

# BEST BOATS 2007

SAIL'S EDITORS' CHOICE AWARDS HONOR INNOVATION AND EXCELLENCE IN NEW-BOAT DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION. THE VOTES ARE IN **BY BILL SPRINGER**



SAIL's Best Boats program is designed to seek out and acknowledge true innovation and forward thinking; the awards are based on firsthand knowledge of the new boats we see at the shows. SAIL editors Peter Nielsen and Kimball Livingston, editor-at large Charlie Doane, and I combed the docks at the fall boat shows and have given Editors' Choice awards for innovation and overall excellence. But we weren't looking for just the cutting edge; smart ideas, like a new and better way to set up a mainsheet, a radical accommodations plan, or a breakthrough in design or boatbuilding technology, were candidates for an award. Best Boats is not a contest in which there are winners and losers, but rather a celebration of true advancements in every aspect of sailboat production, from technology to design and execution. Our goal is to discover and reward the ideas and refinements that propel sailing into the 21st century. Here's what we found.

**EDITORS' CHOICE** ★★★★★★★★★★  
**INNOVATION IN A CRUISING MONOHULL**

We gave our Editors' Choice awards in this category to two boats that push the envelope in useful ways.

## FAR HARBOUR 39

»» The boat that seemed to generate the biggest buzz at the shows wasn't a high-tech raceboat or another big daysailer. People were talking about the pencil-thin Far Harbour 39 because it's the first cruising boat specifically designed to fit into a standard-size shipping container. This is a new genre of boat that offers a new way to go cruising; sailors who want to explore distant cruising grounds on their own boats now have a quick and easy alternative to sailing there on their own bottoms. The entire boat (including the rig and 5-foot, 6-inch-draft bulb keel, which can be bolted on) fits into the same-size container that most of the world's goods are shipped in, yielding both protection and a dramatically reduced cost over transport on the deck of a ship. Packing and unpacking each takes about a day's work in a boatyard.

After a through inspection, Charlie Doane reported that "this boat takes cruising in an entirely new direction. Bob Perry has done an excellent job of creating an attractive boat that should perform well to suit a unique design brief." Peter Nielsen added, "Even though this boat will be



The Far Harbour 39 under sail and in the container (right)



The SP Cruiser's innovative forward cockpit



All sail controls can be handled in the pilothouse



boat apart is the novel circular cockpit located in front of the wheelhouse at the base of the mast. It's unlike anything else out there in providing the comfortable deck space that other pilothouse boats lack.

The fresh thinking goes beyond the "party pit" on deck. The inventive accommodations—right down to the guest cabin with twin singles—should appeal to anyone who judges a boat by accommodations first. Johnson's cleverest innovation isn't even visible. By equipping the boat with electric self-stowing sheet winches, he made it possible to execute every chore connected with sailing (furling and trimming sails) by pushing a button in the wheelhouse—superyacht technology brought down to a 40-footer. According to Peter Nielsen, "The SP Cruiser gets the nod because it's a bold, well-executed design that may very well keep people sailing instead of fleeing to powerboats."

**EDITORS' CHOICE** ★★★★★★★★★★  
**INNOVATION IN A CRUISING MONOHULL**

**SP CRUISER**

»» Motorsailers have been around for years, but Island Packet designer Bob Johnson has improved on the concept with the SP Cruiser. Johnson's idea was to offer sailors an attractive alternative to bolting to a power trawler. Like all motorsailers, the SP Cruiser offers protection from the elements, commodious accommodations, a sailplan that can bolster fuel economy, and a powerful engine that's more than just an auxiliary. One design aspect that sets this



most appreciated by those who want to ship it to distant cruising grounds, the FH 39 is a novel concept indeed. I was struck by the intelligent use of interior space, which makes full use of the restricted beam. It made me realize just how little volume you need to create a habitable interior."

This boat may not appeal to everyone—and purists may wonder why a cruiser would want to skip the voyaging element of cruising—but the Far Harbour 39 earns an Editors' Choice award for pushing cruising-boat design to places it has not been before.

**EDITORS' CHOICE**  
**INNOVATION AWARDS, CATEGORIES AND CRITERIA**

There are four main categories in which we make Editors' Choice Innovation Awards.

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

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 sailors 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—boats that 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 Deck Design
- »» Excellence in Accommodation Design



The Bladerider simply flies

**EDITORS' CHOICE** ★★★★★★★★★★★★★★  
**INNOVATION IN A PERFORMANCE MONOHULL**

## BLADERIDER

»» Several performance boats grabbed our attention at the shows, including the Flying Tiger 10 M, a no-nonsense sportboat built in China and available here in the States for around \$50K. But none had the speed potential or the radical execution of the diminutive Bladerider, the production version of the hydrofoil-equipped Moth. This iteration of the Moth class, which has been around for decades, is a production boat equipped with hydrofoils on both the daggerboard and the rudder. Hydrofoils have been attached to various small production multihulls in the past, but the Bladerider makes it possible to buy, out of the box, a monohull that will lift completely out of the water on its foils in around 10 knots of breeze and is capable of sailing well in excess of 20 knots. And it can fit in the back of a pickup truck.

This clearly isn't the boat for the average sailor, but who's to say that someone won't eventually come up with a viable foil application for a cruising boat? The Bladerider is our Editors' Choice in this category because it demonstrates what's possible.



**EDITORS' CHOICE** ★★★★★★★★★★★★★★  
**EXCELLENCE IN SYSTEMS DESIGN**

## LAGOON 420

»» The Lagoon 420 gets the nod for creative systems execution. For example, to make cruising chores simpler, the generator turns on automatically when battery levels reach a predetermined point, and pushing a button switches the engines off so the rotating propellers will charge the batteries while sailing. Bill Springer reports, "The helm station is the true nerve center of this boat; all controls (battery charging, generator, and propulsion) for the hybrid drive system are accessed at an easy-to-use panel located there. Sight lines are excellent, and singlehanded is made easier by leading every sail-control line (as well as all the engine controls) directly to the helm station."



The Lagoon 420's "nerve center"

**EDITORS' CHOICE** ★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

**INNOVATION IN A CRUISING OR PERFORMANCE MULTIHULL**

»» No awards were given in these categories, but several new cruising multihulls had features worthy of mention. Lagoon is continuing to roll out the diesel-electric hybrid propulsion system introduced on the 440 last year, which now comes standard on the new Lagoon 420. And Sea-wind Catamarans from Australia has figured out how to make the saloon on its new 1160 feel even bigger. The companionway doors retract completely into the cockpit roof, allowing the interior saloon and the protected cockpit to blend seamlessly together. Clever as these features are in themselves, we didn't see any boats that were innovative enough to qualify for this award. Similarly, there was no design radical or innovative enough to qualify for a Performance Multihull award.



The e33's comfortable deck and clever jibsheet fine-tune

**EDITORS' CHOICE** ★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

**EXCELLENCE IN DECK DESIGN**

**e33**

At first glance the e33 one-design racer/weekender looks rather classic with its overhangs, big cockpit, and small cabin. But its well-designed and -executed deck plan is thoroughly modern. The good ideas start in the cockpit. The seats are long enough to stretch out on and have proper lumbar support. The stern area behind the rudderpost offers comfortable lounging space for two. While co-founder Robbie Doyle and designer Jeremy Wurmfeld paid obvious attention to creature comforts, they also wanted the boat to be easy to handle on the racecourse. The boat has been set up so that sails can be raised and trimmed without the need for winches. To this end, the main- and jibsheets can be trimmed with fine-tunes. It's not a brand-new idea, but the e33 gets the nod for utilizing the technology beautifully.



Beneteau First 50

**EDITORS' CHOICE** ★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

**EXCELLENCE IN ACCOMMODATIONS DESIGN**

There's often a certain sameness to boat interiors—unless the designer chooses to take a risk. Two boats received Editors' Choice awards in this category because their accommodations designs leap out of the teak-and-holly mold.

**BENETEAU FIRST 50**

»»The First 50 has an aggressive, modern look abovedecks and below. Veerle Baltiau has blended light wood, minimalist furniture, shiny grabrails, nickel-plated light fixtures, and a beautiful dark-stained, matte-finished sole into a wonderful expression of Now. But style doesn't diminish functionality at sea. The settees, with their squared-off corners, make excellent seaberths. Handholds are where they're supposed to be, countertops have suitable fiddles, and cabinets provide generous stowage. This is an excellent example of a fresh, new look at accommodations.



Najad 440

**NAJAD 440**

»»Najad builds sturdy offshore cruisers, but one look at the updated accommodations plan on the Najad 440 shows that it's more than just a tough, capable boat. The company's work with Dick Young Designs has resulted in a perfect balance between function and beauty. From the dark wide-plank sole to the white headliner in the saloon, this boat just oozes comfort and class. Bill Springer says, "The styling is not radical, but the interior's clean lines and subtle departures from convention result in a truly memorable interior design." The interior also shows off the quality Scandinavian craftsmanship that goes into the construction. The Najad 440 was a unanimous selection for an Editors' Choice award because every detail, from the understated styling to the cabinet doors that pull themselves closed (ever so gently), has been utilized to produce a capable and beautiful boat. 🐦