair of four-stroke outboards. The upgrade also provides a performance boost, because the outboards can be completely retracted under sail, thereby further reducing drag. The result is a zippy coastal version of the renowned world-girdling bluewater cruiser that is the 1160, a boat that should be just right for a lot of multihull sailors out there.

Seawind Catamarans, [sewindcats.com](http://sewindcats.com)



## Xquisite X5

Don't let the dramatic styling of this recent import from South Africa fool you: the Xquisite X5 is also eminently practical, with a wealth of interesting details, including boarding ladders amidships for use by sailors moored alongside; solid handrails, as opposed to wire lifelines; and hull windows that are slightly recessed to protect them from being scratched by fenders and other objects. Underway, the boat boasts a high bridgedeck clearance to minimize slamming in a seaway and an anchoring system that can be deployed from the helm with just the push of a button. The cored hull and deck are infused, with E-glass and vinylester and epoxy resins.

Xquisite Yachts, [xquisiteyachts.com](http://xquisiteyachts.com)

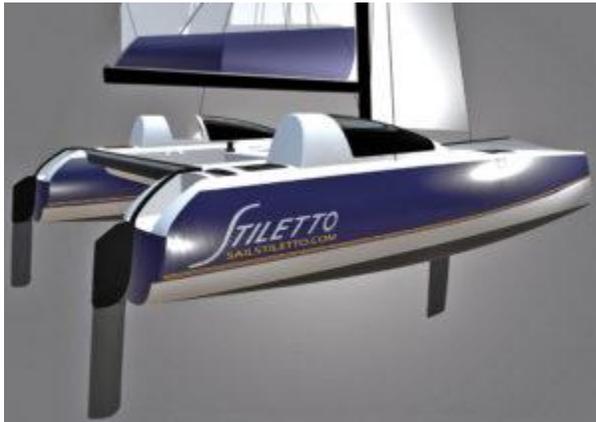
# Multihulls Performance



**Seawind 1190 Sport**

Another derivation of the Seawind 1160, the 1190 Sport offers a number of new features designed by multihull veterans Francois Perus and Alan Carwardine to further boost the performance potential of an already pretty nimble bluewater cruiser. These include daggerboards (as opposed to mini-keels); dagger-style high-aspect retractable rudders; a taller, double-spreader mast; a carbon sprit; a carbon-reinforced forebeam and targa arch; square-top main; twin outboards for auxiliary power as opposed to twin diesels; and reduced weight overall. Coupled with Seawind's well-established reputation for build quality, this looks to be a very impressive yacht.

**Seawind Catamarans, [seawindcats.com](http://seawindcats.com)**



**Stiletto X and Xf**

Sailors of a certain age may remember the dramatically styled Stiletto 27 launched in the mid-1970s. Now, 500 hulls later, the trailerable boat is back in an "X" version that has been redesigned for the 21st century with cutting-edge materials and modern features, such as wave-piercing bows and improved appendages. Better still, there will also be an all-carbon Xf version capable of full-foiling. Look for this trend-setting boat with an already dedicated following to take fun afloat to a whole new level.

**Stiletto Catamarans, [sailstiletto.com](http://sailstiletto.com)**

## Smaller Boats



**Fareast 23R**

Following in the wake of the Fareast 28R, winner of a *SAIL* 2016 Best Boats award, the Simonis-Voogd-designed Fareast 23R offers the same combination of performance and quality construction at an competitive price point, making it an attractive choice as a fast club racing boat. A square-top main, big foretriangle and retractable sprit for flying an A-sail provide plenty of horsepower, while a wide-open cockpit and simplified backstayless rig make it that much easier to sit back and enjoy the ride.

**Fareast USA, [fareastboatsusa.com](http://fareastboatsusa.com)**



**Saffier Se 26**

A recent import from the Netherlands—the birthplace of yachting—the Saffier Se 26 is a salty little daysailer that looks like just the thing for a bright and lively day out on the water. The expansive cockpit can seat as many as eight, and there's a retractable spray hood forward to keep your passengers dry. All control lines lead aft, with a vang, main traveler and belowdeck headsail furler all serving notice that this little boat can go in a breeze. While a wheel is available, this little sloop just cries out for the standard tiller.

**Saffier Mariteim, [saffieryachts.com](http://saffieryachts.com)**



## Sage 15

How refreshing in this age of ever-growing displacements to have a follow-up to a successful first design in a shorter LOA? Like the Sage 17, the Sage 15 is a Jerry Montgomery design that will serve equally well as a pocket cruiser or daysailer for experienced sailors and beginners alike. In a neat twist, the Sage 15 is available as either a sloop or with a cat rig. How cool is that? The molded-in lapstrake provides additional stiffness, and there is a small cuddy for getting out of the weather.

**Sage Marine, [sagemarine.us](http://sagemarine.us)**



## Seascape 24

The Seascape 24 offers the same combination of space and speed to burn that her larger and smaller siblings possess, with its twin rudders, powerful hull form, aggressive rig and wide-open, crew-friendly cockpit. At 24ft, the boat can legitimately work as an inshore family cruiser, thanks to its surprisingly large cuddy. The keel is also fully retractable, making the boat easy to trailer, opening up a world of possibilities, whether it's gunkholing, racing or just going for a daysail.

**Seascape USA, [seascapeusa.com](http://seascapeusa.com)**